

MENDIP CAVING GROUP NEWSLETTER No.108 SEPTEMBER, 1974

AGENDA

COMMITTEE:

SECRETARY Pete Mathews: 155 Radcliffe Way, Northolt, Middx. Phone: 01. 841 8769

TREASURER Ron Saunders: Rylstone, 21 Rushmoor Avenue, Hazlemere, Bucks. Phone: Penn 3487

MEET SECRETARY & RESCUE WARDEN Bill Jones: 91 St. Saviours Road, Croydon, Surrey. Phone: 01 689 1529

COTTAGE WARDEN Wayne Hiscox: 47, Lansbury Drive, Hayes, Middx. (can be contacted at work between 8.30am-5.00pm Phone: 01 573 3888 Ext 677)

TACKLEMASTER John Miriam: 25a Cole Park Road, Twickenham, Middx. Phone: 01. 892 3171

RECORDER Greg Smith: 131, Hagden Lane, Watford, Herts, Phone: Watford 29606

EDITOR Bryen Terry: 54, Brunswick Crescent, New Southgate, London N.11 1EB.

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WEEKLY CLUB MEETINGS: are held at the "Royal Oak" New Road, Brentford, Middx (behind Brentford Football Club Ground) every Thursday night until closing time.

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COTTAGE Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Somerset.

ACCOMMODATION For over 30 people - all essential services. Guests charged at 20p per night (or 20p day fee) Guest party bookings through the cottage warden

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Newsletter No.108 is now with you after being a month overdue. This was partly because I have been on holiday but mainly because of a lack of articles. There seems very little news to report, not only on Mendip but from the rest of the country. Everything seems very quiet as the lack of cavers seen during the bank holiday will testify.

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EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GROUP

An extraordinary meeting of the group will be held at the Royal Oak, New Road, Brentford on Thursday evening September 26th at 9.00 p/c.

AGENDA

- 1) Outline of proposed scheme for the construction of a new cottage, presented to the South-East Council in application for grant aid.
- 2) Proposal - this meeting to endorse the above project and support the plans drawn up for grant application.

No other business will be discussed.

CLUB NEWS

Birks Fell Cave was visited in July as an official club meet but as two articles have already been written on this very sporting cave, I have decided not to waste paper repeating their content. However several other items arising from this weekend are worth note. Most important is the fact that the water rises rapidly in the cave shortly after rain and could make the trip quite hazardous in unsettled weather.

For those festering about in this area it is worthwhile to note that a very interesting walk may be had heading south-west over the fell to Birks Tarn. Here several species of unusual birds were seen including Dunlin. This vantage point also affords a view of the summits of the Three Peaks of Yorkshire.

The weary wanderer can take refreshment at the Buck Inn at Buckden, where they sell a very interesting beer (?) called Old Péculiar. This has to be tasted to be believed and its effect on the unwary imbibor can be quite devastating. All in all an area well worth visiting.

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IT CAN AND DOES HAPPEN

Arthur Spain - Bill Jones
Peter Spain - Roger Saunders

As with all philosophies, the one about "There's always a first time for everything" sprang to mind in the depths of OFD 14 last Saturday (17th Aug).

About two months ago, a scheme was hatched over a few pints at the Queen Vic, to attempt the OFD round trip.

However, out of a possible seven, only four eventually arrived at Penwyllt carrying vague apologies for the absence of the others. After some difficulty Bill managed to persuade the S.W.C.C. to accept him as a leader, even though the official letter to this effect had not arrived. Out of the four of us, Bill had been through the top entrance and out through I, Roger in at I and out through Cwm Dwr and myself on a trip into I in the dim and distant past.

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IT CAN AND DOES HAPPEN - Cont/....

