

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING CLUB

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See back page for Dan-yr-Ogof Discoveries.

With the excessive rainfall of the last few month one wonders whether the Club might be more appropriately called "The Sub Aqua Club", however the exceptional rainfall has done little to dampen the enthusiasm of the majority of the Club members.

From the Old Ham area comes news of a push into the Lambsquay workings by Sid Cooper and Rod Stewart, and later by Rod and Rex with the discovery of an extreme emergency escape route. Many of us, myself included still have to familiarise ourselves with the escape route from Railway Churn through Old Ham Shaft. As most of us are aware, we have for the last eight months been pushing a back entrance dig to Old Sling, and chiefly due to the persistence of the gentlemen Bailey this dig is at last beginning to show some promise. Progress is held at the moment by the "big roof fall", however we can rest assured that the Bailey brothers will not allow a roof fall to discourage them. After passing the roof fall will found a seventy foot chain shaft known by the old miners as "Jacobs Ladder", Mr Watkins the ex-manager of New Dun, last used this back entrance some forty years ago, and when approached for information seemed very pleased that our Club is so interested in Sling and the iron mines in general.

Through some of the nastiest country yet encountered in the mines, has been a push towards Easter by Rod, Colin and Rex. After several Tuesday evenings trips they were finally stopped a short distance from Red Pit Shaft by a very loose roof fall, so they explored the are completely, looking for a by-pass. Two roads lead to Red Pit Shaft and both were found to be blocked with no hope of bypassing either blockage, and our friends arrived home about 3 am more than a little disappointed with their findings. They are confident, however, that a mass attack by a large party could force the first fall and make it safe. This would not of course guarantee the way to Easter open, for it could still be blocked by further falls. Tony Day with members help has surveyed the main part of the new route in order to get a pin point location which should tie in with our present maps of the area.

From Mr Howell of the Gavellers Office Coleford, comes news of a big surface collapse in the wood in Noxon Park. The surface has dropped low enough to reveal the workings in several places so this may well require investigation.

Water Board Test Pumping Programme.

The North West GLOS Water Boards programme was completed on March 11th after 73.6 million gallons had been displaced with a depression of the initial water level by 18.97 feet. Ray Wright has received a copy of the Water Board report and this makes extremely interesting reading, so we look forward to an article from Ray covering this in our long promised journal. One disturbing factor was the discolouration caused by heavy rainfall, and to avoid the heavy cost of a filtration plant, the Water Board may use Buckshaft instead of Shakemantle as a permanent pumping site. Identification photographs have been sent to the Water Board and Jim expects to hear any day, the all clear for Green Bottom Water Adit.

H.M. FORESTRY COMMISSION

We now have received official permission from the Forestry Commission to cave and prospect on commission land, provided, of course, we abide by the rules. These rules have been read aloud at two general meetings. However, should any member still feel in doubt, then he or she is quite at liberty to contact Jim for a copy, and I am sure Jim will be only too pleased to oblige. In view of the difficulty of obtaining adequate insurance, The Deputy Surveyor waived the clause requesting it, providing an indemnity was signed by the Club Committee.

MUSEUM PROJECT

Members are aware that interested bodies throughout the area have been contacted by Jim with a view to setting up a Forest of Dean Museum. Response as one might expect, has been overwhelming and at present we are awaiting news from Dr. Cyril Hart, the senior verderer, to inform us of the Forestry Commission's decision concerning the canteen building at the Northern Colliery.

GEOLOGY COURSE

The Geology Course held at Cinderford Technical College under the expert tutelage of Mr. R. S. Burrows, was well attended by the Club and G.S.S. members. With a rare sense of humour and unlimited patience Mr. Burrows led the class into the deeper levels of this very involved and in view of the interest shown, it was proposed that a course be arranged next season on mineralogy with laboratory work, such as blow pipe, flame, and closed tube tests, thin specimens under the petrological microscope, and the geometry of crystal etc. With Mr Burrows gift of simplifying difficulties, this should be a very interesting and enjoyable course.

(It has long been a pet ambition of yours truly to take colour photographs of thin specimens under the polarising microscope, yet, as Mrs Beeton said when preparing jugged hare "first obtain the hare" . I still need a good microscope). Check under forthcoming events for dates of field trips. Mr Burrows has expressed a wish to join us underground and this is being arranged.

ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH WALES

Members are again very grateful to the South Wales Caving Club for the use of their headquarters recently when members, particularly those who have wet suits, spent a very sporting weekend under the leadership of Colin Graham. On the Saturday Colin was unable to obtain access to Dan-yr-Ogof so a very sporting trip was had in Tunnel. On Sunday, at Colins request two members saw the entrance series of Ogof-Ffnon-Ddu, three sampled the aqueous delights of Bridge and White Lady Caves and the remaining seven with Colin as leader were blown by a force eight gale the three and a half miles over the mountain to Pant-mawr-Pot. A welcome additional member to the party was the charming Miss Eileen Davies (S.W.C.C.) whose presence, no doubt, enhanced members views of the fine formations. On their return the party were struggling into the wind and were very glad to arrive back at the headquarters.

Preparations by South Wales members for the Belinks Pit expedition are proceeding well to plan , and in view of the difficulties experienced on the last expedition, more heavy equipment is being designed and built. We wish them every success this time. See forthcoming Events for future trips to South Wales.

OLD HAM COLLAPSE

Nearer to home we have news of a diversion in Old Ham. Derek Appleing and Tony after finding a large boulder had slipped from above the fall on the main route in the entrance series, decide to blast in the remainder. Members should now use the escape route, those are not familiar with should turn back about twenty yards from the blockage and proceed down over to the right. After reaching the bottom of the slope, work round to the left to regain the main route.

The water level in New Dun appears to be almost up to the first level and the same can be said of Wigpool. If these high water levels are partly due to the cessation of pumping by the Coal Board then it may be some time before we are able to visit the lower parts of these mines again.

Calling at the Gavellers office on the 28th February yours truly was informed by Mr Howell of the water shortage experienced by the Beecham's Group factory, (previously Known as Carters) last summer. About 100,000 gallons daily are pumped from one of the Easter shafts and used for cooling purposes, being pumped to waste eventually into the river Wye. At one time last summer the water level was just above the pumps, so to save this water Mr Howell suggested returning it to a hole near the main Coleford - St Briavels road, where it could flow down dip and eventually reach the original water level. He also suggested that our Club be approached to assist with the location and exploration of the hole. I met the Chief Engineer at Carters, reassured him of the feasibility of the suggestion and agreed that we would investigate the hole at any time to their convenience, however, the rainfall appears to have saved the day and so the problem has been temporarily shelved. Carters will contact us should the situation again arise. Of interest to some members might be - Depth of shaft 405 ft. Depth to pumps 383 & 393 ft. One interesting fact arising was a variation in water level coinciding with the tides.

MOROCCAN EXPIDITION SLIDES

Thanks to Colin members were able to see all the colour slides taken by the expedition, their journey to Morocco, formations underground, camp life and the banquet given in their honour. After seeing the slides we can appreciate the amount of effort and organisation needed in order to make an expedition of this nature a success. A big headache, must have been the huge quantity of food, luggage and equipment necessary, one vehicle had both rear springs broken, however the expedition managed to cope with all repairs en route. (Keith is now having his car resprayed after being sand and mud blasted).

Also shown were a selection of slides of Northern interest taken by Ken Holt, an expedition member from Yorkshire who has a rare sense of humour. Ken has mastered the technique of photographing big places and spaces with flash powder, the only medium he has found to be satisfactory. When pressed for details he was very helpful and seeing that many members take cameras underground I repeat them here. Flash powder is in six shilling jars and Ken assured me that a quarter of a jar would illuminate the Dean Cinema to the back of the stalls, making allowance for the reflectivity of the walls. This of course an open shutter technique, and the flash powder should be placed behind a large boulder or projection in order not to blind the camera. Obviously this is mainly experimental, and no hard and fast rules can be made. After seeing Ken's shot of Caping Ghyll lit from top to bottom it is obvious that this is a technique worth mastering. Ken at the moment is using Perutz film only, it appears to have the most latitude and warmest colour tones, however it must be sent to Austria for processing, the English processing depot having spoilt so many good shots for Ken that he now sends his films to Austria. He even had them returned from the English depot with teapot stains !!!

Plans for the 1967 Moroccan Expedition are already under way and Colin hopes to fly members out and save time wasted on overland routes. We feel that this will be an even greater success. I forgot to mention a shot of Rod fire breathing, did he get his beard singed ?

We would like to thank Mr F Edwards, Rank Xerox, for the loan of the Aldis 1000watt projector.

