


MOLDYWARPS SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP.

REPORT—

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 67*

★  STOP PRESS.
NEW CAVE 1000 FT. THROUGH TRIP,
SINK TO RESURGENCE

The last M.S.G. 'Report' was brought out in March (Easter) 1967. Since then there have been many caving meets, mostly to systems in the Northern Dales, but occasionally further south. All these have been fully 'written up', and further information on them will be published in a Journal, at the end of the year. In the meantime - this newsletter, with a list of recent meets, and general news.

M.S.G. MEETS LIST Since March 1967. (and previous unreported meets).
No. in party.

3/2/67.	Cliff Beck. 5.
25/2/67.	Hard Level Gill. 4.
18/3/67.	Clints Caves, Ireshopeburn. 5.
28/3/67.	Swindalehead Cave. 4.
31/3/67.	Upper Hudeshope, Coving Sike Pot found. 2.
3/4/67.	Cliff Beck. 2.
8/4/67.	Hope Level Four Fathom Mine Cave. 8.
14/4/67.	Hard Level Gill. 4.
22/4/67.	W.S.R.S. System. 5.
29/4/67.	Mongo Gill Hole. 5.
6/5/67.	Smeltmill Beck Cave. 4.
13/5/67.	Littondale. 8.
	(Dowlabottom, Sleets Gill and Scoska Caves) $\frac{1}{2}$
20/5/67.	Ashgill Area. 4.
31/5/67.	Cliff Ridge, Great Ayton. 3.
	(rumours of natural caverns in the 'Elephant Hole', an old ironstone mine, were confounded)
10/6/67.	Borrowdale Beck Head. 2.
19/6/67.	Gods Bridge Cave. 2.
7,8,9/7/67.	Gods Bridge and Trough Scars. 4.
13/7/67.	W.S.R.S. System. 5. Surveying Trip.
15/7/67.	Kisdon Cave. 4.
22/7/67.	Tailbrigg Pots. 6.
30/7/67.	Bar Pot. 4.
3/8/67.	Windmore End and Swindalehead Caves. 4.
6/8/67.	Thackthwaite Beck Cave. 4.
12/8/67.	Swindale Pots. 3.
17/8/67.	Mallerstang area. 4.
18/8/67.	Swinnergill. 2.
20/8/67.	Simpson's Pot. 4.

The attendance at many of these trips has been low due to the affliction of all caving clubs - lack of transport. An improvement in this would mean the end of the sad but typically M.S.G. caving meet scenes - overloaded cars long ago in need of peaceful retirement, convoys of overloaded motorcycles, often parked by the side of a moorland road while one of their number undergoes essential repairs, and hitchhikers with huge packs and dirty boots asking puzzled motorists how near they were going to Flushiemere, Borrowdale Beck Head, Ogof F(fy?)nnonn Ddu(u?), etc. etc.

These newsletters will be sold at the exorbitant price of one shilling and sixpence each, and might help to refill the treasurer's little wooden box (even if they don't, all is not yet lost - Mr A. H----s is looking after eight shillings and sixpence for us).

Many thanks for the free publicity in the Spring 'Speleologist', spreading the fame of the M.S.G. It is a great pity that even the 'Speleologist' cannot spell our name right - since then the secretary has been receiving letters addressed to 'Moldywraps', 'Moldwrapys', 'Mouldywarps', 'Mouldwarpers' and other varied titles. Let it here be stated once more that the name is -

MOLDYWARPS SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP.

Thankyou.

M.S.G. EXTENSION IN GODS BRIDGE CAVE.

God's Bridge, a natural limestone arch, spans the normally dry bed of the River Greta about two and a half miles upstream (west) of Bowes. In wet weather the River flows under the Bridge, but in drier conditions the Greta sinks in its bed some distance upstream from the Bridge, and reappears two or three hundred yards downstream from the Bridge, from a boulder choke. A few years ago the Durham Cave Club explored a small cave entrance in a wooded disused quarry near the Bridge, and followed two hundred feet of filthy muddy crawl to a large stream passage, the subterranean course of the Greta. On a later expedition they found a second entrance ('the Exit') further upstream. This, then, was the cave as known until recently, a few hundred feet of stream passage, generally wide and low with complex oxbows and the occasional aven, the two muddy entrance crawls, and a small dry chamber with a suprising stalagmite. The cave ends upstream in a very narrow sump.

