

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



FEBRUARY 1969

NEWSLETTER No 16

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Mine Exploration Trip to Cornwall

You will that the Recent Activities section of this newsletter contains some trip accounts that are far from recent. This is not because we have nothing else to print, or because we are living on our memories, but is a deliberate attempt to catch up on all the underground news of the past. The last newsletter was rushed out and so gave little, but the results of the A G M and the future programme. This newsletter also rushed out but it does bring us reasonably up to date.

The aim is still to produce a monthly newsletter but we may have to modify our plans a little and produce bumper editions on alternate months with a fill in newsletter giving bare details of past trips and future events. What actually happens is any ones guess.

Material published to date is as follows :-

1964 - 65	3 newsletters	of	9 pages total
1965 - 66	2 newsletter	of	7 Pages total
1966 - 67	42 newsletter	of	42 page total
1967 - 68	64 newsletter	of	64 page total

So while it may not seem like it - we are slowly improving.

Will all last years members that have not yet paid this years subscription please not that they are now officially ex - members of the club. However, the Treasurer is willing to cook the books and post date the entry in the accounts for anyone in this position that does want to re-join. Paid up members to date number 30 and we have a number of enthusiastic beginners coming along - at least they were enthusiastic until the last O F D I trip.

If the last newsletter had been written in full, it would have included the normal section complaining about lack of work at the Castle. Something, however, happened over Xmas and we have had more work done in the last month than in the previous year.

The flush toilet is now installed although we must admit it has no door on as yet, the kitchen area has been tidied up and partly painted and we now have cooking facilities, the bedroom is equipped with 16 bunks - all with mattresses - and we seem to have found the right mixture of Forest coal and logs to keep the main fire burning well. Many thanks must go to the South Wales Caving Club who gave us 12 of their spare mattresses. As a result of all this activity we were able to accept our first booking from another club for weekend accommodation.

BUT - there still remains much to do - the cold water system - the hot water system - the kitchen are - the showers - the remainder of the painting. So - those that have got into the habit of turning up on Wednesday evenings - please keep it up and those that don't yet come - please do.

Club Barbeque

Following the success of the Cave Rescue Group barbeque, we decided to hold one ourselves to raise cash for club funds. Because there are so many things we require for this one, we need a really good attendance

(I.e. not less than 400) to make sure we don't make a loss. In general we will follow the pattern of the last one except that we are attempting to provide much more music in the form of a group, tapes and records. At the end of this newsletter is an advertising slip for the Barbeque - please spread the news around as time is now short - additional copies of the slip can be obtained from Jim Hay.

**ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING CLUB BARBEQUE
SATURDAY 15TH FEB IN BARBEQUE CHURN
OLD HAM (by courtesy of Ray Wright)**

**MUSIC - HANBURGERS - HOT DOGS - COFFEE - BIRMINGHAM FOLK GROUP
BRING YOUR OWN STRONGER DRINK AND DON'T TAKE AWAY THE EMPTIES.
ADMISSION 2/6d.**

Water Board

Contact has been re-established with the North West Glos Water Board and a number of things that were worrying members, cleared up. It had been heard that the Water Board were filling holes all the way from Shakemantle to Plump Hill but this has been to be untrue and they have merely filled in a few holes in the immediate area of their new pumping station at Buckshaft. There seems a good chance that the club might again be able to help with water levels in the Green Bottom area and also locating sources of pollution that are not apparent or traceable above ground.

The buildings that are being put up by the Water Board on Wigpool are the main filtration plant for the water that is to be taken from the River Wye at Wyelands for the Forest supply. Nothing definite could be resolved about the Typhoid tests but it was hoped to clear up the situation in the near future.

Gelignite in Old Ham

A curious little episode occurred in Old Ham a couple of Sundays ago when, following one of the busiest weekends known in the Forest, a caver from Cheltenham who was unfamiliar with the mines, found some gelignite. This was reported to the County Police who put their standard procedure into motion, placed warning notices at the entrance to the mine and called in the Bomb Disposal Squad from Salisbury. Nobody knew a thing about all this until it was spotted in the local papers and Derek Appling got a letter from the Police telling us all about it and warning us of the dangers of old gelignite. Apparently the Cheltenham caver accompanied the Squad into Old Ham and through to New Dun to show them the way and they laid a charge on top of the gelignite and detonated the lot. The letter from the Police stated that the Army 'experts' had found the gelignite to be in very bad condition, crystalline and so touchy that they thought a footfall near it might have set it off. Unfortunately for the 'experts' the gelignite was well known and formed a point of interest when showing visitors around - it had been tested with detonators on at least two occasions and was at least 40 years old as that was when the firm had gone out of business. Cavers visiting the spot recently have found the remains spread all over the roof and walls of the chamber where the Army's charge had blown it.

Speleologist & Descent

Original subscribers may be interested to know that the Speleologist has re-opened with new editors and a new style and size. It will come out quarterly, is now glossy again and costs 3/6d each or 17/6d for six copies subscription.

Address to write to :- 15 Adamson Road LONDON NW3.

A new caving magazine appeared with the apparent failure of the Speleologist, the subscription 'Descent' edited by Bruce Bedford. Issue No 1 has sold out but we have ordered copies of No 2 and anyone interested may look at it with a view to subscribing themselves when they arrive. Price is 2/6d each Published every six months.

