



Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

MENDIP CAVING GROUP .

NEWLETTER No.122

MARCH 1978

EDITORIAL Once again, there is precious little evidence of any real caving activity recorded by Group members in this newsletter. However, warmer weather will soon be upon us - and there is nothing better than a dose of summer to drive people into the cool of the caves, unless a pub is nearer! A limited number of meets are being planned, but the emphasis will be on cottage building for a few more months yet. It is hoped to complete all outside work (except finishing the septic tank) by early April. It would be particularly pleasing to see a few new faces amongst the usual weekend workforce.

Only one more issue and its AGM and Dinner time again! With any luck, full dormitory facilities will be available again, once the ceiling boards are transferred across to the new building. Book early though - there may be more members after beds than you thought possible! The AGM is always good for some lively discussion, and there's the Annual Dinner to fall apart at. And its Simon's birthday, just in case you think there's nothing special to celebrate.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THIS CRY FROM THE PIGGY BANK

It would be of assistance to the Hon. Treasurer if members who have entered into deeds of covenant would kindly send with their subscription the appropriate tax deduction certificate - R185 (A.P.) - properly completed.

The certificate can be obtained from your local Inspector of Taxes, or from either Don Vosper or Ron Saunders.

When you complete your annual tax return, you should enter in the "outgoings" space the gross amount payable under the deed of covenant. This amount, for those who have entered in one or two deeds to pay a total of £5 nett (i.e. the annual subscription) is £7.58 gross - tax deduction is £2.58.

STOP PRESS REAL CAVING NEWS

NEW DISCOVERIES IN BONE HOLE

Following Arthur Cox's and Bernard Reeves' inspiring exposé of Bone Hole and its place in Modern Astrology, Bill Jones and Greg Smith went down to see if the Bone Hole they knew was in any way related. During the visit they located a too-tight way into a decorated chamber below Skull Slope and an extension in boulders towards the east side of the choke below West Rift. The decorated chamber can only be entered by moving some elements of a boulder wall. No doubt more will be heard of these two new possibilities: any lead in this intriguing cave has got to be worth following.

CONGRATULATIONS to Peter and Wendy Spain on the birth of a daughter Elizabeth, weighing in at 8lb 6oz., on January 6th. No doubt a barrel will be forthcoming at the AGM weekend?

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

VELVET BOTTOM BAND Ceilidh (with YHA), March 11th. Few details seem certain: bar to be supplied (Fuller's) by the Cross Keys, caller is Hugh Rippon, time is 8-12 pm and entry is £1.00. Venue is the Isleworth Village Public Hall.

MCG AGM and DINNER Both events will be held on April 15th - the AGM at the Cottage, and Dinner at the Star Hotel in Wells. The menu is likely to include roast pork and the cost will be about £4.00 per head. A coach will again be provided. Battle will commence at 7.30 for 8.00 pm and tickets will be available from Pete Mathews.

JUMBLE SALE

What more appropriate date than April 1st! The event will take place at Bell Road Methodist Church Hall, Hounslow, 2.30 pm. Helpers will be needed at the Hall from 12.30 am onwards and some assistance with transporting jumble will also be required. And don't forget the jumble - we need as much as you can collect and more besides!

Please be sure to contact Arthur Spain, 57 Guildford Road, Broadbridge Heath, HORSHAM RH12 3JY (Tel: Horsham 64068), giving details of amount of jumble collected and help available.

CAVING MEETS

Yes indeed, John MacMillan is busy organising a few meets. Trips to St. Cuthberts and South Wales have been mooted, and a Yorkshire meet is being arranged. And keep your ears open for news of a visit to Czechoslovakia. All details will be in the next newsletter.

GENERAL INTEREST

March 11th 1978 BCRA Symposium - 'Cave Photography' - UMIST, Manchester.

March 11th 1978 William Pengelly Symposium - 'Deposits in Sea Caves' - Flett Lecture Theatre, Institute of Geological Sciences, Exhibition Road, South Kensington.

March 31st-April 2nd 1978 Peak District Mines Historical Society, weekend study course on Peak District mines. This event

is being organised in conjunction with the Losehill Hall Centre and will comprise lectures and field trips. Cost (full board) is £25.00. Further details from Pete Mathews.

April 20th, London Mountaineering Club is presenting a lecture - 'Caves and Caving' - at the Ski Club, Eaton Square (near Victoria Station) at 7.30 for 8.00 pm. The speaker is sure to be someone of distinction!

