



Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

MENDIP CAVING GROUP NEWSLETTER

No: 118

JANUARY 1977

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WEEKLY CLUB MEETINGS: are held at the 'Six Bells' Brentford High St.
every Thursday night until closing.

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

ACCOMMODATION: for over 30 people - all essential services.
Guest party bookings through the cottage
warden.

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A couple of feet of low passage soon gave way to a long stretch of typical narrow meandering passage requiring sideways progress. After ten minutes or so the M.C.G. seven caught up with Jim Eyre and Co. Jim (it is rumoured) knows the Easgill System like the back of his hand and so confident in the knowledge that the trip would be faultless to a Tee, we sat back to admire the chrinoids (this being the only activity our cramped position allowed), whilst those ahead rigged the sixty foot pitch.

After fifteen minutes and much shouting we were told that the ladder was rigged and that the "old man" was going down. The story gets a bit hazy here because some say it took him twenty minutes and others say thirty to get down. At this juncture four of the M.C.G. seven beat a strategic retreat to County Pot arguing that "they'd be open" before they had even negotiated this first pitch.

Such unassailable logic did not impress the remaining three who staunchly followed Jim and Co. at what had now become a respectable pace.

The sixty was as wet as you could wish and the ensuing passages complex, but easy going. It would be very easy to get lost in Top Sinks, but Jim came into his own here and even if we did pass familiar points more than once it was done with such flair that he was forgiven.

We progressed at speed, a high level and at low level until someone shouted "Limmerick Junction". Obviously someone in the party knew where we were. More familiar junctions were passed and then a familiar face! - that of Gordon Batty with his overheated band of men. We exchanged advice, insulted them, laughed at them and then proceeded on to Easter Grotto for a short burst of "awe and wonderment".

At Stop Pot we lost yet another M.C.G. member who opted to exit via County Pot with another party. We pushed on through the Minarets and then down into the Main Drain for some fun. Easy walking with high spirits soon brought us to the collapse beneath Fall Pot and clambering up through the boulders brought us out into Fall Pot itself.

We could not remember just how long the ladder now in front of us really was, but we seemed to agree at around the 130 - 150 ft. mark. Jim went up first on the double line. Two of the party then insisted on leaving by Lancaster Hole and so they left for that entrance which was as yet uncladdered.

On the big pitch the climb was beautifully free, but the immensity of the chamber seemed to play havoc with ones sense of balance and the spinning of the ladder caused nauseous sensations until the eyes could be firmly focussed on the distant wall. A good pull soon had the remainder of the party to the top. Due to an uncooperative spike of rock, deladdering proved tedious and required mildly acrobatic manoeuvres.

The short narrow passages and awkward climbs of Cow Pot proved interesting and at least one of our northern friends found the inclined tube leading to the entrance pitch something to be remembered. A straightforward sixty foot ladder climb took us to the surface after about five hours underground. The trip was complete after a ladder had been lowered down Lancaster Hole and the two remaining members retrieved.

P.S. Has anyone seen Gordon Batty since?

M.C.G. personnel involved were:- Don Vosper, Bill Jones, Mike Lovell, Jane Kirby, Roger Wallington, Greg Smith and John Miriam.

Caving Supplies,
19, London Road,
Buxton,
Derbyshire.

8/10/76

Dear Steve,

Many thanks for M.C.G. Newsletter No: 117 and your letter.

Thanks for the advert and correction.

I am pushed for time, but there is a glaring built-in death factor in your prusiking system. It is things like this that stop me writing anything myself.

If you use a clog Expedition Ascender on your chest you would notice that the rope pulls the ascender away from your chest leaving the safety catch pointing at you. The catch is then easily tripped without even touching it with your hands. The rope may then jump out.

A recent expedition to ? came back a few weeks ago and showed me. A chap was nearly killed finding out because if you lose the chest prusiker you could then easily fall out of the foot loop.

Your system is very common, and, in my mind, ideal, except that the Expedition Ascender on the chest is lethal.

There is a device called a Petzl Croll on the market which is also known as an abdominal jammer. The mounting holes are directly above the teeth of the cam, so the non-trippable safety catch is pointing away from you and the rope is tight against the chest putting you in a better position. You don't have to use Krabs as the diagram would suggest, and Speleo-handles are the Petzl version of the clog Expedition Ascender, but have a safer safety-catch.

