

**THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN  
CAVING CLUB**



**FEBRUARY 1971**

**NEWSLETTER No 29**

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### Why He Left :-

Dussant cum'ere a - courting moi darter  
Ver a yappin sawny vool thee bist  
A cyawllpin fisslin half baked cretur  
Whose neck wer only fit to twist  
Thy mother never adnt arter  
Let thee a bin. The ze moi vist  
Go ' vors I choke the in her's garter

Arter her's fethur spaka thio to oi,  
I took ma 'at went away.  
Ussunt thee ?

## **EDITORIAL**

The Mendips certainly had a well publicised rescue this last weekend, television, banner headlines etc. No doubt most of you will have had newspapers thrust under your noses and the usual ill informed comments made about the Police, Firemen and Army rescuing silly cavers.

It is always a setback for the caving world when this sort of thing happens, it makes negotiating for access etc difficult for some time afterwards.

For some reason caving is very much a “ non - u “ sport and the public in general are far less tolerant towards it than any other “ risk “ activities. For instance, about once a year there is a fatal climbing accident at Winters Leap near Chepstow. This appears to be accepted. But let there be a rescue from a cave or pot-hole and you can guarantee a letter in the national press or comment over the radio calling for caving to be stopped. Why only us ? If you stop caving mountaineering, Bob-Sleighbing, Skiing, Fishing ( a surprising number of fishermen get drowned every year ) etc, etc should all be stopped as they are all potentially dangerous. I did have the pleasure of stopping one such moaner some time ago. There he was spouting away and busy sucking raw cancer down his throat, “ look here “ I said. “ By the time the national health has paid for cutting the rot out of you from that thing you will have cost the country far more than ten cave rescues “ . End of conversation.

Roger Bailey.

Hon Sec  
John Court  
26 Park Walk  
Chase Park  
Ross-on-Wye  
Hfds

Hon Editor  
R E Bailey  
Rose Cottage  
Aston Crews  
Lea  
Nr Ross-on-Wye  
Hfds

## THOUGHTS ON A SYMONDS YAT MASTER CAVE

By Roger Solari

Can you answer these questions ?

- 1 How many streams disappear underground in the triangle between the river and the roads from Berry Hill to Symonds Yat and to Monmouth ?
- 2 Can you name any 4 sinks ?
- 3 Do you know the exact geological feature present at Hawthorns Wood Swallet ?
- 4 Do you know how many digs there are in the northern part of the Forest - for natural caves ?
- 5 Are you the least bit interested ?

The areas around Symonds Yat ( East ) and English Bickner gives strong indications of a cave system, in particular behind the Slaughter Resurgence. Many Forest members are strongly biased against a large system in the Forest because there is simply very little underground passage to give us hope. But have you considered the facts carefully ? We have to decide, knowing that streams disappear underground 2 miles from and 400 ft above risings, whether the water course is of such a size and / or shape to get along, whether these passages are full of water anyway, and, whether they are completely silted.

I think our greatest problem in the Forest as far as caves are concerned is the Forest itself ; during the autumn the amount of silt due to the fall is incredible, after recent diggings at Whippington Brook sink there was about 1 ft of dead leaves, this was obviously from last autumn and allowing for de-composure etc, still a considerable quantity of very fine silt will be carried into the cave. If there are any extensive ' sump ' this silt will be immediately dropped. This was emphasised in the tube at the bottom of Hoarthorns Wood Swallet when it was open and I don't believe there is a sink in the Forest that is not blocked with this very fine silt. It's even completely useless for banging.

