

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Circular to members. No. 2, 25th June 1964

Caving

Mendip

Apart from a small amount of digging in G.B. cave ladder dig, most of the recent work on Mendip this year has been concentrated on our dig at Manor Farm. Since last year, a large amount of spoil had fallen in, and when this was removed it left the dig in a very unstable condition. To alleviate this problem the small stream which flows into the dig was diverted down the valley and a substantial wooden framework was built inside the dig to support the roof and sides. It is now in a very promising condition and we invite members to come down during the Summer Vac. and work the dig. A group of four people would be sufficient.

Recently, at a local farmers invitation, members explored a cave near Butcombe. Although this cave has been known of locally for some time, nobody had ever been in it before, unless the farmers story about a local who fell down it when returning home across the fields after a party, is to be taken at face value. It consists of a near vertical drop of 70 feet followed by a rift about 300 feet long, sloping downwards.

Ireland

This year the Irish party will be staying over there from the 27th. June to the 29th. July. The main work to be done will consist of exploring and surveying Polcahircloggaun W-1 to its end, a further look at the Doolin system, Aran View passage in particular, and looking for an upper level continuation of the Coolah River cave which has been predicted. Also a large number of rainfall and CaCO_3 figures will be gathered.

Archaeology

Charterhouse

A trial square was opened up near Charterhouse and an amount of Roman pottery was found, including some Samian ware. Two ditches of differing date, crossing each other were also found. Another square, 200 feet away yielded what appears to be the side wall of a house. This was near to a site which was excavated by the Society several years ago.

Pickens Hole

The weather has prevented as much being done at this site as would have been liked so far this year. There will be a concentrated effort by several visiting archeologists for three weeks starting on August the first.

General

Extraordinary General Meeting

The alterations to the Constitution, to allow a joint secretary to be appointed, were proposed and carried unanimously.

New Premises

We have recently acquired another room in the University which will be used as a general archeological workroom for laying out specimens during cleaning, preserving, and cataloguing. It will also be used as a stack room for some of the lesser referred to books and journals in the library.

Troglydites

The librarian has asked if anyone has any copies of the Troglydites, the magazine which was published by the Society

in its early days, which they would be prepared to donate to the library, or lend so that it could be copied.

Members' Subscriptions

The new rates of annual subscription fixed at the Annual General Meeting in March 1964 have now been approved by Union Council and will come into force on March 15, 1965 for the Year 1965/66. Members will find enclosed with this circular a form of Bankers Order giving the new rate of subscription which applies to them. Those who already pay their subscription by Bankers Order and those who would like to do so are asked to fill in these forms, sign them over a 2d. stamp and send them to the Hon. Treasurer, Speleological Society, University of Bristol. Please do not send them direct to the Bank. The subscriptions were last raised in 1955 and it took six years before all the Bankers Orders were altered. It is gratifying to note how few members were lost in the process, but nevertheless the Hon. Treasurer hopes that it won't take quite so long this time.

O.C.L.

Easter Log 1964

Those who never seek adventures never get them, but this time we got one or two not of our seeking. The party staying in and around the Marton Arms, at Thornton-in Lonsdale, consisted of Oliver Lloyd, John Worley, Tim Hill, Patrick Thomas, Chris and Kath Ineson, Kit Eaton, Alan Sinclair, David Hobbs, David Savage, Deborah Simmons, Johnny and Rita Squire, Keith Hanna and Michael Statham. We were joined by Graham Stevens, Chairman of the Oxford University Cave Club. Bernard Chapman was unable to come but met us in Gloucester, where he gave us 140ft. of new ladder. Geoff Bond was taken poorly and had to cry off at the last minute.

Ten of us set off with nine packs of tackle to ladder Lost John's Cave on Good Friday. All went well until the advance party reached Battleaxe Pitch. We had got rather stretched out by then, the rearguard having a little trouble in the neighbourhood of Dome Pot Junction. The lower part of Battleaxe was very wet and, as there were only two volunteers to go down the Wet Pitch, they left the tackle there and came home. A 4½ hour trip, rather shorter than expected.

On Saturday fourteen of us returned to the cave. The laddering had been as described by me (Lloyd, 1956, Wessex C.C. Jour., Vol. 4, p 54), but Johnny didn't like climbing the tethers above the Cathedral Pitch and hung an extra ladder there. I still find climbing this crack excellent sport, but others do not agree. Johnny, Mike and Graham went down the Wet Pitch, but found the waterfall too heavy. So we got 6 to the bottom and two went through the deep pool to the lower end of the Master Cave.

