

Mendip

Caving

Group

News

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WEEKLY CLUB "The Royal Oak", New Road, Brentford, Middx. (Behind
MEETINGS Brentford Football Club Ground) every Thursday night
till ejected.

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COTTAGE Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip, Nr. Wells, Somerset.
Accommodation for over 30 - all essential services - guests
charged at 20p per night (or 20p dayfee).
Guest party booking through the Cottage Warden.

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RESCUE WARDEN Bill Jones; 91 St Saviours Road, Croydon, Surrey.

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100TH EDITION

Well here it is at last! The 100th Newsletter is out. Inside a reprint of Newsletter No1 is to be found as well as some extracts from other past numbers highlighting important events in the M.C.G.'s nineteen years existence.

Covenant Forms

About a year ago the Group tried to interest members in paying their annual subscriptions by covenant. We met with little interest. One of the conditions of the covenant is that you should sign and seal etc. to pay for a period of 7 years. Very few members seemed to like the idea of committing themselves to such a long period; and so the idea was dropped.

Recently the committee have learned that the 7 year agreement, which must be signed, sealed and delivered by the member is not binding. The covenant may be terminated by mutual agreement at any time with no loss of benefit.

To refresh your memories. If you pay your sub by covenant, the club may claim back tax from the Inland Revenue. This could amount to £40.50 a year!. You like paying Income Tax? No; well here's your chance to get some back.

There is no excuse for every tax paying member not to complete the enclosed form and return it as soon as possible. Please just sign and witness it leaving dates etc. blank.

Failure to complete the form will warrant the enforcing of Rule 11(f) "the Secretary will be empowered to deliver a swift boot up the backside of all idle buggers as he deems fit".

Parking On Priddy Green

Concerned about the central green being churned up by cars, the Priddy Parish Council have asked cavers' cooperation in parking on the side greens or at the top green in front of the church.

Heard about the guy who ate 30 packets of cornflakes and died of sunstroke?

Field and Trek (Equipment) Ltd

25 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex. Offer camping equipment, climbing and some caving equipment at 'rock bottom' prices. Better than this they offer 20% off on orders over £20, to M.C.G. members. i.e. prices about 5% cheaper than Y.H.A. Catalogue from Johnny Mac, or Mail Order.

N.C.A.

The N.C.A. have compiled a booklet listing suppliers of caving equipment and materials. Only fairly well known sources seem to be listed. Copies with John Miriam and in the Library.

Dizzy Diggy

Diggers at Upper Flood should be on their guard for bad air. It is not certain if this comes from gas pockets under the mud, in which case it is probably carbon dioxide. Alternatively residue bang fumes comprising oxides of nitrogen may be responsible. Ventilation is likely to be worse under dry conditions.

A recent team collapsed almost completely after working in apparently clear air for only half an hour. The effects were quite sudden from completely fit to flat out in a couple of minutes. First symptoms were tiredness, inability to stand, dizziness and loss of vision. The pulse rate was also very high, this was accompanied by a throbbing head and nausea.

So far incidents of bad air have been relatively rare. It is obvious though that no one should work in the cave alone, and especially in the end canal. You have been warned.

Access to G.B.

After some struggle and much argument the Group, along with the other Charterhouse C.C. members is to have its own G.B. Cavern key. This will be held by John MacMillan and will be available to members and guests on any weekend. Parties comprising not more than six persons must hold C.C.C. permits and use electric lighting.

The Tree Men Of Meregill (May 12th)

"350 ft of ladder & 700ft of lifeline is a bloody ridiculous between S.B. and ourselves!" cried John as he sank down outside Little Meregill. Never-the-less, 20 minutes later the tiny entrance had swallowed all, down a 40ft pitch, into the main streamway to the head of the second pitch. A year earlier we had abandoned a trip here and this one looked like going the same way, when S.B's. carbide lamp was extinguished for good by copious amounts of water falling down the pitch. Luckily, there were plenty of sloping ledges; so we carry on, down another 75 footer then 100 footer. Both were very wet, but broken by similar ledges. Thence followed a longish stream passage interrupted only by a couple of small pitches easily passable without tackle. Soon we were forced to crawl, first on hands & knees, then lower as the roof and water came near to meeting. Here we about turned and shot out, deladdering very quickly, up to the entrance pitch, where it took $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to remove all the tackle. (On the previous trip we exited less strenuously, through the Mere sump on a line laid by our own Wanka Wicks. Unfortunately this has now vanished) Needless to say it did not take long before our greedy hands were clutching well earned pints in the Marten

S.B.

The First Caving Visit

Do you remember your first trip underground? Also the excitement of later trips. I don't know if you are like me and bore your colleagues at work stiff by recounting your hours under Mendip or elsewhere.