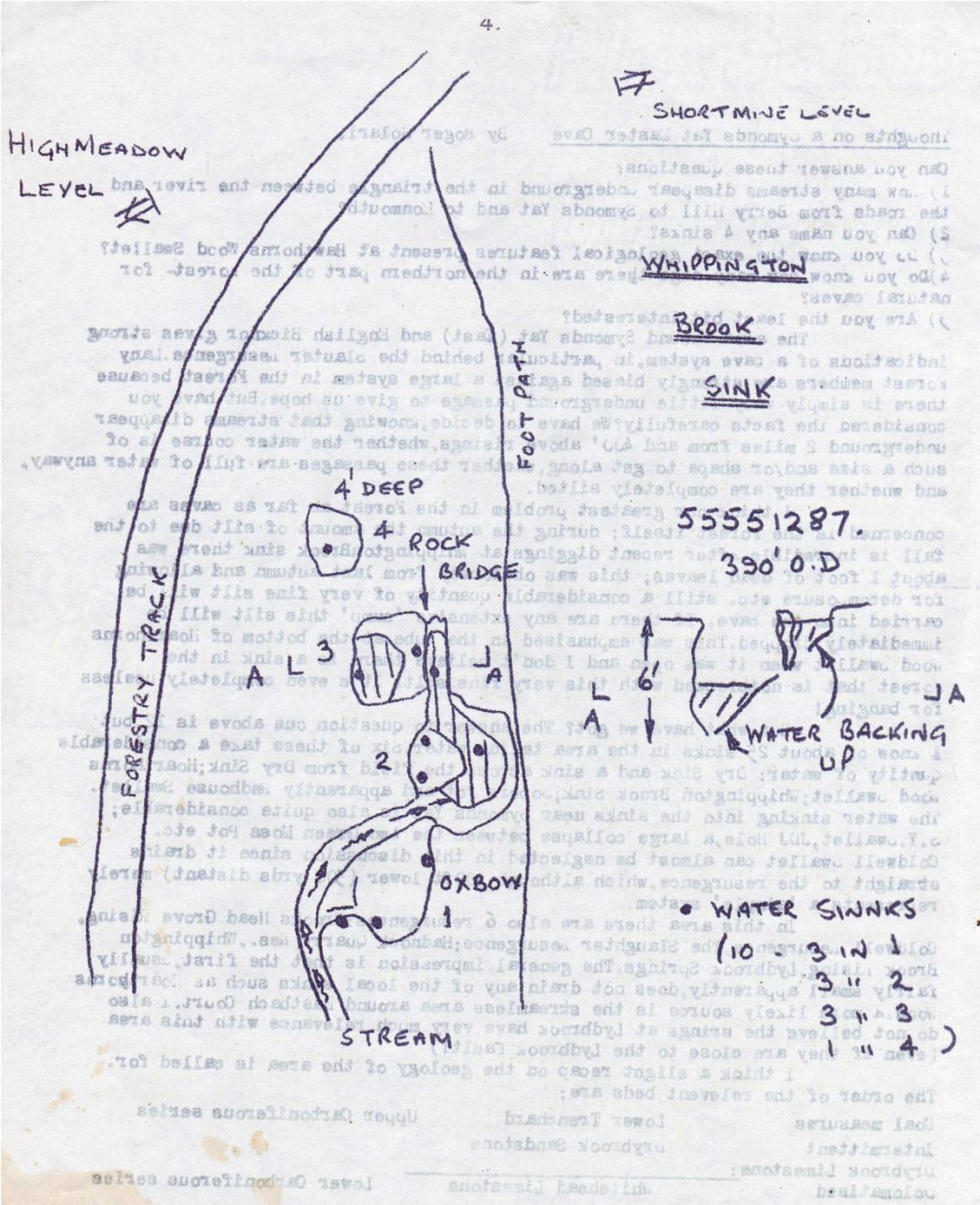
But what we have got ? The answer to questions one above is 12 but I know of about 25 sinks in the area taking water. Six of these take a considerable quantity of water :- Dry Sink and a Sink across the field from Dry Sink, Hoarthorns Wood Swallet, Whippington Brook Sink, Sopers Pot and apparently Redhouse Swallet. The water sinking into the sinks near Symonds Yat is also quite considerable; S Y Swallet, JDJ Hole, a large collapse between the two, Green Moss Pot etc. Coldwell Swallet can almost be neglected in this discussion since it drains straight to the resurgence, although 300 ft lower ( 300 yds distant ) merely represents a ' simple ' system.