Amalgamation with G S S

The possibility of an amalgamation with G S S was being talked about before the last A G M and recently the two committees held a joint meeting under the chairmanship of Ian Standing to discuss any advantages or disadvantages. No firm conclusions were reached but it was found there was much common ground and further meetings on the subject are to be arranged.

Recent Additions to the Club Library

G S S Newsletter for Nov - Dec - Jan - Feb.

Orpheus Caving Club N / L For Nov - Dec.

Plymouth Caving Group N / L for May - Nov 1963.

The Mendip Caver Nov - Dec - Jan.

Donated by Colin Graham

B S A Bulletins No's 76 & 77.

Tube Investments Magazine.

Cave Diving Group Reviews for 1955 - 57. 1961 - 62 & 63.

Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 33.

M N R C Journal July 1963

Shepton Mallet Caving Club Journal No's 2 - 4 - 5 - 6 & 8.

Mendip Caver No's 3 - 4 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 11 & 12.

B S A Proceedings 1964.

C R G Publications No. 1 - International Expedition to Gouffre Berger 1956.

Also received - The Speleologist - Winter 1968 (Vol 2. No 16)

The Cambrian Conference - Penwyllt Sat 25th January.

This meeting had been arranged to allow the Welsh Clubs to decide if they wanted a representative body that could represent them on a National body. Considerable controversy had been aroused by a proposal in the draft Constitution to limit membership to Welsh Clubs or those with their major interests in Wales. Some Mendip Clubs wished to have membership on the grounds that they did considerable work in Wales but had their major interests in Mendip. The meeting was expected to be quite stormy but turned out to be surprisingly agreeable once the main hurdle was passed. That was, that clubs should be allowed membership of the Cambrian Caving Council as it was now called, provided that they could satisfy existing members of the Council that they had a major interest in Wales - or more specifically Welsh caves.

Con't

The meeting started at 10.30 am and, apart for a break for 45 minutes for lunch, dragged on until 6 pm. Welsh Nationalism raised its (Ugly ?) head a couple of times but sense prevailed and things seemed to work out satisfactory for most present. The big stumbling block now is whether or not the constitution of the Council will be acceptable to S W C C. A further meeting is to be held in May to sample the opinions of the club rep's on their committees views on the set up of the Council. As the constitution of the Council is in general agreement with what the committee of R F D C C thought acceptable, we have joined the Cambrian Caving Council so that our views may be heard at future meetings.

Future Events

The full meet list was published in the last newsletter so the object of this section is merely to refresh your memories of the more imminent events.

Derbyshire Weekend 8th - 9th Feb.

At the time of writing, it seems likely that this weekends booking would be cancelled due to a lack of support. This is very disappointing as late cancellations put us in the bad books of the host club or organisation.

Club Barbeque 15th Feb Sat.

More details of this in the earlier sections of the newsletter and the tear off leaflet at the rear. Please encourage as many of your friends and enemies to come as possible. We can't afford to make a loss on it.

Lamb Lear Beginners Trip - 23rd Feb.

A day trip to Mendip to do Lamb Lear as part of the program of beginners trips. Take note that there is a 70 ft ladder pitch in this cave and it means that anyone intending to go on this trip must do some ladder practice beforehand if they want to go all the way in the cave. Ladder practices on most weekends on either Saturday or Sunday afternoons. See Malcolm.

Mendip Weekend August Longwood / St. Cuthberts - 8th - 9th March.

Names will be required well in advance for this weekend as party sizes are limited and it may be necessary to provide for alternative caves.

The secretary makes a special plea for members to give him as much notice as possible of your intentions - whether you intend going or as a regular - if you intend not going.

Recent Activities ?

As was previously said, this newsletter is an attempt to catch up on all the unreported news that has not been covered in previous issues. The title of Recent Activities is therefore slightly misleading but this section does at least bring us reasonably up to date.

It should be noted that the earlier parts of this section are the work of Malcolm before he took on the secretaries job and to him must go the credit (or criticism) .

The modern trend in caving clubs seems to be - more talk and less caving. This club is no exception. The non-caving weekends were as follows :-

14th - 15th Sept British Speleological Association Conference
28th Sept Cave Rescue Organisation Conference
26th Oct Cambrian Conference

B S A Conference - Sheffield

Five club members attended the conference, all of whom were impressed by the variety of lecture material, and the depth with which the topics were studied.

T Atkinson Bsc. Presented D Drews BA PhD paper on water tracing, which was of great interest since Drew did not select a particular method but gave information on all methods in common use, and made an attempt to evaluate each method. His conclusions were :-

Short traces (less than a mile) Fluorescein / Activated Carbon
Long traces Metal Salts / Flame Photometer or Lycopodium Spores
Percolating water Pyranine Conc.

A similar comprehensive study of ropes was made by F Solari Bsc AFRAes. He came to the conclusion that resistance to abrasion is one of the important factors to consider when selecting ropes for caving. Polypropylene ropes have a resistance to abrasion ten to twenty times that of Nylon (depending on type) . He also expressed the view that the caver does not need a rope with Nylons capability for absorbing shock loads. Climbers need Nylon to dissipate the energy produced by a high shock load, but, in general, cavers do not need this.

