



MENDIP CAVING GROUP

JOURNAL

No. 1.

JANUARY, 1959

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Honorary Editor:- D. HARLE,  
88 Cawdor Crescent,  
Boston Manor,  
Hanwell, W.7.



LOG OF EVENTS AT THE AUGUST MEET AT CHARTERHOUSE  
COTTAGE

Present:-

Tony Crawford	Robin Goddard (Visitor)
Malcolm Cotter	David Dilly (Visitor)
Bob Knott	Chris Reynolds (Visitor)
Pete Goddard	Paul Green

The above members and visitors were at Charterhouse for the week preceding August Bank Holiday and stayed there over the holiday bar a few members and two of the visitors. Paul Green and Robin Goddard left July 31st. Tony Crawford and David Dilly left on Sunday 3rd.

Anne Wollacott	Mike Butterfield (Visitor)
Richard Woollacott	Bob Johnson (Visitor)
Don Searle	Tony Knibbs
Rob Charnock	John Coles (Visitor)
John Green	Fred Lyons (Visitor)
Brian Cheyney	Jennifer

Anne and Richard arrived Friday night, Brian and his two friends were meant to arrive then as well, but were delayed 'en route'. Mike and Bob arrived Sat. morning and John and Jennifer in the afternoon. Don also arrived from camp on Saturday. I reached there late Saturday night. Tony and his friend came down for a visit on Sunday morning. Anne went back with Tony Crawford on Sunday and John and Jennifer went back Sunday Evening. Brian and Co. went back Monday and so did I.

The main purpose of this meet was to introduce the new members and the visitors to the art of caving and for the other members to work on the cottage.

The first part of this plan was quite successful, and although the second part was by no means a failure it could have achieved more. On Sunday two caving parties went out one led by Brian, Fred John C. and Chris as end man, took a trip down August, the other was led by Bob K. and he took Mike and Bob down Longwood. Both trips were successful.

Of the work on the cottage, it was felt by some that members who had been working there for the week should have a rest and allow others to do some work although this did not altogether meet with their approval.

The floorboards were laid in the kitchen by Malcolm and myself - mainly Malcolm. The dry stone wall in front of the cottage was built up where it had fallen down. The 'smallest-room-in-the-house' was completed save for the roof, and a gate post was cemented into the ground at the top of the 'drive'. A dry stone wall was then built which curved in a quarter-round to a tree.

On Sunday Richard excavated the drain and then later replaced it and the soakaway was dug out by various people and then filled in with rubble. The drain was first used on Monday. Don took up the paint brush and painted the windows inside and out - the frames that is. Bob K. at this point took it upon himself to sweep the kitchen floor with great gusto fortunately it was only the undercoat and not a high gloss finish. Pete found a cowl for the fire and this when fitted meant that most of the smoke went up the chimney and not into the room. It was, however, not firmly fixed and on Sunday it fell out of the fire place. Much of the rubble in front of the cottage was shifted but work was hampered by the bees who would come and investigate our work.



IN SWILDONS HOLE



ALSO IN SWILDONS



FITTING THE SHUTTERS



SITE FOR THE ELSAN

PHOTOGRAPHERS:  
R.L. WOOLLACOTT  
M.O. COTTER.



The weather was not ideal, it being cold, damp and cloudy. On Sunday evening it rained hard and this continued well into the night. Monday was a little brighter and there was some sun in the afternoon.

Some members stayed for a further week after the holiday

Pete Goddard	Richard Woollacott
Malcolm Cotter	Don Searle
Bob Knott	Brian Haywood

Chris, Mike and Bob left on Tuesday.

R. CHARNOCK.

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TACKLE HINT

A Whistle in one's pocket in a tight squeeze is often very uncomfortable and can hamper one considerably. My idea is that the whistle and lanyard be securely and safely attached to the helmet by means of two Terry Clips.

One turn around the base of the Terry Clips gives ample length of lanyard for the whistle to be placed in the mouth when required; the rest of the lanyard can be used as a chin strap for the helmet.

To avoid the whistle being an awkward projection, the Terry Clips should be placed as near as possible to the carbide lamp.

DON SEARLE.



TACKLE MASTER'S REPORT FOR 1958 FROM 1954

1954

Materials for 125 ft. of ladder bought. Four 25 ft. ladders made.

Due to an incorrect ordering of the tube materials, all these ladders were scrapped, but valuable information was gained by the mistakes made, both in materials and construction. Part of the cost born by the club. £5. 2. 9.

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1955

More materials bought. This time direct from the works. Our 65 ft. ladder made in one complete length. Cost to the club £3. 17. 5½d. This cost less as part was paid by a donation. Also we had a gift of cable from an old member now left.

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1956

This year we again bought ladder materials - to the sum of £10.15. 0. We made two thirties, two twenties and a fifteen ft. Added to our 65ft. this gave us 180 ft.

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1957

Due to the new intake of members and the drastic reforming of the club, we went to town. We bought materials costing about £18. and made a further amount of rungs, but were unable to fix the cables that year.

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1958

At last I have been able to get the money from the hardest, meanest and most tightfisted Treasurer that it has ever been the privilege of a Tackle Master to meet.

We have completed most of our tackle programme now.

We have 360 ft. of ladder made. 310 ft. available for use. The remaining 50 ft. needs links and Talurit clamps.

All that remains now is the need for 75 Ft. of cable and £3. 0s.0d.

Costs for this year have been £6.6s.0d.

Programme for 1959.

Firstly lever the £3. from the Committee. This will enable us to finish the last 100 ft. of ladder.

You will notice that I often say we during this report. Well the reason is this. Don Searl, David Harle, Bob Knott. Paul Green, Rob Charnock, Pete Goddard, John Green and Malcolm Cotter have all put a great deal of hard work in on components.

Richard Woollacott has helped on the assembly of over 100 ft. of ladder, and is well versed in all the aspects of assembly.

Thank you all.

T. CRAWFORD.

Hon. Tackle Master.