In the heat of the summers day, we trudged, cursing and sweating, up to the top entrance. We entered the cave gratefully and almost without accustoming our eyes to the darkness we pressed on. Well, as with this cave, unless one is intimate with the system, it doesn't take long to have doubts as to the correct way on. It doesn't help by looking for worn routes as legions of other cavers have made the same mistakes. Our first hesitation came in the region of Chasm Passage, where we hunted for the fixed rope into Areté Chamber. We had to backtrack several times finally finding the correct way was the one we originally intended to take. Eventually we entered Salubrious Passage and in passing Bill pointed out the very fine formations of the "Trident" and the "Judge".

Further on after some indecision concerning the way on at the Crossroads we found our way above the Maypole Inlet Rift and descended into it. Thence onto the Connection with the main stream-way, not without a certain amount of relief, as we had taken quite a while to find our way down to Maypole. After looking at the survey I'm not surprised, - its pretty complex.

Well, on down the main-stream to the Great Oxbow where we by-passed to sumps to re-enter the stream passage. This passage as many will know, is littered with potholes large and small, so one has to tread warily. Inevitably one or other of us sank without trace but re-emerged spluttering merrily.

Arriving at the Confluence, thinking that the stream and the noise of the water would never end, we had a council of war and decided to attempt to exit via Cwm Dwr.

It is surprising how easily one forgets a cave system. Both Pete and I thought we knew Cwm Dwr. An hour and a half was wasted trying to find the way beyond the "Smithy" and the "Big Shacks" further along without success. The correct way on always seemed to illude us. I think that by this time we were all getting rather tired and fatigue can do queer things to ones judgement. Anyhow as time was rapidly pressing on-our E.T.A. was 8.00pm and Bills waterproof grandfather clock said 7.00pm. A rapid withdrawal to the Confluence was undertaken, with the object in mind of tracing the route through to I.

Down Piccadilly, follow the dry passages to eventually come to the morale-boosting rope up Divers Pitch, follow the smooth well-worn passages and emerge like a cork from the letter box. Here however the route was not clear. By this time two of our lights were dimming, though we had spare carbides. But trying to locate wear-marks with a dim light and a tired mind is not easy. We rummaged around coming across encouraging signs, eventually gaining what we later found to be Starlight Chamber.

At this point it was becoming apparent that we were very hazy about the way on. Although both bill and I at different times partly descended the chamber it was without much enthusiasm. As we were very unsure as to whether we were on the right track and by this time not only were lights fading, but so was the time factor. We were already one hour overdue.

Another council of war resulted in returning to the letter-Box, where it was decided reluctantly to await a foraging party. We settled down to hopefully wait, and I must confess it to be a distastful business having to rely on others. But say what you will about the S.W.C.C., their rescue organisation is really on the ball.

By 10.15 we heard a distant whistle blast and cursing the fact that none of us had a whistle we all shouted in unison. However the blasts got fainter so it was suggested that although

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IT CAN AND DOES HAPPEN -Cont/..

the sound appeared to come from I it may have come from Cwm Dwr. So shifting sprightly back to C.D. making myself heard occasionally, I located two blokes who had descended that way.

They recommended back-tracking through I as another party was coming that way. Back at the letter-box we were all united, proving that it took roughly the same time for both parties to reach us. Well, the thanks over, we started the remainder of the journey. Surprise, surprise, we went back along the same route trodden earlier and apart from the final portion after the chamber through the boulder choke, we would probably have located the Stream.

After an uneventful slog through I and out into the warm, sweet-smelling air at the entrance. At the farm a welcome cup of tea was thrust into our hands and thence back to Penwylt in style - by lorries and range-rover. After muttering heartfelt thanks and apologies all round, including the four policemen waiting, we did a rapid change into dry clothing and felt human once more. With grub inside us and promises of pints all round at the Ancient Briton next day, we retired gracefully.

Our trip lasted twelve hours and taught us a few things, mainly how important it is not to underestimate the E.T.A. to carry a whistle and spare lights and plenty of food. Although we had some food more would have been welcome.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to say a big "Thank You" to the S.W.C.C for coming so promptly to our aid. I just hope that we, the M.C.G would do the same in similar circumstances. The cash we as individuals gave to the Rescue Fund is only a small gesture when one considers the time and personal effort that goes into a rescue, large or small.