In the final half hour of Friday, 7th July, M.S.G. members C. Carson and J. Wilson, camping nearby, entered the cave by the 'Old' entrance, and on reaching the streamway, turned r. (downstream) to inspect the supposed downstream sump. To their surprise, there was no sump - apparently the party who 'discovered' the sump here must have been in the cave in wet weather, and presumed that the sump was permanent. The exultant explorers crawled on for a few yards, and then the roof began to rise again. Beyond, the stream passage continued for several hundred feet (the survey of the cave now under way has progressed enough to show that this passage follows anything but a direct line between the 'Old' cave and the resurgence). The passage is often large enough to permit easy walking, and many oxbows, one with a 25' high aven, were noted. The main streamway eventually sumped again - Jeff Wilson is sure that this is the same sump as in the short stream passage directly behind the resurgence, reached by a crawl from the river bank nearby - and due to lack of time, and unease about the weather - this part of the cave could be a death-trap after rain - the explorers cannot claim a thorough inspection of all the oxbows and side passages.

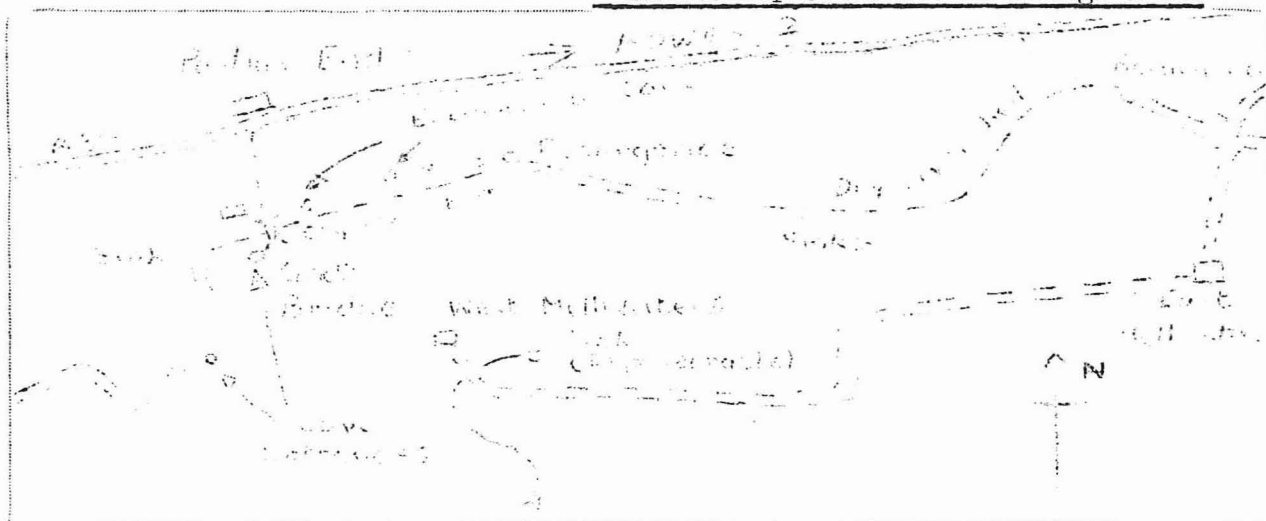
Other Caves at God's Bridge.

On the upstream side of the Bridge, on the south side of the River, is a small cave entrance, normally almost dry, but after rain discharging a powerful stream. This cave quickly develops into a constricted wet crawl, which the two members mentioned above have forced for around 90'. Some distance away, in a grassy mound set back from the river bank is a very constricted fissure leading into a small stream passage, probably the same system. Upstream splits into two, both too tight, downstream has not been forced. A very thin waterproof caver might force a through trip, of three or four hundred feet, here.

Near the 'Old' entrance to the main cave is another, rather larger, hole. This leads into a hands-and-knees crawl over a hard mud floor, round a few bends, to the cave in the river bank near the resurgence, from which another passage leads to a short length of low streamway behind the resurgence.

The River, as mentioned above, reappears at the Resurgence, and flows on towards Bowes for a few hundred yards, before suddenly vanishing again (again, only in dry weather), into impenetrable fissures. The final resurgence is from under tree-roots and a grassy bank. There are no obvious entrances which might give access to this second 'active' system, but Jeff Wilson has hopes of digging one.