## DOWNEY'S CAVE.

Some considerable time ago now, I met Malcolm Cotter and Tony Knibbs in South Wales. They had arrived to visit Ogof Ffynon Ddu and were camping near the entrance. It was obvious from the moment that we met that Malcolm was a caving fanatic and that made two of us, so we rapidly developed a bond of friendship which despite innumerable differences of opinion has stood the test of time.

Needless to say they had their trip around O.F.D. and soon they were on the prowl for something else to do.

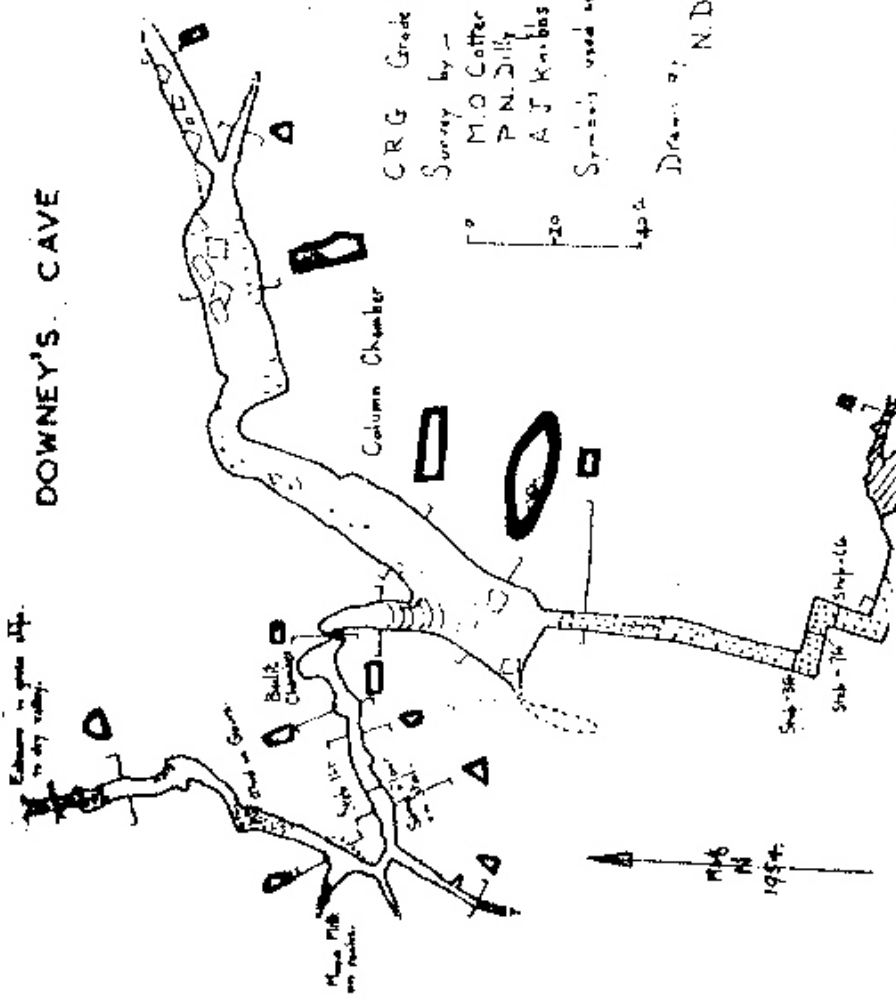
When I suggested that we might survey Downey's Cave they jumped at the chance, despite the fact that they had come to see as much as possible in South Wales and not to sit in the cold dampness of a cave for long hours surveying.

Downey's Cave, as you can see from the survey is a very small cave but for all that it is very beautiful.

The survey progressed uneventfully, until we reached Bailit Chamber and then the fun really started. The narrow squeeze which was actually chiselled out of the rock between Bailit Chamber and the stalactite slope to Column Chamber was half full of water and not wanting a soaking in icy water with several further hours of survey to go, we set about bailing the squeeze by means of a few bean tins which have been left in the Chamber for that purpose. Soon, we had created a terrible fug and my spectacles were truly steamed up and I had to leave the scene of operations to clean up. When I got back the others reckoned that the job was finished and cunningly

# DOWNEY'S CAVE

Entrance to cave at  
to dry valley.



CRG Grade IV

Survey by -

M.O. Cotter

P.N. Dilly

A.J. Knibbs

Symbols used as CRG 1947

Drawn by

N. Dilly

Dec 58



persuaded me to go first through the squeeze, thus using me as a sponge to mop up the remaining puddles of water. Soon we were all through the squeeze and the surveying stopped for some time while we admired the beauties of Column Chamber. Soon we were back at work and with longer survey legs, the survey was progressing at a fine pace. The Column Chamber route soon closed down and we went back and followed a small trickle of water along a perfectly rectangular passage with a beautiful stalagmite and flow floor in an orange red colour.

We finally ended in a chamber one half of which consisted of a large pool held in by a stalagmite barrier. While taking the measurements of the size of the Chamber I noticed that there was a small passage on the far side of the pool. The survey being over, there was no need to keep dry so Tony and I waded into the pool and found that the passage was half full of water and appeared to close down. In a moment of madness I lay down in the water, rapidly regretted it, but now I really was wet I decided to see if the passage could be forced for I knew that somewhere here there was a connection with O.F.D. which had been proved by shining lights, but had been pronounced too narrow for human passage. Soon I was lying flat in the water with the water lapping at my chin. As I progressed, the roof got lower, forcing me first of all to take off my helmet and then slowly forcing my face downwards into the water so that every time Tony moved I got a mouth and noseful of water.

I could see by now that the passage went on for at least another ten feet but the water was too high for progress. They Malcolm had an idea. He and Tony started bailing the pool furiously,

not with tins this time but in whole armfuls. The waves they made washed over my face several times and I was left spluttering in the middle of cursing them to be more careful. Then it occurred to me that it would be a lot easier if I backed out and helped them bail. After a few minutes furious bailing, we were sweating profusely and steam was pouring from our wet boiler suits and soon it was impossible to see more than a few feet through the thick mist that we had generated. I could see Malcolm and Tony only by the beautiful haloes which surrounded their lamps and appeared just like car headlights piercing the gloom.