Mr Solari's conclusions in general were that the best ropes for cavers were hawser laid Polypropylene ropes. Staple fibre rope was the best he tested extensively but he admitted that Fibrillated tape Polypropylene may be even better. This very encouraging since most of the ropes within the club are Fibrillated tape ropes.

Note - since this was written, we have purchased large quantities of the Staple fibre ropes because of their nicer handling properties.

Con't

At the conference, there were also accounts of various trips to caving areas ie, S W C C to Belinka Pot - J Evre to Provatina University of Bristol Karst Hydrology Expedition to Jamaica - P Thompson - caving in Mexico. The latter was very amusing since it illustrated the techniques of abseil and prussic in the U S A, as compared with that of electron ladder in Britain.

F Hanna & T Atkinson gave lectures on measurement rates of erosion in cave passages and the earliest stages of underground drainage in limestone, respectively. Both papers were very interesting but the latter seemed a little difficult to fully understand due, perhaps, to the emergence of some revolutionary theories.

At the conference, there was a demonstration of ladder construction by the epoxy resin method. This seems highly unsatisfactory compared with the ferrule method which this club uses. Whilst discussing equipment with a Yorkshire caver, he admitted that many Northern clubs used shoddy tackle. I will quote his remark about electron ladders, "if you kick it and it doesn't fall apart, its good enough"

C R O Conference - Cheltenham

A high percentage of our members attended the annual conference of the C R O at the Berkley Hotel, Chelt. There was equipment on display accompanied by demonstrations.

Mr D Appleing, warden of the G C R G C opened the conference by introducing the chairman for the meeting, a representative of the County Police force, and continued with a short account of the inactivity of the G C R G.

This was followed by a brief talk on the 'Vitalograph' manual resuscitator and a complete kit of aids and accessories was shown. These items pack away in a handy bag, ideal for cave rescue work.

An interesting point arose out of a discussion with Mr Andrews of Irving Air Chute G B Ltd who manufacture safety harnesses as it would appear that in industry, the point of suspension is commonly the legs, ie. Lifting upside down. This perhaps helps the flow of blood to the brain. The method, however, would be impracticable in caving when winching in close proximity to a rock face.

Mr T Davies of Siebe Gorman illustrated the use of a mechanical resuscitator, but pointed out that unless the lungs were operational, the resuscitator would be of little use. It was noted that if someone's lungs were only capable of partial expansion, pure oxygen might help the limited capacity of the lungs to absorb more oxygen. This could be a critical amount. The layout of the Siebe Gorman apparatus would have to be slightly modified for application to cave rescue.

The centre of attraction was the Immobiliser stretcher which worked on the principle of evacuating air from a quilt of polystyrene pellets to give a perfectly rigid stretcher. The advantages over a conventional stretcher, are that it can be moulded to the exact shape of the patient, is very light and floats. The latter was illustrated in Sandford Swimming Pool after a sump rescue demonstration. Two disadvantages are its size and its susceptibility to puncture, since the protective sheet in its present form is not large enough.

All the equipment on display was very interesting but the financial side of the argument makes the proposition a little less attractive.

After tea, John Osbourne of S W C C gave a talk on sump rescue operations which were afterwards demonstrated in the pool by fellow members of S W C C. This proved to be very educational and I am sure everyone realised the importance of organisation and co-ordination in this particular technique.

The conference closed after general discussion and was followed later in the evening by a dinner.

Cambrian Conference - Newport, Salop.

The conference was held in the Shropshire Mining Club H Q near Newport, Shropshire. Six club members attended the conference.

A great deal of time was spent discussing last years minutes but the most important issue seemed to be the formation of a National caving association. Most clubs represented were in favour of sending observers to a regional councils meeting in Matlock where the national conference was to be discussed by C S C C and C N C C. It was emphasised that the observers could not take part in the discussion. This was decided as being a rather futile position. It was then proposed that the Cambrian Conference be changed to the Cambrian Caving Association where representatives elected by the clubs could participate in talks concerning the formation of a National body. A meeting to discuss these proposals was arranged to be held at the S W C C's H Q. in January and all the clubs concerned were to be circulated with details.

Some caving was also done during the above period of much talk and reports of some of these trips follow. Time was also spent during this period getting Barbeque Churn ready for the G C R G Barbeque.

Wye Valley - Sunday 6th Oct - L Bailey.

The party consisted of J hay, A Solari, M Sterry, R Bailey and myself. This was a surface trip, primarily to look at Coldwell Swallet where quite a bit of silt had been deposited. We then looked at a place upstream where Jim had seen the stream sinking previously. We stuck a bar into the stream bed and put a 4 oz charge in, with the result that the stream then sank in the hole caused by the bang. We then went to look at Symonds Yat Swallet. There was a draft coming from a hole in the edge of the depression. We pulled out a few stones but decided it would be a major task to dig the Swallet. We then went to see the Dropper and then continued on to Green Moss Pot and while Roger and I had a look at the shaft in Green Moss, Jim and Malcolm went to look at Slaughter Resurgence.

Mendip Weekend - 11th - 13th Oct - T Gardiner

On Friday evening, the party consisting of Jim Hay, John Elliott, Roger and Laurence Bailey, Malcolm Sterry and Terry Gardiner left for Mendip in fairly rough weather. The party travelled in two vehicles and miraculously met in the (Something) pub in spite of Jim's navigating. A short journey to Fairy Cave Quarry brought us to the front door of the Border Caving Group's cottage where a comfortable night was spent by all - I think.

