

MCG
NEWS

UPPER FLOOD SWALLET EXTENDED BY FIFTY FEET

A new 30ft passage has been opened-up in Upper Flood Swallet and another 20ft is visible ahead. Pete Mathews, who has done most of the work, call it 'Pete's Dig'.

Most folk visiting Upper Flood turn left after climbing down the drop just inside the entrance. At the extreme end of the small rift chamber, they pass through the hole in the floor and wriggle along the muddy drainpipe. But, if instead of doing this, the visitor turns right, he finds himself at Pete's Dig.

The site has been ignored by most people and it gave the impression of being miners' residues. A roof of large boulders jammed in position by lengths of rotting timber did nothing to encourage the would-be explorer. By inclining his head to one side and poking it through an array of pit props, the adventurer could see ahead for about five feet. The unstable nature of the roof and the mass of clay beneath gave the impression that this was a roof fall in an old working and on this basis digging began.

The notions of a dangerous roof disappeared as quickly as the rotting timbers were dislodged - the roof is now well cemented together and is as safe as these things ever are.

Way ahead just visible

During the first weekend of digging, the clay floor was dug away to enlarge what had been a six inch space. There was a small space ahead of this and then a tee-tight-to-follow Z bend with the way ahead just visible.

Two further sessions of sole digging around one of the huge boulders forming the side of the bend resulted in a pick disappearing into black space. A few smaller rocks were/Continued on page 7.

NORTH WALES GOLD MINE RE-OPENED

A company has purchase an option to buy the base metal rights of nearly 700 acres of Merionethshire including the disused workings of the Gwynfynydd Gold Mine. The company proposes to use modern methods to extract minerals previously not worth mining.

FIRST MAP OF LONDON UNDERGROUND PLANNED

A committee of geographers, archaeologists, and others is to map the subterranean fields beneath London including natural cavities underground cable ways and railways. The latest elec. nic equipment will be used for this first comprehensive survey.

CAN'T COUNT

This issue is incorrectly numbered on page one. It should be 80

MCG LADDER IS STRONGEST

Tacklemaster John Miriam believes that the technique of ladder making developed by MCG is superior to any other system. Recent tests have revealed that the joints made at the rungs are stronger than the wire itself.

Come to think of it, this is fortunate because he just reported to the committee that all but 100ft of the existing 10-inch ladder is to be immediately withdrawn and that the remaining 100-ft should be scrapped as soon as possible.

He is contemplating making two grades of ladder: A strong, heavier type for Mendip and a lighter variety for longer pitches elsewhere.

QUICK WAY TO GET WARM

The cottage urgently needs some firewood and Pete Hunt has large supplies at his Upper Butts Brentford home. One snag: Pete doesn't want to saw it. But saws are available - come and get out of the cold.

WELLS DESECRATED ?

Have you been to see the new Canon's Houses in Wells. People from all over the world have commented on them - mostly adverseley claiming that they are a desecration of the ancient city.

DINNER DATE

The annual dinner (preceded by the AGM) is planned for March 29. Price is expected to be about 25s Od.

CHRISTMAS CAVERS

Eleven lads are expected to leap on Mendip at Christmas - a record. Those who want Christmas lunch should pay a deposit to Pete Mther Mathews.

MILLION GALLON DAM BUILT FOR ST CUTHBERTS PUSH by Pete Mathews

A multitude of attacks have been made on the Gow Rift, the present end of St Cuthberts. The terminal sump has been enlarged and extended, but underwater digs have not been very successful. A big attempt to drain the sump and remove the heavy silt deposit has been planned. In all seven dams have been constructed, the largest across the mineries was designed to hold a million gallons. The work follows results of the Mendip Hydrology Survey.

CRUCIAL VOTING QUESTION UNDECIDED AT NATIONAL ASSOCIATION MEETING

The Council of Southern Caving Clubs was unable to obtain agreement to its proposal for 'unanimous' voting in the National Caving Association. At the annual meeting held in Gloucestershire last month Cambria, Derbyshire and the North insisted on 75 per cent majority voting and the South stuck to its guns requiring unanimous decisions on all important questions. No decision was reached and the South are to think again.

The National Sports Council have said that it is unlikely that the NCA in its present form would be unable to properly control any grants made to it.

STOP TACKLE THEFTS

If tackle is stolen 1. Tell the Police, 2. Tell the regional council secretary 3. Prevent thefts by marking all tackle. The NCA will circulate details of tackle stolen.

ELECTRIFYING NEWS

Arthur Spain has overhauled the battery rack on the charger unit in the cottage. He has improved the spring contacts and replaced the fuses by circuit-breakers. It is expected that the new rack will be more foolproof than before. Don't try to prove it !

ELECTED

Two probationary members were accepted at the last meeting of the committee. They are: Charles Benedetto, 5 Raynald House, Gracefield Gardens, London S.W.16; and Bernard Williams, 8D Riverdale Road, East Twickenham, Middlesex.

