

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



FEBRUARY 1970

NEWSLETTER No 20

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This newsletter marks the end of the renewal period for club membership this year and as a result, membership at the time of typing is 29. No doubt some of the forgetful ones will pay up later, and, with new members in the pipeline, we should soon be back to our normal strength of around 40 members. The reduction in the age of the majority from 21 to 18 means that in future only junior members will have to have application forms signed by parents, and, if nothing else, the Government have tidied up our application for membership procedures.

Included with this newsletter but not part of it, is the library list which Diana has worked hard on and I hope club members will now make more use of the library. The newsletter will continue to contain recent additions to the library so the keen ones can keep their lists up to date. Some club members have their own collections of caving and allied subjects, books and magazines and if they are willing to lend these to other members, I would be glad to list what they have in the newsletter. I know books are precious but they are much better being read than hoarded away.

The club van has taken its first real run at the middle of January down to South Wales with a light load. While it would be difficult to say that we had a trouble free run and keep a straight face, it did at least get us there and back.

At the moment it has a dicky starter motor but it starts quite well on the handle and it is hoped to use it again on the next South Wales trip.

The treasurer is rapidly becoming embarrassed by the rate at which we are using up his limited stock of money and so the committee have been looking at ways we spend the money in an effort to stop the drain. One of the more costly items last year was the headquarters and so it has been decided to increase the fees. It always was intended that the fees should increase as the amenities increased and so they now are 3/-per night for non members and 2/- per night for members.

In the newsletter it was asked if any club members were interested in cloth badges for putting on Anoraks.

These would consist of the green club badge with the words Royal Forest of Dean over the top and Caving Club underneath, any member interested should see John Court and any orders must be accompanied by cash 6/-.

The club committee met with the G S S committee at the end of January for the delayed three monthly meeting on items of common interest. Quite a lot came out of the meeting and a fuller account is given inside.

DATES AND TRIPS

Included here with the newsletter is a pull out calendar with all the meets and dates marked on for the next six months. Not all marked on this calendar are confirmed bookings but latest news will be given in each newsletter as John Elliott bets replies. The situation at present is as follows and I would suggest that you mark up the calendar in what ever way suits you best.

February	Sunday 8 th	Day trip to O F D II. Top and bottom entrance and all welcome.
	Sunday 22 nd	Day trip to Stoke Lane. Wet suits essential. One sump.
March only	Sunday 8 th	Mendip day trip. St. Cuthberts asked for but not confirmed. Six
	Easter.	In party, rest to Swildons. Swildons round trip alternative. Camping at Porth-yr-Ogof for four days. Little Neath
Bridge etc.		
April	Sunday 12 th	Cave rescue practice or training . Details next month.
	Sat/Sun 18 th /19 th	Weekend in South Wales at Penwyllt caves depend on weather.
May	Sat/Sun/Mon	Camping long weekend at Oxwich on Gower to do Tooth and
	23/24/25 th	Llethrid and swimming.
	Sat 30 th	Cave rescue group A G M at the Butchers Arms.
June	Sat/Sun 20 th /21 st	Weekend in South Wales at Penwyllt caves depends on weather.
	Sat 27 th	Fund raising Barbeque. Not in Barbeque Churn but outside. Suitable place needed.
July	Sunday 12 th	Cave rescue practice or training . Details later.

CAVE SURVEYING

A leaflet is enclosed giving details of a one day symposium on cave surveying at Leicester on Sat 7th March.

Would anyone be interested in going, contact Jim Hay with a view to making up a car load. Note the talk on the O F D survey.

ODDS AND SODS FROM THE FOREST

Water levels have caught us up at last and the water table has risen about 20 feet in the last two weeks. Last week only the top six rungs of the New Dunn iron ladder were above water level and the third landing workings were submerged. A number of streams are running underground that have not been seen before and in general the mines are pretty wet.

Wigpool dropped very low and it seemed for a while as if a round trip might have been possible. The Back Passage was made-able from the notice board to the Winch But, even when the water was at its lowest, there was a noticeable current of water flowing towards Trail Pit.

West Midland C E G paid us a visit during the month and stayed at the castle and actually did some caving. How they fitted it in between opening hours is not known. They did some field work around Symonds Yat and found what they think may be an un-recorded rising part way down the Staunton-Bibblins track. From the description it sounds suspiciously like a stream coming out of a collapsed mine level but it must be looked at to be sure.

