

Annual half-yearly meeting report

SUBS UP, BUT ONLY FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

Subscriptions for full and probationary members over the age of eighteen are to be increased to £2 from January 1971. All other subs remain at 15s 0d.

The meeting worked its way through a series of complicated proposals and at one time found itself bound by the C & R to both increase subscriptions and not to increase them: It took two re-votes to resolve the situation. All the increase goes to the LPF.

SEARCH FOR LAND TO BE INTENSIFIED

Malcolm Cotter reported that it seemed likely that Jim Fry, our present landlord, was likely to remain in residence for another three years. "But, three years isn't a long time" said Pat Walsh - it could take all of that time to demolish and re-erect our present building. A subcommittee was formed (Ron Saunders, Malcolm Cotter, Tony Knibbs and Roger Wallington) to step-up the search.

LPF BENEFITS BY £100

Ron Saunders reported the general fund to have £200 and the land fund £360. The meeting decided that £100 should move from the general fund into the LPF.

BETTER EQUIPMENT FOR NOVICES

The club will in future have available six carbide lamps and helmets for the use of novices. The tacklemaster is planning to buy about 1,000ft of new rope.

1971 MEETS PLANNED

John MacMillan, confirmed in the post of meet secretary following Pete Munt's departure to Canada, announced that Penyghent had been booked for Easter next year and Lost John's for August BH. Pete Mathews said that we soon have a key for Box Mines and he was asked to negotiate for one for Lamb Lair.

JOURNAL "SOON"

Editor Brian Mee hoped that the next MCG Journal would be available about the end of the year. Closing date for copy was the end of November. Newsletters for exchange clubs would in future be handled by the recorder.

Political commentary

NCA SHOULD WATCH CAVERS' INTERESTS

A working party of the National Caving Association recommends that the NCA should do more to tell the world about the uses to which caves are put and the numbers of people interested in speleology. This, the committee's report says, would assist in conservation of caves where they are threatened by quarrying or loss from some other reason.

Caves can be protected to some extent by being scheduled sites of special scientific interest (SSSI's) and in this way access had been preserved at Stoke Lane Slocker. But quarrying - if of considerable commercial importance - could still take precedence.

Vandalism - both intentional and accidentally following high usage - could be cured only by an educational programme, says the working party

RAIL LINE TO BE OPEN TO ALL

Clutton RDC (our local authority) has decided that 4½ acres of the Hallatrow-Camerton rail line, disused for 45 years should be preserved as an amenity area. Attention was drawn to the beauty of the area by the 2nd Paulton Scout Troop who sought to use it as a training area. The Peak Planning Board may buy parts of the Rowsley-Peak Forest rail route to tidy up the ugly scar it caused in the Peak Park.

FOR RICHER FOR POORER . . .

A medical student and a nurse were married underground in a cave near Malaga, Spain, last month. A priest officiated and all guests wore helmets and lamps.

AUSTRIAN SKIING HOLIDAYS

The Austrian Alpine Club is again organising skiing holidays from Britain next year. Travel can be by sleep coach - coaches fitted with seats that convert to double-deck bunks. De tails from the Editor.

HAD TO BE RESCUED

Greg Smith and John MacMillan were rescued by the Fell Rescue Organisation after being overdue on Casterton Fell last month. They were lost for two hours in heavy rain after not going down County Pot.

Poland 1970

A TRIP THAT NEVER WAS

The MCG expedition to Poland this year included among its records the first British visit to the caves of the West Tatra region. A full report is scheduled for the 1970/71 Journal. But not all the trip was caving, writes Roger Wallington . . .

It started, as all good caving trips do, outside an establishment selling beer - then we realised our first mistake: It was closed! We'd prepared thoroughly for what was planned as a 24 hour trip and were loaded with coffee, stoves, food and two enormous 'wursts', to say nothing of caving gear. Then our Polish friend told us that the party was too large and three of us would have to join some of his comrades on a 12 hour trip to another 'nearby' cave. Two of us - selected by democratic process, of course, - set off at 3 pm to conquer Wielka Litworova (a cave not a Polish bird).

At 7 pm it was getting dark and to our amazement we were still on our way to the cave and climbing rapidly. We stopped for a rest and were contemplating whether we were fit to start caving and climbing large pitches when our friend said: 'We rest, half way now!'

At 10.30 pm we did reach the cave entrance and found that it was within 100ft of the top of the mountain - the last $\frac{1}{2}$ hr had been covered on hands and knees.

With much arm waving and gesticulating we explained to our Polish friends that after this we were too hacked to go caving and would spend the night on the mountainside while they went caving. The three of us under the space blanket kept remarkably warm in a five-foot depression in spite of wind and rain - a good test of the space blanket.

In the morning we awaited the cavers at the foot of the first pitch in sight of daylight. They were due at 7am, but we did not hear them until 11 am and did not see them until 1 pm. While they were on their way we had our first glimpse of Polish caving techniques:

Luck and a length of sisal

Down the first three pitches, each of 30ft, they draped one long tatty length of sise rope (Hemp 'no good' they said) and this was tied to a boulder on the surface. Their technique was to abseil down pitches and to prussik up or climb ladders suspended from a bowline in the one length of sisal. It was possible for three or more people to be climbing at one time - and all have their weight on the one piece of sisal. They refused to touch our proffered lifeline, although they were all shattered. We reached the beer house at 7 pm. Luckily after this 28 hr non-trip, it was open.

