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ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN
CAVING CLUB

FEBRUARY 1963

NEWS LETTER
NO. 10

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GENERAL NEWS SECTION

This newsletter is very much overdue because of a number of reasons - it had originally been typed for the December meeting but lack of printing facilities prevented it from going out. Full apologies to all those expecting a newsletter and not getting one, and please make allowances for anything in this one that might read awkwardly but it was mainly typed three months ago.

Foot and mouth disease brought all caving to a halt at the end of November in the Forest and in all the other caving areas.

The Forest became infected from outbreaks nearby but fortunately it did not spread to the sheep in the Forest itself. The committee Recommended that all caving stopped and, as far as is known, no caving took place in in the Forest while it was infected.

The position now is that the Forest is no longer infected but still remains a restricted area. Caving has started again in a limited way and is restricted to land remote from agricultural land.

This means Mines such as British Mine, Wigpool and Oakwood Mill can now be entered but that Old Ham and Old Bow should be avoided.

It was hoped that the halt in caving would bring increased numbers to the Castle to help with the rebuilding but it didn't work out that way and the work came to a halt as well. The club started building 1200ft of ladder about a year ago and so far about 650ft have been completed. Of the remainder, 300ft belongs to the club so unless this is completed, there will be no ladder available this summer. It was originally estimated that the ladder would cost in the region of £8 per 100ft and it has worked out at £2 for a 25ft length - this is slightly cheaper than the first estimate as 25ft lengths are proportionally dearer than 100ft lengths.

Materials are urgently needed at the Castle - as is labour and any of the following would most welcome :- Paint of any description - wood for building or burning - single beds - back boiler - hot water tank - large sink - hardboard - water pipes of plastic or metal.

Club fees are overdue as from 1st February and this will be the last newsletter for those not rejoining.

Fees - Senior members (over 18) 15/-d per annum.

Junior members (under 18) 7/6d per annum.

All fees paid before 1st February will entitle the member to a personal membership card signed by both the club secretary and the chairman at no extra cost.

A G M and Committee

The third annual general meeting of the club was held on November 2nd at the Butchers Arms and the following committee was elected :-

Chairman	Mr J E LEWIS Springfield Mansons Cross Monmouth.
Secretary	Mr J Hay 10 Park Walk Chase Park Ross-on-Wye.
Treasurer	Mr R E Bailey Rose Cottage Aston Crews Lea Nr Ross-on-Wye Hfd's
Librarian	Mr M Howell 14 Woodville Avenue Mile End Nr Coleford Glos
Records Officer	Mr P Schwarz 12 South Rd Broadwell Coleford Glos
Equipment Officer	Mr L Bailey Rose Cottage Aston Crews Lea Nr Ross-on-Wye
Other Member	Mr N Sterry 9 Oakhill Rd Court Farm Estate Mitcheldean Glos
Other Member	Mr R Stewart 10 Nash & Cox Milkwall Coleford Glos

Total attendance at the A G M was 38 of which 27 were club members entitled to vote. Club membership at the time of the A G M was 48.

NIFE CELLS

A few 3-cell NIFE lamps are left at 28/-d each and it is hoped to have a few more in the future. The cell bottoms only are also available for those who already have a headset but want a spare battery and these are only 15/-d. Cash is required for them as the club hasn't anything in hand.

Spares are being ordered in large quantities soon after the February meeting and should be ordered through the secretary as soon as possible. Note that the new cells for sale above (second-hand now) require the leak proof steel vents and those cost 3/-d per set of three. Spare bulbs are available at 2/6d each and spot reflectors at 2/6deach.

CLUB RULES - or how to be a good club member.

Following the election of a new committee, it has been decided to publish the club rules which, although unwritten, seem to have been in use by some members since the club was formed :-

1. Do not come to the meetings.
2. But if you do, come late.
3. If the weather does not suit you, do not think of coming.
4. If you attend a meeting, find fault with work of the officers and the other members.
5. Never accept an office, as it is easier to criticise than to do things.
6. Nevertheless, get sore if you are not appointed on a committee, but if you are, don't attend the committee meetings.
7. If asked by the chairman to give your opinion regarding some important matter, tell him you have nothing to say. After the meeting tell everyone how things ought to be done.
8. Do nothing more than is absolutely necessary, but when other members roll up their sleeves and willingly and unselfishly use their ability to help matters along, now that the club is being run by a clique.
9. Hold back your dues as long as possible or do not pay at all.
10. Do not bother about getting new members. Let the secretary do it.
11. When a banquet is given, tell everybody that money is being wasted on blow-outs which make a big notice and accomplish nothing.
12. When no banquets are given, say the club is dead and needs a tin tied to it.
13. If asked to sit at the speakers table, modestly refuse.
14. If you are not asked, resign from the club.
15. Do not tell the club how it can help you, but if it does not help you resign.