Sketch Map of the God's Bridge area.



Northern Caving News.

Yorkshire, and other parts of Britain, seem to be enjoying a caving boom at the moment. Amidst the multitudinous discoveries, the Northern Dales have not been left out, although they have not yet produced anything on the same scale as is being found further south. The Kendal Cave Club have been at work at one of the promising sites mentioned by one of their members, David Heap, in his book 'Potholing under the Northern Pennines', and have laid claim to Shooting Palace Pot, 'quarter of a mile of narrow twisting passage' - trending away from Crackpot. Shooting Palace Pot is on the hillside about a mile or so east of the now famous Crackpot Cave, near a sink which is thought to feed the as yet undiscovered Master Cave behind Crackpot (which is potentially the longest cave in the country).

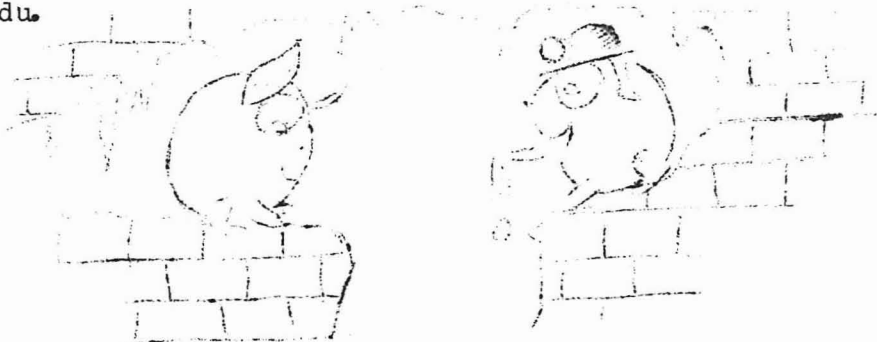
U.L.S.A. have extended Whirley Gill Hole, a proved Crackpot sink, but not in the direction of the Master Cave, for c.500' (the total length of this cave is now over 1000'). They have also been looking at the sinks for the Sargill - Cliff Force system, and have here opened West Side Pot, 175' long and 37' deep.

Another centre of action is the Faggergill area, on the north side of Arkengarthdale, where sinks over a wide area feed a large resurgence, Roughton Keld. An added enticement to work here is the fact that miners - their level now blocked and bulldozed - once broke into the 'Faggergill Master Cave', and found it of large size, with formations. U.L.S.A. are digging the Keld itself, and N.P.C. are said to be digging nearby, and other minor clubs and groups are interested in the region. Possibly this system will 'go' in the near future, as may Crackpot. (as I hope will some of the systems the M.S.G. are concentrating on).

An entrance was found into some of the elusive Flushmere Mine Caverns on a Durham Cave Club Meet (the actual exploration party consisted of one D.C.C. and three guest M.S.G. members). The route into the caverns, which are not those mentioned in 'P.U.', involves a none-too-safe 50' mine shaft and a long level, waist deep in water. Other mines in the northern dales may lead into cave systems previously unexplored, or only briefly entered by miners. John 'Chop' Longstaff and Gel. Holmes of the M.S.G. have found an interesting one somewhere in Swaledale.

Is there a recognised manner in dealing with dead sheep, cows and other animals that one always finds effectively blocking the most promising holes and sinks? The secretary recently found a whole row of pots in Teesdale, each neatly covered by a stone slab or rusty iron, each very promising and each with a pile of rotting carcasses. Explorers of Swindale Pots have had this trouble also - doubtless somewhere there is an entrance to a master cave, wide open, but from which cavers have been repelled by dead sheep thoughtfully thrown down by the farmer (Does this constitute 'burial' of the dead livestock, compelled by law?)

The 'classic' caving area of Crave, often thought to be almost 'worked out' as far as new discoveries are concerned, has recently yielded some very big systems. One or two more master caves have been entered, another, its one known entrance gated, is on the point of being entered by one of its sinks. Gingling Hole, on Fountains Fell, has been forced to a little deeper - 140' to 580'. A few more pots have gone down to well over 500' - gone are the days when Penyghent Pot was the deepest in England. There is some consolation to Yorkshire cavers in that, although they cannot claim an English depth record, neither can their old rival, Oxlow-Giants in Derbyshire. Without dispute the deepest hole now is in South Wales (if rumours are correct), and that is one that has not been 'bottomed', but rather forced up from the resurgence - Ogof Ffynon Ddu.