I don't know how long we continued in this fashion, but it seemed ages before we made any impression on the water level.

Slowly the waterlevel fell and when it seemed that we must give up from sheer fatigue, we noted to our delight, not to say relief, that the passage was now only about an inch deep in water.

I once again forced my way into the narrow passage and became almost firmly wedged with my head sideways between the narrow jaws of rock. After about five minutes I had progressed about a foot through the narrowest region when suddenly to my horror I noticed that the water level was once again rising. I yelled with fear and the others began bailing furiously. I was so tensed with fear that it was a minute or so before I could move and struggle on, for I was determined now to carry on until the passage was impossible. Just when I felt I could go no further, the passage widened and I found myself after a few tugs and wriggles in O.F.D.

After a shouting conference along the narrow passage, Tony decided to join me and to go out through the O.F.D. entrance. I lay down once more in the trickle of water at the O.F.D end, and

acted as a 'natural' dam while Malcolm bailed furiously at the pool end. It seemed quite an age before a very hot sweating and muddy Tony joined me in O.F.D.

It was decided that since there would be no one to bail the pool for Malcolm, he would have to return to the surface the way we came in. His parting statement was "Well I won't get half as wet as you."

We returned quickly to the surface and were soon joined by a very wet and bedraggled Malcolm. We roared with laughter when he told us what had happened. While we had been occupied with the pool bailing to lower the water level in the O.F.D. passage, the narrow squeeze between Bailit Chamber and Column Chamber had refilled with water until it was once again half full. We had forgotten to bring a bailing implement through with us and so Malcolm was forced, after all his efforts, to get soaked in order to get out.

It was 3 a.m. the next morning before they finally left the caving club cottage, after what can only be described as a monstrous hoosh.

And so ended, a fine and exciting caving day.

NOEL DILLY.



## AUSTRALIAN CAVING ORGANIZATIONS.

B.J. O'Brien. President Australian Speleological Federation

The oldest caving society in this country is the Tasmanian Caverneering Club, formed in Hobart in 1946. Two years later a group at Sydney formally constituted the Sydney University Speleological Society (S.U.S.S.) and for several years these two remained the only caving societies in Australia.

However, from about 1952 onwards, various individuals in many parts of Australia began to discover for themselves the joys and adventures of cave exploration. For some years small informal groups in half a dozen areas indulged in cave exploration primarily as a sport and friendly pastime.

The advantages of organized caving gradually became apparent to these groups, and with the assistance of the two existing societies several regional caving clubs were formed. Since many of these societies shared several caving areas, it soon grew evident that a great deal of duplication of speleological work was resulting from the lack of co-ordination among the groups. Furthermore, the resources of each society, such as its library, equipment, and manpower were often insufficient for an adequate attack upon the large and virtually unknown field of Australian Caves.

Accordingly, planning of a central co-ordinating body was commenced. It was soon realized that the individual societies must remain autonomous, but it was felt that the setting up of a separate organization in which all societies would be interested could solve some of the difficulties resulting from the great distances and small resources involved in our Speleology.

Even through the period of planning of this organization, the existing societies encouraged the growth of other constituted groups. Plans were made to inaugurate the Australian Speleological Federation at Adelaide in December 1956, and this provided an added incentive for some of the informal groups to develop constituted societies. Thus at the Adelaide meeting, the A.S.F. was formed with the support of the following societies: Canberra Spel.Soc., Cave Exploration Group (South Australia), Cooranbong Spel.Assoc., Cooma Cave Club, Hunter Valley Caving Club, Jenolan Spel0 Soc09 Mt0Isa Spel0 Soc0, Newcastle Technical and University College Spel0, Soc09 Orange Spel. Soc., Sydney Spel. Soc., Sydney University Spel. Soc., Tasmanian Caver-neering Club, Victorian Cave Exploration Society, and Western Australian Caving Group.

The aims of the Federation were set out at this first meeting in the following terms:

"The aim of the Federation shall be to further speleology in all its aspects on a National level, to gather together Australian Speleologists and to formulate national policies in furtherance of its aim."

In discussions at this meeting and subsequently, these aims were gradually expressed in more specific form. The policy of the Federation in such matters as research co-ordination, library facilities, search and rescue organization and other matters has been decided by personal meetings and by extensive correspondence.

Sub-committees have been established to carry out specific projects, carrying out most of their work by correspondence, or where possible, members being drawn from the same locality. Even so, the problem of long distances influencing personal

meetings in Australia has been a very real one. On one day, the president, treasurer and librarian travelled 500 miles by car so as to hold a discussion with the secretary, who, in turn, had travelled some 800 miles in two days.

The existing subcommittees work has been largely preparatory to date but we are confident that this year will see valuable results in each field. Bat banding is being planned on a national level, a central index scheme is well under way, and early reports are being prepared by other sub-committees.

These reports and other progress will be the subject of intensive discussion at the second National Conference to be held in Hobart, Tasmania in December 1958. I might mention that general interest in this meeting is even now greater than that immediately prior to the inaugural conference. As much as anything, I think this interest is a welcome confirmation of the value of the Federation.

Immediately after the meeting, large expeditions will spend several weeks exploring the very beautiful and very extensive Tasmanian caves. With the resources in manpower and equipment that will then be available, we are hopeful of several exciting discoveries.

Contact with the member societies is maintained by roneoed circulars and a Newsletter prepared by the secretary. The latter contains current information and requests for information or other needs of society's research programmes.

Individual societies may also enlist the Federation assistance on those occasions when the voice of a National body is likely to be of assistance. For example, the A.S.F. has recently completed successful negotiations with the N.S.W. Tourist Department granting certain privileges to members of the

Federation in the extensive caving areas controlled by the Department.

The Federation is, of course, eager to promote caving in Australia and to assist in public appreciation of speleology. It has actively aided several new societies in their formative period and it has encouraged joint activities by members of several societies. Finance is, unfortunately, essential, but no difficulty has been experienced with the present system, where each society contributes a levy of 2/- per member.