However, my reminiscences could n't have been that un-interesting, as it has resulted in a party of five non cavers coming down to Mendip for a days trip to see for themselves the horrors (or beauties, whichever way the feeling takes them) of Goatchurch and Swildens. My choice of these two caves was to give an insight into the dry and wet aspect of caving.

The time finally arrived, and unfortunately it was raining, so my guests were not fully able to appreciate the glory of the Mendips. We changed in the car park at Burrington and set off to Goatchurch, which we entered at 10.30. I was watching their faces with some interest as you may imagine, but all I noted at the time was a look of apprehensive eagerness. The big laugh came when we had completed the large top chamber and arrived at what to my guests looked like a tiny hole on the left hand side. "It's down there" I chortled happily and at once saw the mild apprehension turn to fear. "I thought it was straight on" said one. said one hopefully, trying to avoid the little hole. Off we went down the little hole with many grunts and groans of "how do I get down there", or what seems to be the favourite comment "do we come back this way?" We arrived at the Boulder Chamber where we had our first minor accident, one of the torches gave up the ghost, so I had to retrace my steps to the entrance, where a torch had been left. My guests during this time were left to their own devices in the Boulder Chamber with strict instructions to have a look round but not to go down any holes.

Upon my return we had a slight break to allow me (I must admit) to cool down before proceeding down over the Coffin Lip and on down to the delight of delights The Drain. Here there were some white faces as I explained that I would go through with the largest member of the party, just incase. This was my hour, I must have masochistic tendencies. To see my colleague in a most unusual attitude struggling through with red face complaining bitterly that he was stuck. I relented though and gave words of encouragement and he finally emerged into the chamber. The others were then invited to join us, the relief on their innocent faces was a picture as they emerged. This was quickly shattered when told that there was no other way out, and there was no thing for it but to retrace their steps.

The waist length was found to be very acceptable over the top of the Coffin Lid, but the rest of the return trip, and exit through the Tradesmans Entrance was smartly negotiated. The time then being 12.30. A welcome break was had at the cottage at this stage where lunch was devoured with some gusto I would add.

14.00. hrs. found us on Priddy Green where the goodwill fee was handed in at the farm, followed by the trudge over the fields. Here it was noticed that nearly everybody but them was adorned in a wetsuit. I pointed out to them that it wouldn't be as bad as they thought, as I had a wetsuit and wouldn't feel a thing.

The entrance was a picture to see, the innocents were all standing round chatting, whilst I charged and ignited the carbides, then like the ghost of Jacob Marley I stood and pointed to the hole. "Down there" I said smilingly at which they all laughed and said "your joking", to which remark I slid into the hole and said "follow me".

We all trundled through fairly happily whilst I admonished them to stay dry as long as they could. It was at the Letter Box that I nearly had my first revolt. As is usual in Swildon s there is a delay here whilst we waited for a party of six tired cavers to clutch and crawl their way up. This is always bad for a non caver to see as it is inclined to stir the emotions somewhat. So I was ready for the remark when it came. " I don't want to go down there". Fortunately the panic did not spread and I said "don't worry its a lot easier than it looks". Its going down ! We continued down with dire warnings not to lay too close to the left edge where they would fall into the Lavatory Pan. A little further on we came to the Old Forty and although there wasn't much water going over, there was too much for beginners to do with out a rope. So the old waist length was again called into service, using yours truly as the belay sat in the pot with feet firmly wedged onto the walls. The first member of the party clambered over and asked what he should do " Oh just grab the rope and turn round to face me and climb down". I know now what a plug feels like as it is yanked out of the bath as this person must be a good fifteen stone, and he was swinging about on the end of the rope like a kid playing Tarzan. However, the strain finally eased as there was a bit of a grunt and a cry "I'm down". The rest followed in similar fashion.

From then on ofcourse the way is easy, and so I was able to point out the various sights including the pressure fault which if looked at closely is very impressive. We went down as far as the Twenty where we rested for a while. Watching the efforts of people going down and up the ladders. The return was made by the Long Dry Way , and I must admit that I had to rack my brains a bit to find the right way as I had only been that way once before, and then going the other way. I understand ,from later comments that it is rather unnerving when the so called leader has to say "Hang on a minute while I have a look up here". Still daylight was finally sighted and a very happy but tired bunch of cavers returned to the surface.

The cottage was again invaded ,where the ceremony of the caver's bath was performed to be followed by scoff, i.e. anything which could be fried was; and eaten with gusto and washed down with cups of tea.

The final cure for a days caving is of course carried out with out much ceremonial at establishments similar. to The New Inn where the process of replacing as quickly as possible, all the liquid which has been lost during the course of an energetic day.

