

“B B”

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THE BELFRY BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF THE BRISTOL EXPLORATION CLUB

Change of Address.

Johnny (Menace) Morris; - The Green, Three Cocks, Breconshire.
Dizzy and Postle Thopnsett: - 77, S. Court Ave., Dorchester, Dorset.
Pat Ifold: - 60, Ashley Down Road, Horfield, Bristol. 7.

Members are reminded that it is in their own interests to inform the Hon. Sec. of changes in address so that the BB and other communications can reach them with the minimum of delay.

Committee for 1953.

Nominations are now due for the 1953 Committee. A form for this purpose is enclosed with this B.B. The Committee consists of eight persons, at least one of these a lady member and one London Representative. You are therefore requested to nominate up to 8 persons. Please remember, you must get the consent of the people you wish to nominate before you do so.

K.D.

Recent Cave Books

by
Pongo.

The “Plume of Smoke” by Edward Morris.

Occasionally novelists turn to caves as ‘original’ subjects for their books, and when they do the characters seem invariably to get trapped below ground and only escape after incredible difficulties and improbable luck in finding another way out.

This happens again in The Plume of Smoke, when the explorers are trapped by a flood beyond two traps in ‘Pilgrim’s Hole’ in Derbyshire. It is a somewhat wild and woolly tale involving treasure hunting down the cave, plus – a gang of bandits also out for the loot. There are gun battles galore both above and below ground, but in the end, of course, the righteous are victorious, escaping with a hoard of diamonds, all the bandits are killed, and the hero gets his girl.

Mr. Morris has clearly done some caving, but not, I think, very much. Pilgrim’s Hole is meant to be a very difficult cave, but I do not think the difficulties would be very great to any reasonably experienced party, although they appear to have been considerable to the inexperienced treasure hunters. For example: - they each took half an hour to climb a 70ft. clear ladder pitch – but no life line was used!

Rather silly and exaggerated, but not unamusing if you like blood and thunder.

“Underground Adventure” by A. Gemmel and J.C. Myers

If Mr. Morris has not done much caving, Messrs. Gemmel and Myers have certainly done a great deal. Their adventures are, perhaps, less hair-raising than Mr. Morris's but at least they did happen. The book is, in fact, the story of the exploration of a number of Yorkshire caves and pot-holes. It is clearly told and well illustrated by Mr. Meyers' photographs, and by the surveys of the caves.

The cave dealt with are Hull and Little Hull Pots; Simpson Pot; Gaping Ghyll and Disappointment Pot; Notts Pot; Lancaster Hole, and the Easegill Series. There are also chapters on some mines and other odds and ends.

Altogether to be thoroughly recommended.

“400 Centuries of Cave Art” by Henri Breuil.

This is a massive students' work recently published in France in English and French. It deals with an extremely large number of decorated caves. It is not easily digested and although I have now had it about a month and I have by no means finished it. A proper review will appear later on.

R.M.W.

The following account of Climbing in Austria has recently reached us. Ed.

Record of Mountain Activities in the Austrian Tyrol.

By
Jack Waddon.

The Village of Ehrwald was used a headquarters

23rd. June.

Starting from Ehrwald at 10am and climbing by the route known as the Hohen Gorg, we came to the Seeben Dee which is 30 metres deep and at an altitude of 1630 metres. Frequent rain showers made visibility poor and slowed us down, but we climbed on as far as the Coburger Hut, where after a glass of beer, we returned by a quicker route to Ehrwald.

24th June

Leaving Ehrwald at 9.0am in warm weather we walked to the village of Sarmos, and there began the ascent of Grubigstein (2218m). Except for the last 100m, which involved a spot of scrambling it was just a good walk, most of the way through pine woods, as far as the Wolprathausere Hut, owned by the D.O.A.V., which is at a height of 1761m. Having reached the summit we spent some time taking photographs and then returned the way we had come.

25th June.

We decided to climb Davidspitze (2242m). It consists of a strenuous scramble up steep pine clad slopes until Hermeeser Alm is reached at a height of 1405m. From here onwards we were climbing through cloud up a steep scree slope until we arrived at the summit of Upspitze (2234m). From here a simple traverse along a knife-edge ridge brought us to the summit of the Davidspitze. We had been assured that on a fine day a magnificent view can be had from here, but the cloud prevented us from seeing much, except a pair of ptarmigan which flapped past; and so we returned to our Hotel with unexposed films in our cameras.

28th June

As the weather was very hot we decided to go to the top of Lugspitze (2165m) and take photographs. A cable car goes to the Austrian frontier, which is only a matter of 20m from the top, and since the heat made a scramble up through a scree sound unattractive, we decided to use it. From the Austrian cable car station everyone has to go via a tunnel to the German cable car station about half a mile distant on the other side of the mountain. From here another cable car takes one to the top, but as soon as we had completed all the formalities at the border, we climbed straight up. Before we could get to the actual rock face, we had to climb up through a lot of loose snow which we found even more dicey when we descended later in the day. We had a few very welcome beers in the hotel at the summit and then returned the way we had come.

1st July

We went by the way of Seeben See to the Esburger Hut (1920m), another pleasant D.O.A.V. hut on the edge of the Drachen See, a 90m deep lake fed from the melting snow. The afternoon was spent on a couple of climbs on the western face of the Sonnerspitze, and then we returned to the Coburger Hut for the night.

2nd July

We awoke early and began the ascent of the Sonnerspitze (2214m). For about 100m it was a scramble up a steep scree, but from then on it was bare rock all the way to the summit. After reaching the top we began to climb down by the same route, but by this time the sun was higher in the sky and the heat was unbearable. Apart from a bit of trouble with brittle rock (all the mountains in this area are a form of limestone) the return to the hut was uneventful though slow. We returned to our hotel via the ridge known as Shrwalder Alm.