It is a comforting thought to know if you get into trouble help is on the way pretty quickly.

Arthur Spain.

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ADVANCED CAVE RESCUE COURSE

Following the basic cave rescue course run in May, a five-day course on the more advanced techniques of cave rescue will be run at the National Scout Caving Centre, Whernside Manor, Dent, Yorkshire, from September 22nd - 27th

The course, organised in conjunction with the British Association of Caving Instructors, will cost 19.50.

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WOULD ANYONE WHO HASN'T PAID THEIR SUBS PLEASE DO SO

Joke: Chemistry Teacher to eight year old pupil "How do you make a Hormone"?

Eight year old child "Don't pay her".

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MENDIP NEWS

Blackmoor: An exploratory excavation has been started in the south bank of the valley, very close to the limestone/shale boundary. The site is marked by a subsidence of the bank which occurred at the time of the 1968 flood. The first object of the dig is to find out if the subsidence was caused by a simple slump of the bank, or by an underlying swallet. Most of the material removed consisted of mining tip. Below this was a thin layer of clay resting on limestone. Clearing of the bedrock has revealed a clay filled crack, wide on the valley side. A little more work will be required to ascertain if there is an old blocked swallet or not.

RADIO FOUR: It has been rumoured that Brian Prewer has radio located the head of Cowsh Aven Inlets somewhere behind the barn on Manor Farm.

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The Three Peaks of Yorkshire.

Visitors to the West Riding of Yorkshire, touring around Clapham or Ingletton will be sure to have noticed several high moorland masses dominating the surrounding countryside. To the visitors who know the area it is classic country, providing severe tests for walkers, climbers and potholers on, around and under the high moorland. The area is known by its three major heights, enclosing an area of some 80 square miles. The heights are known as Whernside, Ingleborough and Penyghent, all approaching 2500ft. O.D. and encompass a wide variety of scenery much sought after by tourists and active ramblers, climbers and cavers. Each peak is a fine walk in its own right providing much variation of terrain and far-reaching views. It is an even greater challenge to link the three heights together in a single, one-day pedestrian circuit.

It is a rugged test of stamina, endurance and ability over 25 miles of mountains and moorlands, with 5000ft of ascent, and descent. This is "The Three Peaks Walk".

Several M.C.G club members, on extended visits to the area on the pretext of caving, have attempted and completed the Three Peaks Walk. Not to be outdone Brian Terry and myself, being in Yorkshire on the pretext of caving decided to attempt the walk.

Our starting point was Horton-in-Ribblesdale and we decided that we would follow the route recommended by Wainwright in his 'Walks in Limestone Country'. As we drove towards Horton in the wind and lashing rain we both regretted our slight over indulgence in the pub the previous evening. We had waited eagerly each day to dawn fine and clear, but as mid-week approached and the weather declined still further, we decided that, next day, we would attempt the walk whatever the weather or our condition.

On reaching Horton, the rain increased its intensity of pouring and Penyghent was miserably out of sight in cloud which was down to valley level. We signed in at the Penyghent Cafe, a safety precaution in event of accident, then proceeded to don boots, waterproofs and all the accoutrements of a day's walking on the fells.

We set off through the village towards Brackenbottom in a

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The Three Peaks of Yorkshire - Cont/.

heavy, saturating, drizzle. The back alongside the road was cascading down in a torrent of peat-stained water, informing us of the soddened moorland peat on the higher levels. We plodded steadily up the lane, through the farm at Brackenbottom, through the lower intakes and eventually onto rougher moorland almost immediately below the scar of Penyghent. An adjustment of pace to ascend the steep outcrops of shale and limestone and we were then approaching a grassy downland-type summit of the first peak.