CLUB TAKES A CHANCE

The committee at its last meeting decided to take a chance to improve the land purchase fund. £50 from the existing fund is to be invested in Premium Bonds. The last issue of the Consumer Association's magazine 'Which?' reckoned that an investment of £10 for a year offered a 98 in 100 chance of winning nothing and 1 in 1,346,154 chance of winning £25,000. A £100 investment reduced the odds to 88 in 100 of winning nothing and 1 in 134,615 of getting £25,000.

SLIPPING CLUTCH . . . GO TO BERKSHIRE

Geologists have found large deposits of Fullers earth near the Berks villages of Baulking and Fernham. Just the thing for clutches

Letters to the Editor

SOME CAVERS ARE NOT ATHLETES !

Please find enclosed the address labels. I suppose it is debatable which is worse - tacky tongue or writer's cramp ?

Here are some more revealing statistics to make the mind boggle. The secretary of our athletics club addresses 5,000 letters a year and is responsible for duplicating all invitations to compete in matches and all circulars.

He also attends all local schools matches to recruit young athletes, organises all matches acts as timekeeper and announcer and writes reports for three local newspapers. - P & J Virgo, Slough, Bucks.

(That just shows what athletics can do for you doesn't it - at least he shares one thing with our editor - he apparently doesn't run and I can't remember what caving was like-BM)

NO SUBS, NO NEWSLETTER

Having filled-in four address labels, does this mean I get newsletters even if I don't pay next year's subs ? M.D. Brace, Northwood, Middx.

(No. The spare labels are for addressing reminders to pay subs)

ASKING FOR TROUBLE

I deny all connection with sit-in (November News)- either sitting-in or getting out. But what I did do was to help get-out the UB students who thought Vicarage Pot was part of the Trouble round-trip and so abseiled down it.- Fred Davies, Neighbourne.

**THE LUMINOUS, INGENIOUS AND EXOTHERMIC ALFIE COLLINS
ALL FOR FOUR SHILLINGS**

Scarcely anyone caving on Mendip hasn't heard of Alfie Collins; or hasn't heard him recite one of the famous but improbable tales of speleology as it exists in the mind of A.J. Collins. The first Speleode descended on an unsuspecting world in 1942.

Now Alfie's works have been immortalised in print and are on sale in aid of the new Belfry fund. There are four volumes at 4s 0d each all illustrated by Jock Orr.

Volume one, which can now be ordered from Pete Mathews, contains : 'The Luminous Legend of Sammy Smayle', 'The Ingenious Invention of Kenneth Lyle' and 'The Exothermic Experiment of Freddy Fry'.

A WELCOME FROM THE HILLSIDES

BY John Miriam

A recent weekend at Llangattock will be one of the more memorable of this year's meets for the six members and two guests who managed to reach White Walls (the CSS cottage) in spite of Brian Hillman's self-dismantling starter motor and John MacMillan trying to drive through a dry stone wall.

The aim was to negotiate the Southern Stream Passage of Ager Allwedd and to explore the streamway of which it is a tributary. A subversive rumour that the SSP was nothing more than a one-mile pebbly crawl was disbelieved by Greg Smith, Bill Jones, Hohn MacMillan, Charles Benedetto and John Miriam, who went to find out for themselves.

The SSP starts about two thirds of the way along the main passage and it is entered by dropping through a hole in the floor of a right hand fork in the passage.

After crouching and crawling for half an hour it was decided that the SSP was long; after an hour it was agreed that it was even longer and after 90 minutes the conclusion was that it was ridiculous. Greg and Bill dashed on leaving the other three to follow more slowly. After 150 minutes of crawling Greg and Bill were met at a narrow rift and it was decided to return.

Chapter of accidents

The return along the passage was made memorable at a point where one slides on one's stomach over a boulder while praying that another boulder above stays jammed. This time it did not. Charles was half-way through and it took ten minutes work with a waist length plus assorted kicks and shoves to produce a sufficiently large - if unstable - hole to allow the four trapped cavers to slide through.

Having stabilised the boulder the party slogged out and set-off for the pub. Outside the Chelsea Cottage Bill managed to drive-off the side of the road while backing out, depositing the car plus four occupants between the arms of the hairpin bend beneath. While manhandling the car towards the road, it careered off demolishing a dry stone wall in the process.

Sunday was a day for rebuilding dry stone walls and pulling out cars

OLD CAVERS NEVER DIE.....

They just get married, get too fat, or join the committee

CAVES AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Arthur Spain, a member of the Group for many years, returns to Swildons Hole to ask 'Swildons or the Swillpot?'

Six members of the Victoria CC and I decided to plod down as far as Blue Pencil. At the new way from the Water Chamber to what used to be the foot of the 40 we had a quarter-hour wait while some ill-equipped youngsters emerged. At the head of the 20 we encountered our second snag, a three-quarter hour wait for two parties of near-exhausted youngsters to stagger by. There was another party ahead of us as well.

All this frustration caused us to flash past Barnes Loop and the route to Blue Pencil without realising it and we arrived at Sump 1. It was too much for three of us and we dived into the beautifully clean and fresh Swildons 2. After half an hour enjoyably splashing around through the ducks to Sump 2 we returned to the others. Ugh! The sight and smell of spent carbide and rubbish all over the place almost persuaded us back through the sump.