We awoke at the crack of dawn. We got up about mid morning and soon had finished our breakfast, after which we were joined by John Berry. The first exercise was to get a weather report, followed by a look at the stream into Stoke Lane. This was running thick and plentiful into a large aperture in the ground several yards in front of the entrance. The floods had caused this and Swildons especially had suffered from flood damage.

On arriving at Priddy Green (Stoke stream did look fearsome) we changed and headed across country to Swildons entrance. This too had changed radically and we entered through a new gaping hole. The stream passage was followed for a short while and soon several members of the party began to realise the extent of the damage to the cave. We climbed down a small rift, and, following the stream, came to the 'Forty'. Instead of being at the top, we found ourselves negotiating a 15 ft climb with a fixed line.

Con't

Gasps of amazement were heard from those familiar with the original Swildons look. We journeyed on through some sporting and interesting cave, eventually arriving at the 'Twenty' . After fighting our way through a great pile of ladders, we descended the short but exciting pitch without any mishaps other than Jim almost losing a finger from his rubber glove. The party journeyed on until Sump I was reached. It looked quite formidable but Jim and Malcolm instilled confidence in the others by volunteering to go first.

Malcolm dived through on a line but didn't seem to go as far as reports of the new deformed sump implied. A well rehearsed form of line signalling soon cleared out doubts and Jim followed. Malcolm returned to help the less experienced through. Terry went next, followed by John Berry. The next head to emerge was that belonging to Malcolm who reported that Laurence and the remaining John had allowed commonsense to prevail and were returning to explore the dry series. Jim, up to his neck in water and feeling rather cool, suddenly remembered the ammo boxes. So one of the less sane members of the party went back through with a line, sent the boxes through, and returned to be pulled base rather than apex first out of the water by Jim. At this stage, rips and poorly fitting areas in wet suits were noticed. A few paces up the passage was a dry spot where nourishment was taken. Further on, the first duck was found and negotiated but the second duck did not look as easy. A one inch air space prevented seeing what lay beyond and the changes due to flooding made us dubious of this obstacle. Jim went first after deciding there was plenty of air space, followed by Terry, Malcolm and John. The next stage looked easy so, one by one, we left the 18 inch of head room, went down through the next duck and arrived in a large passage. Feeling quite pleased with ourselves, we proceeded to Sump II where we found an air tank. Although we enthusiastically looked at the sump, Jim said we had better not free dive it in case we met a returning diver on a lung.

We made our way back to the surface without injury and were followed 30 minutes later by Laurence and John. The trip had taken over 4 hrs and had proved to be an excellent start to a fine weekends caving.

Back to the cottage and a meal (wonderful) , the rest of the evening being spent in a condemned Free House called 'The Fire Engine' .

Another good nights sleep was followed by another good breakfast and our wet suits were donned. This time Stoke Lane stream looked less formidable and we were soon negotiating the dry ? Entrance. The stream was then found and a long crawl in the stream cooled everyone off. After lying in the stream waiting for another party to pass, the group slid skilfully and easily through the 'Nutmeg Grater' . Shortly after we met another party who were standing by the sump thinking about it. John soon put them right by telling them that they were looking at the duck. John Elliott led through the sump, followed by John Berry, Laurence Bailey, Terry Gardiner and finally Jim Hay who failed to talk the other party into following.

The sump was passed without incident other than one poor fellow who surfaced too far to one side of the passage and was rescue from drowning by John Elliott. Finally Sump II was reached and a short free climb took us up into Bone Chamber. This chamber was by-passed and the gloriously decorated 'Throne Room' reached.

This was a photographic trip and the group of potential artists were optimistically eyeing the material for their compositions. Another chamber which lay beyond the Throne Room was entered and the photo's commenced. Each chamber was scrutinised so as to achieve perfect compositions. Each chamber was photographed in order of appearance as we made our exit with a finale of flash powder at Bone Chamber.

Everyone met with success except Terry who enthusiastically took three frames and then found the wind on had jammed his camera which, I can assure you, left him feeling most despondent.

Can't

On the way out the sump was taken at tremendous speed thanks to the organisation and advanced signalling methods dictated by the leaders. The rest of the trip went smoothly except where two unfortunate members of the group were asked to pose in the stream passage for a photo. Jin left them sitting in the water for an untold length of time while he had one mishap after another with his camera and flash equipment. On the way out, Jim, Terry and John took a look at the first duck but decided the water level looked a bit too high and so took the bypass.

Back at the cottage, much bread and jam was eaten by all and the more conscientious members of the party cleaned and washed up and left the place immaculately clean as the other members always do.

Kingsdale Master Cave - 19th Oct - John Elliott

After a rather chaotic start, Malcolm Sterry, John Howe and myself set off to meet Roger Solari in Birmingham. Thus united, we head up the M6 to Yorkshire.

We were staying at the B S A Hostel in Settle and arrived there pretty late. Unknown to us, a bucket of water had been placed over the door to give one of their drunken mates a warm welcome. John Howe was first in and the howling yell was music to hear. Anyway, the trap was reset and another victim was to fall before the night was out.