By permission of Modern Press Croyden
Printers and fund raising specialist.

Recognise anybody in the club ? Yourself maybe.

OLD HAM IRON MINE

Before the foot mouth outbreak an attempt was made to bring down the dangerous flake in dig churn beyond balcony passage. The work was not completely successful and a loose piece still projects from the right-hand wall. This will be put right as soon as conditions permit, but should anyone get down first after the outbreak is over, great care is still needed even though it looks much safer.

CAVE RESCUE CALL-OUT LIST

The following members are those who live west of the river and are on the call out list.

M. Austin.	M. Howell.	N. Sterry.
L. Bailey	J. Lewis.	R. Stewart.
R. Bailey.	H. Messenger.	M. Wheeler.
C. Graham.	P. Schwarz.	S. Wheeler.
D. Hay.	R. Simpson.	S.O. Wheeler.
J. Hay	A. Solari.	B. Woods.
T. Hemms.	R. Solari.	R. Wright.

This a very low representation from a club of our size and all responsible members of the club are asked to ensure that their names and details are on the list. Equally important is the necessity to attend the practice meetings as untrained newcomers will be more of a liability on a rescue than an asset. Forms of application for membership of the C R G in Gloucestershire can be obtained from the club secretary.

A CAVING PROJECT - J V Elliott.

It is hoped to hold a number of special projects this year, the first of them being a 43 hour trip in an iron mine. The object of this is basically to see how club members can stand up to the length of time underground. More details will be available to those who are interested but the time underground will not be wasted as certain projects will be undertaken - probably to a set programme.

If you are interested in being considered for this project, will you please fill in the form at the end of this newsletter and return it to me. The number finally chosen will largely depend upon the number of applicants. The trip will take place towards the end of March and a full report written on the findings.

J V Elliott
Hon. Sec. G S S
71 Imjin Rd
Friars Farm
Chelt
Glos

RECENT ACTIVITIES SECTION

Thursday 2nd November.

The club A G M at which the new committee was elected in what seemed like record time but still left us short of viewing time for the slides that followed.

4th - 5th November.

Derbyshire Weekend.

At 7 pm on Saturday evening, three rather scruffy cavers , namely David Bailey, Roger Solari and John Elliott wandered across the wind swept fell carrying 600ft of rope and 65ft of ladder. They were prepared for anything - they thought. Having just convinced the farmer that they weren't suffering from foot and mouth disease or any other serious ailment, they had set off for Oxlow Caverns. The entrance was down an old lead mine shaft about 55ft deep. Timing a stone dropped down the shaft confirmed this and so the appropriate length was dropped over. At the bottom of this a large chamber was reached by way of a further 70ft climb. A crawl leading off soon brought them to the second pitch of 40ft which had a fixed steel ladder. The tackle was lowered over separately by one of the ropes and the descent soon made . They were joined here by an inlet stream which flowed on over the third pitch. From the top of this pitch a fine view was had of West Chamber which was a really impressive size. Roger was first down the 45ft fixed ladder and sent up some interesting comments as he and the water collided. The others followed and also uttered various comments about the torrent of water. The obvious way on was to negotiate a tricky 30ft climb on down into the chamber, but this proved not to be the case. A series of cascades went steeply down behind the ladder and which were descended at an alarming rate straight to the top of a 20ft pitch, closely followed by an 80ft one. As this looked very interesting, a double lifeline was rigged and the good volunteer, Roger, was tied on and pushed over. The first 30ft was steep cascades and was reached by clinging to a chain. In this way the fixed ladder was reached and from this point they could gaze at the chamber floor some 150ft below. The ladder covered 50ft of this and the rest was just a steep climb. Again an awe-inspiring sight when one looked at the his companion clinging to the chain way up in the roof.

All safely down, an interesting position had now been reached. John wasn't too popular for refusing to wear a wet suit and also for convincing the others to do likewise, and Dave had for-gotten to lower the tackle down the last pitch. All they had was 30ft of ladder. Battle on was the general story and so off they plodded through magnificent sized chambers until another pitch was met. Their 30ft ladder didn't make much impression and so there was no chance of a descent. A fair size waterfall could be heard but not seen.