Seymour Swallett was visited on a Wednesday evening to see how much Swindon Group had put in. The most noticeable thing is that they have removed the squeeze in the entrance and all the fun has gone. They appear to have dug straight on down in the bottom but haven't gone very far and it is doubtful if they have gone as far as previous diggers. What was particularly interesting was a considerable draught in the entrance which was disappearing down the right hand rift in the bottom of the hole. This is the place that

G S S followed water down when they were actively digging Seymour and it looks quite promising. About two evenings digging would allow a thin person around the first corner and might show if it was worth continuing. The draught was very noticeable.

The B U S S dig in Symonds Yat Swallett has suffered somewhat in the recent rains as the stream has chosen to go down the dig instead of the Swallett. Malcolm and Roger visited it at the height of the wet season and thought they heard rumbles in the depths. The just-propped boulder in the entrance doesn't look to inviting for a start and it is apparently worse inside.

Two new cave digs have been started this month - Malcolm and John are digging near Cursits and Jim, John and Diana are digging near Symonds Yat Swallett.

The Malcolm and John dig has been christened Fester Cave and at present consists of 8 feet through boulders with a total length of 27 feet into a small chamber. Prospects look fairly promising although the cave curves towards Cursits.

Con't

The entrance is located 10 feet to the left of Cursits entrance and so will have the same map reference of SO 6526 1112.

The J-J-D dig near Symonds Yat is the un-named swallett about 100yds from the track down from the Dropper on the Symonds Yat side. As there is no map reference, because this no convenient point to reference from. All the Forestry Commission tracks in this area have been altered since the 6 inch map were surveyed but the Swallett must be not far off directly above the Slaughter Resurgence. The reason for starting the dig was that all the recent rain had cleared an open hole through the slit into clear rock and noises could be heard from below. So far the dig has consisted of clearing working room in the slit but it looks good.

Milkwall Quarry Caves were looked at with a view to survey them but the poor weather and small party - apart from a lack of surveying tape - caused the surveying to be postponed. All three enterable caves were entered but a fox was found to be in possession of the West Cave - not seen but certainly smelt. The South Cave was found to be smaller than remembered but the vertical squeeze was easier. The South Cave also contained a bat - type not known but it was ringed.

A number of members are showing more interest in bats and it is hoped to get more information from the G S S on the work done by Tony Isles and others on ringing bats. If we can find someone interested in holding the records, we can then check ringed bats for age and ringed location. It has been suggested that we ought to establish a bat reserve where bats have access but not cavers.

The New Yew Tree Pit saga continues with the Baileys steadily extending the area of workings opened up.

They recently got into a drivage that was driven from the other direction and hopes are that it will prove to be a Red Pit Or Easter drivage. All the blasting in Yew Tree Pit itself appears to have been done with powder but the new drivage is more modern. The drivage is blocked by a fall and the fall has exposed upper workings. These are interesting as the floor is littered with dead millipedes and wood lice although there are a number of live millipedes around.

Together with the bats that have been found in the lower workings, it would seem to indicate that there must be easy access to the surface somewhere near. The survey indicates an approximate depth of the workings to be around 200 ft.

The possibility of a through trip - Old Ham - New Dunn - Red Pit - Old Bow - is beginning to look much more possible.

The dig up through the boulders at the original dig is still as shaky as ever although some propping has been done, and, Roger warns that extreme care should be taken if the area is visited.

The rust oysters found on iron that has been submerged or in very damp conditions in the mines always presented a puzzle but it is hoped to have some sort of answer soon. A friend of the Baileys at Nottingham University has some samples from the Forest and intends to do some investigation into them. For those that have never seen them, the rust oysters grow on iron bars and plates in the mines and look just like an oyster or mussel standing on edge. They grow up to about 1 ½ inches across.

On a spare day last month, Roger and Malcolm did what others have been talking about and went for a drive and walk around the Chepstow area. They apparently found a rising bigger than Slaughter, and, when it is remembered that there is a greater area of limestone around Chepstow than there is in the main South Wales caving area, it begins to look very interesting. No further details of the rising are known but the club ought to take a greater interest in the area before the Mendip clubs get really active down there. Ian Standing has covered a lot of ground around the area for the Glos. Cave Registry and can no doubt supply more information.

There appears to have been a fall by Blue Pool in New Dunn and the area looks very unhealthy. Two large blocks have come down onto the floor but it is not clear where they came from. The roof always did look bad in this area but it looks worse now. Anyone going that way may care to have a look see if anything can be done but it must be left out of the tourist trip routes for the time being.