In this area there are also 6 resurgences - Brooks Head Grove Rising, Coldwell Resurgence, The Slaughter Resurgence, Hadnock Quarry Res', Whippington Brook Rising, Lydbrook Springs. The general impression is that the first, usually fairly small apparently does not drain any of the local sinks such as Hoarthorns Wood. A more likely source is the stream-less area around Eastbach Court. I also do not believe the springs at Lydbrook have very much relevance with this area ( even if they are close to the Lydbrook Fault )

I think a slight recap on the geology of the area is called for.

The order of the relevant beds are :-

Coal Measures	Lower Trenchard	Upper Carboniferous Series
Intermittent	Drybrook Sandstone	
Drybrook Limestone :- Dolomatised	Whitehead Limestone	Lower Carboniferous Series
	Crease Limestone	



Dolomitised Various Quantity Of Massive Limestone Brownstone	Lower Dolomite Lower Limestone Shales  Tintern Sandstone Group Quartz Conglomerate Old Red Sandstones	Lower Carboniferous Series  Old Red Sandstone
---	--	---

In the Symonds Yat area the shales apparently conceal very little speleogenic limestone, compared with the massive block found at St. Briavels or even on Howle Hill, Dunderhole area. So we will have to find the caves in the dolomitised limestone. The relevance of the dolomite is merely that it slows up the formation of caves. The initial permeability is the same as limestone but the dolomite rocks take longer to dissolve. The caves will be smaller ( than Dunderhole ? ).

The one chief stratigraphical feature is the Lydbrook Fault. Possibly the most important fault of the area, it divides the shallowly inclined lower carboniferous series of Symonds Yat from the rest of the steeply inclined basin. The fault only effects the lower carb. series, a fact which may mislead some people into thinking that the fault ends at Hoarthorns Wood Swallet. The appearance of the end, merely is due to the intervention of the coal measures from which the Hoarthorns Wood stream runs. The fault which has apparently some considerable throw at this point ( bringing Drybrook Sandstone and Lower Dolomite together ) must continue for considerable distances below the coal measures. What does the fault bring together 100 ft down in Hoarthorns Wood Swallet ? Lower Limestone Shales / Crease Limestone ( CL to SE ) ?

### **Recent Developments**

Apparently totally unobserved to all Forest cavers except me there was a minor flood on the days of January 4 / 5<sup>th</sup>. No disastrous effects seem to have been involved, only a minor change at Hoarthorns Wood

( although I may have to qualify that statement at some later date ). Whippington Brook Sink appears to have flooded well, washing away about 1 ft of bank at one point, but bank to Hoarthorns Wood.

Here the old entrance is silting up fast and the flood backed up, overflowing into the new dig ( A depth of 8 ft perhaps ). Apart from a small collapse the only change is that the stream now flows at full spate straight across the bottom of the dig ( a small trickle had been seen previously ) and judging from the way it is getting away, it must have a fairly easy route. One odd factor is that our dig is, if anything, is already beyond the lost rift, so where is the stream going so silently, unless it does a remarkably quick back somersault ?

On the same day, I noticed that Brooks Head Grove Rising was running at a volume of about twice that in Hoarthorns Wood stream, and, not having seen this rising before, I began to wonder. However the difference between sink and rising is less than 100 ft, we hope, compared with a known depth of 100 ft for the Swallet. Perhaps Carterspiece Swallet goes that way. In which case why does Seymours Swallet go the other way ( as depth of this dry swallet also is against Brooks Head being the original rising ) these two swallets are about 200 yds apart, probably less. I have since been reassured that this rising is usually minimal.

The other site of recent interest to me has been Whippington Brook. To any one who has seen both sink and rising on the same day ( after recent floods, dry spells, or whatever ) it is obvious that the two cannot be connected. The sink to my knowledge is always greater than the rising ( about 6 periodic visits over 2 months ).

cont

I would think that the risings merely drain the few sinks directly above, the one Jim once banged so noisily for one, but probably not including Green Moss Pot. A recent sink found at NGR 5591331 is more difficult to map unless it drains under the hill to Sopers Pot and hence to Slaughter, for I am coming to the impression that Whippington Brook Sink is more likely to go to Hadnock Quarry Resurgence rather than Slaughter. This goes very much against the grain for several reasons the water would have to follow the strike, with a dip of about 25 degrees towards Slaughter. Slaughter resurgence is closer by about ½ mile. But what else can go to Hadnock Quarry Resurgence, a fairly important rising entirely neglected due to its impenetrability? The ridge above is narrow and very long.