Decisions of the Federation can be made by the elected officers, but are subject to ratification by the Committee, consisting of a representative from each member society and meeting annually. Policy is decided by this Committee, which may also vote by post.

One may conclude, I think, by saying that speleology in Australia is growing vigorously. This growth is channelled in the proper and most beneficial direction by the various societies. Grouping these together is the Federation, whose unity and vigour promises well for the future of Australian speleology.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

The Editor wishes to thank the Australian Speleological Federation for this article, which has been taken from the booklet which they prepared for distribution to delegates at the International Congress of Speleology held in Italy.

## THE COMMITTEE

Now that I am a member of the Committee a few of the many intricacies of procedures have been unravelled for me. The language used is interesting, since, though there is such a wide diversity of expressions, they all have practically the same meaning...nothing.

Our Committee meetings start as is common, with the minutes being read by the Chairman. Here the drill varies. Some Chairmen start off as bold as brass and say "Is it your wish that I should sign these minutes as a true and...", and here their strength gives out and the sentence trails off to nothing. More often, however, the sentence snuffs it, before it is even commenced. Not to worry - no one is listening anyway. Those few who have been conscientious enough to read them, are, I suspect, inwardly astounded that anything so succinct could have been produced out of such chaos.

The meeting then starts in earnest, the business can usually be summed up with the application of one or more of the following expressions. -

This matter was discussed at length. Adjourned Sine Die - Sine Die, being literally translated means sign of death - in other words you've had it. Adjourned for further report or postponed until next meeting. Everything except the matter under discussion was discussed. We haven't a notion about this one, but if we leave it till next time, something may sink in meanwhile, or, if we kick this about long enough, it might even get lost.

The meetings end after suitable and adequate refreshments in the early hours of the morning and everyone goes home congratulating themselves

on the good job they've just completed.

As has been said - if the Ark had been built by a Committee, it wouldn't have been finished yet.

R. CHARNOCK.

Hon. Recorder.

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MENDIP CAVE REGISTRY.

The desirability of having a central source of information on Mendip Caves has become increasingly apparent over the last few years. It is probably true to say that as much information is being lost to the caving world as is being gained by new exploration. Some pioneer cavers of the early days of the century have left us, taking with them much useful knowledge, and who knows how much information is locked up in personal diaries of eminent cavers of yesterday.

Several individuals have thought of, or even tried to produce, a complete record of Mendip cave information, but it was not until 1956 that representatives of most of the Mendip Caving Groups met to consider setting up a Register. The result of this first meeting was the "Mendip Cave Registry". Since 1956 its officers have met on 17 occasions and have, after a considerable spate of debate and experiment, evolved a system which it is hoped will serve the needs of the Registry for many years to come.

It was recognised at an early stage that

the Register must be readily accessible to the caving public and arrangements have been made for it to be permanently available at the Wells County Library and the Central Reference Library, Bristol. It will take the form of a Twinlock Binder and will no doubt in time develop into more than one volume. The Register is based on the 2½ inch Ordnance Survey maps and each map will be divided into four quarters; each quarter sheet will form a division of the Register and the information appertaining to each map section will follow the map.

The work of preparing the Register will never be complete while cave exploration continues and publications are produced. It is also inevitable that the Registrars will miss some references and information may be incomplete in other ways, but the object of preserving information that might otherwise be lost, and of making available to cavers a more complete record of information than at present exists, will undoubtedly be achieved.

The volume of initial work is tremendous and it is bound to be some time before the Registers are placed in the libraries. There is already a very keen and hard working team but the more help forthcoming the quicker will be the Registry's progress. If any reader is willing to offer help, whether financial, clerical or in active research, he or she should write to the Chariman: Mr.C.H. Kenney, Tudor Cottage, Beryl Lane, Wells, Somerset.

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REPORT ON THE REPAIR AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE  
GROUP COTTAGE

It has fallen upon me, the supposed foreman in charge of repairs etc., to write this brief report of the progress of the cottage.

When the cottage was taken over last summer it was in a very dilapidated state indeed. However, during the August Meet, a very creditable amount of work was carried out, such as the replacement of all the windows. A considerable amount of time was also spent bricking up the various large orifices through which the cold Mendip wind did whistle!

The chimney was rebuilt and a large chimney pot was generously given by a Cheddar building firm.

Then the problem of shutters arose but was overcome when our provident angel, Mr. Fry (Stirrup Cup garage) kindly gave us a wooden corn elevator which was speedily ripped to bits and knocked into very sturdy shutters.

A yale lock was purchased to hold fast the front door and the cottage was left, in my opinion, in a fairly secure condition.

Since then, work on the cottage has been spasmodic but nevertheless is moving steadily on.

The main problems now are such things as floor boards (for the end room), interior doors and most important beds or bunks.

The Members at the August Meet worked very hard and they will certainly be rewarded by their efforts now that winter is creeping in.



The Group certainly could not have done without my help and I was gracious enough to give it the benefit of my enormous store of knowledge.

P. J. GODDARD.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

I would like to point out that the Editor in no way can be held responsible for the accuracy of the last paragraph of the previous article. Any suggestions as to what Pete could do with his help and store of knowledge, should be addressed directly to Pete.

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PRESERVATION OF SNAP LINKS.

I would like to pass on to Members a method I used for preserving my snap links. Better methods can obviously be used particularly in substituting correct strength phosphoric acid instead of dilute nitric.

My method was to zinc plate as follows:-

1. Dip for a short time in dilute nitric acid to remove rust. Wash under tap.
2. Make up 10% solution of zinc sulphate (10 parts zinc sulphate to 90 parts water by weight)
3. Suspend snap link in solution and connect to negative terminal of battery 1½ volts.
4. Connect small zinc plate to positive terminal.