After touching the O.S. Column as a recognition of achieving the summit we clambered over the drystone wall to start on the long walk to Whernside. As we descended Penyghent on a water logged peat track we moved out of the cloud that had been shrouding the fell.

Having been warned, by Wainwright and club members of the problems of a deep, saturated sphagnum bog called Black Tub Moss, we opted for an alternative route past Hunt Pot and the Shooting Box at the top of Horton Scar lane. We paused briefly for a cup of hot coffee and a check on the route and then proceeded over wet, undulating moorland following a line of white stakes, provided as a guide over private land.

I was the first to flounder in a knee deep, bright green pool of sphagnum and shipped a bootful of cold, peaty water for my carelessness. We then picked our way carefully around many such pools and wet flushes over very rough terrain until we eventually gained the old packhorse road, now a green track which coincides with the Pennine Way. We followed this track walking past Jackdaw Hole, until we left it by a track on the left that leads through good limestone pasture walking to Birkwith Cave and Farm, skirting round the farm we crossed the farm road and proceeded, by typical dales cattle pasture, farm tracks and a part of the Ingleton-Hawes road, to Ribbleshead. We approached the massive bulk of Whernside, the lower, flanks just visible under the capping of cloud, with the Ribbleshead viaduct in front of us.

We stopped for a hasty lunch at the junction of the roads, and then set off beneath the viaduct for Whernside summit. This we felt was to be the most tedious of ascents, Whernside being the highest of the three, but the most boring of all, as the ascent is the longest and dreariest over tiresome wet peat and rushes. As we plodded up through grazing cattle on rough pasture, the cloud descended to envelope us in a damp, squelching world of gurgling drainage and a "why the hell am I here?" philosophising for both of us.

The final very steep scree slope was scrambled up and a grassy summit was reached along a gently ascending ridge. After touching the O.S. column we retraced our steps along the ridge and continued to descend along a well defined peat track. The cloud began to drift slowly away, gradually revealing a breathtaking panorama of the dales and the vast bulk of Ingleborough towering above Chapel-le-Dale. The descent off Whernside was then clearly visible and we climbed down steep fell sides, then through sheep occupied fields to Bruntscar Farm.

As we were congratulating ourselves on a good climb of Whernside we decided that we would reward ourselves thus far with a pint at the Hill Inn, to be passed en route. With this in mind we applied ourselves to a section of roadwalking towards Chapel-le-Dale and the Hill Inn.

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The Three Peaks of Yorkshire

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A sudden thought occurred to me, I hadn't brought any money and on questioning Bryan neither had he. As we passed outside the inn we consoled ourselves with the fact that they weren't yet open and, anyway, we hadn't time to wait. A final look at the map before venturing to the summit of Ingleborough, the 3rd and final peak, suggested that 15 miles were behind us and that we had 10 still to go.

a steady walk through limestone outcropped pastures, on a natural terrace above the valley, brought us to the steep ascent of Ingleborough's East Ridge. We made the climb in silence, except for heavy breathing and the occasional vehement exclamation of how we felt. As we paused, often, mist began to roll in at the head of the valley, slowly obliterating the limestone scars below us and eventually, everything around us, except the steep scree slope on which we stood.

The East ridge path was eventually reached, and we followed this round the 2000ft contour, and then laboured heavily up the final shale outcrops onto the summit plateau.

A swift cup of hot coffee revived flagging spirits, but the density of the mist did nothing to aid our descent. We had to resort to compass bearing to find the correct route towards Simon Fell. Bearings taken we "leapfrogged" to find the route down and off of Ingleborough.

The track rapidly disappeared into a morass of peat hags but the descent had taken us out of the cloud and we could discern our objective, a shooting box, far ahead in the fading daylight.

The path gradually improved until, by the shooting box it turned onto firm limestone turf and the walking became delightfully brisk and easy past Nick and Sulber Pots onto the geological fault of Sulber Nick.