On Saturday we headed for the Flood entrance of Kingsdale Master Cave. An artificial entrance led into a good sized passage. A plunge into icy water with just enough air space led to a good sized muddy passage with occasional high avens. A 25 ft pitch was laddered into a main stream which sumped downstream so the upstream route was followed in an impressive passage. A bedding plane crawl led to further deep canal type passage. A junction was met, right soon sumped so we followed left. After further wading we reached the traditional final sump. But not to be left in peace, Roger has to stick a foot through and feel air. Off he goes for a look. His voice is audible and he calls out to come on through. John Howe plunges in and Malcolm soon follows. Now the passage is about ten feet wide at this point and in all innocence I pluck up courage to follow. I shout through and, getting no reply, prepare to dive. Suddenly Malcolm emerges in a rush looking pale. This was explained by the fact that he hadn't found any air space and had fortunately managed to return. By calling to Roger who had come to see where we were, we discovered that the air space was 9 inches high and a foot wide - charming. This was worth knowing and once more Malcolm dived. After that, somewhat reluctantly, I dived. There certainly wasn't much room. Another duck and a small chamber was reached. By this time Roger had looked at the next air space but had come up in bad air. He returned and as the air didn't seem too good here either, we all dived back into the main passage.

Returning, we crawled up a side passage until we reached the pitch from Simpson / Swinsto Pots. Attempts to climb it were defeated by the slippery mud. We exited the cave and agreed it was a good trip even if we didn't lose Malcolm.

Tathams Wifes Hole - 29th Oct - Malcolm Sterry

On Sunday 20th October, J Howe, J Elliott, R Solari, myself and a member of B S A Settle, whose name escapes me and in future to be referred to as 'The Leader', decided to do the above mentioned hole. It so happens that there is a long walk to this cave and it is true to say that the four wet suited cavers from the Forest of Dean were a little worse for wear after the one and a half mile walk, much of which was up a gradient of one in four.

Four shattered cavers and the leader descended the hole and made our way rapidly to the first pitch of 25 ft.

There was already a party in the cave and so the pitches were laddered. Being a little stuck for tackle, the last member of our party, Roger, came down un-life lined in preference to using our 200 ft length of polypropylene as a double lifeline. The pitch was great fun since the ladder was hung in the middle of the water, which was at a high level - so said the leader.

Following the first pitch was a steep slope and the second pitch of 5 ft. I was the first to descend and found it to be even wetter than the first pitch. Then both Johns and Roger followed. Then came the leader who, I might add, did not have a wet suit.

Due to the noise of the water, the leader was unable to hear our shouts of send the tackle down, until he got to the bottom of the pitch. He said that in the very wet conditions it would not be worth while descending the fourth pitch since there was only a short crawl and a sump following it. We decided to take the lifeline from the second pitch and use it on the third, This we did and proceeded to the third pitch of 25 ft where the ladder was hung well clear of the water. The take off on this pitch was awkward but the pitch itself was a climb which was followed by crawling for some time until we came to a duck. By this time, our leader was suffering from extreme cold and so we decided to split up. The leader was to return to the head of the third pitch and the rest of us to carry on to the top of the fourth pitch.

The fourth pitch was already laddered by the other party well away from the water and thus made an extremely difficult traverse to get on and off the ladder. Not wishing to leave our leader too long, we quickly made our way back. The route between the third and fourth pitch involved some traversing and a large squeeze. We found our leader at the top of the third pitch, made our way to the second where there was a queue to climb the pitch. We climbed the pitches, collected our tackle and made our way out.

This was a very interesting trip which was made more enjoyable by the high water. The cave is 475 ft deep and 2000 ft long.

Surface and Underground of South Shropshire Lead Mines - 27th Oct - Laurence Bailey

The day after the Cambrian conference was set aside for field trips. Several of the delegates took up Dave Adam's offer of a tour of the South Shropshire lead mines and so, after our usual late start, we all set off in convoy into the wilds of Shropshire.

The lead mines are found in a hilly area around Hop, the scenery being similar to Cornwall - ruined engine houses and vast heaps of 'tailings' which consist mainly of crushed calcite. We had to drive around looking at old engine houses and shaft sand, after an investigation of one of the local pubs, we visited a small level in the Bargain Mine. This level was driven in the 1960's by two old men, one of whom we had met in the pub. The level is only a few feet long and was not very productive, only 1cwt of ore being raised a month. Barytes samples were found in and just outside the mine. Anyone visiting this mine should be careful - the props are not to N C B standards.

Next we drove down to the Snailbeach Mine, this being the largest mine in the area and many of its buildings are still standing. A quick trip was then made to a level which leads into the mine via a 700 foot deep stope working, the stope being crossed by a bridge (of sorts) over a 600 foot drop. Some side workings were looked at and some galena samples collected before leaving for home.

G S S Trip to Swildons Hole - 8th Nov

The previous trip to Swildons having been enjoyed so much, several members of the club joined in with a

G S S day trip to savour the delights and flavour of Sump I again. Nothing constructive was done on the trip - it seemed to consist mainly of seeing who could get the muddiest and we were surprised to find that the new 40 cu ft diving tank was still lying by the side of Sump II. Probably the most notable aspect of this trip was the number of cavers that knew we that we met down the bottom. Some time was spent watching cavers lights appear in the muddy sump water a considerable time before the caver appeared.