Has anyone looked at Whippington Brook Sink, and really studied its formation. It is essentially similar to Symonds Yat Swallet, which will mean absolutely nothing to most people. The Yat Swallet has been penetrated to a depth of 50 ft in a large collapse. The stream sinks in a second collapse 20 ft away and has not yet been seen underground. WB Sink is more complex, involving at least four collapses. The stream sinks in the third usually recognisable by the wood and tyre in it. During the flood it continued overflowing to the fourth. The first is under an oxbow just above the sink and is usually by-passed by the stream while the second is completely silted, although after digging for 10 minutes a hole was made to take the entire stream, continued digging, as it invariably does, blocked the hole again. I enclose a rough sketch of the sink as it is a typical sink of the Symonds Yat area. Solutional collapse invaded by a stream. Whether there is any point in digging at such a site is debatable. The solutional pot is supposed to close to small fissures and bedding planes, invaded by the stream but still insufficiently large to follow. This does occur in a very small solutional pot - Sopers Pot, but the same is not experienced in Symonds Yat where several large rifts have been encountered. Perhaps we aren't deep enough ( some say we are too deep now )

As an answer to question No 4, I will list the digs in the area :-

Hoarthorns Wood Swallet - RFDCC semi active re-opening		59041375
Seymours Swallet - GSS active		59001389
Dry Sink - GSS		58121373
Wet Sink - GSS		58171373
Kiln Hole - GSS last three enforced closure		5801396
Coldwell Swallet - and resurgence - RFDCC semi active	S.	56921555
Symonds Yat Swallet - BUSS - abandoned temp'	R.	56051520
JDJ - RFDCC - abandoned, ad infinitum I hope		55741433
Sopers Pot - CPG - abandoned		55761408
Green Moss Pot - RFDCC - abandoned		55651398
Bent Hazel Sink - CPG - abandoned during forestry operations		56081373
C 4 - GSS ?		
Whippington Brook Rising - RFDCC - abandoned after collapse ?		55251408
Dunderhole - RFDCC - semi-active		60061943
Fester Dig - RFDCC / CPG - inactive		652112
Other important NGR's :-		
Slaughter Resurgence		55561460
Hadnock Quarry Resurgence		54161539
Brooks Head Grove Rising		58681435

Cont

Only three of these digs have got off the ground - Kiln Hole was going well before a cow intervened. Hoarthorns Wood Swallet has been lost possibly for ever unless a saviour is found. Symonds Yat Swallet is probably the most concerted effort but youthful spirits permitted a very rapid descent in the lower 20 ft leaving it very dangerous and nearly impossible to shore. If nothing else the hydrology of the area ought to be completely established, the only facts so far known is by dye testing Coldwell Swallet to the resurgence and Dry Sink. Wet sink and others close one to Slaughter. And Symonds Yat Swallet to the Slaughter ( approx 10 hrs ) . Failures include Sopers and Redhouse to the Slaughter. So we have a lot of work on, if we want it :-  
To dig Hoarthorns Wood Swallet and Seymour Swallet if it is abandoned by GSS and to dye test Carterpiece Swallet to Brooks Head Rising to try and establish a negative link ( not difficult for Malcolm ) Whippington Brook Sink to rising, Hadnock Quarry or Slaughter.  
Sopers Pot to Slaughter, Green Moss Pot and surrounding sinks to Slaughter or Whippington Brook Rising. Redhouse Swallet to Coldwell or Slaughter.

In the next GSS journal there will be an article on water testing so far completed in the Forest, but none of the above answers have been proven. One day we may find a large cave system in the Forest or at Symonds Yat, the silt, size and strata aren't helping but the apathy is killing.