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held during the afternoon of Saturday, April 15th. Members wishing to have specific items placed on the agenda (excluding items for discussion under Any Other Business) should inform the Hon. Secretary Pete Mathews as soon as possible. Amendments to the Constitution and Rules and nominations for committee posts are required to be with the Hon. Secretary by March 25th, i.e. 21 days prior to the AGM.

The automatic retirement of all committee members at the AGM necessitates that nominations are received for the following posts:

Hon. Secretary	Hon. Cottage Warden
Hon. Treasurer	Hon. Editor
Hon. Meet Secretary	Hon. Recorder
Hon. Tacklemaster	

Before making a nomination on the form supplied, please make sure that the nominee is prepared to stand; a slight swaying may be ignored.

LAMB LEER ACCESS terms have now been agreed between the landowner and CSCC (Southern Council). Keys will be available to shareholder clubs of CSCC Ltd. Club shares cost £10 plus an annual subvention of £4. Owing to the Group's somewhat straightened financial circumstances, the committee has decided to postpone the acquisition of a key until the piggy bank wears a smile again.

OTTER HOLE. Casual visitors to the cave are warned that the cave is now gated. Keys are available from Hereford Caving Club. Because of the high risk of flooding in the entrance passages, it is planned to establish a food dump. Supplies will be sufficient to sustain eight cavers for a week. What are you thinking of doing for your next summer holiday?

A LINK-UP of two Welsh caves, Ogof Craig-y-Ffynnon and Ogof Agen Allwedd, is a major talking point in South Wales. Ian Penny is busy carrying out hydrological tests whilst Bill Gascoine is experimenting with smoke bombs. If the link-up is made, OFD's UK record of 42 kilometres will be broken and a new challenger will join the top-twelve longest

caves in the world. Like OFD, this would be a through-trip to remember.

BY ANY OTHER NAME. The National Caving Association is proposing a change of name to British Caving Federation. This dynamic move should go a long way to allay fears that the national organisation would not bring widespread benefits to caving. All over the country, caves will ring with the new clarion call - "Get Federated". Well, we think it was "federated"..... it certainly began with an "f".

THE PREDICTED RUSH for membership has started. A Mrs. Judith MacMillan is said to have become a probationary member on February 12th. Can we expect yet another blow to the 'Peep Holes in the Showers Partition' movement?

A BLOOMIN' MARVELLOUS Christmas at the Cottage was enjoyed by nine members and two offspring. Overwhelmed by a bloomin' great 15 lb turkey (it just fitted the oven), most of the time was spent cogitating. With a barrel on hand, nobody was sober enough to risk driving to the pub.

On Boxing Day, everyone set off to North Wales to stay with the Knights at Rhyd-Ddu. Bad days were spent walking - bloomin' snow. Good days were spent shopping - bloomin' sun. Most returned to Mendip for the New Year; no doubt to show off their bloomin' new boots.

PERSONAL INSURANCE. The CNCC (Northern Council) has negotiated a scheme to provide personal insurance cover for cavers. Annual premium is £4.50. The scheme requires a minimum of 2,500 subscribers and the main benefits are:

£5,000 payable on death or loss of limbs, etc.
£50 per week for 52 weeks payable for temporary disability.

Cavers interested in joining the scheme should contact Pete Mathews.