The path was now fairly direct over true limestone terrain and our pace increased as the route brought us closer to the final route finding down to Horton, through private farmlands.

A final heave over the last hillock from the farm and the glistening rooftops of Horton became visible in the gathering dusk. This was the most delightful sight and I think that we both almost floated across the railway and through Horton to the cafe to sign off.

As we signed off the form we noticed that about a dozen people had started the walk after us, but all had 'phoned in to say they were abandoning the walk due to bad conditions.

We felt particularly elated at our achievement and thoroughly enjoyed our 1st pint after 11½ hours of walking over The Three Peaks.

S. Conquest.

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Changes of Address: John Miriam, 25a Cole Park Road,
Twickenham, Middx

Pat & June Walsh

58 Munster Road,
Teddington,
Middx.
Phone No. 01. 977 8414

Mike Chambers 15 Aspley Road,
Wandsworth,
London S.W.18.

BAR POT - GAPING GHYLL 24th August.

Pete Lingwood Helen Saunders
Steve Conquest Jackie Gregory
Phil Ingold Fred Burton.

After a good evening drinking at the Wellsprings, we arose the next morning for a trip into Bar Pot. Anyway, after a good breakfast and a look in "Cave and Crag" in Settle, we parked in Ingleborough and hiked towards G G. Note this expedition now had Fred carrying a monstrous rucksack and not his usual Aquaequipment bag.

We arrived at G G about midday, payed our fare out (now £1.00) and after a quick change, walked over to Bar Pot. Our descent of the 45ft pitch was made without incident, apart from a very squeaky pulley. As we neared the top of the 110ft pitch we could hear another party descending. It turned out they were from the Craven Club.

After some time, Steve descended the pitch, but half-way down he had to wait while Pete untangled a knot in the life-line (Steve was not amused) but it made a good excuse for a rest. Jackie was tied on ready to descend as she reached the ledge, she decided it was rather a long way down and was duly escorted out by two more Craven members. The rest then descended without incident apart from Fred who appeared to be hanging upside-down as he left the ledge where he was resting 30ft down. At the bottom we consumed a few mouldy Mars Bars and some Kendal Mint Cake.

The passages leading to the Main Chamber were rather well scalloped and half-filled with glacial mud. On arriving at the Main Chamber we were pleasantly surprised to find only two people waiting to go up in the chair. We then wandered round and met a group of elderly photographers who had just come down for the ride, one of whom was very keen to see a little more of the cave. We took him down East passage to Mud Hole. This passage contained some quite impressive formations.

On our return to the Main Chamber we realised our mistake in not going up in the chair earlier. There were now 22 people in front of us and we had a wait of over 2 hrs. Fred went up all the way with his eyes closed - he's afraid of heights, but you'd never guess it.

Once on the surface we made a hasty retreat to the beer tent and after changing we came out to find Don and Greg trying to persuade each other to go caving. Needless to say they didn't go caving.

We spent the evening eating chinese food in Clitheroe and drinking at the Wellsprings.

Helen Saunders.

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FORTHCOMING LECTURE

W. Poucher the famous mountainer, writer and photographer will be giving one of his rare illustrated talks to the Reading Mountaineering Club on Wednesday, 6th November, 1974. The lecture will begin at 8.00 pm at the Berkshire College of Education, Woodley Lane, Woodley, Berkshire.

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WHITE SCAR CAVES

Some months ago apparently, one of the digs in this area made a connection with the show cave at its furthest reaches. Possible connections have always been on the cards and several rumours have circulated on previous occasions. This was a definite breakthrough which was just as definitely blocked up again by person or persons unknown. Perhaps a vested interest was at stake.

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NEW TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

Malcolm Cotter Ashford 52643

Richard Norris Waltham Cross 97-37534

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More Jokes

Some parents show a distinct lack of foresight where their offspring are concerned. People like Mr & Mrs Tools who christened their daughter Jenny.

How can you spot a Blind Man in a nudist colony? -
it isn't hard.