### **FOREST NEWS**

The big news this month is the reopening of Westbury Brook Iron Mine, that is, the first level only, the rest being under water. A likely entrance was found by Laurence and Roger Bailey several Sundays ago when they should have been at the cave rescue practice ( we confess Derrick, but we overslept ) To start with the site did not look very encouraging, but there was a good draught going in at the bottom of a rock scree, this was pursued and after three short digs we were in ! read John Courts account of the trip

### **DEAD MAN IN A FOREST CAVE**

In the middle of January two young boys playing cowboys and Indians in the caves in the Symonds Yat to Monmouth area discovered the body of a 47 yr old Cheltenham man. He had been missing since the middle of December and the Police stated that he had been dead for some time ( Ed and I went and shot my mouth off about the Nailbridge job in the last newsletter, good job the cops haven't got the message yet, I've got a sensitive stomach ).

### **CAVE RESCUE MATTERS**

It is proposed by the clubs masochists that our private rescue practice takes place in Buckshaft scowel hole, everybody out in two hours in a pre planned operation, more of this in the next newsletter.

27<sup>th</sup> March - GCRG leaders training session.

There are also rumours of a GCRG dinner and dance during March.

### **EQUIPMENT**

John Court has tow ropes for sale, 15 ft long, 4,500 lbs breaking strain 10/- each.

Ian Standing has Carbide for sale, I have forgotten the price ( just imagine, laying back in the chair and him saying " well what do you want, cocaine or bloody carbide ? )

## **HEADQUARTERS**

The floorboard situation is looking up, we hope to have the next lot out of Coleford Baptist Chapel ( ? ) .  
John and Diana Court attempted to vacuum clean the walls of the upstairs room, but found the plaster pulled away. We shall have to strip off the walls and white wash the bare walls.

## **NEW MEMBER**

John Deuton                      Mrs Daphne Hay                      Mrs Pamela Solari                      Mrs Pamela Brown  
Welcome to the club !  
Jim, Andy and Pete had better watch out this is obviously a crafty move.

## **REVISED DATE FOR MEETS LIST**

7<sup>th</sup> February Shropshire Lead Mines.

## **BATS**

Micheal Wearing who works for the Forestry Commission is recording the state of the bat population in the Forest for the Mammal Society. Those who are interested will find him at the Butchers Arms on Wednesday evenings or at his home address :-

Soudley Lodge  
Soudley  
Cinderford  
Glos GL 14 2UA

## **SKITTLES**

GSS want to give us another hammering. This will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> March , a Friday, in the Longford Inn being on the Gloucester Tewkesbury road. Grub will be a buffet costing 7/6 each. The pub has been chosen not for the skittle alley but for the room available for talking, bragging and lying about caving etc.

## **ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY**

UBSS newsletter new series No 1 December 1970  
Orpheus CC newsletter Vol 6 No 12 December 1970

## **WHO's - WHO**

“ Andy now zat Daphne is back in the club we are safe to go into Old Bow”  
What Welsh nationalist in the club has found his razor ?  
Which climber / caver has an “ attack” of “ crabs” .  
Who has a pet spider in the headquarters ?  
Who said “ this is the only club my husbands getting me into from now on” ?

**SUBS** - are now due rates are :-      Single member 15/- Adult. Junior per annum.  
Family Membership 10/- Adult. 5/- Junior per annum.

Pleas cough up to Andy Solari.

## **WESTBURY BROOK IRON MINE - TRIP REPORT**

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January, we started off with the intention of digging Hoarthorn's Wood Swallet. However, when we reached Hoarthorns farm, Roger Solari informed us that the dig was nicely flooded. Since there were a number of GSS members about we could hardly push the draughting rift in Seymours Swallet. After some discussion a number of our digging party went to dig the resurgence of Coldwell Swallet, DI, Jim and I decided to follow up the Bailey brothers request for support on their Westbury Brook dig. After a very quick dig Roger and Lawrence had entered a churn, on a very steep dip. In view of the possible severity of any system that may have been below the churn, they had disclosed the site of the dig to Jim, in the hope that he may be able to support them if necessary.

When we reached the dig at 11 am Roger and Lawrence were already underground. Five minutes later we were in the first churn, medium sized with damp, fine sized stones as the floor. A short traverse ( to prevent stones running down hill ) and we reached a line running down dip. We followed this hand line and after about 100 ft we caught up with the brothers, who had been sheltering from stones that we had dislodged.

