



ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN
CAVING CLUB

OCTOBER 1967

NEWS LETTER

NO. 8

CONTENTS

General News.

A newsletter per month.
A.G.M.
Mossdale Caverns Tragedy Appeal.
August Bank Holiday at Herberts Quarry.
Dan-yr- Ogof Leaders.
Ogof Nos Hir.
Age of iron mine formations.

Recent Club Activities.

P.G.L. Trips.
Wolverhampton School Trip.
Piers Plowman School Trip.
Cave Rescue Practice.
Biblins Log Cabin Opening.
Cave Rescue Groups A.G.M.
New Resurgence.
Oakwood Mill Deep Iron Mine.
Old Ham Iron Mine.
Redbrook Culvert.
Ladder Building.

Future Activities

8th October - Visitors trip.
19th October - P.G.L. Staff trip.
22nd October - Day trip to Pfynton Ddu
28th October - Cave Research Group A.G.M.
2nd November - Club A.G.M.
4th November - Cave Rescue Bar-be-que.
12th November - Salesian School trip.
24th November - Cave Rescue Group Dinner/Social.

14th October - Tony Day's marriage to Jean Sherrat.

Who's Who.

Mossdale Caverns Tragedy Appeal Letter.

GENERAL NEWS SECTION

The R.F.D.C.C. is now approaching its third birthday and as can be seen from the cover this is only the eighth newsletter to be issued in that three years. A proposed club journal has never got beyond the talking stage due to a complete absence of any publishable articles from the club members. To overcome this lack of information about the club and its activities, it is now intended to produce a newsletter every month even if there is nothing to go in it, with a front page and a blank contents page we can issue at least two pages ! This issue contains an article on formation ages in iron mines in the Forest of Dean by Roger Bailey and it is hoped that more members will be encouraged to submit articles for future publication. We promise not to alter anything that is submitted unless it is obscene or libellous. I think everyone will realise that there is no shortage of subjects for a newsletter when the last bumper edition was issued only a month ago.

As a further step to producing articles for the newsletter, it is intended to organise at least one trip for beginners each month and one trip away from the Forest. In the past beginners have tended to tag onto trips made by more experienced cavers and this has been unfair to both, particularly where the more experienced caver has had to wet suit on. Details will be given in the future events section of the newsletter each month and any club member willing to lead either beginners trips or trips outside the Forest is asked to contact a committee member, if he doesn't contact you first.

NOTE - None of the above promises have anything to do with the fact that the A.G.M. is only a month away and the elections for new committee members takes place then.

A.G.M.

All club members have had notification that the A.G.M. takes place on Thursday 2nd November at the Butchers Arms, Clearwell in the upstairs room. Lately the club meetings have tended to start later and later but on Thurs 2nd Nov the meeting will start promptly at 8 pm and if you aren't there you will miss your chance to vote for your favourite committee member, or to not vote for your x ? - &x committee member. This year it is hoped to get the elections and business over much more quickly and to pass on to much more important drinking and story swapping. This does not mean that we have come to an arrangement with the local constabulary over Castle-ing (breathalyser tests start after this months meeting)

MOSSDALE CAVERNS TRAGEDY APPEAL

Enclosed at the end of this newsletter is a copy of an appeal received a couple of weeks ago and it is reproduced as requested. The letter is aimed at individual caver and not at complete clubs and it is therefore up to each club member to decide what action to take and to write direct to the persons concerned if he or she wishes to.

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY AT HERBERTS QUARRY

John Elliot, Roger and Laurence Bailey, Daph and Jim Hay spent most of the August bank holiday in South Wales 'digging' in a small resurgence cave in Herberts Quarry. The name of this cave cannot be mentioned in this publication as it was not some peculiar Welsh name as we first thought but was obtained from a Biology book. The cave was filled almost completely up to the roof with an evil smelling mud mixed with diesel oil that had apparently soaked down from the quarry above. Two days were spent in puddling this mud out of the entrance and resulted in about 20ft of passage (Diarrhoea Passage) terminating in a small chamber. The way on through the chamber was blocked with very hard packed clay which couldn't be shifted by any means but a good drought and a small amount of water was entering through an aperture in the roof. This was enlarged and led into a tight passage with sharp bends that couldn't be passed without extensive blasting so the work was left at that stage. The cave is about 30ft below the quarry floor and shows no sign of shattering from quarry work and so remains an attractive dig in an area that has many surface signs of underground systems.

The third day of the holiday was spent at Penwyllt helping at the Engine House dig on a hot sunny day where the cable winding winch was much more dangerous than the dig itself.

DAN-YR-OGOF LEADERS

The following weekend was officially arranged at Penwyllt to introduce intended leaders to the management and to have familiarisation trips in the cave itself. Our nominated leaders were Roger Bailey and John Elliott but other club members went along for the weekend. Unfortunately the water in Dan-yr-Ogof was too high for safety so the leaders trips had to be cancelled. As an alternative, Roger Solari, Roger and Laurence Bailey and John Elliott led by Martin Gough of S.W.C.C. helped to carry the radio location gear into the Clay Series of Ffynnon Ddu 2, in an effort to place the position of the Engine House dig within the cave. Laurence unfortunately slipped when carrying the heavy radio in Cwm - Dwr Quarry cave and ricked his ankle and so had to return to the surface. On the trip, which lasted 12 hrs no radio contact was made but a fluorescent dye put down the dig was traced underground.