AS WE FOUND IT

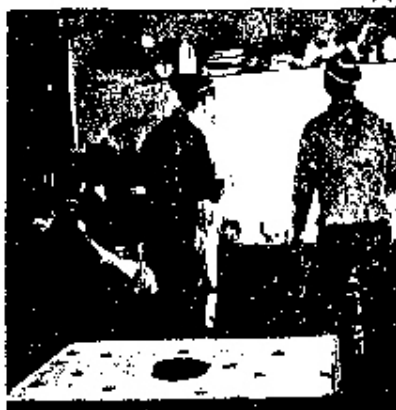


TH



ONES FOR BUILDING

PHOTOS: M. COTTER  
R.L. WOOLLACOTT AND C. REYNOLDS



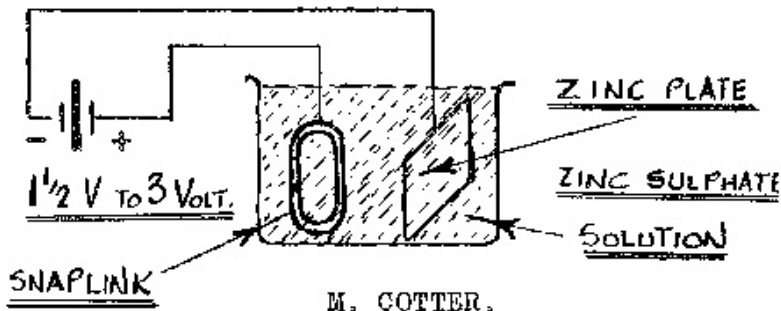
MOO



ALSO AS WE F



5. Watch link being electroplated and wash off when even. It will be necessary to turn round snaplink for each side to be done.



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MENDIP CAVING GROUP LIBRARY

The Group has in its possession many of the Newsletters of the Cave Research Group of Great Britain. Their contents are listed below. If any member has in his possession any other copies of this publication and would like to pass it on to the Group I shall be very pleased to receive them.

Cave Research Group.

Nos.49-50 July-October, 1954.

Group News

Water-Testing at Marble Steps Pot.

Water-Testing at Penyghent Pot.

Two new Potholes

(i)Excavation of a sink in Yorks.

(ii)Conies Dale Pot Derbyshire.

Determination of Dip and Strike.

Biospeleology Prof R. Husson.

The Inauguration of a British Mammals Society  
Caving in Germany (Part 2).  
Review The Darkness Under the Earth  
N. Casteret.

No. 51 November-December 1954

Group News  
Full Report of the Annual General  
Meeting 1954

No. 52

Group News: General Meetings 1955 & 1956  
New Rules for Visiting Bullpot,  
Lancaster Pot and the Easegill  
System.

Spider's Webs & Helictites.

Library: Stocks of CRG Publications &  
list Of Foreign and British Peri-  
odicals.

New Caverns for old.

Notes on collecting and posting of cave  
Fauna.

An 'Award of Merit' to the Group by the  
National Speleology of America

Notes on Caves at Home and Abroad:

Chelms Coombe Cave Cheddar

New Durham Caves

Caves in N.Wales

Cave Region of N.W.Ireland

Main Caving Areas of Italy esp. of Liguria

Italian Speleological Institute.

Biological Supplement

Fauna Collected from caves as recorded in the  
C.R.G. Fauna Records. Part I (1938-39)

Nos. 53-54 December 1955

Group News.

Full Report of the Annual General Meeting  
1955

The 'Slipgrip': a self-lifelining device.

No. 55 January-February 1956

Group News.

Report on the Skye Speleological Expedition  
1955.

Nos. 56-57 March, April-May, June 1956

Group News: Including the full report by  
the Hon. Sec. C.R.G. of the enquiry into  
The Threat to King Arthurs Cave Gt.Doward  
Whitchurch Herefordshire, and Access to  
Fairy Hole Eastgate Co. Durham.

Bat News Devon Speleological Society.

Collecting and posting Cave Fauna.

The origin of mud stalagmites in Lethrid  
Swallet.

Report on the Excavation & Deposits of a  
natural fissure in Park Lane Stone Mine  
Neston Wilts.

Unsafe Karabiners Circular of the Bri-  
tish Mountaineering Council.

Nos. 58-59 July-August 1956

Group News: New class of membership to the  
N.S.S.

More about Mud Formations.

Speleology in Malaya

Caves in India and Pakistan No.7.

Library Notes.

Reviews - The lyre N/L Orpheus Caving Club

The Cambrian Ordovician Limestones and  
Dolomites of the Ord. and Torran Areas  
Skye & the Kishorn Area Rosshire.

Biological Supplement

Fauna Collected from caves as recorded in  
the C.R.G.Fauna Record. Part 11 (War years  
1940-46 and 1945-46)

Nos.66-67 May, June-July, August 1957

Group News

Silt (earth) pillars in Derbyshire

Library Notes-Palaeotology, Archaeology

Report of a Speleological Reconnaissance in  
Co's Sligo and Leitrim Eire.

Review Les Crystallisations excentriques de  
la Grotte Moulis by Prof.B.Geze.

Transactions of the Cave Research Group

Vol.4 No.1 December 1955

Vertical Development in some Irish Caves

Cavern Formation in the Northern Pennines

The Karstlands of Jugoslavia

Explosives as an aid to Cave Exploration

Summaries of the above papers in French and  
German.

Vol.4 No.2 October 1956

The Speedwell Cavern

Caves and Glaciation: Central & Southern  
Pennines and adjacent areas.

Summaries of the above in French and  
German.

EDITORS NOTE

Any Member who would like to borrow any of  
the publications in the Group's possession,  
should contact the Hon.Recorder - Robby Charnock,  
9 Ealing Park Gardens, Ealing, W.5.

One often hears the theory that Cheddar Gorge is a collapsed Cave but recently more people come out with the statement that it is just an ordinary valley. Following through with questions seems to draw a blank, so to stimulate thought in this direction I have decided to put some of my ideas to paper.

I, myself, do not believe Cheddar Gorge to be a collapsed Cave. Just for a start, ask yourself if you know of any Cave which without a roof would provide a Gorge anything like the size of Cheddar. G.B. certainly would not; its size would account for only a small fraction of the Gorge.