A relief party of five entered 1½ hours later and helped out with the tackle, while of the first party who had come out of the cave earlier, three returned later still and helped get the tackle up the Cathedral Pitch.

That evening we had visits at the Marton Arms from Alan Clegg, Bob Leakey and members of the N.P.C., including Roy Wilkinson, who persuaded us to come down his new cave on Easter Sunday. This was Thackthwaite Beck Cave, discovered about 3 years ago. It is in Wensleydale just east of Askrigg, about 2000 ft. above O.D., in the Blue Scar Limestone (Nat. Grid Ref. SD. 985911).

Sunday was dull and wet, and we had sleet on the high moors of Widdale, as we went over to Wensleydale. The party consisting of Oliver, Patrick, David Hobbs, Chris and Kath, Rita and John Worley were joined by about six members of the N.P.C. We climbed three mountains to reach the cave: a fine sight, with a waterfall gushing out of a boulder pile at the foot of a cliff. Rumour had it that there was a second, easier entrance. Roy Wilkinson was cagey about this. He wanted to put us through the old entrance, which is a series of right-angle

squeezes, quite sporting even by Mendip standards. Three of us upheld the honour of Mendip by getting through, but the fourth got stuck, so he and the rest went round the easy way.

Thackthwaite Beck Cave is a resurgence cave with a horizontal stream passage going 16° W of N for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. It shows a lot of roof collapse, and its main difficulty is finding the way between muddy boulders or negotiating ducks in the streamway (at 6° C.). It has one beautifully decorated chamber (about 40 x 20 x 10 ft.) a quarter of the way in. It may, however, be classified as a collector's piece.

The rest of our party on Sunday did Birkwith Cave and the through trip of Calvas Hole to Brant's Gill.

On Sunday night we were calling on the Wessex at the Crown Horton-in-Ribblesdale. Before dinner, however, a disturbing rumour reached us that there had been an accident down Lancaster Hole. Such rumours have an ugly way of turning out to be true. So we went to the Crown after dinner taking our rumour with us. We found there only part of the Wessex party, the seven lions who had bottomed Pennyghent Pot the previous day and were now licking their wounds. Mike Thompson promptly went and phoned Bob Leakey to find out what had happened, so that no sooner had we got our three guitars in tune than he returned to say that the rumour was true. Alan Clegg had been drowned in a diving accident in the sump at the bottom of Lancaster Hole.

Clegg's name was one to conjure with. He was a stalwart caver, enthusiastic diver, treasurer of the C.R.O. and of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs. His wife will still be remembered by older members of the U.B.S.S. by her name, Dorothy. She was with him when the accident occurred. The other diver was Mike Boon. They were clearing up after the dive, when the tow line for the float got stuck. Clegg went to free it, got tangled up in it himself, lost his gag and drowned. Mike Boon fished him out right away, but in spite of adequate artificial respiration he never recovered.

The party at the Crown languished. The Wessex had their own troubles too. A party returned from Bar Pot having failed to find the connection with Disappointment Pot, while another of which had descended D.P. to make an exchange trip was overdue. We stayed to await the outcome, and some Kendal chaps showed us some good pictures. At a quarter before midnight Phil Davies was rung up by the Police to say that the C.R.O. had been called out in respect of the overdue Wessex Party. C.R.O. forces were overstrained by the Lancaster Hole incident and would we send a strong party to rendezvous at the New Inn, Clapham. So the Wessex sent one right away and we returned to the Marton Arms, gathered a party together, changed and went to the New Inn. Soon after getting there we heard that the D.P. party had come out via Bar Pot and we were stood down.

On Monday I spent a lot of time ascertaining the facts of the Clegg case and helping to clear up, while the rest of our party returned home. It was a different Leakey that called on me that evening. On Saturday he had been calling me "You ruddy intellectuals," but now his theme was "Why do people go caving?" It was a gloomy finish to a very promising cave trip.

Next year we hope to get permission to do the Lancaster Hole-Ease Gill systems. It has been suggested that we stay at the New Inn, Clapham, as the food is good and they like cavers. Their rates are of the order 25/- B.3. Camping facilities are available and next door is the Manchester University Students' Caving Hut, which I understand we have been invited to use.

Back on Mendip I found a pathetic little note in the Log book from Crickmay, "Nothing to do, so did nothing". He had had the place to himself.

Oliver C. Lloyd.

F.K. Hanna

I.J. Standing

Joint Hon. Sec.