We all carried on down dip, the route being on an obvious miners walk in, with many old footprints in the mud. After a short pitch ( 6 ft ) the route split. We followed the right-hand route, and, soon found that the draught had disappeared half an hours poking and pushing, the other way was found. This regained the walk in. ( At the end of our trip we found that we should have taken the left hand route )

Whilst searching for the way on, DI was disturbed to come across a small bat, white chested, lying on its back waiting for its tummy to be rubbed. The bat was apparently hibernating, in a small cavity.

The walk in now followed a passage with a very natural looking roof, past a wind door, and then into a steep waterworn section. This passage about 10 ft by 3 ft dropped into the side of an extremely large churn, which for obvious reasons, we named echo churn. The churn is about 40 ft wide by 30 ft high, with natural pot holes in the roof. The point of entry is on top of a large clay heap, where the roof has collapsed, leaving a pattern similar to Football roof. We went to the north along the churn, but after about 300 ft the going became very steep. The roof is higher here, with the floor littered with large boulders liberally coated with clay.

Jim slid down the slope for a quick recce whilst we unravelled the rope for use as a hand line. He was soon back, however, having been stopped by a clay fall after about 150 ft with no obvious way on. The rope was very useful to Jim for his return.

Cont

We returned to our entrance to Echo Churn and then went south for about 100 ft where a honey-combed wall confronted us. We were intrigued by what were fairly certainly fresh foot prints, coming down out of a hole next to the wall, crossing the churn, and dropping down a hole on the opposite side of the churn one way only. A mystery for another trip.

We had a quick poke in the Honey-Comb and looked into a lower small churn however this could not be free climbed and we had no ladder. Back into Echo Churn and we followed the footprints down the hole. Forty feet further and we were standing in the churn that we couldn't climb into. The route drops fairly quickly about 100 ft vertical height, with awkward exposed climbs.

A short muddy scree slope, and we were in the level ( what there is of it ).

There is a 20 ft section of level at the end of the scree, the level is then mined out, but continues about 40 ft further on ( North ) with a 20 ft section. A traverse around another mined out section ( about 10 ft ) and the level then continues, apparently partially filled with deads.

The traverse was not pushed since it is muddy, inclined and narrow, with a 20 ft exposure. A broomstick is needed to give balance off the opposite wall, although a wire will be more sensible if the level continues for any distance.

The water level is about 25 ft below the level, which gave the appearance of having been recently flooded. Just below the level is a rotten Dram Truck, with one pair of wheels intact.

After a quick look for bypasses to the traverse, we decided to return to the surface since our lights were beginning to dim. ( Morale - charge your cells before going on a surface dig - you may be underground longer than you anticipate ) Three quarters of an hour later we reached grass.

We believe that we have only scratched the surface of finds to be made in the Westbury Brook are, particularly along the strike. However care is needed due to the gradient and quantities of mud and clay covering the rocks. This is not a mine for beginners.

TACKLE - A 200 ft hand lie was rigged at the entrance with a sling and crab used to hold the line away from a loose wall of deads immediately over the slope.

LEVEL - Approx' 100 ft visible of the first landing of Westbury Brook Mine, similar in size to the Oakwood Mill Land Level, ie, approx' 7 ft in diameter.

An article on the Westbury Brook Mine and its history will appear in the next newsletter.

John Court.

## **A FURTHER TRIP INTO WESTBURY BROOK MINE**

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> Jan, saw another small party entering the scowle leading into the workings above Westbury Brook Mine first level. This time a short length tree branch was taken in with a view to crossing the traverse on the level so that the extent of the level to the north could be checked. It was also intended to check some of the obviously draughting passages left from lack of time on the previous trip. The more direct route was used to get to Echo Churn and proved very much quicker and easier. We continued on to the level which is approx' 350 ft down with more caution than on the first trip now the extent of the exposure is known. Conditions get steadily muddier as the level is reached and the footing has to be watched.