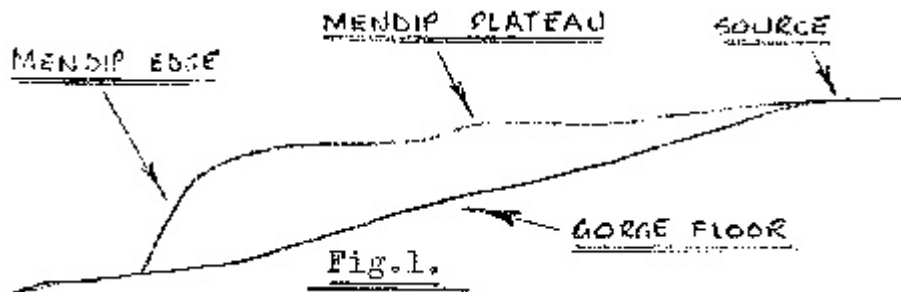
Again, do you know a Cave which has a gradual descent over a distance of six miles with large tributaries coming in at the base of the main valley. Cheddar Gorge starts at Priddy and has a tributary which joins it at the Bath Road turning looking towards Yoxter Rifle Ranges. Lower down, another tributary joins at Black Rock Gate. The latter bifurcates itself into Longwood and the continuation of Velvet Bottom.

The streams which start at the head of the valleys now enter Swallet Caves at G.B. Longwood Velvet Bottom and Swildons Hole. They all drop very quickly to a region close to the water table.

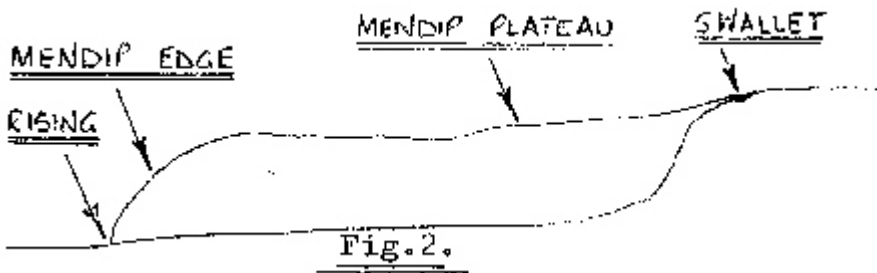
Now Wookey Hole Valley is often given as an example of the way that Cheddar Gorge was formed. In reality there is no similarity. The floor of Wookey Hole Valley has a very slight gradient while that at the mouth of Cheddar Gorge is steep.



I stress the mouth because after the water had run steadily down to Mendip edge it suddenly speeded up; with this increase it was able to take a greater load so steepening the profile. (See Fig.1)



Wookey Hole water on the otherhand has already reached the bottom contour of Mendip edge and so has a profile like that in Fig.2.



Valleys which have started as Caves all have the same plan as Wookey Hole, i.e. low gradient which if it could be taken upstream would end up very steeply.

A valley, on the other hand, has a steady gradient which may steepen when it reaches the edge of high ground.

Goughs Cave, itself, gives adequate proof to what a cave would be like in the area - should this collapse, it would make no difference to the surface topography.

In the same way I would say that Burrington Coombe is a dry valley. Ebbor Gorge on the other hand is like a dry valley for the first half and then like a collapsed cave.

Balch seems to think that Cheddar Gorge should have started forming before the Triassic but I see no reason for this - after all, we still have ten million years or so left to do the work in!

There are no indications in the Gorge itself that suggest a cave - for instance, stalagmite deposits.

There is one point which remains to be cleared up. What is the nature of the deposits which the village of Cheddar is built on. The Ordnance Survey shows an area of raised ground at the mouth of the Gorge which could be some of the matter eroded away.

While you ponder the question, I intend to make further investigation and prepare a fuller and more comprehensive account.

MALCOLM COTTER.  
Hon. Meet Secretary.

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LAMBS LEER EXPEDITION. 2nd August 1958

Members Present alphabetically were - A.Crawford, M.Cotter. D.Dilly. P.Goddard. R.Knott C.Reynolds.

Arrangements had been made in advance with The Hon. Secretary of the M.N.R.C. - Mr. P.Stewart.F.R.G.S.

We arrived early at Lambs Leer 10.00 so as to arrange out tackle problem with P.Stewart.

Descent was to be at 1430. but I had forgotten the sixpenny stamp for our bloodchit. Pete Goddard and I went down to the Miners Arms to get both the W.S.G.s' and M.C.G.s' bloodchits signed by H. Murrell.M.C., F.R.P.S. I managed to get a stamp from Mr. Murrell. Also with a slight grin I was requested not to repeat the W.S.G. slight slip. That is to allow every one to sign across the stamp. Apparently very legal but awfully messy!

The leader is the one who assumes the responsibility of the rest; they have to sign at the bottom of the form to show they have read it. No one did, except me, and I read it out to Pete on the way back. I had to, just to confirm we had not bought anything!!! We came to the conclusion that we were both Lords of the Manor of Lambs Leer and therefore we must be O.K.!

Having collected our two patient guides from the M.N.R.C. who were waiting for us, we all walked over to Lambs Leer and descended in good order the first pitch of 60 ft. in iron ladders, which was vertical but on a side angle. This lead to a couple of very interesting chambers. Then the change is sudden straight into the beehive chamber. The actual beehive occupies the whole floor and although now dull it must of, in its time, glinted like a myriad stars. Directly after, is the main

pitch of 80 ft. This is both a fine climb and a vantage point for viewing the part of the cavern hidden by the overhang. This part of the cavern is quite the most beautiful and the black tracery is like a Moorish veiled wall with other colours inter-spaced.

I forgot to mention that P. Goddard has been desecrating the formation, the beehive, with blood. This practice must cease at once. This small though painful gash was treated on the floor of the main cavern.

The climb of the main pitch to the floor was done in the time of just over two minutes per person. The Descent was precision in itself.

With the help of the others we rigged an electron ladder on an endless wire cable put up by M.N.R.C. and Malcolm and I climbed up to Valentines Shelf. A mud bath all the way up and on the shelf as well. Facing us is a mud choke leading slightly upwards, a tube in fact. This is one of the many old rivers that must have helped form this place. Do not mistake me, the forming of this place is not due solely to river action as Swildons is mostly. Having looked around I left the shelf and joined the others in the main cave.