As a final footnote, I am glad to say that my guests are not put off and infact are even very quietly talking, out of my earshot, they are thinking of going down again.

Etic Dowley

If you castrated a glow worm would it be delighted?

Prussicing

The club is prepared to pay half the cost of personal Prussicing Ropes purchased by members. However the M.C.G. will not be purchasing any for general club use as it is considered that they should be personal property.

Members' Weekends

The first weekend in every month is reserved for members only at the cottage. So if you find the cottage crowded with guest bookings and it is difficult to get a bed then we suggest you try a Members Weekend.

Membership

Robert Penn of High Wycombe has been accepted as a Probationary Member.

Ian & Penelope Bramble now live at 4 Keldwythe Drive, Keldwythe Windermere, Westmoreland and have been also accepted for Probationary Membership

Brian Terry has now been accepted as a Full Member.

Congratulations

The M.C.G. wishes to congratulate Roger Wallington and Pat Puddink who are getting married on 15th September.

Also congratulations go to John Puddink and Janet Blackman who are getting married on July 11th.

Incidentally, Roger has just turned down the offer of a cheap tent. Because (his words) "It won't sleep three!" We will say no more.

A chap walks into Burtons and says,

" Can I try that suit on in the window? "

" No you dirty swine, try it on in the changing room like everybody else "

EXTRACTS FROM:-

DECEMBER 14th/15th 1968.

Behold ! It came to pass that on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of December, there was to be a great gathering of the Great Tribe who call themselves Mendip Troglodytes. And this gathering had been foretold even unto all the sons and daughters of that tribe by the papyrus of the Scribe of Meets and by that papyrus of the Scribe of Editions. Yea, even the noticetablet at the place of weekly communion was thus inscribed.

Thus it was written that on the fourteenth day of the month of December a great Practice Rescue would take place. For it oft happened in those days that of so many Troglodytes as ventured as ventured into Darkness this same Darkness did suite one or another of them. And even as it smote more mightily the novice Troglodyte yet it spared not he who was versed into the ways of an elder of that tribe. Thus it was meet that the more of this tribe that knew the ways of salvation from such perverse chatisement the more joyous would be their knowledge of Darkness and their passage therein.

And it was also written that on the fifteenth day of the month of December would take place a great pilgrimmage unto G.B. Cave which is an amazement unto Troglodytes, and likewise also a pilgrimmage unto Lamb Leer, mined of our forefathers.

Thus there appeared, on the fourteenth day, an elder of that tribe and he came nigh unto that place where the tribe should foregather. Yea ! he took even his bed and his manna unto the ritual dwelling place of Tribe. But Lo ! Coming nigh unto the portal of that dwelling a great truth was desoended upon him. Entering through that portal he beheld neither Troglodyte nor image thereof. Yea ! Not even the lowly mouse bestired himself in that cold place. And his eyes were mocked of that inscription ; Home for Retired Cavers.

And it came to pass that this elder, being alone in the wilderness, did go forth from that place and did raise his voice unto Heaven in sorrow, and did vend his garments in anguish thereat.

And on the-morrow it came to pass in a like manner and not one of those Troglodytes did venture forth unto that place of Judgement to go forth with that downcast elder. Therefor unvisited and unblessed were these shrines of G.B. Cave and Lamb Leer, and their passages echoed not to the merriment of the Troglodyte multitude. And it occured unto this elder that surely the goodly name and great traditions of this accursed tribe of Mendip Troglodytes did deserve some better act.

O, Ye brethren of pseudo Mendip Troglodytes, heed ye not that which is written of the Scribe of Meets? Neither understood ye the papyrus of the Scribe of Editions? Nor do ye peruse the noticetablet? Wherefore have ye so slight regard of purpose for which the tribe was ordained ?

O, thrice-stuffed tribe of Troglodytes, extract thy palsied digits, cause thy undergarments to be ^{pulled} heavenwards, arise from thy posteriors and become once more that much-vaunted brotherhood of Darkness as it was told in ancient times. Cast not the mote out of thine elders eye afore casting the motes out of thine own.

T. Knibbs.

Mersham Mine, Redhill Revisited.

"It provides a casual and interesting two hours exploration, mostly walking....."

We entered the mine through a collapse in the roof followed by a short crawl over some of the rubble. From then on the progress was as rapid as a bent posture would permit."

That's what I wrote in Newsletter 78 September/October 1969. We returned to the mine on 1st April 1973 and considering what we found the date was not inappropriate.