Mineral collecting trips down the mines recently have turned up some interesting samples. Selenite needles up to 1 ½ inches long have been on clay near the short cut in New Dunn, and, although they have been in Wigpool before, I do not think they have been seen in New Dunn. As said in previous newsletters, some Goethite stal pipes have been taken to the National Museum of Wales where they were apparently received with enthusiasm. Mr Wrigley called in at the Edinburgh Museum while on holiday and told them about these pipes and this week received a request from them for samples. It has now been found that the pipes can be found in two varieties - jet black Goethite pipes and brown yellow Limonite pipes. A large number of Calcite crystals up to an inch long have been found on New Dunn second landing and these are unusual in that half the crystal is orange and the other half is purple. All these calcite crystals are covered in the transparent golden skin common in the mines but the composition of the skin is not known. A word of warning - the golden skin is removed if vigorously washed.

ODDS AND SODS OUT OF THE FOREST

South Wales caving club are taking orders for the O F D survey and booklet again after reprinting and we have to place an order quickly if we want to get copies. The club is going to buy one of the hand coloured surveys as the levels are shown on it but most members will be content with the plain edition. John Court will be sending off the orders immediately after the next club meeting (Feb 5th) and so any more orders should be given to him now. Prices are :-

Plain survey booklet 30/- post paid

Hand coloured 50/- post paid.

All orders to John must be accompanied by cash.

The Society for Mines Research in the Bristol area which up to now has been an informal group is holding a formative meeting on Wednesday 4th March in Bristol. All with an interest in mines are invited to the meeting which is to be held in the school's room at the City Museum Bristol at 7pm .

Most people will have seen the extensive coverage given to Wookey Hole extensions with the result that the non-caving world thinks that this was the most important thing to happen in caving in the last ten years. However it was good publicity for caving - if such a thing exists -but the details put out for public consumption were slightly different from the true facts. The television and press coverage gave the impression that the breakthrough occurred that weekend when in fact John Parker dived through some weeks previously. What was also not made clear was that the extensions are Wookey 19 and that considerable diving is necessary before the last sump is reached. It will be interesting to see if the talk of shaft into the new extensions comes off as it will considerably aid further exploration.

Alan Coase and others have by-passed the long crawl in Dan-yr-Ogof - The only trouble is that the new by-pass is four times as long and worse than the long crawl. Funny how other routes turn up once the way in is found. Now we need an O F D I to O F D II new route and an easier way from II to III.

At the last C S C C meeting an intriguing suggestion was that C S C C should form itself into a limited liability company and purchase caves to ensure access. Unfortunately a legal eagle made it sound difficult and it is now not so likely. The possibility has not been dropped however.

THE WILDERNESS FIELD STUDY CENTER

The Gloucestershire Education Committee purchased 'The Wilderness' - a large building above Mitcheldean - in 1968 with a view to turning it into a Field Study Centre for the use by schools and colleges.

The centre is now looking very useful with accommodation for 54 at 30/- per day, common room and library, geological and geographical lab, biological lab and dining room. The warden is Mr B V Cave, M.A. M.I.Biol. And he is very interested in anything that goes on in the Forest. As he is hoping to establish a biological collection, club members can be of help by passing on any spare mineral or rock samples. In return, Mr Cave may be able to help out with laboratory work and he does possess a full set of six inch geological maps of the Forest.

In the long term, there is a possibility that the centre may form the basis of a Forest of Dean Museum and we will have somewhere to deposit our mining relics.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

The following publications have been added to the library this month :-

Cave Research Group Newsletter Number 119 Dec 1969.

A G M Reports

Speleology in the South East

Spratts Barn Mine

Officers and Committee 1970

B S A Bulletin Number 84 Jan 1970

Antro del Corchia Breakthrough

Pierre St. Martin 1969

Foreign Expeditions

Robins Dub Cave

A Fume-less Blasting Explosive

Speleologist Vol 3 Number 20 Winter 1969

Merstham Firestone Mine

Exposure

Caving clubs C - N

Abseiling Down Diccan

Space Blankets

Transactions of C R G Nov 1969.

Proceedings of Symposiums on Cave Photography.

OMITTED FROM THE LIBRARY LIST

R F D C C Newsletters, Nos 1 - 19.

Ireland 1968 - R Solari, M Sterry, J Elliott.