P. Goddard then left by means of the main pitch so that Malcolm could take some photos of the ascent. He was followed by B. Knott.

B. Dilly. C. Reynolds and myself then took a look at Beaumonts drive by way of the scaffolding put up by Miners. This leads to the cave of falling waters. This is really solidified and is a remarkable place. It

takes little imagination to see it as it must have been thousands of years ago. Manganese and lead are much in evidence here and in other parts of the cavern.

On returning to the main cave we ascended in turn as easily as we had gone down. Malcolm, darn him, was still wallowing on Valentines Shelf. He must like mud! From our high view we saw him leave to examine the rest of the cave with the guide.

The others now left to return to the surface leaving just the two needed for the winch. We had all taken turns with the winch so it was quite in order for them to leave us at this point.

In about fifteen minutes, Malcolm and our friend the guide joined us on the top of the main pitch. A muddier pair it has never been my privilege to see.

The remaining four of us now returned to the surface coming out at just 1900.hours.

Having got out of our dirty gear we thanked our two friends for spending their whole afternoon with us, when they could have, no doubt, spent a more interesting day following their own devices. Anyway our heartfelt thanks go to these three people who were responsible for our excellent time in Lambs Leer.

Bob Knott returned my boiler suit with thanks and an eighteen inch rip. Thank you Bob! Grr-!

Well I must sign off now. Thank you all for your good company and fine climbing.

TONY CRAWFORD

Bickington is a small village on the main Exeter-Plymouth Road, about four and a half miles from Newton Abbot. Bickington Barton Quarry lies to the North of the village, the cave being in the South East corner of the quarry, behind the limekilns. The grid references of the two entrances are SX/80187273 and SX/80187275.

The cave was revealed by quarrying, probably nearly a century ago. More recently, the entrance in the floor of the quarry was filled with earth and the main entrance used as a rubbish tip. The cave was 'discovered' by Devon Cavers in 1942 when enquiries in a local pub revealed that there was a cave only a few hundred yards away and "If you thraw stoans down, Maister, they goes PLONK!"

On July 12th 1942 Edgar Reed and John and Winn Hooper made a first descent. They found that a rift lead off from the bottom of the 30 ft. ladder pitch to give a total depth of about 60 ft. In 1947 a further 10ft. was added to the bottom of the rift and another passage was cleared which ended in an earth choke. This was cleared by students of Seale-Hayne Agricultural College in 1956 who showed that it was the lower end of the hole previously filled in by the farmer. It provides a means of access to the cave without using tackle. The students also cleared a hole at the very bottom of the rift and so reached the present bottom of the cave nearly 100ft. below the surface. Since then there have been no further major discoveries.

For convenience, I will describe the cave from the original entrance.

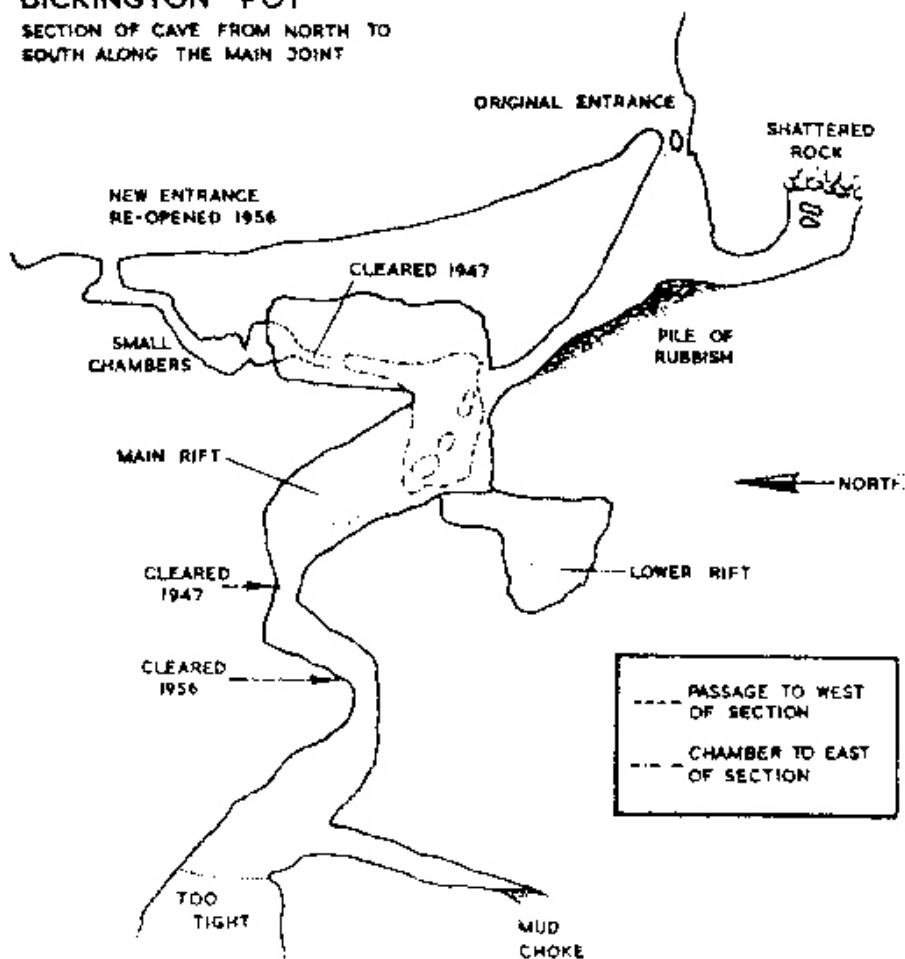
In a ledge a few feet up the quarry face two close-set holes open into the roof of a chamber which is roughly bell-shaped, being longer along the North-South axis. The ladder pitch is about 30ft. and ends amongst rubbish and the remains of dead sheep. To the South a passage about 6ft. high and 8 ft. wide rises, slowly at first and then more steeply, until it abruptly reaches a wall of shattered rock. There is a vertical hole in the roof and two sloping ones joining it, but the top is blocked with more shattered rock.