A great scar ran along one side of the valley above the mine - thousands of tons of spoil had been deposited for the foundation of the new motorway; the collapse in the roof was now a pit twenty feet deep and twenty feet square which we descended by a springy wooden ladder. Just below the lip of the pit the end of a large bore concrete pit projected to discharge flood water into the pit and so into the mine workings.

From the bottom of the pit two passages led off in opposite directions - we chose the northwesterly one. A stooping walk of 20 yards or so brought us to a pile of rubbish and down on all fours, at the top of the bank was an obvious crawl which did not descend the opposite side of the bank but went on gradually decreasing in size until it was too small to follow, so we turned around and went back to the passage. We tried a branch passage only to find the roof coming down to clear water which flooded the passage; back again; we tried another passage and another and another. Each in turn started promisingly but the result was always the same, either the rock face at the end of a short working passage or more rubble, a crawl and then too tight to go on.

After an hour we decided we were not going to penetrate further into the mine from the pit so we climbed out and turned eastwards to another entrance.

This second entrance was about the size of a badger's set and in a natural position under and through the roots of a tree. On the other side of the tree a vertical hole about 10 feet deep had been dug to join the tree root entrance. This took a sharp turn to the left and vanished.

First first, turned to the left on our backs, down a confined tube about 8 feet long and then to a squeeze - it was not necessary to take a deep breath in order to jam. However after some pushing and grunting we all got through and into a small chamber in which dried

We went down feet first, turned to the left on our backs, down a confined tube about 8 feet long and then a squeeze - it was not necessary to take a deep breath in order to jam. However after some pushing and grunting we all got through and into a small chamber in which dried grass was scattered around. Was it a badger's set? I don't know. In one part of the mine we found some rotting matter on which fungus was growing, but we could not tell neither what it was, or what it had been.

We tried one main passage running roughly East/West with branch passages. The ultimate result was, however, much the same as before, slightly longer walks with crawls but always blockages, or the end of the workings after only a short distance. The most noticeable features as contrasted with our previous visit were the number of times to crawl to pass from one passage to another and the vast amount of spoil and rubble which blocked the workings. It had not apparently fallen from the roof nor did it appear to be a collapse of the miners' walls behind which the spoil had been dumped, nor was it the groutings which we were told had been poured into the workings at 10 foot intervals along the motorway. Certainly blocks and flakes had fallen from the above, but the manner of their presence was reasonably obvious.

After spending another hour and a half we re-immersed through the badger's hole (?), there was no other way. This squeeze seemed easier going up, even with an ammo box being pushed in front.

If you want to see a Hearthstone mine I suggest you go now because if deterioration continues at the same pace for the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ years you 'll not get in at all.

Our party - Arthur and Pete Spain with their friend Jim, Ron and Roger Saunders with Roger's friend Benedict Watrigant d'Alinval (that's a difficult to roll of the tongue at the first attempt). She told us that there is a cave in France named Benedict which she discovered. She also told us that she had slept in caves from choice, not because she was fourth in a family of nine.

Ron Saunders.

Have you heard about the German Hairdresser called Herr Kutt?

Cottage Warming Party (Extract from Cottage Log 16.5.59.)

At Whitsun 1959 a party was held at the Charterhouse Cottage to commemorate its completion. Everyone arrived either Friday night or during Saturday. The members of Liverpool University went caving into Longwood. David & Richard collected the food from Priddy Stores. Tony fetched Margaret her sister and her friend Jean. The rest of us cleared and tidied the Cottage. The floors in the middle and end rooms were scrubbed. The beer and cider were tapped. A large force was collected together and was set to work under Malcolm's leadership on the construction of the other front wall

and which was completed. Jean cleared the front with a homemade rake supplied by Mr Fry. Bob organised the clearing of the bricks etc. from the front of the cottage.

Ann lead the girls in the organisation of the food into sandwiches etc. By 4.00.pm this had been completed and Margaret decorated the cottage with lilac and tulips she had brought and Beech leaves. Only the ham and sausage had not been prepared.

Guests at the Party. The Marquess of Bath, Marchioness of Bath and two children, Mr Fry, Mrs Speed, Alfie Collins and wife, Mr and Mrs Opemshaw, Tony Setting, Mr and Mrs. Ryder, Mr and Mrs Glover, Two reps from Bristol College of Technology, two reps from Liverpool University. Mr and Mrs. Bolwell, arrived in the afternoon but left early.

All seemed to be very impressed with the cottage and party. Malcolm made up some punch with Elderberry Wine, Gin, Scrumpy, Orange and Lemon squash. A highly potent but much enjoyed.

The Marquis and family seemed to enjoy themselves and left complete with some tadpoles from Charterhouse pool for the aquarium at Warminster.

The party broke up at midnight when most people drifted home or to bed.