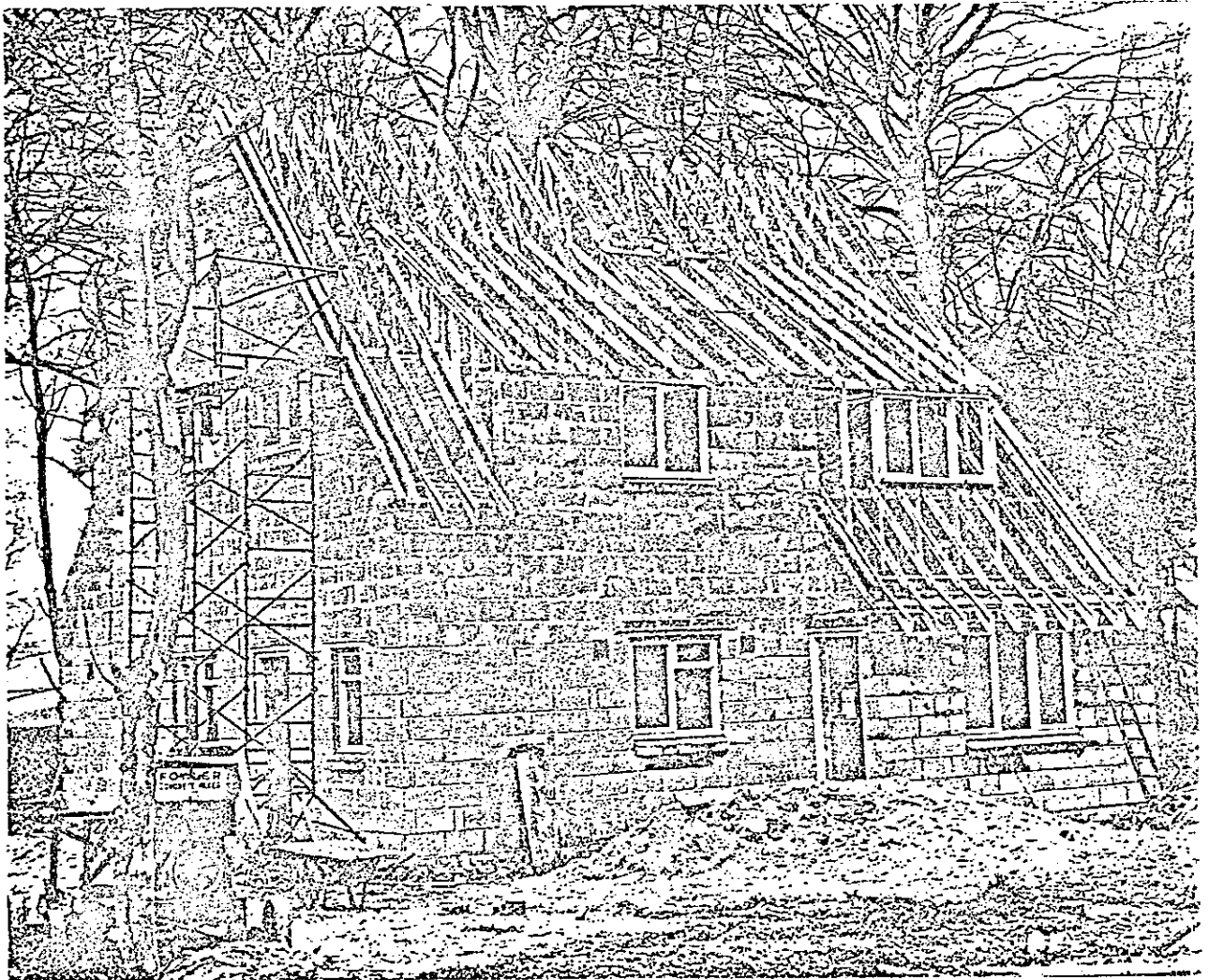
FREE ADVERTISEMENT coming up..... the Cerberus Spelaeological Society's publication "Fairy Cave Quarry - a study of the caves" is still available. Send £2.50 for each copy required to:

Graham Price, 31 Waterford Park, Radstock,
BATH.

SEEN THE NEW COTTAGE LATELY? There's no prize for a negative answer, but if you haven't, go and stand in the corner with an empty pint glass on your head. Seriously, your active interest is needed NOW if we are to finish the job this year. Don't just sit at home weekends, hoping that the rest of us will do your share. Come on down and let that nice, kind foreman Wayne Hiscox find you a lousy job up on the freezing roof!

The past two months seem to have been unusually cold: roofing experts have been close to suffering snow-blindness and frost-bite. But it's almost spring and the roof is nearly finished. Laying pantiles is a slow, tedious business. However, the roof is entirely felted and battened, with tiles covering about 50%. The accompanying photograph was taken last December and doesn't reflect the much-improved situation today - even the windows are glazed now. For the first time it is possible to find a cosy job indoors.

NEW COTTAGE BUILDING, DECEMBER 1977.
Photo by John Pudduck.



COTTAGE DESIGN As we get closer to the time when coathooks and a dartboard can be put up, so members may feel more able to comment on design aspects. The Building Sub-Committee is giving a great deal of thought to such matters as kitchen layout and bedroom arrangements (no, not that kind of arrangement!), and are doing a very good job. But no scheme is perfect, and all ideas and minor brainstorms would be welcome. However, give plenty of thought to your suggestion - Roger Wallington and Wayne Hiscox have already put in a lot of work, and will soon demolish your doodle on the back of an envelope!