You must print something to the above effect in the next edition.

Also, please, in the next edition point out that we have a new SHOP not just mail order facilities.

Cheers,

Phil

P.S. Comment on the above if you wish.

Editors Note:

Many thanks for the letter, no comments to make. The points are perfectly clear. Diagrams of the Petzl Speleo-handle & Croll appear on a separate page.

POIGNEE PETZL GACHETTE ACIER

La nouvelle gâchette acier à picots inclinés évite glissements ou coincements. Elle s'utilise avec le "CROLL" (bloqueur ventral).

The new steel spring-catch with slanted wedges prevents jamming or slipping. It is used with the "CROLL" (abdominal clamp).



CROLL

Bloqueur ventral positionné à plat sur le baudrier, permet la remontée sur corde lisse. La nouvelle gâchette acier à picots inclinés évite glissements ou coincements. Il s'utilise avec la poignée spéciale spéléo.

Climbing with a smooth line is made possible by the cross-beit's flat-positioned abdominal jammer. The new steel spring-catch with slanted wedges prevents jamming or slipping. It is used with the special speleo handle.

NEW MEMBERS

- Prospective - Paul Hamilton, 20 Gartmoor Gdns. London, SW19.
(during term time)
or
36, Moss Road, Winnall, Winchester, Hants, SO23 8PG.
- Probationary - Jonathan Roberts, 17, Kent Ave. West Ealing, W.13.
- Full - Fred Burton, 4, Sycamore Grove, Kingsbury, London.

Four recent prospective members have recently joined Westminster S.G. !

COTTAGE BUILDING

Quarterway Stage

Most builders reckon to have a house about a quarter finished by the oversite concrete stage. Well, we've reached that point, so if you haven't done much so far, get off your backside and help out with the remaining three-quarters.

Holidays 1977

It is not expecting too much to ask every member to reserve some holiday for working on the cottage. Many people did this for 1976 and it was found that the most satisfactory achievements were made over long - weekends rather than a week's stay.

All members are expected to put in some effort.

Ed's Note - - - - See later article on Cottage Building Finance.

John Miriam, Greg Smith, Don Vosper and myself beat a hasty retreat to Mendip on the Monday after Christmas, still suffering the effects of too much Christmas dinner and too many mince pies.

That night at the Hunters we discussed which cave we would like to do a trip down, and decided on Thrupe Lane Swallet, since none of us had been down there before.

Our trip, however, was postponed for two days. On Tuesday morning when we awoke (quite late) there was a two inch layer of snow over the ground, so we took advantage of the cloudless sky and fresh snow and walked into Cheddar and back. On Wednesday when we awoke (not quite as late) it was so cold that all of the water pipes had frozen. Luckily for us Arthur Cox and Bernard Reeves arrived with a blow lamp and thawed us out!

At last on Thursday, there was no excuse, we woke up early and had another look at the Survey (which looked fairly complicated) and set off to Thrupe Lane.

Thrupe Lane Swallet

The entrance is a short excavated tunnel on the side of a cliff face which leads to the first 30 foot pitch. Once down the pitch we found that we were in a very Cherty limestone rift passage which we had to trutch down, tearing holes in our clothing as we went. The passage then enlarged, much to our relief, and we went underneath the passage we had just come down: to the top of Perseverance Pot.

Perserverance Pot is a 60 foot rift, similar to the entrance rift in St. Cuthberts. The way down is fairly constricted, and once down the way on is through Cowish Crawl, a short muddyish wallow which leads into a rift and, at last, water. We scrambled around trying to follow the water down, and in doing so nearly traversed Avalanche Pot (65 ft) - we had lost our way!

We made our way back up through some boulders to enter Butts Chamber. Here we climbed up boulders and entered a small phreatic passage to the left, which connected us with Marble Chamber and more water. At the end of the chamber we scrambled down through boulders and found ourselves in a pleasant stream passage, which was carrying rather a lot of water. On we walked down to the stream passage, when suddenly it ended at the lip of Atlas Pot.