To the North one climbs down over the rubbish and passes through a small hole to find oneself on a ledge about 10 ft. above the floor at one end of a rift about 40ft. long. On climbing to the floor of the rift one has a choice of routes. On the left a narrow slot in the floor drops into a lower continuation of the rift which is choked with boulders. On the right (the East) three holes at different levels lead directly to a chamber about 8ft, in diameter and 15 ft. high from which a mud-choked passage leads off at roof level.

Continuing along the rift one can travel at a higher or a lower level. The lower section drops steeply down to a boulder slope and ends in a hole in the floor (cleared 1947) leading to a small continuation of the rift approximately below the main rift. A hole at the base of the wall (cleared 1956) opens out over a 20 ft. drop which can be climbed without a rope as halfway down there is a small chamber with a muddy floor, the rest of the rift dropping away below one. Climbing down further one finds that the rift narrows and ends as a slot about 9 inches wide and 4ft. long which goes down for another 30ft. or more, appearing to widen and bend out of sight. A strong updraught is often noticeable at this point. If one turns round when one reaches this impasse, one finds an opening which

# BICKINGTON POT

SECTION OF CAVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG THE MAIN JOINT



SCALE. 1 INCH : 20 FEET APPROX





leads to a downwards sloping passage, which goes for about 25ft. and ends in a tight squeeze, and a partial choke in very soft, sticky mud. There is no draught along this passage.

Returning to the main rift one can climb up and take the higher route, and, just before it gets too narrow to follow, there is an upward sloping passage in the left hand wall (cleared 1947) leading to two small chambers about 6ft. by 6ft. and 4ft. high. From the furthest of these a steeply sloping passage, filled with loose earth, leads upwards, opens out somewhat and then a hole appears in the roof which is the other entrance. (Re-opened 1956). This is 4ft. deep and lies half way between the main entrance and the limekilns. The passage appeared to go beyond the hole but on clearing away the earth I found that in fact it ended almost immediately although a few feet gained shows some interesting rock veins.

Now that the general outline has been described I will try to relate its major features to the rock that it is in.

The cave is situated in middle Devonian limestone, which dips at 30-40° towards the South East. The cave itself is greatly influenced by a series of vertical joints, one above the other, the uppermost running North to South and the lowest approximately Northwest to South East.

The bell shaped entrance chamber and the passage running South show large shallow solutional facets in the wall. The North-South joint system has not had much effect in shaping this passage although the bedding determines the shape of the roof near the Southernmost end. When we get to the main rift,

however, we find that the joint is an all important factor, the transition from one type of surroundings to the other being extremely abrupt, the roof suddenly rising 10 ft. or so until it narrows and the floor dropping 10 ft. to a rock and boulder floor. The walls in this part of the cave are very knobbly due to solution. These wall features show strong bedding control. The chamber to the East also shows this but the roof is comparatively smooth. The reason for the difference in the solutional appearance of the rock can be explained by the fact that the two regions lie in different horizons in the limestone. In the lower part of the cave the joint has changed its direction and the walls are smoother than in the main rift as it occurs in more massive limestone. The passage from the top of the rift is one of a number of mud filled slots apparently controlled completely by the rock beds. This leads to two low mud floored chambers and the passage to the surface which all show bedding control and in one or two cases show interesting blades of rock. This part of the cave is very similar to parts of the Buckfastleigh caves.

The only calcite deposits in the whole cave is some rather interesting flow in the southern passage. However, the walls are of interest due to the solutional effects.

As for the possibility of extending the cave, there are a number of workable digs, but all would require a lot of hard work and the use of explosives in some cases, as in trying to force the final inviting slot. This would be well worth the trouble if it solved one of the problems associated with the cave. The village gets its water from a number of springs and wells on the edge of the limestone, the nearest being about 200-300 yards from the cave on almost the same level as

the entrance. The bottoms of this and a number of other wells are on a level above the bottom of the cave and yet it is on the uphill side of these wells. There is no sign that even the lowest visible part of the cave is anywhere near the watertable.

### Summary

This cave is interesting because it is very different to other Devon caves. It is, like the Buckfastleigh caves entirely Phreatic in origin but, unlike them, it shows a much more vertical character. Thus while the total passage length is probably only 350-400 ft. the total depth is about 100 ft. and appears to go much deeper. It is hoped that a dig can be started and that an accurate survey can be undertaken.

CHRIS. REYNOLDS.

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If any Member of the Mendip Caving Group wishes to visit this or any other of the Devon caves, the Author is very willing to supply all relevant information.

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### A NEW DIG.

I wish to announce the opening of a new dig. It is situated in a disused quarry at Binocar, near Shepton Mallet.

The dig is not quite in the obvious place, but about 9 ft. from the apparent opening. It is on a bedding plain inclined at approximately  $30^{\circ}$ .

The entrance hole at the moment measures approximately 2 ft. by 1 ft. and is choked by loose rock, with a very little earth with it.

Excavation should be rather easier than the other digs; the entrance is about 15 ft. from the base of the quarry, the rocks being just rolled out of the entrance.

A considerable draft is emitted from the entrance hole, with a very potent smell of cave.

From its position, it could easily lead to a major cave system. I have found dripstone  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick; small straws in and around the entrance.

With luck this cave should go with little excavation work.

Permission to work this dig was obtained from Mr. Brewer, Casa Piedra, Portways, Gurney Slade. Telephone No. Oakhill 358.

DON SEARLE.

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## OBITUARY

Our Members were shocked to hear that Oliver Speed passed away on the 12th. February, 1959. An Obituary in a Caving Journal is usually for a Caver. Oliver Speed was however not one. We will all remember with pleasure, the visits we made to The New Inn - 'Olivers' as it is known, when he sat by the fire and talked about the Mendips in days gone by. He was a great friend to the Group and we all came to admire and respect him. He was, indeed, one of nature's Gentlemen and we will all sadly miss the pleasant evenings we spent together. The Group extends their sympathy to Mrs. Speed and her Niece, Miss Speed, for their sad loss and hope that they will continue to run 'Olivers', as we expect it to continue to be known.