M.S.G. EXTENSION OF HARD LEVEL GILL CAVE.

The first M.S.G. expedition to Hard Level Gill Cave is described in the M.S.G. Report No.1. Since then there have been two more trips, and an extension has been found. On the first expedition a low passage on the r.hand side of the main passage, near its end, was forced, into a wider, damp and only slightly higher chamber. The second expedition to the cave followed a flat out crawl through pools onwards from here, at first parallel with the main passage and continuing in the same direction, then swinging away to the r. This passage narrowed and ended where it was divided into two horizontally by a leaf of rock. The aperture above the rock - quickly dubbed 'the letterbox' proved too tight for all but Steve Peaurt, who squeezed through, and returned some time later to inform the party, blissfully waiting in the pools of the crawl, of an extension.

The obstacle was passed by the larger members of the party on the third expedition to the cave, by digging out the gravel from beneath the leaf of rock, and squeezing under, on their backs in six inches of muddy water. Beyond was a narrower but rather higher passage, again apparently running roughly parallel with the main passage of the cave. This passage, mostly hands-and-knees crawling on a gravel and stones floor, continues for something over a hundred feet, with two small 'tubes', choked with gravel and mud, entering. There is a short section with dripping water where one can almost stand upright (and a welcome pool provides water for carbide lamps), and then a few more yards of crawling, to the end, a small 'chamber' with impassably tight continuations.

Distance is difficult to judge accurately in crawls such as this, but the total length of the extension must not be far short of 200'. The only object of interest found in the extension was a rotting jawbone, posing a problem in how it got into that part of the cave (presumably swept in by floods). The bone in question was donated to the treasurer's collection of sheep remains.

Hope Level Mine Cave - Access.

On a trip to this system, a week or so after the main expedition there (when the secretary's geological hammer was dropped - happily this was retrieved), M.S.G. members were shocked to find that a Cambridge University team of students were engaged in setting up a 'laser-beam seismograph' in the level, and fixing a heavy padlocked gate on the entrance. An impassioned protest letter was sent to Cambridge, and the reply informed us that the level had always been private, and that full permission for the seismographics had been granted. No cavers will be allowed in the mine, as slight vibrations will upset the seismograph readings (and presumably cavers cut in half by a laser beam could be an embarrassment). However, there is some slight chance of arranging the occasional expedition at 'suitable times' - for further details of this contact the secretary.

Many thanks to Dr. J.O.Myers, who has sent the M.S.G. a large survey of the system (the final few hundred feet of wet crawl, and the final chamber, have not been surveyed, I think).

Simpson's Pot.

I have been asked, by a triumphant M.S.G. party who succeeded in descending Simpson's Pot, to include a note to the effect that the pitch Aven Pot (25') does not need a ladder, and can be ascended (lifelined) on a rope, or by climbing the rock.

(Gaping Ghyll, however, can not.)

M.S.G. Finance.

As many reading this will know, the M.S.G. has a representative (Geoff Langthorne) in the Durham C.R.O. committee. Due to the affiliation of the Durham Cave Rescue with the C.R.O., each Durham club has been asked for a two guinea subscription. This must be paid.

It is the hope of Colin Carson, our temporary 'outside meets' secretary, to obtain C.N.C.C. membership for the M.S.G. This would entail M.S.G. expeditions to such systems as Lost Johns, Easgill etc. to be arranged, but again a fee, again two guineas, is entailed.

It has been suggested that these expenses could be covered by a subscription - a painful subject which until now we have managed to avoid. The immediate expenses could be covered if all active Moldywarps paid a 10/- subscriptions - for six months, or a year (?).

Opinions on this will be welcome.

Ayleburn Mine Cave.

It had been intended to arrange an M.S.G. expedition to this cave, near Alston - recently extended by the D.C.C., but it has come to our notice that the level which gave access to the cave has fallen in - so another of the larger caves of the Alston block is now inaccessible.