R F D C C Caving Trip Reports 1965 - 1966.

R F D C C Caving Trips Diary 1967.

CINDERFORD LIBRARY

Cinderford library have produced a small booklet detailing the books they have or can obtain on Caving and related subjects. In all they list 34 books on various topics under the following headings :-

Cave Biology	1 Book
Geology	2 Books
Practical	8 Books
Specific Areas -	
Derbyshire	2 Books
Lancashire	1 Book
Yorkshire	1 Book
Somerset	8 Books
Wales	1 Book
Ireland	1 Book
France	5 Books
Germany	1 Book
USA	1 Book

Plus one history and two for younger readers. The list has been put in the Club Library for interested members.

WHO's - WHO

Who steamed up Fox Hole.

Who led 11 down the wrong Sway Hole.

Who Gives Club members P T lessons.

Who writes letters

Who is the Club member thinking of going 'Down Under'

Who won't take his wife on caving trips.

Who got lost in Pant Canol.

Who had the 'Airey Fairies'

Who needs a wife to swap.

Who is the Club's prize Hippie.

Who - we hope - is going to have an orgy on his 21st .

In a statement, Sterry said he had been in a local Public House all evening and then took a girl home. Sterry was also fined £15 for using it with no insurance. WHO ??????

JOINT CLUB COMMITTEE'S MEETING

The committee's of R F D C C and G S S met for a delayed version of their three monthly meetings on the 27th Jan at the Red Lion, Huntley, at which a number of points arose. The chair was taken by John Elliott and Tony Day took the minutes.

As the minutes of the previous meeting had been lost, it was agreed by all present that it was probably for the best anyway and no matters from the previous meeting would be raised.

Cave Registry - Both Clubs were concerned at the lack of activity on the registry and it was agreed that an A G M should be called to discuss the whole future.

Cave Rescue - Since the introduction of the 5/- registration fee, the number of members joining the Cave Rescue Group had fallen drastically. It was thought more due to a lack of publicity than the 5/- and both clubs agreed to use gentle persuasion on members.

Con't

This was to take the form of a permanent section in the respective newsletters on cave rescue and to give more publicity to minor incidents that could have caused a call-out. In addition, the cave rescue group committee was to be asked to provide more news in the C R G newsletter, particularly in the form of fuller reports on rescue practices. The possibility of borrowing the BBC film of the Sunset Hole rescue was to be looked into.

Mine and Cave Preservation - with the increasing number of parties entering the mines - Old Ham in particular - it was felt that a tidy up was necessary to show an example. More important still was the necessity to clear up rubbish left on the side of the road where most parties change before going into Old Ham. This mess was apparent to the public and showed cavers in a bad light. It was agreed that both clubs would ask members to pick up rubbish when on trips down the mines and R F D C C would supply some plastic bags to be left in Old Ham entrance for this purpose.

Beginners Trips - R F D C C asked G S S for their policy regarding taking youth parties caving as R F D C C had now ceased to do this as a club. G S S had no fixed policy but accepted parties on merit but agreed to look at their policy for the future.

Social - Considerable time had elapsed since the last social between the two clubs and it was agreed that it was time for another. Provisional dates were either 19th March or 16th April and R F D C C were to try to book the Kings Head at Littledean for skittles on either of those dates.

Joint Journal - a suggestion had been received that the clubs should produce a joint journal. Both committees were against the idea on the grounds that a journal should contain the work of a single club.

Joint Club Trip - It was agreed to try to make up a joint Clubs trip to Yorkshire on the first or second weeks in June. These dates suited both clubs but cave bookings were to be investigated.

Dates arising from the above meeting will be finalised as soon as possible and notified in the newsletter.

OLD STONE WALL COLLAPSE SAGA

IAN. J. STANDING.

The note on ' Are there any caves in the Forest ' in last months newsletter calls for some comment. It raised two questions : Firstly, does Old Stone Wall Collapse exist and secondly, are many caves in fact mines ?

Cavers must realise one or two things about most of the six figure map references published for caves etc in the Forest area. Firstly, most six figure references, even if accurate, give location of a 100 metres square of ground surface. If the reference is not accurate, then the ground surface error may be a square of ground three times this size, eg, 300 metres square. Most of the published six figure grid ref's have been taken from 1" O S maps by visual means and, in an area like Mailscot Wood which has few good landmarks, errors readily creep in. The second hazard with any published map reference are misprints - well instance by the original Hereford C C ref for Green Moss Pot. This was sited about a mile nearer the Yat than it actually is, leading many to think it had fallen in or others to think they had found a new cave which was in fact Green Moss Pot.