Much of the AGM will be spent on this aspect of the cottage. Please don't waste everybody's time. Make sure of your facts or speak to Wayne beforehand: two-foot shelves look silly on either side of a four-foot passage. Let's have plenty of really good ideas at the AGM.

11A NORDRACH COTTAGES? well, maybe. During the next few months we need to advise the GPO of our new address. In other words, we have to decide what to call it. As a last resort, we could get away with something like 'Mendip Caving Group Field Centre, Nordrach-on-Mendip, etc.' Got any thoughts on the subject?

The AGM seems a good time to resolve the issue. If you do have any ideas on the matter, please submit them IN WRITING to the Hon. Secretary BEFORE EASTER. If the response is good, we might run a competition, so include your name too - there could be a prize.

COTTAGE FITTINGS We are getting around to a very expensive part of cottage building - fitting out. Naturally, we don't wish to pay out more than we need. If you have just what we need lying idle in your garage, or have trade contacts, let Wayne know. However, we don't want junk: the fittings must suit the design, not vice versa. See what you've got from the items listed below.

KITCHEN Calor gas rings, cooker, wall can-opener, pair of taps or mixer tap, drainer, laminate-faced board for all worktops, sealant, etc.

LIVING ROOM Flooring - wood block or sealed vinyl.

SHOWERS/CHANGING ROOM Ideas please ... pull switches, wall heater, toilet roll holder, cistern, coathooks, mirror.

TACKLEROOM Heavy duty bench top, vice.

EXTERIOR Light fittings, coal bunker, boot scraper.

EVERYWHERE Plaster, screws and nails, paint (sensible quantities of colours or any amount of white emulsion or gloss), timber, plumbing items, electrical wire (30 amp, in at least 20 ft lengths), flush wall switches (13 amp and in new condition), small bore copper pipe for gas supply (30-60 ft needed).

Be sure to tell Wayne what it is you have to offer. Storage space is at a premium and your kind donation may prove unsuitable. Six-inch lengths of Edwardian 2 amp flex, timber offcuts, odd taps and rusty nails are not required.

SMALL FORTUNES FOR THE WALKING Tony Knibbs and Arthur Spain

Short of robbing a bank, a small caving club contemplating a building project will sooner or later turn to fund-raising schemes to remain solvent. Appeals to members are very effective and produce instant results, but the search for a few thousand pounds quickly reaches beyond this possibility.