Meet Report - The 'W.S.R.S. System', Langdon Beck. 22/4/67.

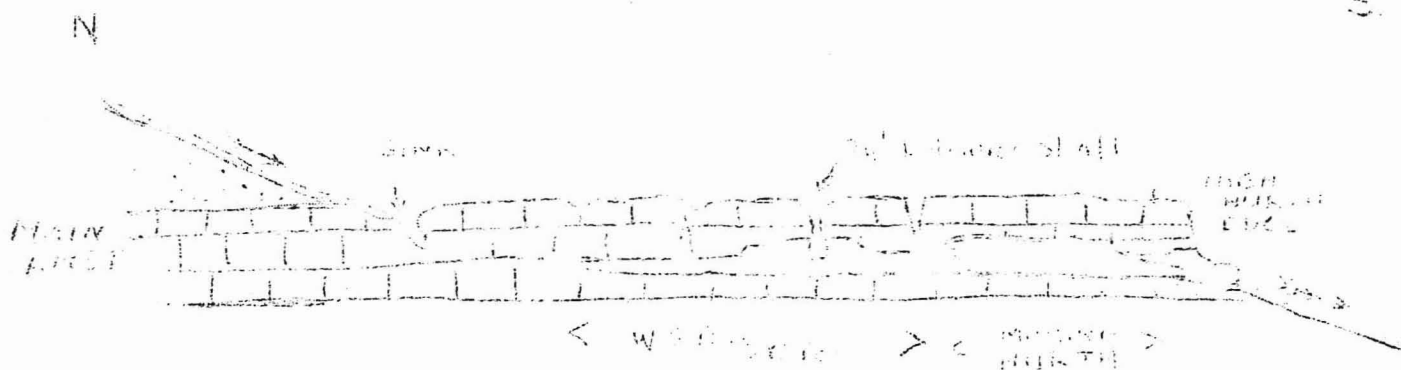
The entrance to this cave is in a small depression, beside a large rocky shakhole, on the limestone plateau above and behind Moking Hurth Cave. The stream which emerges from Moking Hurth flows through the system, but cannot be followed through into Moking Hurth, nor can a passage be forced to the sink. The sink, at the rear edge of the plateau, is in a narrow gravel choked rift.

The entrance shaft could perhaps be climbed, but it is easier to use a 25' electron ladder. The shaft drops into a north-south rift, ending within a few feet to the north, but to the south forming a 'T'-junction with a second rift. This soon ends also, but a small passage runs further south, via a muddy pool, and after a few yards emerges in the wall of a narrow but high streamway. Descending over stalagmite cascades one gains the passage floor. To the r. (downstream) the passage ends, but a narrow rift on the r. can be followed for twenty or thirty feet. The upstream passage continues for several hundred feet, with several right-angled bends. The first part of the stream passage is generally high enough to permit walking, but after a chamber, with fine formations, calcited blocks jammed in the rift force one to crawl in the stream, and beyond the passage lowers to a long crawl. There are a few yards more of higher passage, and then another crawl, at first over some 'quicksands', eventually becoming too low and narrow.

There are one or two side passages in the lower reaches of the streamway, one, on the l., at first almost blocked with formations, and ending in an aven. There are good formations throughout the system, cleaner and more profuse than those in the further reaches of Moking Hurth.

A later trip to the System was made for surveying purposes. One more visit should complete the survey.

Diagrammatic section through Moking Hurth/W.S.R.S. system



Cave Rescue.

The Moldywarps Speleo Group are now attached to the Durham Cave Rescue Organisation, and several members have their names down on the 'call-out' list.

As the majority of these members are students it has been decided that they will be on call-out only during their vacations. During college and university terms, their role will be taken over by the Newcastle University Caving Club.

The M.S.G. has paid £1 working capital to the local C.R.O., but it is now the policy of the D.C.R.O. that all members should also be members of the National C.R.O., this entailing a £2 membership fee which has not yet been forthcoming (see Finance).

It is recommended that all members who are on 'call out' should have a rucksack packed ready with clothing and food, and a fully charged cell to provide light for 24 hours.

G. Langthorne

Revision Note to Meets List.

One M.S.G. meet was unfortunately omitted from the list, and the three members concerned insist that their trip be noted - 13/8/67 Alum Pot, Lower Long Churn. They also claim to have forced through the Upper Long Churn system.