OGOF NOS HIR (With apologies to S.W.C.C. if the spelling is wrong)

As a direct result of the successful dye test in the Engine House dig, S.W.C.C. members went back with the radio equipment and this time established contact. After getting a fairly strong signal in the dig itself, a much stronger signal was obtained nearby on an innocent grass bank. Two hours digging was sufficient to make direct contact with those inside to come out and complete the first round trip, Work was done through the whole of the following night to make the entrance safe and sizeable and so hence the name - Ogot Nos Hir or cave of the long night.

This new entrance now means that there is an escape route in flood conditions and that anyone injured in an accident can be brought out without going through Cwm Dwr Quarry Cave.

AGE OF IRON MINE FORMATIONS

During recent attempts to reach the Easter Mine by digging down through north of Old Bow Iron Mine, some very fine formations were discovered. The circumstances on which these formations were found, together with the archaeological evidence, makes it possible to put some sort of age to Iron Mine formations.

The formations are similar to those in the Wigpool Iron Mine, fine white stalactites and stalagmites - some of the stalactites being up to 18 inches long and 3 - 4 inches in diameter at their roots and the stalagmites up to 8 inches high and about the same diameter as the stalagmites. In the same area are also many 'fried eggs' and some small 'bacon slice' curtains. The formations were found in workings which had been blocked off as they were worked out, by miners piling up deads etc, and it is very unlikely that they had been entered since the miners left them.

The archaeological evidence is in the clay pipes of identical type, one of which was found on a level above the formations and one on the formations level. Clay pipes are about the only dateable objects found in the mines, the pipes being between 150 and 200 years old. If, as seems likely, the formations are of the same age as the pipes, two conclusions may be drawn :-

1. Calcite is deposited much more quickly in mines than in caves, the 'thousand year per cubic inch' quoted by the show caves being right out for mines.
2. Old Bow is not more than 200 years old and similarly the formation areas in Wigpool Mine are of the same age where they could have been worked from the old Columbus Pit.

The arguments for and against the conclusions above are numerous and could fill a book on their own and perhaps further newsletters will show further ideas on the subject from members.

By the way, we dug straight back into Old Bow !

P.G.L. TRIPS

The last P.G.L. trip for this year took place at the beginning of September to the relief of those involved in leading the parties down Old Ham. In the three months that the trips took place, 268 people of all ages, shapes, sizes and sexes were taken underground for a period of two hours without a single accident or complaint. The trips have made a large number of friends for the club, not the least being Paul, the scout with one leg mentioned in the last newsletter, who covered the route in the mine unaided.

WOLVERHAMPTON SCHOOL TRIP

On Sunday 17th September the club took a party of 51 on the standard tourist trip into Old Ham. This was not in one single party as otherwise we would have had some just getting in as others were trying to leave, but in three separate parties at different times of the day. The group was Ward's county Secondary School, Wolverhampton on one of their adventure outings and this included an 8 mile walk in 4 hours before even starting on the caving trip.

PIERS PLOWMAN CLUB TRIP

On Sunday 10th September, Piers Plowman Club from Malvern paid us a return visit and spent about 3.5 hours in Old Bow. There were about 12 in the party including Dave who carried an Everest rucksack, a transistor radio, a camera and a tape recorder on the whole trip. Some one must have given him a funny idea about caving because the rucksack contained a full survival kit including dried and tinned apricots. A pleasant evening was spent down the Butchers Arms afterwards.

CAVE RESCUE PRACTICE

The planned surface rescue practice and training session on Sunday 24th September had to be transferred underground to escape from the weather. Not all the planned program was achieved, partly because of the late start and partly due to the low numbers at the meet. Following this practice it was decided to make the next meet an actual rescue practice at a time yet to be decided and to leave stretcher lashing and first aid practice to the two groups individually.

BIBLINS LOG CABIN OPENING

The club was asked by the Youth Authorities to provide an exhibit on Forest of Dean caving at the official opening of the log cabin on Sunday 24th September, and so the joint G.S.S. and R.F.D.C.C. caving exhibit with some additions was set up. It unfortunately rained most of the day but a good deal of interest was shown in the exhibit and a number of groups asked for organised trips down a mine. Three foolish members of the club also went swimming in the Wye in wet suits, one contracting a severe cold and another a dose of Wye Tummy. This swimming in fast water was great fun and gave the basis for an idea which is given in the future events section of this newsletter.

CAVE RESCUE GROUPS A.G.M.