Malcolm led back through the sump only to come face to face with a startled caver that was just about to start in the opposite direction. There was a girl in this party who was being persuaded to try the sump, without a wet suit and she only agreed to do it after she had heard that another female member of their club had not yet done it. A number of them dived through and then came straight back - just to say they had been through.

St. Cuthberts Swallet - 17th Nov

Six club members had a very good trip to St. Cuthberts, led by a member of B E C. The cave descends very steeply by a series of fixed ladders pitches and tight rifts to a depth of over 400 ft.

Eventually the stream sumps in a gravel choked rift where B E C, have spent considerable time digging under water in an effort to pass the sump. Unfortunately, just as they seemed to be getting somewhere, last years floods filled the lot back up again. Now they plan to build a series of dams and bail the sump which, it is hoped, will give them a couple of hours dry digging each session.

Certain members of the party showed a marked reluctance to getting wet, so a quiet word was had with the leader and most of the passages that where followed were very wet. In general the cave is very sporting with tight climbing rifts, tricky little climbs and drops over calcite and some very large gour pools that make it very nearly possible to drown the next man, The trip in is very misleading as it turns out to be a hard pull on the way out and the final 60 ft entrance pitch nearly proved too much for some. Altogether, one of the most interesting caves to be found.

South Wales O F D II - 30th Nov

A small party went down to Penwylt for the weekend, meaning to meet up with others on the Sunday for a proposed trip into Dan-yr-Ogof or O F D II. The trip on the Saturday was originally planned for Tunnel Cave but the streaming rain and the distance to the top entrance put everyone off. Instead we all decided to do a through trip from Cwm Dwr to O F D II top entrance, Water levels were said to be not to bad and we found that water was only just beginning to flow down the passage at the confluence. The level in the main stream was definitely higher than we had experienced before and the Marble Showers and Windy Aven were very wet. By the time we reached the maypole - after much fun swimming the pots - we were beginning to realise that the water levels were rising. We had intended going to the final waterfall but the amount of water coming down the maypole made it doubtful if we would get up it.

So we abandoned plans for the waterfall and, with much difficulty, rigged our ladder and climbed the maypole. There was so much water coming over the edge that it took over half an hour to get four of us up the 20 ft climb and the water was noticeably increasing during this time. We missed the climb up into the high level passage and found ourselves at the little waterfall beyond and so we had to back track until we found it. From here the trip was uneventful and we emerged very wet and very tired after a trip that turned out to be much more sporting than we had imagined when we started.

The cave rescue group dinner was held on the Thursday before this trip and was as much fun as ever. Numbers were down on previous years due to the day and for the first time ever, we made a loss financially.

South Wales - O F D II - 1st Dec

On the Sunday, the remainder of the cavers turned up for the proposed trip into D Y O but it was obviously too wet so plans were made to reach O F D III in two smaller parties. What we didn't realise until too late was that all those that knew the quick routes were in the first party. So by the time the second party found its way to the Crevasse, it was too late to go any further. Much time was wasted meandering around passages looking for a short cut, only to find when we got out that we had been within feet of it at one stage. The first party didn't manage to get to there either as they had found some interesting new passages and ledges in the Chasm are and had stayed to explore them. So the object of the trip was not fulfilled but we certainly got to know O F D II a lot better.

Cave Rescue Practice - Buckshaft - 15th Dec

A second attempt was made to rescue someone from Buckshaft Scowle Hole, with as much lack of success as the last time. As usual the practice was hampered by a lack of personnel and the planned finish time of 2 pm dragged on until six. What the practice did show up was a distinct lack of ability of some members on the steeper pitches. Buckshaft is rapidly becoming our 'bogey hole'

C S C C A G M - 11th Jan - Bristol

A number of the more politically inclined members went to the A G M of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs at Bristol to see what was going on in the higher realms of caving. Nothing revolutionary occurred although a number of people were surprised to find that a National Caving body - The National Caving

Association - had already been formed. Some discussion resulted from the proposal of Cambrian to turn itself into a representative body but as it affected so few from the South, it was declared to leave any action up to the individual clubs. Oliver Lloyd was re-elected secretary / treasurer and Eric Cathrine was elected Assistant secretary.

Cambrian Caving Conference - Penyllt - 25th Jan

See general news at front for details.

On the day following the conference, hordes of Gloucestershire cavers descended on Penwyllt as both G S S and ourselves had day trips arranged. About 16 of our members or prospective members turned up

(I'm still not sure of the numbers) And were split into three groups. Two parties of six for O F D I and the remainder to go into O F D II. One of the beginners parties did the standard trip up mainstream and out through the Rawl and Bolt traverse while the others did a trip up into waterfall series.

The stream was about 4 ft above the step and so it was not particularly wet but some people seemed to deliberately go out of their way to disregard the leaders advice and so got very wet. The club chairman did not appreciate the joke when he was dragged into a pot just for the fun of it.

About four hours was spent underground - enough for most people to get very cold without wet suits.

And that brings the majority of the clubs unreported activities up to date. Should anyone have anything I have missed that they think should be covered, I would be glad to get it in a suitable form for publishing in the next newsletter.