The grid ref's in caves of Wales all appear to have been taken from the 1" O S map - by circumstantial evidence - in as much as the 6" sheet numbers they give are an extremely ancient series which did not have the National Grid on them, (rather like the 25" sheets of the present day) . One further point which should be mentioned is that the information in the 1st edition of caves of Wales was compiled by the authors of the book from published sources then available. No Forest or Gloucester caver was responsible for any of the Forest information, other than a few additions to the section on ' Smaller Caves etc ' . When the second edition was in preparation, P A Standing and myself supplied much in the way of corrections and additions but, regrettably, not all of this was used.

In 1964 we queried the existence of the Old Stone Wall Collapse as its position and name strongly suggested confusion with the Whippington Brook Rising at the Old Stone Well. The authors told us that the Old Stone Wall Collapse was quite different from the W B rising and their description hardly matches the rising as it then was. They stated that it was very difficult to find, in dense undergrowth and 20 feet deep.

Also, they made no mention of the rising which could hardly be missed.

In 1966 G S S published a list of caves etc in the Forest with map references in which P A S and myself entered Old Stone Wall Collapse and Whippington Brook Rising. As we did not know exactly where the former site was we put it in the 100 metre square to the east of W B Rising as we know it cannot be in any other close position. Unfortunately, a misprint in the journal gave it an erroneous map reference and added to the confusion. Whilst I remain to be convinced either way about the existence of Old Stone Wall Collapse an intensive search ought to be made of the area to the east of W B Rising before it is dismissed completely.

Last months newsletter also carries the idea that Whippington Brook Rising may have been mined - an idea which seemed to appear when John Osbourne was active in the area fresh from the adits of Shropshire. While there are superficial resemblances to a run-in adit, I would suggest that the following observations favour nothing more than a normal rising of an underground stream :-

1. A stream rises at this point and, judging by its behaviour under flood conditions, the rising is a normal limestone cave system rising.
2. This point is in the Basal layers, if not on the junction, of the limestone with the shale. Exactly the spot one would expect water to rise.
3. I know of no other trial level, run-in adit, iron mine or scowle hole in a comparable position on the Glos side of the Wye. All other traces of mining are at a higher altitude in the top layers of the limestone or in the crease itself.
4. There is no evidence to suggest even a trace of iron ore in the sediments thrown out by the rising water. The July 1968 flood deposited a lot of pale yellow sand around the rising. This sand is typical of what one would expect from a simple cave stream system. All known mine holes and even the trial pits and scrapings are bright red in colour.
5. The collapse around the rising is a common feature of any rising. It is due to erosion around the exit points and naturally tends to move along the course of the stream while the bank around slumps in. This collapse has been helped by cavers digging at the exit points which tends to leave the bank above unsupported.
6. The rising has changed a good deal over the past decade. When I first saw it around 1960, all the water emerged from a well defined point and close by was a blowing hole which emitted a strong blast of air. A little way down stream was a small circular well cut in the rock and fed by the rising. All of these features have long since gone. Collapse has become more marked in recent years.

The rising is, in all probability the stream which sinks higher up the Whippington Brook Valley. A test could usefully confirm this. I think it is unlikely that the swallet waters would emerge at the Slaughter because it would involve them crossing the Hillersland valley which is bedded in its lower section, but carries a surface stream. Such a situation has been known to occur but does seem unlikely.

The question as to how many of the 'caves' are mines can be settled quite simply by examining each in turn. The sites I have seen vary from natural caves as at Symonds Yat and on the Monmouth side, to natural caves which have had their earth fills removed (miners or Rev. Symonds and hangers on ?) as at Symonds Yat both sides. There are many natural caves which have been enlarged by mining, particularly at Symonds Yat again on both sides - C4 is a good example. There are also mines which have broken into bits of cave.

Ladypark Mine comes into this category .

The limestone area from Coldwell Rocks to Hadnock Quarry is an area of much interest and several problems and warrants considerable study. Getting accurate grid references fixed is a problem as yet to be solved, particularly for the Symonds Yat area where the caves are frequently in cliffs and very numerous.

Ian J Standing.