The A.G.M. of the English and Welsh Cave Rescue Groups was held at Bristol on Sat 30th September and was well attended by members of the club. A number of the talks were given on Cave Rescue Groups, or the lack of them, abroad but also included a talk by two Belgians on the Belgian Cave Rescue Service which is backed by their Red Cross Service and sounds very well organised. The main subject of interest was two talks on artificial fibre ropes, one by a representative of British Ropes Ltd and the other by Melvyn Davies, a well known caver who is also an expert on I.C.I. artificial fibre ropes. Some fine slides of Belgian caves and also of the Berger were seen during the talks.

NEW RESURGENCE

An apparently previously unrecorded resurgence has been found in the Wye valley about a mile down stream of the Slaughter resurgence. It appears through hardcore from under a railway embankment and the flow is approximately half that of the slaughter. The temperature if the water has been measured at 47 degrees F, when the river water was at 53 degrees F. More work is to be done on the resurgence but it appears that it is one of the few streams that was not culverted under the railway.

OAKWOOD MILL IRON MINE

Further exploration of this mine continues, especially as it is probably the best chance of getting anywhere near the subsidence at court farm that we have been asked to look at. The mine has also shown itself to be rich in mining relics including an old dram truck and a long drill bar.

OLD HAM IRON MINE

The lost signalling gong has been rediscovered and has been brought out for storage in the castle by Phil Schwarz and Mike Howell. All club members visiting the mine are asked to do a bit of cleaning up as a number of very messy parties have been down there this year. Everyone should also note that the main route into the mine is now dangerous as a large flake of the roof has shifted. This is just beyond Balcony Passage and the tight bit, where there is a 5ft drop onto the floor.

REDBROOK CULVERT

The message reached the club that a Redbrook landowner, Mr Davey had a tunnel of some sort on his land that he would like looked at. At first it was thought that this was the same tunnel called 'The Big Well' that the water board have asked us to look at some time but it proved to be entirely different. When club members got there it was found to be the artificial underground water course of a brook used to drive a mill wheel. The tunnel is about 120 yards long and has a brick built roof on top of stone sides and the owner intends to put the wheel in order and to generate his own power.

LADDER BUILDING

This still continues at a slow but steady pace and it is hoped that improved methods will speed this up in the next few weeks. Building takes place every Wednesday evening at the castle so all members with spare time are asked to turn up and help with ladder or the castle. Total ladder finished so far is about 250ft out of the complete order of 1200ft.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Sunday 8th October - Visitors Trip

A trip for a mixed party of friends and possible future club members to either Old Ham or Old Bow Iron Mines. See Ted Lewis if Interested.

THURSDAY 19TH October - P.G.L. Staff Trip

This is to be a "thank you" trip for P.G.L. staff that either didn't get on one this summer trips or want to go again. The trip is open to any club members that want to go to Old Bow and will be followed by supper at the Butchers Arms afterwards. See Ted Lewis or Jim Hay if interested.

SUNDAY 22nd October - Day Trip To Ffynnon Ddu 1.

This trip is open to all club members but is primarily for those that have not yet anything but iron mines. Total party size is limited to 12 so book early to avoid disappointment. Names to Jim Hay if interested.

Saturday 28th October - Cave Research Group A.G.M.

This is being held in Cheltenham this year and is to be followed on the Sunday by a surface and an underground trip in the Forest. The club is not officially involved in these trips.

Thursday 2nd November - Club A.G.M.

As previously notified, the A.G.M. is on this day at 8pm in the Butchers Arms at Clearwell.

Saturday 4th November - Cave Rescue Bar-Be-Que.

Similarly to last year, the Bar-Be-Que is to be held in the Bar-Be-Que Churn at The British Mine and it is hoped to make it a much more grand affair. For this reason members will be required to put in some work in the Churn to extend the existing area to make room for the expected 300 cavers and friends. This year it is hoped to lay on much more entertainment and more food and there has even been a whisper that belly dancers may appear.

Sunday 12th November - Salsian School Trip.

A visitors trip for the above school down Old Ham.

Friday 14th October - Tony Day's Marriage to Jean Sherrat.

A sad occasion to record with another active member of the club to have his caving Activities curtailed. Still, at least he is keeping it within the caving world and will be able to take Jean with him on the few trips we shall see him on in the future. The club's best wishes go to both for the future.

Mentioned previously under the Biblins Log Cabin account are ideas that seem to have caught on with some members of the club. That is, the idea of a swimming race - in wet suits - down the Wye over a course from Lydrook to the Biblins. Rules would be completely open except for deliberate drowning of another competitor and no taking short cuts overland at the horse-shoes. As no one in there right minds can be expected to stay afloat for the estimated 2 hours of the race, any sort of float or raft will be permitted. Entries will be accepted from members without wet suits and they will be certified as soon as they enter the water. Those competitors with wet suits will be certified as they leave the water. No date has been fixed yet but the longer we wait, the colder the Wye gets so those interested please let a committee member have your name. We already have four names but they don't know it yet.

WHO'S WHO

Who found that by swimming as fast as he could go that he could just stay in position under the Biblins bridge as mini-skirts were crossing.

Who very nearly got booked into the Y.W.C.A. instead of the Y.M.C.A.

Who found that a Land Rover is not as bomb proof as they thought.