As we teetered on the brink, and got the ladder rigged and lifeline uncoiled, John braved the depths to a very watery ledge 25 foot down, where we managed to belay the ladder out of the full force of the water.

At the bottom of the pitch Greg and John followed the stream down a few climbs, but then the rift started to narrow and they noticed the sides were covered with mud, which inevitably led them to a frothy sump.

On the way out Don claims he heard some very unladylike language coming from the direction of Perserverance Pot - now I wonder who that could have been?

Friday saw the arrival of many more members for the New Years Eve celebrations. The back room of the Hunters was packed solid. There was music, singing and much beer drinking, and at the stroke of midnight those that were capable, and some of those that were not charged outside and sang Aulde Lang Syne in the middle of the crossroads.

Some of us had foolishly agreed with Dave Irwin to go with him down Brown's Folly Mines at Bathford (just east of Bath) on New Year Day. Feeling somewhat fragile (to say the least) Don Vosper, John Miriam, Greg Smith, Neil Brooker and myself managed to get to Paradise Lane, Bathford, to meet Dave at 11.30 a.m. At 12.15 when we had all convinced ourselves that lunch at a nice little pub on the way back would be just the thing we needed Dave arrived, and showed us the entrance and drew us up a small survey.

Brown's Folly Mine

The entrance to the mine is low and, in fact, was the only place that we needed to go on our hands and knees. We found ourselves in a vast complex of chambers, where we proceeded to get lost. Eventually we found a small slot by a breeze block wall, which we slid down. The way on was not obvious, but we went straight on past a number of danger signs, finally reaching the first main passage.

We turned right and went along under a roof supported by timbers. Then we turned left and went up some small man made steps and past some railings to reach 'Clapham Junction', where there was a complex of railway lines, where even the points still worked. We went left here and went through a small doorway into the 'Black Room' - a sank sombre place, which was littered with rotting timbers and appeared to be the largest chamber in the mine. The roof was entirely supported with timbers, and we were quite pleased to leave.

Back at Clapham Junction we turned right and gaily stomped along the passage, where we saw cave pearls in some of the calcite pools on the floor. We then saw two drinking troughs that had been used for watering the horses, and carried on missing the 'saw bench'. At the end of the passage we turned right into the 'Middle' main passage. We travelled along this passage for quite a long way and then turned left near to the end, our aim being to connect with the main front passage near to the second entrance. Along this passage, just off to the left, is one of the most important sights in the mine - the collapsed crane - which we managed to miss.

At the end of the connection passage we turned right, and past the 'Stables'. About 150 yards afterwards we turned left to follow a passage which we believed would take us out through the second entrance. Luckily it did!

Sunday saw several people cottage building, while Don Vosper (yes folks - again!), John and Judy MacMillan and myself went down Langwood for a short trip. First of all, it took us half an hour to get the lid off the entrance - it was frozen tight with water and mud - such determination to get into a cave has never been known before! As two of us had not worn wet suits, and it was very wet indeed, we didn't venture into the main stream passage.

It was all hands to cottage building on Monday. The main projects for the day were the digging of the second soak-away and drainage trenches. A start was made on the cess pit marathon. Yes -there's nine inches depth dug now - and only 12 foot 3 inches to go!

JANE KIRBY

DEARY DATES

The Club Annual General Meeting will be held on Mendip on 26th March 1977.

The Annual Dinner will be held on the same date at the Star Hotel, Wells.

MUSIC GO-ROUND

Club Ceilidh

Following the dazzling success of the Shepton Mallet C.C. our starry-eyed musicians are keen on putting on a ceilidh - type dance in the London area. It is hoped to make this a St. Valentine's 'Do' or thereabouts.

Help with P.A. systems would be most welcome, especially the loan of microphones.

Contact..... P. Mathews.

The Oldest Musical Instrument in the World

Listener's to Brian Rust's programme 'Mardigras' will know of his recent series dealing with rare and unusual instruments in folk music and jazz. One of his recordings was of the oldest known instrument: Stalactites in Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. The stalactites have been carefully ground so that they are in tune and fitted with electrically driven hammers played from a keyboard. An amplification system is also used. The piece played for the Recording was Boccherini's Minuet.