The Poetry of Caving (and not the Alfie Collins sort)

I N P R A I S E O F L I M E S T O N E

by W. H. A U D E N

If it form the one landscape that we the inconstant ones
Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly
Because it dissolves in water. Mark these rounded slopes
With their surface fragrance of thyme and beneath
A secret system of caves and conduits; near these springs
That spurt out everywhere with a chuckle
Each filling a private pool for its fish and carving
Its own little ravine whose cliffs entertain
The butterfly and the lizard; examine this region
Of short distances and definite places:
What could be more like Mother or a fitter background
For her son, the flirtatious male who lounges
Against a rock in the sunlight, never doubting
That for all his faults he is loved; whose works are but
Extensions of his power to charm? From weathered outcrop
To hill-top temple, from appearing waters to
Conspicuous fountains, from a wild formal vineyard,
Are ingenious but short steps that a child's wish
To receive more attention than his brothers, whether
By pleasing or teasing, can easily take,

(The first of five verses)

M Y S T E R I E S O F M E N D I P (On Wookey Hole)

by Jennings, 1807

To lay the lorn spirit, you ce'r it must pray,
And command it, at length, to be gone far away,
And in Wookey's deep hole,
To be under control,
For the space of seven years and a day.

If then it return, you must pray and command
By midnight,
By moonlight,
By death's ebon wand,
That to Cheddar Cliffs now it departeth in peace,
And another seven years its sore troubling will cease.

If it return still,
As, I warn you it will,
To the Red Sea for ever
Commnd it: and never
Or noise more or sound
In the house shall be found.

SUMMER IN YORKSHIRE

A report compiled by TONY KNIBBS, JOHN MIRIAM, HELEN SAUNDERS and JOHN MacMILLAN.

SELL GILL HOLES AND ALUM POT

Sell Gill Holes and Alum Pot were selected as good introductory trips for a first day in Yorkshire. The approach to Sell Gill was made from the road above New Houses, a mile north of Horton. The descent commences by the dry route and easy pitches of 25, 35 and 45 feet brought us to the large rift which enlarges to form the main chamber and from where a wet 150 ft pitch leads up to the other entrance. The party divided to visit the final sump.

The canny Scot

While changing again to visit Alum Pot an irate female accosted us demanding a shilling a head - a demand reduced to sixpence by our canny Scots negotiator. We entered by Lower Long Churn and reached the daylight of the main shaft via the 45ft Dolly Tubs pitch and a 15ft ladder eased our way down the Greasy Slab. Traversing around the shaft and crossing the bridge brought us to the 60ft pitch leading down to the foot of the large open shaft. We'd run out of ladder and just look disconsolately down in the direction of the final sump.

A demonstration of how not to climb ladders from three characters descending the main shaft was followed later by cries of 'pull' as they discovered that incorrect techniques are much more exhausting than the proper way.

On the way out some of us left by way of Upper Long Churn and took a look at Dr Bannister's Handbasin with its small water chute leading up to the surface.

ROWTEN POT

Sunday mid-day (whatever were they doing outside of a pub at that time -Ed) found us slogging up Kingsdale Scars to the impressive entrance to Rowten Pot. A scramble down the north end of the entrance rift led to Gulleÿ Pitch. Helped down by a handline, we had a choice of a bedding plane crawl or an easy traverse leading to the point where the rift opened up and there is a fine pitch and the stream enters beneath a natural bridge. Across the bridge a substantial ledge provided a good take-off point for the 145ft pitch. The ladders hangs free for the first 40 ft and then continues from a wide ledge down against a beautifully-fluted wall.

The final 20 ft of the pitch bring you into contact with the stream running in scalloped and fluted rock scenery before it disappears again down the next pitch. There is a dry pitch of 65ft to the left of the water enabling the stream to be reached in comfort. Further along the rift another stream enters at a fourth pitch where 35ft more ladder was added to the original 65ft to give a good climb between two waterfalls.

The Yorkshire report continued

LOTS OF WATER IN JINGLING POT

A considerable amount of water was flowing into Jingling Pot when we arrived and this we diverted about 20 yds upstream into Jingling Caves, firstly to make the first pitch a dry descent and secondly in an attempt to drown three members who had just entered Jingling Caves. We descended the 120 ft pitch in comfort and - in spite of our efforts - the three remained undrowned. The pitch was slightly inclined with a few jagged ledges and it led into a narrow rift terminating in a boulder choke.

RUMBLING HOLE

Late rising at Greenclouse meant an even later arrival on Leck fell. A small party explored Short Drop Cave and the remainder laddered Rumbling Hole.

Because the final section of the 115 ft entrance pitch was offset down a gully, one tends to swing about awkwardly for the first 80ft. Six of us reached the second pitch by way of a short stream passage, but here John MacMillan gasped his knee and Sion Hookins accompanied him back to the pub (sorry, surface).