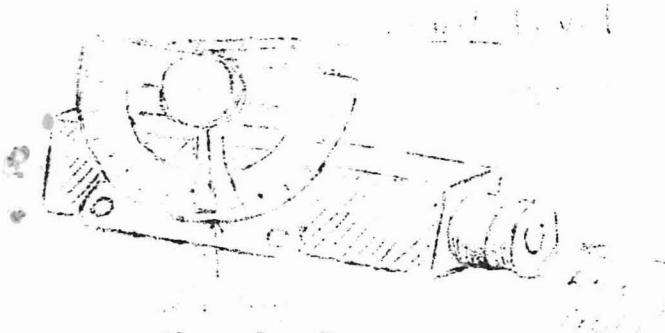
Cave Surveying.

It is the moral obligation of a caving club or group that discovers a new system, or an extension to a known system, to survey their discovery - if one is not positive about 'first exploration', some satisfaction can be derived from being sure about 'first survey'. The M.S.G. at the present time have done little surveying, and I suggest that some should be practiced, in readiness for rapid surveys of new discoveries. At the moment the sole surveying equipment (bought by the secretary - treasurer please note) is a 'Silva' Compass - accurate enough for Grade 3 surveys, and a 5 yard length of non-shrink non-stretch plastic covered clothesline, tagged every yard. Experimenting with measuring line in the form of 7 yards of small stainless steel chain (intended for a common domestic use) proved unsuccessful, and the chain was not worth the embarrassment involved in buying it, or the financial outlay. With the present equipment, such as it is, a Grade 3 survey should be possible. The secretary and 'Chop' Longstaff are at the moment convinced they have a natural gift for surveying, after their sketch plan (rough bearings and estimate everything else) of Sowan Burn stream passage, when checked against a Grade 4 N.P.C. Survey, proved suprisingly accurate.

Acetate sheet, written on with a chinagraph crayon, is essential in surveying wet or dirty systems - hard experience has proved that notepaper, written on with pencil, will not wash after having been used in, of all places, the 'Old' entrance crawl at God's Bridge. For drier caves a notebook, hard backed, and kept tightly shut when not in use by elastic bands, can be used.

For measuring angles of elevation and depression in a cave the little instrument known as the Abney level is useful. It is also expensive. Heights of passages, and lengths of constricted tunnels where use of measuring line is impossible, can be measured by a stick, of known length, and painted with a scale.

When one is satisfied that angles and distances have been recorded, and the form of the passage sketched in, one can conclude underground work, and start plotting the survey - this should be done on squared paper. A list of the conventional signs used in cave



Abney level.

surveying is to be found in 'British Caving' (Cullingford). The Grade of Survey should be stated on the finished product - the Cave Research Group gradings are as follows :-

- 1 - Rough plan from memory, not to scale.
- 2 - Sketch plan, directions and distances estimated (made on spot).
- 3 - Rough plan-survey. Compass accurate to within ten degrees, lengths by marked cord or stick.
- 4 - Compass graduated in single degrees used, compass error not known.
- 5 - Calibrated prismatic compass, metal or steel tape.
- 6 - Cal. pris. compass and clinometer on tripods, chain or steel tape.
- 7 - Theodolite used, survey as accurate as is possible.

It is useless to hope for a high degree of accuracy on a survey made to a low grade, and can be dangerous - if you measure a sump on your survey as 12'9⁵/₈", and realise after you have sent Jeff Wilson off to dive it that due to the error of your survey it could be anything from 15" to 150' long.

A finished survey can give a clue as to where a cave could be extended - if ripple markings on walls and floor have been noted, and it is known that the steepest facet of each ripple points 'downstream', the direction of a former stream can be found. A sudden increase in the height of a passage might mean there is an unnoticed inlet passage in the roof, a passage might be seen to be heading to towards another nearby system, so that digging might produce a 'through trip' (this has happened on Mendip - surveying showed the two series in the Longwood-August system to be very close, and a dig then connected them, by-passing a notorious wet chimney).

This article can be concluded with a sketch-survey (Grade 2) made of Lynkirk Cave, an easy system near Stanhope, showing the various speleological conventional signs. The total length of the 'through' cave is about 300'.

Lynkirk Cave, Stanhope.