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A Mine Exploration Trip to Cornwall - By Stephen Southwick

Stephen Southwick	WMCEG / RFDCC
Simon Southwick	WMCEG
Nicholas Southwick	WMCEG / RFDCC
Geoffrey Seaman	WMCEG

We left Birmingham on Saturday June 8th , our destination being Halse Town near St. Ives, Cornwall. From there we intended to explore a few of the mine workings in the area around St. Ives and St. Just.

Sunday June 9th

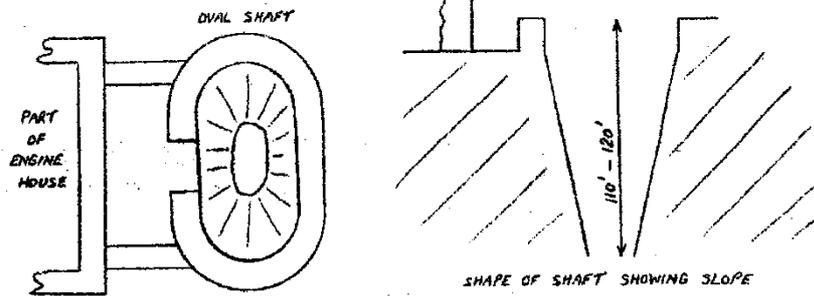
Nick and I went to have a look at an old mine working, known as 'Volas' near Hales Town. We found the shaft impenetrable as it was overgrown with brambles. The only other that we found had been filled in rubbish. We gave up and, needless to say, returned to the Hales Town Inn until closing time.

Monday 10th June

Geoff, in the meantime, was suffering from a touch of sunstroke and was sleeping it off in his parents hotel in St. Ives. Simon, Nick and I went off to look for an adit to Gew Mine, opposite the Engine Inn, the water from which runs into Nancledra River near the village of Nancledra. We followed the stream for one mile, then upstream for two, when Nick decided to fall in. No mine adit but plenty of trout to be seen. At 3.30 pm we went to have a look at a shaft belonging to Rosewall Hill Ransome Console Mine. By looking straight across from the Halse Town Inn towards the sea (west) , three chimneys and two winding houses can be seen on the lower part of the hill. The shaft we intended to try, turned out to be a little deeper than expected - it is in the region of about 120 ft. As we had only about 60 ft of ladder with us, we were again foiled. The shaft itself is in good condition and could be easily done with sufficient equipment. The bottom can be seen and, since it is dry, it must be one of the upper workings, as most of these Cornish Mines are flooded. The location of the adit is not known. The best method of laddering this one is to suspend ladders from scaffolding timber placed across the shaft, as the walls of the shaft slope inwards. See diagram 1. As in so many of these older types of shafts, it is unwise to touch the sides, due to the unstable nature of the granite stempling. This mine formed part of a large group in this area and joins up with the St. Ives Console Mines and would be well worth exploring.

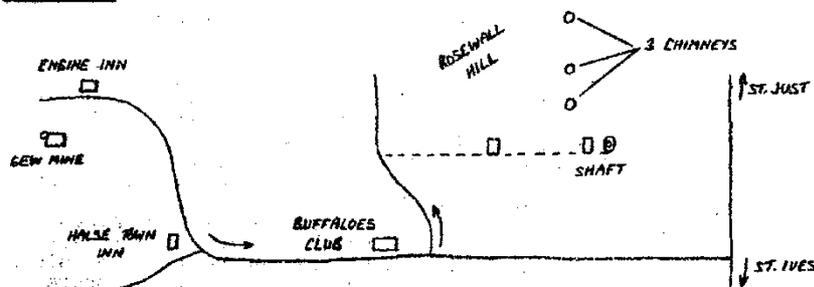
See next page for diagram 1.

Diagram 1.



The shaft is found by the side of the derelict Engine House, one of the two found there. Take the first turn left off the road past the Buffaloes Club, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Halse Town Inn. Vehicles can be parked in gateway on right uphill. See Diagram 2.

Diagram 2



Afterwards we went to St. Ives to collect Geoff who took us to meet a most interesting chap, Mr. David Clarke, a geologist and a member of the Royal Cornwall Geological Society in Penzance. He gave us some very interesting information and showed us some samples of the radio active Turbonite which is found locally and is quite dangerous to handle. He lent us his gold pan for us to try panning tin from some of the streams - we actually found some

Tuesday 11th June

We went to look at some of the copper mines, the adits of which come out on Carbis Bay beach. On entering a tunnel, we found a flood shaft in the floor, which we crossed on planks of wood already there. Crossing two other shafts further on, we ferried the equipment across by rope. This continued until Nick and Simon found that the tunnel came to an end. Coming back, Nick took a few photos of Simon and myself ferrying equipment across. About this time my light gave out and, following Simon closely, I forgot about the last flood shaft and took an unexpected plunge, dashing my hopes of staying dry, but I got out OK. We then found other mines on the beach but these to were flooded.

The mines in the St. Ives - Carbis Bay area have a high reading of radioactivity. Geoff Seaman's father owns some land, just outside St. Ives, on which is situated a uranium mine, which is apparently not very deep and which was worked by a couple of Germans just before the outbreak of the 1914 - 18 war. They were either interned or sent back to Germany. The entrance shaft to this is lost, probably filled in. It was Nick's birthday today - we went on a spree. Started off at the Commercial Hotel, St. Just, then to the Tinnars Arms, Zenner, on to the Engine, then the Halse Town Inn, finishing up at Mr Peggoty's in St. Ives.