At this stage they decided to retrace their steps and have a look at the new Ozlow extension. This involved the ascent of another 40ft fixed ladder, a further 900ft of crawling which ended in an aven. Thirty feet up was a passage that looked good but couldn't be reached. Somewhere was a route to Giants Hole if it could be found. While Roger and Dave made vague attempts to scale the aven, John followed on the crawl to a fork. Choosing the right hand one (it was the largest) he battled on in a good size passage until stopped by a pitch. All assembled happily at the bottom of the ladder, the usual chocolate and sardines were produced, and the meal devoured.

Con't

A stream could be heard and with screams of “it must be Giants” the party tore off only to find the stream disappearing into a horribly small passage. Upstream was followed to where the stream tumbled out of an aven. Retracing there steps, the party contemplated the way on and finally the cheating the farmer out of 2/6d proved too much and with many howls, plunged into the icy water. The passage soon opened up but suddenly it closed down once more to an even worse duck. Roger promptly gave up caving, Dave muttered unhappily about taking up knitting while John just shivered. The deed done, they raced on into a chamber and on downstream till it suddenly sumped. At this stage of exploration suicide was contemplated, but fortunately the presence of a complete system of reinforced concrete dams took their minds off the situation. While trying to figure out how they worked, Dave found a plug and proceeded to block one of the dams. As they all watched the water rise with interest, it suddenly occurred to them that the plug may not be easily removed. While Dave played submarines trying to remove it, John had found a long rod and proceeded to prod it out from the other side. This had a funny effect on the submarine. By now all were shivering violently, and so they made their way quickly back to the duck and raced through the crawl in the hope of getting warmer. Up the ladders like the clappers dragging tackle behind them. The entrance pitch was at last reached and here the strain showed. It certainly wasn't climbed like the clappers. Outside a snowstorm was blowing and if they had thought it cold before, their minds were soon changed. They were better off in the streams underground. The time was now 12.30 and it took another 2 hours to get changed and return to Stockport. Here the evening was rounded off in Dave's flat drinking hot cocoa round the fire. They all admitted it sounded much better sitting around the fire.

Information compiled by the three wet and scruffy cavers.

Sunday 5th November.

A beginners trip around Wigpool Iron Mine on which the water level was examined. Surprisingly low, the men and boys sign and the winch could both be reached.

Friday 1st December.

Glos Cave Rescue Group - Buffet/ Social was an even bigger success than last year due to the numbers being up from 50, to 75. In addition we had visitors from South Wales and a very good time was had by all. The bar extension to 12 midnight only rubbed in the fact that the drivers couldn't drink but a number of others were seen making serious attempts to increase the bar taking. A number of unmentionable sights were seen during the evening and some of them were sober.

Then follows a sizable gap due to you know what.

Caving has now started up again in a minor way on ground well clear of agricultural land and most of the activity has been in the Barbeque Churn section of Old Ham Iron Mine (British Mine). A small extension has been found in the roof of the main level and some fine 3 inch helictites are growing in the end nearest to the entrance of the mine. Most of the effort has gone into trying to connect the two halves of the mine - as shown on the old maps - but so far without success. All passages going left on the way in as far down as the Hairpin Bend have now been covered and apart from some possible digs in falls, all passages are blind.

One of the Swallets near the Biblins Bridge at Symonds Yat has been looked at and appears promising. Unstable rocks at the bottom make digging awkward but the swallet is in a very promising position.

FUTURE PROGRAM SECTION

For obvious reasons this section is regrettably small but it is hoped that trips will be arranged during the month and details circulated by word of mouth.

Any Wednesday evening can be spent at the Castle helping with decorating - the two most urgent jobs at the moment are the white-washing of the kitchen area walls and the cleaning and painting of the overhead pipes.

Two weekends in South Wales will be booked with S W C C as soon as we know they are taking bookings again and day trips out of the area will start when the restrictions are lifted.

WHO'S WHO section held over to the next newsletter.

NAME..... CHRISTIAN
NAMES.....

ADDRESSES.....

TEL No,.....

CLUB OR SOCIETY.....

AGE (if under 21).....

CAVING EXPERIENCE :-

INTERESTS (Please tick where appropriate)

PHOTOGRAPHY	GEOLOGY
SURVEYING	HYDROLOGY
DIGGING	CRYSTALOGRAPHY
EXPLORING	BIOLOGY
MINERALOGY	COMMUNICATIONS

PLEASE STATE EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR THE ABOVE INTERESTS :-

Please return these forms to Mr J Elliott 71 Smjin Rd Priors Farm Chelt Glos - Before 1st March 1968.