This article from Ian helps to clear up some of the mystery surrounding the early history of Old Stone Well versus Whippington Brook Rising. Recently we met an 'old un' near Symonds Yat Swallet who told of holes in the bank above Whippington Brook Rising that he had heard water running in the bottom of. The area to the east of the rising is not large as the Hillersland valley is quite close and so the area should be easily covered in an afternoon.

However, I would dispute some of Ian's arguments for a natural rising although I am inclined to believe the rising is natural. Taking his arguments point by point :-

1. The natural rising could be inside a trial level and would then behave naturally.
2. With the large number of sinks above the Biblins, there ought to be more risings on the same level as
W B rising if this is the natural spot to rise.
3. There is a trial level just opposite the rising on the same level.
4. Point one still applies.
5. Iron mine entrances also collapse.
6. The old name of Old Stone Well could refer to any type of rising.

To me, the most puzzling question is where the water from the sinks such as Green Moss Pot and the Biblins Swallet resurge as W B rising is the only one between the two valleys and it doesn't seem to carry enough water. More dye testing plus a dig in W B rising would seem to be the answer.

UNFINISHED DIGS IN THE FOREST

Over the years, a great number of digs have been started in natural sites around the Forest but very few have been pushed to open anything up. Below is a list of just some of the more promising sites in the hope that some of the more energetic members may be tempted into new digs in them. John Court spent some time with me and the 6" maps and we hope that these references won't cause any confusion ' a la B W Rising '.

No particular order of importance or location is intended.

Dunderhole Farm Swallet - The Dunderhole

SO 60071942

About 100 feet of fairly dry cave is followed by about 100 feet of very wet cave. The whole cave is very tight and progress is stopped by the tightness. Blasting is needed to extend it but a trip to the end back takes nearly 2 hours.

See Jerry Evans at the farm for permission.

Bishops Wood House Swallet

SO 5997 1876

A natural rift taking three small streams and located similarly to Dunderhole, ie, about half a mile from and 300 feet above the Wye. The swallet lies in the edge of Bishops Wood just opposite Bishops Wood House and the owner is not known.

Green Moss Pot

SO 55721396

The pot consists of a ten foot drop into a low 30 foot diameter chamber with a boulder floor. The stream from the entrance originally sank in these boulders and the Baileys have followed it down for some depth. Now the stream sinks nearer the entrance under a wall. The pot is on Forestry Commission land and can be found - with difficulty - by climbing up the south side of the Hillersland valley about 300 yds from the river until a parallel track is reached. The pot lies just off the side of the track opposite a very large depression.

Slaughter Resurgence

So 555145

Probably the largest resurgence in the Forest, it can be found by turning right along the track towards Symonds Yat station after coming down to the river on the Hillersland valley road. Digging chances do not look good as a dig might collapse the Forestry Commission track just above it.

It is well worth a visit when dry to see if it could be dug downwards instead of horizontally. It is on Forestry Commission land.

SYMONDS YAT SWALLET**SO 56051523**

The swallet is thought to offer a good chance of getting into any system behind the Slaughter Resurgence as it known to rise there. It lies just off the track from the Symonds Yat log cabin to the Hillersland valley near a large depression and is on Forestry land. It is being dug at present by B U S S who have penetrated through loose boulders and are following the stream and the draught.

Biblins Swallet**SO - no ref's**

The swallet is located about a quarter of a mile from Green Moss Pot along the same top track towards the river. It lies off to the left in the edge of the wood just past the S-bend in the track on open ground. A small stream sinks into a large sunken swallet and previous digs have been halted by the large consumption of explosives required. It is on Forestry land.

Whippington Brook Rising**SO 55241410**

Previous articles should give sufficient information on this rising.

Seymour Swallet**SO 59031389**

The entrance lies just to the left of the dry stream bed about 100 yds below Hoarthorns Wood Swallet. An 85 foot pot ends in a sand and gravel floor that has been considerably lowered by G S S digs. See 'Odds and Sods from the Forest' for description. At present it is being dug by both G S S and the Swindon Group and permission should be sought at the farm from Ken Seymour.

Hoarthorns Wood Swallet**SO 59051372**

The swallet can be found by following the stream in the valley below Hoarthorns Farm until it sinks in a large depression. Originally dug open by R F D C C it consisted of an 85 foot pitch and a short cave with a total depth of 105 feet. Digging at the bottom had not been completed when the July 1963 floods silted up the entrance. Well worth re-opening. Permission at the farm from Ken Seymour.