The second pitch, down a narrow vertical gully, is in two sections, 30 ft and 20 ft - both dry - and the third pitch follows immediately. The first free-hanging 30 ft was dry and the second 20ft against the wall was wet.

The water led to the fourth pitch - 50ft against the wall, wet and the most sporting of the lot. At the bottom we found ourselves in a chamber with a tributary stream entering from one side and the combined streams lead to a slimy sump - a point only 100ft from the Lost John's system. We returned to the entrance to be greeted by stones, the odd end of a lifeline and agreed that the cave was nowhere near the SSP standard listed in Pennine Underground.

MARBLE STEPS POT, IREBY FELL CAVERN & TATHAM WIFE HOLE were all visited, but have been previously described in MCG publications in 1963 and 1964, also 1969

MEMBERS ARE GOING TO BE MADE TO WORK

There is a scheme afoot to lighten the load on committee members - and at the same time spread around the business of running the club - by linking small groups of people (sub-committees, perhaps) to each committee member. If you are interested in any of the main lines of Group activity, please talk to the relevant person: Tackle and equipment, meets and digging, reporting/printing, spending/raising money, Cottage maintenance etc.

DEAR....., HAD A WONDERFUL TIME AT..... WISH YOU'D BEEN THERE. THIS IS WHAT WE DID:

CYMRU AM BYTH gan the ffamily Ssaunders

THE SMELL OF NEWPORT SANDS (Mon)

Gales and rain dissuaded Helen and Ron from surfing and they turned their attention to the sea caves on the north side of Newport Sands. All but one were of no consequence, but the exception, some 120 ft long held possibilities. We dug out the floor of a passage which had started about the diameter of a hand and five feet long, having first thrown stones to discover a cavern beyond. For about an hour we dug and then managing to crawl through, wished we hadn't. The stench of sea garbage rising from thick black mud on the floor (that squelched) was most unpleasant. The chamber was just a continuation of the main cave that had been blocked by sand and rocks at a bottle neck.

NEARLY CORKED IN OGOF PEN ERYR

Ron and Helen Saunders visited the cave which is some 200-300 yds on the Brynmawr side of the CSS cottage. A track leads up to the old quarry behind and doubling back towards Brynmawr there is a narrow entrance at the foot of the escarpment. A small chamber leads by way of a slight squeeze to an inclined corkscrew and so on to a rift passage. The corkscrew was sporting: Helen managed it at the second attempt (nearly thwarted by what Ron describes as a 'bulbous' backside and Ron took much longer. The rest of the cave is both uninteresting and partly unstable.

GOLD IN THEM THERE HILLS

Ron felt it necessary to visit the Dolaucothi Gold Mines (Caio, Cards) in the hope of finding some to pay for the family holiday. The workings excavated since Roman times were for the most part short and reminiscent of a rabbit warren. One addit seemed worth exploring: the first 20 yds or so were six inches deep in water and soon branched into three passages. One was partially closed by a roof fall, the second was a cul-de-sac but the third had a man-made pitch in the middle at least 40 ft deep. Without a ladder descent was impossible but Ron did pick up one large nugget - which the family subsequently managed to leave behind.

One remarkably keen young caver, was an ardent and exceptional saver. To increase his wealth, he used infinite stealth And all demands for his fees he eschewed.

The Cottage, he slips in and out, On his visits he casts every doubt. Never once had he spoke, 'till he discovered no coke Then he died with his toes and nose blued.

O.D.

REVIEW

by Joan Goddard

THE LOST CAVERN OF HUTTON

Axbridge CG & AS newsletter Sept 1970 is taken up almost entirely by a preliminary account of the 'Lost Cavern of Hutton - its rediscovery.' So far about 400ft of passage dropping to a depth of about 100ft have been found - and this is only a third of the system which was described by 18th and 19th century writers. A grade 2 survey is included and a grade 5 edition is to be produced. Access is restricted and prospective visitors should contact Chris Richards, 11 Highland Close Whorlebury Hill, Weston-super-Mare.

LATEST SURVEYING TECHNIQUES

Transactions of the CRG vol 12 no 3, July 1970 contains eleven papers dealing with various aspects of surveying that were presented at the Leicester symposium in March, 1970.

SOUTH WALES HEPSTE VALLEY DESCRIBED

Westminster SG vol 6 no 9, May/June, 1970 contains a useful eleven page article by Dave Everett dealing with the Hepste Valley, South Wales. The R. Hepste runs parallel and to the east of the R. Mellte which contains P rth-yr-Ogof. Well-illustrated with sketches and diagrams the report contains a good geological and geomorphological background to the area and brief descriptions of the cave entrances.

BE YOUR OWN FIFTY SHILLING TAILOR

Wessex CG's Journal Aug 1970 contains a long and explicit account of how to make a nylon caving boiler suit for fifty shillings. I was most impressed because two men made their own boiler suits without any help from their wives. Seekers of patches on boiler suits (by wives etc) please note.

SHHANKYOU Robby and Pam who provided ale for the HYGM. We are remembering, remmemberring, rem.....you...

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