COPPER IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

In conversation with Mr P Harris, a well known Monmouth historian, we were discussing the copper ore mined in The Dean from 1673 - 78, somewhere above Redbrook. Mr Harris would very grateful if we can find the exact location of where this took place. If Mr Howell has little knowledge of this it might be possible by local inquiry and diligent searching to find this location.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome Mr Brain of Rank Xerox and Mr E Cartmell of Abenhall School to the membership list. Mr Brain is very keen on Pre-Historic Britain, and has some of the finest flint arrowheads in the country. Mr Cartmell has many interests, and a fossil collection that has to be seen to be believed. We are grateful to him for the semi-permanent loan of a miners dial, and with a little repair we hope to soon put this instrument into commission.

EXPLOSIVE LICENCE

Roger has obtained an explosive licence which will be more than useful, especially should Rex anytime find occasion inconvenient. This now means we have three members of the Club who hold a licence.

FINANCE

We are very pleased with the grant we received from the Youth Organisation, obtained mainly with help of Mr Gratton the Area Youth Organiser, because we have of course a junior membership in the Club, Mr Gratton was agreeably surprised to find junior members on an equal footing with the seniors, and with junior representation on the Club Committee. Underground, and with helmets on, there is nothing to distinguish juniors from seniors, and of course we welcome juniors to the Club. Junior enthusiasm is a thing we cannot have to much of.

NATURAL DIGS

There are at present very few natural possibilities in the Dean area. Malcolm is occasionally digging at Milkwall Quarry Cave, and the G.S.S. will again be pushing Kiln Hole at Joyford. This latter dig is 80 ft deep, and has now turned into a horizontal passage full of silt, and is probably one of the most promising naturals in the area.

Tie up with Tony Day . Glos 67282.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS
GEOLOGICAL FIELD TRIPS WITH Mr R S BURROWS

Sun. May 8th - Ludlow . Meet near bridge at 11 am. Bring lunch.
Wed. May 18th - Forest of Dean. Meet at Cinderford Tech College. 6.45 pm.
Sun. May 22nd - Malvern. Meet at Wych Cutting . 11. Am. Bring lunch.

TRIPS TO SOUTH WALES

Fri. May 13th - 12 beds booked at, S.W.C.C. for weekend.
Fri. July 8th - = = = = = = = = = = = =

Programme will arranged later depending on leaders etc. Should it be possible to arrange entry to Dan-yr-Ogof, only those wearing wet suite will be allowed.

Jim will require one weeks notice from all members wishing to avail themselves of accommodation at the S.W.C.C. headquarters. This is in order that we may inform the S.W.C.C. if we require less than the number of beds booked. Demand for beds is likely to be higher this year and it is unfair to book in advance and not fill them.

DAN-YR-OGOF DISCOVERIES

Truly a surprising week. In view of the various conflicting reports from the daily newspapers, radio and television, yours truly was able to contact Rod on Friday evening for a first hand account. With his usual reticence Rod was unwilling to volunteer any information, except to say that the new discovery was indescribable and the conversation continued with me asking the questions and Rod doing his best to provide the answers.

It would appear that the party consisting of Eileen Davies, Bruce Foster, Alan Coase, Bill Little, Rod Stewart and Colin Graham were well beyond the lakes when Eileen and Bruce decided to investigate the Long Crawl on their own. After several hundred feet of tight crawling they negotiated a tight hole about fifteen feet deep, into what may prove to be the biggest and most magnificent system in Britain. After a hasty look round they rejoined the party to break the news whereupon the whole party went as far as time would allow into the new extension, finally emerging after some fourteen hours underground.

Rod assured me that up to Friday they had been about a mile and half roughly in a straight line, with side extensions opening everywhere. He mentioned the waterfall but did not confirm the height (100 ft) , however, he did say that his Nife cell spotlight would not reach the roof in many places. Ha also mentioned incredibly long straws from roof to floor, with helictites growing off them. I am sure every Club member was thrilled at the news of this discovery, and will join me in heartily congratulating Eileen and Bruce for their magnificent effort.

John E Lewis.
Hon, Chairman and Editor.
Springfield, Mansons Cross,
Monmouth, Mon.

LATE NEWS

This Sunday 17th , Roger, Laurence and David, removing a boulder, in the outcrop working at Nancy's Farm Wigpool, found a healthy draught, so squeezing through, they more than doubled the present known area. Checking the record with Roger we find that since our November newsletter, some sixty four trips underground have been enjoyed by members.