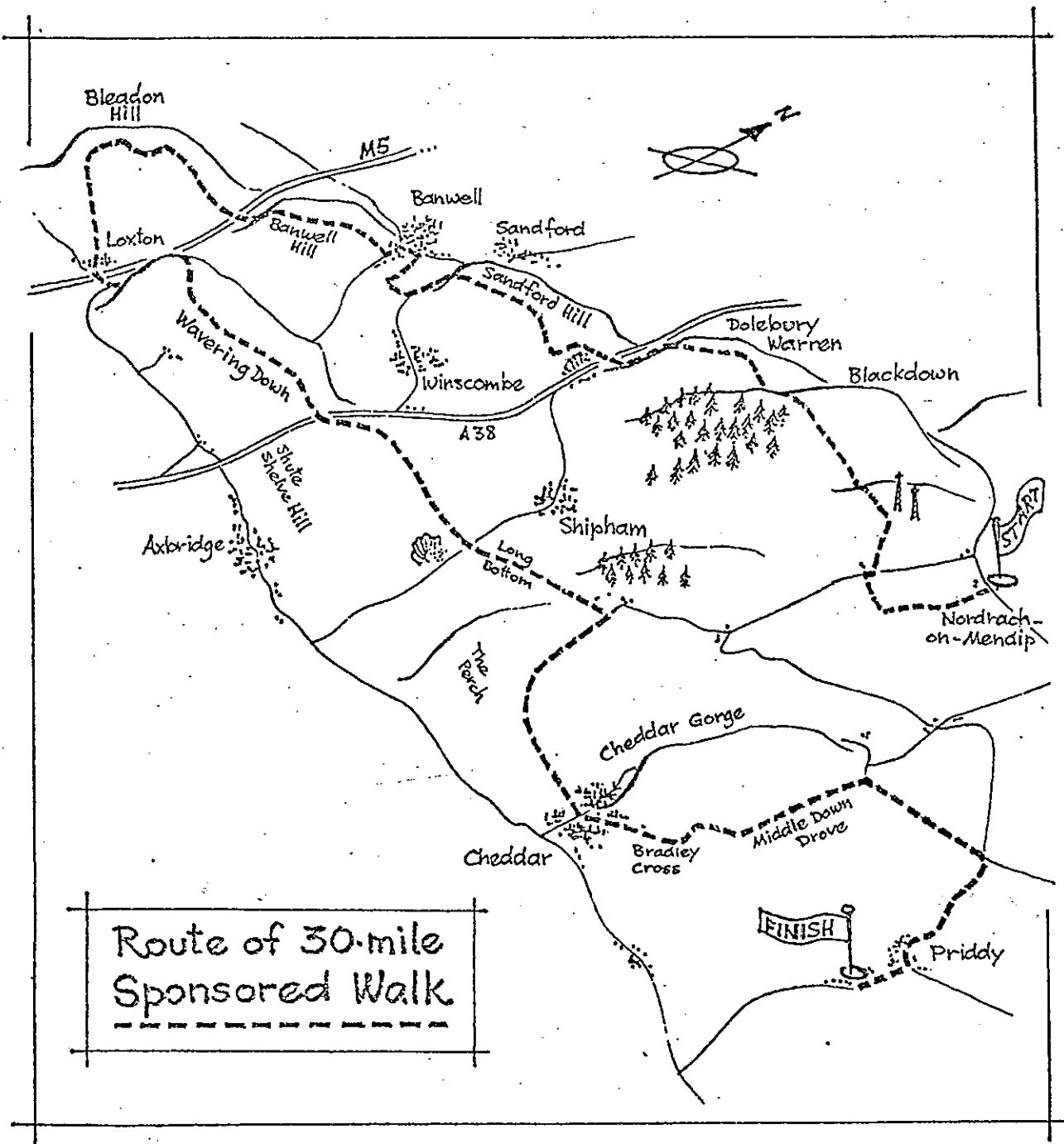
Of course, the real art of fund raising is to carry the appeal successfully to as many people as possible - ask any charity! Many sports and social clubs are also good at fund raising, frequently on a regular basis. Examples are numerous and varied, but few of them are practical with a small membership. Small-scale efforts usually bring small-scale returns, and a small club with a big cash deficit is unlikely to take on a high-risk venture. Raffles, a jumble sale and even a dance can easily be organised to show a good profit with minimum initial outlay. The Group organised such events and made profit, but it was a sponsored walk which really brought in the cash - almost £1,000.

Of all sponsored activities, a walk is the least original but the easiest to organise. Most cavers are good walkers and are usually well-equipped to do so. Cycling to Mendip was turned down because few members had bicycles, fewer still would have stayed the distance and organisation over 120 miles of road travel was seen to be potentially difficult. Although attractive by association, events in caves were rejected as being rather silly and probably difficult not to make a fiasco of.

An evening spent perusing OS sheet 182 (1:50000) confirmed that Mendip offered good walking prospects with a high ratio of footpath-to-road usage. Thirty miles seemed a good distance to aim for, with a fair amount of climbs and descents to make it more of a challenge: it was felt that prospective sponsors would expect cavers to attempt something more adventurous than ten miles around Hyde Park. This judgement proved correct, and the chosen mileage seemed right for sponsors to offer anything from one to ten pence per mile (sometimes more).

Inevitably, some paperwork was needed. The first item issued was a circular to members, outlining the shape and size of the event. This was followed very quickly by sponsor forms which gave a 60-word description of the objective of fund raising and the distance to be walked. The remainder of the form was divided into columns and horizontal line spaces in which names of sponsors and the cash amount per mile were entered. Care was taken to make this form appear attractive and 'official'.

Each participant on the walk was issued with written hints on what to take, emergency procedure and a description of the route. A xerox copy of the appropriate area of OS 182 was given to each walking group (safer than walking alone and



easier to monitor): each copy was marked in felt-tip pen to show the route and checkpoints. Both the written description and the map showed the distance and estimated time between checkpoints. Most groups also carried a copy of OS 182 or of the older one-inch series OS 165.

Footpaths and rights of way are prone to change, and map detail cannot show very recent changes. It was decided to walk the route before the event to make sure that paths still existed and that the route was sensible. Given a choice, walkers always take the easiest route if options exist - the route was finally chosen from this point of view. Points needing waymarking were recorded in a notebook together with enough brief details to form the written description referred to above.

A proforma was provided for each checkpoint, including start and finish. On these, the marshals entered names with times of arrival and departure. Marshals could man more than one checkpoint, always calling at the next point to confirm progress of walkers before leapfrogging on to the next. Enough transport was always available to collect those who dropped out en route, and first aid and a cold drink were always available at checkpoints.

