

NORTHERN CAVERN & MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 1962

This newsletter is produced because active Members have been so busy that if we waited until autumn, when we had considered producing a newsletter in addition to the 'Transactions', we would be unable to include all possible material. As it is, most of the reports are extremely brief.

The meets committee had included as many suggestions as possible to keep as many Members active as was possible, therefore we have had a rapid succession of meets, with large attendances, and also there have been more determined private meets.

25 / 3 / 62 New Goyden Pot (Nidderdale) Leader C.Wade.

Members were accompanied by the odd snowflake which so far this year has been present on every meet. The party split into two groups, the main party to descend New Goyden whilst two Members went to Goyden Pot in search of specimens after lifelining the others down the first pitch. It was on this pitch that the 'incident' occurred. This was such a unique act of selflessness that it deserves relating, although the person has, alas, to remain anonymous.

The leader allowed a much respected Member to descend unsuitably clothed for potholing. This was to be the Members first ladder descent. The head of the pitch contains much loose sandy gravel and a large quantity of twigs. A small amount of this mixture dribbled down the pitch as the ladder was climbed, but when the Member in question had descended about eight feet the Member was 'attacked' by a much larger stone, about the size of a building brick. After the tumult had abated the Member wished to continue down and many people were relieved when the Member stood safely under cover at the bottom of the ladder. The Member then produced the offending stone from his jacket and laid the stone in a position where it would do no further damage.

Would you carry a largish stone down a ladder when in difficulties? Most people would have shouted 'BELOW' and let the stone drop when the other people were under cover, IF they could have caught the stone at all.

The rest of the meet was rather an anticlimax, all parts being visited except the Hardy pools and the upstream sump passage. We had with us a Member famous for his ability to go further than most whilst wearing Wellingtons, but the top sump was rather beyond his capabilities.

8 / 4 / 62 Rimington and Ashnot (near Clitheroe) Leader A.E.Cannell.

Platt and Wade had considered scrubbing the meet when they stood on the deserted Skipton 'bus station, but by the time we arrived at Sawley we had swelled to thirteen ???, and the weather had improved. We were unable to go underground at Rimington, except for a short wet level, but bright warm sunshine made it pleasant as we walked round the hill. Our President would not have appreciated the walking bit as he had had his car stolen the previous evening.

We then went to Ashnot near Newton to look at a mine which A.E.Cannell had found. This was a series of pocket workings, large in some places and small in others and remarkable in that at one part we travelled some distance at least 25 feet below the level of the water in a part of the mine which had flooded recently. Many fossils were seen and one or two were collected.

22 / 4 / 62 Crackpot Cave (Summerlodge, Swaledale) Leader R.G.Guthrie.

The weather had been very unfavourable at the start of Easter so that only a few Members travelled to Swaledale after staying at the cottage.

The cave is very beautiful and is well worth the effort for those who dabble in photography, after the present, most unpleasant, entrance has been passed. Opportunities for diggers are provided with the abundance of boulder falls and one can see from the efforts of past diggings that there have been many with every confidence that the cave continues.

23 / 4 / 62 Sir Francis Level (Gunnarside Gill) Leader R.S.Harker.

After leaving the Guthries at Crackpot we were motoring around Swaledale when we met A.E.Cannell and party and it was decided that united on the morrow we should visit Sir Francis Level. (Believed to be named after Sir Francis Donys). On the morrow it seemed a shame to leave the warmth of the sunshine for the waist deep water of this long level. We estimated it to be about 2000 yards and the condition of the level is poor for much of the distance. The level entrance as fallen so entry must be made down a short shaft about 300 yards further up the stream from the old entrance, where the level runs parallel but below the stream. Apart from some magnificent straw stalactites the engine room is in poor condition owing to rust and decay and most of the 'furnishings' have been removed or destroyed, as it is obvious that many parties have visited the place recently.

24 / 4 / 62 Faggogill mines (Arkengarthdale) Leader A.E.Cannell.

Since the weather remained pleasant a convoy of vehicles left camp for Faggogill, picking up strayed Members en route. Since we had not visited this area before we chose the level most likely to connect with Stang mine, on the other side of the hill. This level ended at a mud fall at about 500 yards after passing through ground held up with wedges and passing under a lengthy stopping of the 'anti-gravity' type.

The second level to be explored followed the general direction of the valley. Entry was gained at a point about 400 yards beyond the standing arch which had been the original entrance, by following the depression until we reached a place where the arching was firm and could be passed under. The level started as a low crawl on gravel and since the floor declined rapidly we were soon able to stand upright. At the end of the arching a natural passage led off to the left and could be followed for about 40 feet to an aven about 25 feet high. The aven had an 'omelet' type calcite and gravel floor and water falling down the aven seemed to run to a hole about five feet deep in the floor of the level just beyond the start of the natural passage. Up to this point there had been very strong evidence of the type of flooding found in caves, beyond this point we found no evidence of flooding. The party explored all passages to a total length of about 600 yards, except one which was deep in mud and water and was in shattered ground. On reflection this passage would seem most likely to lead to the major workings.

Level No 3 had been walled up a short distance from the entrance.