Once the level was reached, it was relatively easy to cross the traverse with the aid of the short stick. As was expected, the level was blocked by a clay slip about 100 ft from the traverse but a considerable draught could be felt. This was puzzling as the draught was into the mine at the entrance and also into the mine from the blockage on the level. Either the draught from the entrance we use by-passes the fall or there is another entrance. Re- tracing our steps to the large chamber below the level we found a well preserved hod of a type not seen before near to the dram truck. Some attempt was made to locate the missing wheels and axle of the dram but it would seem that they have either been removed in earlier days or they have gone on down the steep dip workings below water level. The axle and wheels remaining were dug out of the clay and carried out with the hod when we had finished looking around.

The southern end of the level finishes in a large clay and boulder fall so it was attempted to by-pass this by taking higher level workings over the top pf the fall. Conflicting draught directions made the correct direction difficult to find but eventually the level was found and dropped into from above. This led to a hilarious time as the level is filled with deep glutinous mud and even a tightly laced boot is reluctant to stay on. Walking in passages with a low roof and this sort of mud on the floor becomes very strenuous.

After about 150 ft a further slip has blocked off the level and there is no obvious way around. Until a survey is made there is no way of telling where the end of the level lies.

A few more routes were examined on the way out at higher levels but apart from a 50 ft pitch near the entrance, very little else was found. The last trip lasted 4 hrs.

Jim Hay.

## CAVING IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

In the town of Hay-on-Wye, there is what the owners claim to be the largest second hand bookshop in England. Recent visits to it have proved fruitful with purchase of a number of caving books such as Norbert Carteret's 'My Caves' for around 5/- each. The most interesting buy however, was a little volume entitled 'Caves of the Earth' published around 1890 by the religious tract society and containing a wealth of facts as well as some obvious fiction. The writer ( un-named ) has - or had - a better knowledge of continental caves than British ones but has dug up some very interesting stories on caves much visited today.

For instance, do you recognise this description of a well known cave of 80years ago :-

A stupendous natural cavern, through which the river runs for nearly a quarter of mile, while cattle graze, and harvests wave above it, on the incumbent rock. At the entrance, the cavern is about 40 ft wide, and twenty high, numbers of forest and other trees, of great diversity of form and foliage, growing on either side of the opening.

On a fine day there is sufficient light for examining about fifty yards of this natural tunnel, when it gradually fades away into impenetrable gloom, and torches are necessary to complete its inspection.

The cave described is Cwm Porth, now better known as Cwm Porth-yr-Ogof or White Horse Cave. It is strange that no mention is made of the white horse, or is that a modern tourist attraction ?

The above description is an example of what the book writer calls type two of three of ' Caverns ' - type two being caverns open at both ends. Cavern type one is defined as - 'Cavities ' more or less narrow and prolonged, open to the daylight at one extremity, and penetrating laterally or vertically, from the earths surface.

Eldon Hole is quoted as an example of the vertical type, formally regarded as one of the wonders of that district, on account of its supposed unfathomable depth. Various attempts were made to measure the depth with lengths of cord and weights but were not successful. Cotton - a poet ? - recorded his own attempt in verse :-

But myself with half the peaks surround  
Eight hundred, fourscore, and four yards have sounded  
And though of these fourscore returned back wet  
The plummet drew and found no bottom yet  
Though when I went to make a new essay  
I could not get the least down half the way.

cont

A more scientific attempt was made by the Earl of Leicester in the reign of Queen Elizabeth who found an early caver interested in money and lowered down the hole. The account states :-

He was let down about two hundred ells, and after he had remained at the length of the rope awhile, he was pulled up again, with great expectations of some discoveries, but, when he came up, he was senseless, and died, within eight days of a frenzy.

An ell, by the way, was a measurement of about  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  yds. The first successful descent of Eldon Hole was in 1781 when a Mr Lloyd was lowered by eight men and reached the bottom at a distance of sixty two yds. He described the bottom of the hole in some detail and noted that there was sufficient light at the bottom to read print.

The book describes caverns type three as caverns comprising those which consist of a succession of lofty and spacious halls or chambers, usually connected by narrow and winding passages. Peak cavern Castleton is quoted as the finest home example with a length of two thousand, two hundred and fifty feet and a depth under the mountain of six hundred and twenty feet. The description of Peak Cavern in 1890 runs as follows:-

At the turn of the road, a vast mass of rock is suddenly presented in front, with the mouth of the dark labyrinth, in the form of a depressed arch, a hundred and twenty feet in width, and forty two in height. Entering beneath it, and proceeding about thirty yards, the first compartment through which a dubious twilight prevails is crossed, the roof gradually becoming lower, and the excavation narrower, till a confined passage is reached, at which all trace of the blaze of day light is lost. After traversing this aperture about thirty yards, the first great interior cavity is reached, and five other capacious openings follow.