Lost the car and Simon somewhere.

Wednesday 12th June

Geoff had arranged, with a Mr Sweeney, a trip round Levant Tin Mine. We arrived at the mine at 8 pm and were met by Mr Sweeny and Marcel Thumb, a member of the Birmingham Cave and Crag Club. He operates the man cage - and so at 8.20 we descended into the darkness of the mine, to the 40 fathom level.

The shaft does not go straight down but twists backwards and forwards, probably following the mineral lode down. From the 40 level we worked our way down to the concrete plug which is stopping the sea from coming in, although the sea still comes past it at quite a rate. We were told to wear waterproof clothing as the mine was very wet. What we were told, however, was about the temperature, which, at this point is about 70 degrees F. All the water coming in is sea water since we must have been 200 - 300 yards out under the sea.

Strange stalagmite formations grow from the huge lump of concrete which is now part of the floor.

The sea breached the mine through the floor whilst drilling operations were commencing with a search drill. Along the passages leading from this cavern are large boulders sucked in from the sea bed.

There are also old drills and other mining equipment lying about. It is from this level of the mine that boulders can be heard to be moving about on the sea bed above, during a storm - comforting thought.

There is plenty of false flooring about - all the old timbers are still holding everything together and are still quite safe, even though they have been down there for there for at least 40 - 50 years.

Con't

We were then taken down to the 54 fathom level, which is as far as the men go at the moment, although the mine has been pumped out to the 60 fathom level. The temperature here must be in the 80's and must be unbearable in wet suits. The men here are clearing rubble from blocked workings, using the original trucks, which work perfectly although they have been under water as long as the timbers. From here we were allowed the freedom of the mine to take photo's and explore around. The shift ended at 12 midnight so we did not have as much time as we would have liked.

From an old gunnet (shaft) in the 23 fathom level, the old man engine shaft can be reached with part of the man engine still there. Unfortunately time was against us so we were unable to reach it.

It was in 1919 that the man engine collapsed killing 31 miners - the second worst Cornish mine disaster in history.

And so at 11.45 we came up to grass level, had a shower, and chatted with the men on the shift, who are a great bunch of fellows. They certainly deserve any credit for the work that are doing.

The Gevor will send a diamond drill through into the bottom levels and drain the rest of the mine via Gevo. They will then test drill for deep tin and copper. Copper was more predominant than tin at the Levant mine. It was abandoned sometime in the late 1920's , due to the low price of copper and tin.

The trip to the mine really made our holiday and, believe me, there is plenty more to see. We hope to be able to visit it again sometime.

Thursday 13th June

We woke up today to find our eyes and bodies all puffed out due to the heat and the wet suits and also due to the action of the salt water.

Spent the rest of the holiday in PUBS and sunbathing.

Horrors of Exploring in Cornwall

BEWARE - of the depths of mines.

Mines in Cornwall, as in most places (I think) are measured in fathoms. Thus when someone says “ that shaft is a hundred deep” take it from me, it is one hundred fathoms deep, which is 600 ft.

BEWARE - of flooded shafts.

Very wet and very deep.

BEWARE - of false flooring

BEWARE - Mineral Collectors.

Turbonite - green platy mineral - very pretty - found around St. Austell. Samples can be seen in the museum of the Royal Geological Society, Penzance. See Mr David Clarke.
If this mineral is allowed to get under your skin or finger nails, it can cause burns due to its high radio activity.

BEWARE - of some of the chimneys which are arsenic flues. The walls are still coated with arsenic - not very healthy.

BEWARE - of unstable shafts. On no account touch the sides.

BEWARE - of Harvest Ticks.

There are plenty of these about on short grass, walls, and bracken. Nick found two of them on him. They look like a round beetle with a leathery back and they suck your blood, which causes to swell up to about the size of a grape. The female will bury itself in your body and there it will stay. This happened to one of our friends who had to have it removed at the hospital after a trip to the goldmines around Dolgety. On no account must you attempt to remove one of these ticks yourself - you are likely to develop gangrene.

A drop of petrol will kill one of these ticks and it can then be removed completely, otherwise the head will be left in.

BEWARE - of Adders

We found 5 within a few minutes.

Helpful people to contact for Cornwall :-

Geoffrey Seaman - Brig y Don Hotel, Harbour Front, St. Ives, Cornwall

He will show you about and he may be able to arrange trips to various mines.

Mrs Pope - Halse Town Inn, Halse Town, Nr, St. Ives.

She is interested in the history of the are and she will provide information if she can. She also sells the best BEER in Cornwall.

Mr David Clarke (Geologist) 32 St. Johns Street, Hayle, Cornwall.

He may be able to take you into the museum of the Royal Cornwall Geological Society, Penzance. He will also help with mineral samples.

S / Lt. Steve Johns - C / O. H M S. Pembroke, Chatham, Kent.

He is secretary of the Cornish Mine Preservation Society, which is now unfortunately disbanded, but he would be very interested to hear about any exploration of mines. He may also be able to help you with the location and access to mines.