Slade Wood Rising**SO 56860534**

A stream emerging from a short cave passage blocked by boulders. It is located just in the edge of Slade Wood above Slade Brook - the stream from the rising joins Slade Brook. Permission from Bearse farm.

Dark Hill Cave

SO 56750548

The cave appears to be a flood resurgence for Slade Wood rising and is located around the corner of the hill from Slade Wood rising on about the same level. It has never been really pushed because of its tightness and banging would probably be necessary to take off the corners. Although it is on Forestry land , permission should be sought at Bears farm to use the track across their ground.

Slade Brook Rising

SO 56760553

The rising is marked on the maps and lies just to the left of the track from the main road across Bears farm to Slade Bottom. A fairly large stream appears out of the bank between boulders with no obvious place to dig. Although on Forestry land , the farm once took water from the rising and may do so again so the farmer is very reluctant to risk blockage. More likely is Slade Brook Flood rising about ten feet away on the other side of the track. Ask at Bears farm for permission.

Willscroft Wood Pots
051

SO 568048 - 571

Opposite Bears farm in Willscroft Wood there is a line of pots with four large ones. The pots are about 6 feet in diameter and about 25 feet deep, all ending in sand and gravel floors with a generous mixture of dead sheep. Previous digs have been stopped by a lack of gas masks. Owner not known.

Coldwell Swallet

SO 56935151

The swallet can be found by following the cliff top path from Symonds Yat coach park until a stream passes under the track. Following the stream down until it sinks in a hole in the bank brings you to a swallet. In dry weather, the stream may sink higher up in its bed. The swallet consists of a sixty foot passage of good size, finishing up in a silt choked end. Recent digs have got through the silt and the stream now sinks under a very low wall. Space is restricted at the end and explosives are needed. The swallet is on Forestry land.

Other possible digs are :-

Insulator Pot

SO 65221108

Orles Barn Depression

SO 57110570

And two digs being dug at present - are, Fester Pot and the J D J dig.

Why not have a go yourself ?

The fourth pitch (The Amphitheatre) was first rigged in a narrow rift but John E and Roger decided that John C would not manage the descent so the ladder was moved to a more open position. By the time that John C and Diana had descended the fourth pitch, Roger had laddered the last pitch. Unfortunately , he had decided that all surveys were wrong and so he used a 30 ft ladder. When the two Johns reached the top of the pitch, faint noises could be heard which after some time were interpreted as being a request for more ladder. Only afterwards was it realised that Roger was standing on a ledge being slowly drowned in a continuous flow of decidedly cold water.

Five minutes after bottoming the 45 we were at the junction of Dis and Henslers Passage in the Gaping Ghyll system. A short jog downstream and a look into the dry higher passage where some interesting formations were seen.

Returning to the Dis junction, the passage marked to Bar Pot was taken, however, after a few yards, a quarter hour exploration was necessary before the way into Bar Pot was found - a very muddy crawl. On through the bottom of Bar, Flood Entrance Pot and then the long stoop of South East passage to Gaping Ghyll main chamber.

A faint light in the roof of the chamber marked the entrance shaft where a large volume of water was entering from Fell Beck, Main Chamber is 500 ft long, 110 ft high and 90 ft wide, the floor being 360 ft from the top of the shaft. After a quick look round Main Chamber, the party headed back to Dis. Since the South East Passage had been rather tiring it was decided to attempt to find the short cut through Amphibian Passage. A passage which seemed to go in the right direction was followed but this soon lowered to a flat-out crawl in mud and water. Roger pushed this and five minutes later cries of “ come on “ had the remaining three squirming on. Amphibian Passage is well worthy of its name.

The end of Amphibian Passage is within 500 ft of the last pitch in Dis and within minutes John E was halfway up the last pitch - five minutes struggling with a jammed double life line (under water) and he reached the top.

The rest of the journey out was without incident, John c must have lost a few pounds since he failed to get stuck in the rifts (although he had a good try) .

At 10.15 pm moonlight was reached and, after a quick walk across the moors, the Land Rover was reached and the frozen party changed into dry clothing (after chipping the ice off boots etc) . By the time Clapham was reached the pubs were shut - although a few bottles were picked up shortly after. This was a very good trip, but definitely not recommended for cavers with more than a 42” chest.

John Court.

Last months newsletter had a number of typing and spelling mistakes which certain people took great delight in pointing out. I have no doubt that this months newsletter contains just as many and I am quite capable of spotting them myself than you.

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