At different points candles are lighted by the guides, at considerable heights which display the dimensions of the successive chambers, with the ribs and layers of massive rock which form the roofs and sides. At one spot, a small lake has to be crossed in a boat or skiff, the passenger lying down at the bottom, owing to the over-hanging rock descending to within twenty inches of the surface of the water. A singularly striking effect is produced by the explosion of a small quantity of gunpowder, wedged into a crevice of the rock, at the far extremity of the cavern, the sound of which rolls along it like a loud and long continued peal of thunder, but with a deep muffled intonation.

Now why cannot trip reports in the club newsletter read a little more like the one above. Tourists in those days must have been hardier than today as well.

Cont

A number of other sites in England are mentioned and of possible interest to those actively engaged in water tracing in Derbyshire is the note that :-

‘the rivers Hamp and Manifold, on the confines of Derbyshire and Staffordshire, sink into the disjointed strata, and, after running underground for several miles, emerge in the gardens of Llam Hall.

The method used for water tracing is not recorded but another cave mentioned in connection with underground streams is described as :-

Near the city of Wells, in the limestone of the Mendip Hills, a three-chambered cavern occurs, often visited by the curious, from which Pope derived some of the materials of his artificial grotto at Twickenham. The furthest chamber has a fine stream of water running through it, eight or ten feet wide and two feet deep, which sinks through a cleft in the rock, and bursts out in the adjoining valley as the source of the river Axe.

Recognise it ?

A splendid description which must be used in a newsletter again is the ‘ Vacuity of prodigious extent ‘ used to describe the cavern found by miners in the Speedwell mine in Derbyshire.

The trip report on this cavern is given as follows :-

‘ This great natural cavern is nearly half a mile in the interior of the rock. It is reached by an artificial excavation which commences at the depth of a hundred steps below the base of the mountain, amid profound darkness. The excavation, the work of miners pick-axe, is from three to four feet deep in water, and so narrow that the sides may readily be touched with the ceiling above. Proceeding along this confined subterranean canal in a boat pushed along by the guide, the visitor is at length landed on a ledge of rock protected by an iron rail. Above him, a cavern expands to an unknown height, while below him, on one side, it extends to an unknown depth, the impervious gloom only for a short distance removed by the torches, and the startling sound of water falling into the abyss, constituting a scene impossible to be witnessed without some degree of nervous trepidation. During the further excavation of the mine, this tremendous gulf received upwards of forty thousand tons of material without any impression being apparently made upon its capacity, while into the awful dome overhead rocks have been projected, which have risen to their usual height, exploded, and thrown out their beautiful coruscations as freely as if ascending simply beneath the vault of heaven.

Perhaps this is the explanation of the empty firework cases SWCC found in the upper part of OFD II last year.

cont

Descriptions are also included of the Blue John Mine which is noted for its fine stal growth following an explanation that stalactites and stalagmites are formed by deposition ' pellicle after pellicle '. This explanation is apparently included because of an earlier common belief that stals were a form of vegetable life and grew as ' stone plants '. Macalister's Cave on the island of Skye is fully covered but the writer notes that the formations have been sadly mistreated by tourists and the remainder blackened by the smoky lamp. Another good reason for banning carbide ? Finally, to encourage our ladder builders to greater efforts and of particular interest to those that cave abroad, the following caves are offered :-

Those that occur are principally vertical fissures of unknown depth, and perfectly incapable of being explored. Such is the cave of Marienstadt, and the enormously deep gulf at Fredierickstal in Norway, where a stone thrown in requires from a minute and a half to two minutes to give echo of its fall. It has been calculated, therefore, to have a precipitous depth of from 39,866 ft to 59,049 ft - nearly twice the height of the loftiest summits of the Andes.

Anyone for tennis ?