ANY OLD IRON?

Members who can put their hands on any valuable scrap materials, preferably not iron, but brass, lead etc. should contact Wayne Hiscox who can dispose of it for cash. The cash would then be donated to club funds.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

All 1977 subs were due on 1st January, 1977. Pay Don Vosper or direct to Ron Saunders (address at front).

Some members have not yet paid for 1976 membership. Would they please pay up, soon!

Members paying for 1977 should sign a deed of covenant form which allows the club to reclaim tax deducted. The individual is completely unaffected financially, but it allows the club to claim £2.50 for every £5 of subs collected.

A 50% increase in funds for the club!

Make sure you sign one.

MEET PROGRAMME 1977

FEBRUARY	26	Dale Head Pot.	Yorkshire.
MARCH	12	Dan-yr-Ogof.	Wales.
MARCH	26	A.G.M.	Mendip.
APRIL	9	Echo Pot.	Yorkshire.
APRIL	30	Sponsored Walk.	Mendip.
MAY	28)	County Clare.	Ireland.
JUNE	12)		
JUNE	18	Little Hull Pot.	Yorkshire.
JULY	16	Magnetometer Pot.	Yorkshire.
OCTOBER	1	Rumbling Hole.	Yorkshire.
OCTOBER	15	O.F.D.	Wales.
NOVEMBER	19	Rift Pot - Long Kin East Pot.	Yorkshire.
DECEMBER	17	Lost John's.	Yorkshire.

COTTAGE BUILDING FINANCE

As most readers will know by now, the Sports Council have kindly extended the period of grant aid until May 1977. This extension takes account of the delays experienced in obtaining a Building Permit. Members should not anticipate any further extension. In view of this every effort should be made by the Group to obtain all necessary materials by this date. There are, however, on or two small problems:-

1) Loans Scheme

The amount of outstanding loans stands at £357. It is essential that all loans that have not yet been paid in should be done so without delay.

It is possible that some members were on hard times when originally approached two years ago. If you are now affluent, you are probably unique, but might be persuaded to increase the size of your loan? It is fair to say that members who were affluent and who are now broke have still struggled to reach their promised loan.

2) Short Term Loans

Our target figure of £6,000 to complete the project, naturally takes account of a 50% grant. Thus, we only need to raise £3,000, or do we? The Sports Council retain 10% of the grant ie., £300 and additionally we must pay the final bill of, say, £400 before we claim the grant available of £200. In other words at the end of the project we must raise an additional £500 in order to complete the thing. This money would come back almost immediately, but we must still have it. Ron would be very pleased to hear from anyone prepared to lend an additional £50 or £100 for a period of about a month.

3. Overall Financial Position

At the start of the project we were £500 short of our target of £3,000. Although the sponsored walk went reasonably well we got nothing like the £1,000 estimated by Arthur Spain. In fact the money raised has barely covered the shortfall in loans. We are, therefore, still £500 short.

Bearing in mind the extra sum required for completion we need to raise almost exactly £1,000 between now and May. This is just about the sum required to finish the interior of the building. If we don't raise this money we will still have a new cottage, but it won't have showers, changing facilities, electricity etc.

Remember, it is your cottage: your money and effort are giving you superb value. Your money is effectively doubled by the grant and your efforts are giving you a headquarters which will have an insurance value of around £25,000. Not a bad return these days.

Editor's Note.....

A more detailed and up to date explanation of the cottage finances will be published shortly on Club Information No. 2.

MENDIP CAVING GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 26th MARCH 1977
ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1977/1978

The election of officers to serve on the committee for 1977/1978 will be held at the Annual General Meeting.

Nomination of candidates for election must be received by the Secretary by 5th March 1977.

All the existing posts will be vacated by the presently serving officers, but all are available for re-election, except W. Jones who wishes to resign.

The posts are as follows:-

- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Meet Secretary/Rescue Warden
- Cottage Warden
- Tacklemaster
- Recorder
- Editor

Please use the form at the bottom of the page to propose a nominee.

TEAR OFF

Nominee for Officer

Nominee..... For Post.....

Proposer..... Date.....

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR NOMINEE IS PREPARED TO STAND FOR ELECTION