We did get to Blue Pencil, but that is almost forgotten - what is remembered is the underground rubbish dump which the cave has become. Members and their guests must remember not to leave carbide everywhere and rubbish: Take it out with you. And also please remember that novices have their limitations - exhausted cavers are a danger to themselves and a nuisance to others.

LESSONS WORTH LEARNING

Last month Greg Smith gave a 'victim's eye view' of the Longwood rescue. Here Tony Knibbs comments on some key points....

1. Hauling the victim up the main pitch was straightforward to begin with. I climbed the ladder alongside the victim while Tony Buchan co-ordinated the hauling above. Lack of sufficient lifeline provided a needless hazard..The only available line was attached to the carrying sheet with an extra-long tail of several feet which was then attached to the climber alongside. This was potentially very dangerous.
2. Had it been possible to fix a pulley above the pitch it would have been useful.
3. There were problems at the top of the chimney - rescuers must try to get ahead of the victim again as soon as he has been passed forward.
4. The operation was halted at the foot of the 10ft ladder and there is no record of any rescue in the restricted section beyond. The crux of the problem would come at the letter box but I think only a very small victim would make it.

GEOLOGICAL TIME REASSESSED

Various time scales reconciled

A new geological chronology has been calculated by Dr W.A. Berggren working at the Wood Hole Oceanographic Institution, Massachusetts, USA. His work has reconciled various different calculations made in the past. Using radioactive analysis of rock specimens he believes that he can define periods to within half a million years.

Dr Berggren agrees with previous estimates of the beginning of the Pleistocene period at about 1.8 M years ago; but then he varies previous estimates of the Pliocene period's start 13 M years ago to only 5.5 M years ago.

He dates the Miocene as beginning 22.5 M years ago. This assessment is made using the radioactive analysis of rocks containing microfossils of the family Foraminifera.

The rocks analysed in this programme came from deep sea drillings in the Atlantic.

Detailed report in 'Nature', December 13, 1969.

POTTED HISTORY

A potted history of the search for St Guthberts 2 is contained in 'The Mendip Caver' vol 5 no 6 - in the library, which has also recently received vol 13 nos 2 and 10 of 'Stop Press', Sydney SS's publication.

AUSTRIAN SLIDE SHOW PLANNED

Pete Mathews is planning a showing of last summer's slides taken on the Group trip to Austria. He would like to see collections in order to select a reasonable number to show first to participants privately and then one Thursday evening at Brentford.

Fifty foot more (from page one)

removed and the bend was by-passed. Unfortunately the way on became too tight with a further 12 ft of passage still visible. It will probably prove negotiable after a session with an entrenching tool.

A few days spent digging by one person have opened up a total of 30 ft of passage with a further 20 ft visible ahead.

Some might call this a trivial little passage, but as things are on Mendip these days it ranks as a major discovery.

SUBS ARE DUE TO THE GROUP ON JANUARY 1 - SEE LETTER ATTACHED

GET SET FOR CHRISTMAS 1970

Too late for this year, but in plenty of time for next, is an MCG scheme to print Christmas Cards up to professional standards. Quick: Make some friends to whom you can send them.

WINTER ENTRY TO DAN YR OGOF

During the Winter, when Dan yr Ogof is closed, access is via the River Entrance. Party leaders should obtain keys from SWCC cottage. Parties must lock themselves in.

1969-70 JOURNAL

Joan Goddard reports only limited support for the Journal and it is planned to produce it in a somewhat limited form early next year.

WHERE WERE YOU ?

Where were you on the cottage work weekend ? Answers to Tony Buchan on a postcard, please. Prizes will consist of invitations to the next one.

BOOK AND SURVEY NIGHTS

Books will be available from Joan Goddard at the Royal Oak on the first Thursday of each month; cave surveys will be on sale on the third Thursday of the month. Here is a complete list :

Surveys

Caves of Cheddar Gorge	4.3	Coopers Hole	3.3
Eastwater sh 1	4.3	Eastwater sh 2	4.3
Goatchurch	2.6	Lamb Leer	3.9
Longwood/August sh 1	5.6	Longwood/A sh 2	3.3
Longwood/A sh 3	3.6	Pinetree Pot	3.3
St Cuthberts Plan	3.3	St Cuthberts section	2.6
St Cuthberts addendum	1.0	Stoke Lane	4.3
Swildons	4.3	Ubley Hill Pot	2.3
Read's Cavern	1.6	Browne's Hole	2.0

Books

Pennine Underground	10.0	MCG 1967 Journal	5.6
Caves of Mendip, Derbyshire, Wales & the Marches each			9.0

Committee

SECRETARY	Peter Mathews, 155 Radcliffe Way, Northolt, Middx
Treasurer	Ron Saunders, 21 Rushmoor Ave, Hazlemere, H. Wycombe, Bucks
C/warden	Tony Buchan, 80 Rectory Lane, Long Ditton, Surrey
T/Master	John Miriam, Glenville, Wheeler Lane, Witley, Surrey
Meet sec	Peter Hunt, Kelway, Upper Butts, Brentford, Middx
Recorder	Jean Goddard, 24 Swan Close, Hanworth, Middx