In the event, few walkers dropped out and the walking was carried out with no mishaps. About half of the participants developed blisters (often discovered after the walk), few people had difficulty route finding and almost all finished the course - even a dog managed it!

The course of 30 miles involved ascents totalling over 3000 ft, starting from the Group's hut at Nordrach and finishing at the Queen Victoria in Priddy. Westwards, the route lay over Blackdown, Dolebury Warren, Sandford Hill, Banwell Hill and Bleadon Hill down to Loxton. The eastward section started up Compton Hill and Wavering Down, skirted Shute Shelve Hill to the road ascent up Long Bottom, then dropped south into Cheddar. A final climb up Mendip's southern slope led to the long stretch of road into Priddy.

After the walk, a slip of paper recording the distance covered and a marshal's signature was issued to each participant. Sponsors may reasonably expect some proof of accomplishments.

An unavoidable shortcoming of the route planning was the need to include stretches on roads. A lone walker or small group could afford to play the advantage and maybe do some field-hopping, but conspicuous groups are best kept to rights of way or regular footpaths. We could not devise such a long trek on Mendip, keeping to paths or common land, without including roadwork - about 5 miles in all. No doubt, a devious route could be worked out but would be riddled with short-cuts and would seem to cover little real distance.

A distance of 30 miles proved to be about right for most walkers. Few failed to finish, but few could have reasonably gone much further. We estimated a slow time to be 11½ hours for the route: some did it in about 9 hours, most took around 10 hours.

A total of 30 members took part on two separate dates. Over £900 was collected for the funds, the highest individual return was just over £100 from Jane Kirby! At an average earning of around £30 per walker, an event of this type can be an effective fund-raiser for negligible outlay.

VELVET BOTTOM BAND Socking it to them at Priddy Village Hall on February 11th, Don Vosper, Simon Knight, John Pudduck, John Miriam and Tricia Moore gave a splendid performance of country dance music. Pete Mathews showed considerable panache at the occasional chaotic scenes his calling was aimed to avoid: why are most dancers deaf? MCG not only provided the music, some of them were prominent by their dexterous footwork and general reeling about the dance floor. A day on the freezing roof of the new cottage building seemed to instil a certain enthusiasm for something more warming.

The function was organised by Priddy Youth Club as a fund-raising event. Hot food was supplied and Roger Dors made sure that there was no shortage of liquid refreshments. A useful profit for both the Youth Club and the band set the seal of success on a hilarious and enjoyable evening.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS Jane KIRBY,
 8 Worcester Terrace,
 Clifton,
 BRISTOL 8,
 Tel: Bristol (0272) 39682.

GROUP ORGANISATION

COMMITTEE

- Secretary - PETE MATHEWS, 31 Brewhouse, Hill,
Wheathampstead, Herts.
Tel. (home) Wheathampstead 2521
- Treasurer - RON SAUNDERS, Rylstone, 21 Rushmoor Avenue,
Hazlemere, Bucks.
Tel. (home) Penn 3487
- Meet Secretary - JOHN MacMILLAN, 11 Whitehouse Way,
Iver Heath, Bucks.
Tel. (home) Iver 652339
(work) Slough 33611
- Cottage Warden - WAYNE HISCOX, MCG Cottage, The Stirrup Cup,
Nordrach-on-Mendip, Blagdon,
Somerset.
- Tacklemaster - PHIL INGOLD, 31 Spring Lane,
Hemel Hempstead, Herts.
Tel. (home) Hemel Hempstead 2029
(work) Hemel Hempstead 42233 ext. 304
- Recorder - MALCOLM COTTER, 249 Feltham Hill Road,
Ashford, Middx.
Tel. (home) Ashford 52643
- Editor - TONY KNIBBS, 23 Winern Glebe,
Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7LT.
Tel. (home) Byfleet 43875
(work) Weybridge 45522 ext. 6125

WEEKLY MEETINGS of the Group are held every Thursday evening
at the BEEHIVE HOTEL, 227 High Street, Brentford,
Middx.

CAVING ACCOMMODATION is available at the Group's Mendip
headquarters cottage:
The Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip,
Blagdon, Somerset. (NGR ST55/5150.5605).

29 beds are available, together with cooking
facilities and other amenities including
caving library. Guest bookings must be made
to the Cottage Warden.