Level No 4 was only explored for a short distance owing to the lateness of the hour and also due to some excitement about the discovery of a pothole which alas turned out to be a disappointment.

6 / 5 / 62 Sell Gill Hole (Ribblesdale) Leader C.Wade.

It had been hoped that we could ladder the big pitch (150 feet) in addition to the easier way but owing to difficulties with assembling tackle the big pitch was abandoned. Due to a late start and the fact that a largish party had arrived the meet became very much of a 'down and up' trip. A piano, an accomplished pianist and an old song book gave us a splendid evening in the "Crown".

Camping facilities are available to the rear of the Crown Hotel, Lofthouse. Earlier this year some of the C.D.G. were our guests at our cottage and at our request, wallowed in the Mongo sumps and the snow that was falling heavily when they returned to the surface. There is no truth in the rumour that one of the divers slept in his suit at Keld Farm to keep warm, it was to keep dry. In September the C.D.G. completed their final dives at Threaplands Cave, passing the third sump which however only revealed about 50 to 60 feet before what would appear to be the terminal roof fall. Threaplands Cave is now finished as far as the C.D.G. is concerned as the cave is a water supply, which means that digging is out of the question for the moment. In 1955 a party of founder-members of the Society forced a sink in the area of the roof fall to a depth of sixty feet. We think that this is part of the same system but the shaft is now closed by a land slip.

Alec Bottomley, Recorder for the C.P.C., with whom many Members were associated in their pre-Society days has departed for the Antarctic for a three year tour. It will be recalled that a member of the Skipton Caving Club, Michael Wilkinson (The Count) also left for the Antarctic some time ago. Alec is to be a meteorologist, the Count is apparently a sledge assistant.

British Expedition to Gouffre Berger

Following in the footsteps of Nick Pratchett and Bob Powell the British expedition reached the bottom of Gouffre Berger, which is the deepest known pothole in the world and is situated in southern France. Ken Pierce made sure the record was in British hands by diving in the terminal sump to make the depth about 3,600 feet. We do not know how deep Mr. Pierce actually descended but from what we know of Ken, a mere sump would not deter him.

as mentioned earlier, D. Judson of the C.P.C. was a member of the expedition which he said was blessed with extremely good weather, some pitches being quite dry in comparison with Powell's report in 1956 which remarked as being rather wet.

For those interested in the problem of lighting large caverns for photography we have had impressive reports from persons using Calor gas lamps. Apparently one can purchase at a reasonable price specially portable cylinders with special steel mantles. Candlepower is said to be about 6,000 and two such lamps are said to have illuminated Gaping Gill main chamber with ease.

Casterton Fell

The landlord of the Bull Pot Farm area, including Lancaster Hole, has decided that this land is out of bounds to potholers. The gentleman became irritated by a rescue which caused him considerable inconvenience. Although the gentleman was more hurt than injured one cannot but feel sympathetic for landlords and farmers who, weekend after weekend, have to face what amounts to invasions in the popular districts of visitors from all over the country who do not seem capable of honouring the Country Code. It is unfortunate that clubs which are careful should suffer for others and be most hit by such drastic action. At the close of the last Cave Rescue meeting, held on September 22nd., the Red Rose Pothole Club gave notice of a meeting to be called of all the northern clubs to try to gain access under the Access of the Countryside Bill. Further details are not at present available.

Electrolyte for Edison lamps can be obtained from the Cottage Warden. We hope that later in the year charging facilities will be available, a small cover charge will be made however.

Transactions

Closing date for copy is October 25th. A meeting of the publications Committee is called for that evening at Stoneleigh, Utley. at 8.00pm.

New Members

Mrs. M. Cannell. Garstang.: A.Stobbs. South Shields: M.Davies. Bradford:
K.C.Jackson. Skipton: D.Hall. Slaithwaite.

Changes of Address

A.R.Nichols. c/o The Black Horse Hotel. Grassington. Nr. Skipton.
J.Sletcher. c/o The Black Horse Hotel. Grassington. Nr. Skipton.
Russell Bayles. 'Teuthill', Frodsham. Warrington. Lancs.
A.E.Cannell. 7, Birch Road, Garstang. Lancs.
R.Leach. 62, Ratcliffe Street, Darwen. Lancs.
W.J.Keay. Flat 2, Bolgrave House, Ilkley.

Additions to Records

ZM I44 Turf pits waygate. Grassington moor.
M I45 Swinnergill Level. Swaledale.
M I46 Old Gang workings. Swaledale. I888 copy
M I47 Grimwath Mines. Hebden. I872 copy
M I48 Snailbeach Mine. I863
C I49 Dale Barn cave N.S.G. I956.

The survey of the Grassington moor area started in I960 has been taken up again. Considerable progress has been made on surface work, there is still a great deal to be done. Members willing to assist in this work should contact the Hon. Recorder. Members capable of neat drawings are also wanted to make tracings of surveys.

Election of Committee at Annual General Meeting

At least four places require to be filled at the A.G.M. Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary if a Member wishes to make a nomination and is unlikely to attend the A.G.M. Subject to a vote to the opposite the person nominated should be present to assent to the election. Members wishing to make nominations in person should do so to the Chairman on the motion 'Election of Officers.'