NOTE. The Deutsche und Oesterreiche Alpen Vereain (D.O.A.V.) is divided into sections each of which is composed of members living in the same area. Each section is responsible for the maintenance of a climbing hut and signposts in the immediate vicinity. The huts are excellent and bunks and blankets are provide at 7sch. (about 2/-) per night.

J.W.

The Monthly Appeal.

Your Editor once again asks for contributions of all kinds for inclusion in future issues of the B.B. It is so very easy to sit back and read your B.B. and comment on it; I wonder how many of those who are dissatisfied with it as stands at present have ever bothered to do anything but comment about it. If each member of the club would send in only one article a year the B.B. would become truly representative of all the club and Editing would become a pleasure. Besides, if there are plenty of articles for selection the B.B. can grow from its present six pages. The great majority of material is the work of, at the most, a dozen individuals whose continual work keeps the journal alive. Let me have reports of trips, both climbing, and caving, and notes about the hundred and one facets of club life that you have found interesting. If you are afraid to write to me hand in material to any committee man, who will see that it reaches me.

By the way notifications of change of address etc., should be sent to the Hon. Sec., as also should queries re-circulation of BB. I only edit and cut stencils, others do the donkey work, i.e. printing, addressing and despatching.

T.H.S.

The following is the first part of a history of a very important part of our Club Life. I have been waiting for a second episode to reach me from the author and hope that the realisation that the first part has appeared will make him send on the next one in time for the continuity to be maintained.

Ed.

BUILDING A BELFRY

By

TONY JOHNSON

Part 1.

Resume of a paper read before the Amalgamated Society of Gerry-builders at their first unbelievable General Meeting.

This paper should be taken as setting out the procedure to be adopted by all future Belfry builders. With suitable refinements it could be used as a specification for building a hygienic pig-sty or large dog-kennel.

First one must search around for an excuse to build. In our case this was easy to find. The club's Mendip Residence was Mains' Barn, not a bad place, but!!! This has several disadvantages. It had to be shared with other cavers, and all cooking had an overpowering smell of paraffin and tractor oil (which still persists). Also sleeping accommodation was rather sketchy, bunks – hay – were all right, but one was liable to be awakened by (a) rat sniffing at snitch; (b) cow chewing socks; or (c) pitchfork nonchalantly placed in vicinity of gizzard. Finally, a most serious drawback – it was much too near Swildons Hole and other such inventions of the devil.

Having convinced oneself that a hut is required, the next thing is a site. The composition of this should be: - slag 30 p.c.; rubbish 30 p.c.; mud 30 p.c.; cowsh two splatters, and hard rock a trace. A plentiful supply of cows and their accessories should also be assured. Our site had the advantage of being 1 mile nearer the bus route than the barn and only a mile from a delectable hostelry B.E.C. rating b----- good, R.A.C. little known. A further advantage was its vast distance from Swildons, although a gaunt orifice known as Eastwater was uncomfortably close.

Now one is ready to seek a hut. This may seem simple, but oh! No! First one requires the Stanbury Detective Agency, Inc., who will discover a bankrupt tennis club willing to sell their palatial pavilion for a song. When the song has been sung, a large throng descends on Purdown, the home of this desirable residence, brandishing house-breaking implements, in the use of which they are acknowledged masters. At the word of command both nails are removed and the hut is dismantled. If Guy Fawkes day is in the offing, as will be the case, an armed guard must now be provided to dissuade small boys with smaller bonfires. Application to the North Somerset Yeomanry c/o Sgt. Sago Rice should result in the loan of guns – anti-tank 17 pdr. One, small boys for the scaring of, which should fill the bill.

The afore mentioned detective agency will then proved a 'lorry' to remove the wreckage to Mendip. The fact that the lorry will be devoid of springs matters not a jot, and provided that the least steep route to Mendip is used, the journey should be made in two days. Old tennis balls found under the hut may be used to repel boarders.

Having arrived on site, the next trick is to creosote the floors and lay them on the two boulders of the foundation. This may be enlivened by the introduction of Dan Hasell to remove the prop when somebody is creosoting underneath the floor. After tying up the walls and glueing on the roof, the great day has arrived – the official opening! – This is done by one Don Coase (now presumably accompanied by his better half) who becomes stormbound with Rasputin and is daringly rescued by the club at great expense.

Everything now lies dormant for a decade or so, but wait! – the exterior gets painted a catching shade of roofing felt, and numerous panes of glass are put into THE window. About this time the first bit of pamperment arrived with the acquisition of a self-willed petrol-electric generator, transport for which will be in the hands of one George 'Sparks' Lucy hindered by an ex – W.D. Ariel motor-cycle. This godsend/nuisance leads to the acquisition of an even more cussed radio set which will serenade all and sundry with the news in woggish.

Due to the increasing volume of our far-flung empire about this time, the accommodation becomes increasingly crowded, which necessitates the nailing of a number of picturesque notices to the walls to relieve stress concentrations especially round certain bunks. Overloading showed itself in a number of other ways, one of which was the delectable shear buckle pattern on one side of the hut which warranted investigation by both the W.P.L. and the Lesser Snoring Science Guild. Accommodation matters came to a head one day when Don Coase was to be seen asleep (?) on a slag heap and someone hung their hat on a hook that materialised into a cow which promptly filled two carburettors and an oil tank and departed. Thus a new site was obviously required.

(to be continued)

Part 2 of this account on Belfry History will appear in the November B.B. ED.

R.J. Bagshaw, Hon. Sec. 58, Pensford Road, Bristol. 4.

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