

# **THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN**

## **CAVING CLUB**



**JUNE 1971**

**NEWS LETTER No 33**

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No poem or quotation by chairman Mao in this edition but we have included a car sticker, or bookmaker  
Or something .

Missing - Account of a trip to Pippken Pot by ' Spade ', will the finder please pass it to the editor as it is  
long overdue for publication.

**Hon. Sec**

**John B Court**

**Hon. Editor**

**R E Bailey**

## **FOREST NEWS - The New Dunn Rescue.**

A party of three came to grief when collecting minerals in New Dunn on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May. The accident happened when the group, using an ice axe, were attempting to dig out dolomite crystals from the wall of ' Gelly Churn ' near the pipe shaft, when several large chunks of roof fell away giving Laurk Gage a glancing blow and breaking and crushing the foot of Richard Kay. Laurie prised the rock off Richards foot which was bleeding badly. It was obvious that help was needed and the third member of the party William Milroy made his way out meeting on the way Mike Howell and two others. After helping to make the casualty comfy Mike returned to the surface and hitched his way to Coleford to pick up the Cave Rescue Ambulance from the Police Station. The call out was now in operation but it wasn't till about 1 pm that a really useful quantity of people was available.

It was a stroke of luck that Dr Peter Standing was visiting his Brother Ian at Coleford, they were soon on the scene and the victim was given a shot of pain killer to ease his suffering. The rescue then proceeded as often practiced and Richard was brought to the surface about 3 pm to face a barrage of press and TV reporters.

Richard had to be given two pints of blood before being operated on, his injuries were four broken bones in the foot and tendons cut, he is expected to make a full recovery.

The following serious and flippant observations have been made :-

- 1 It takes about two hours to get a rescue going in force.
- 2 We must move the casualty quicker.
- 3 We need a caving Doctor locally.
- 4 Don't hack at the roof, it's dangerous.
- 5 Don't try to lift the casualty by his broken foot, his screams hurt your ears.
- 6 Don't have an accident, your reception by the press as you reach the surface is enough to put you off caving for life.

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP - AGM**

A well attended meeting was held at the Butchers Arms Clearwell on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Gordon Clissold took the chair and the years work was reviewed by the warden Derick Appleing. The tackle officer, Malcolm Sterry reported that little new equipment had been purchased and existing tackle had been made up into bags numbered in order of priority. The Treasurer Laurie Gage reported that the groups finances had taken a downward trend, this year very little money had been made from the usual sources.

The selection of officers for the year 1971 - 72 was as follows :-

Chairman	Gordon Clissold
Warden	Derick Appleing
Treasurer	Colin Anderson
Tackle Officer	Malcolm Sterry
Info Officer	Ian Standing
Ordinary	John Court
-----	Tony Day

cont

The meeting was shown plans for a winch which has been designed for GCRG purposes. It would be hand operated but provision would be made for fitting a suitable power unit. It would also be portable enough to be used underground. Design work had been done by a well known local firm to the wardens spec, the firm would also build the winch as an apprentice's project, GCRG would only need to supply the cost of materials, a total cost of about £50. The meeting decided to go ahead as the winch would fill a vital gap in the groups equipment.

### **CLANNA RESURGENCE**

As he is cave registry registrar of the area Colin Graham took up his tape measure and donned his shorts ( I bet he wished they were Hot Pants ) and plunged into the icy waters only to find that the winters flood waters had brought down some boulders about 40 ft in , but this had not stopped the draught.

### **OLD GLASS**

When the Bow - Ham through trip was discovered at the Ham end some large pieces of glass were found, they were obviously all from the same object, and from the curvature of the pieces it was quite a size. The glass itself is interesting, it is like a sandwich having a pastel green middle in between two light green layers.

Jim Hay took a sample into the Gloucester Folk Museum. It turned out to be an Apothecary's bottle, that's the kind you see in chemists windows, and dates from around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Maybe the miners suffered from high blood pressure.

### **YEW TREE PIT**

Yew Tree Pit shaft lies in the wood opposite the Lamsquay Guest House, it has recently sunk down a number of feet and is now about 30 ft deep to the rubbish. A quick investigation from the shaft top did not reveal any apparent way off and the smoke from lighted news paper hung in the shaft. From now on a regular check will be kept.

### **BUCKSHRAFT SCOWEL HOLE**

This is on the verge of being lost as the rubbish thrown down by local people is now almost blocking the way on down. This hole had interesting potential, there is a pitch at the bottom leading into water, various ways off and a strong draught.

To many, its loss will be significant in that there will be no more rescue practices from there. We shall have to find another dirty smelly hole with hordes of screaming kids to spit on those toiling up the muddy slopes.

### **FAIRPLAY MINE**

Jim Hay was in the vicinity of the shaft recently and reports that a strong smell of deceased sheep is issuing from it.

### **SYMONDS YAT**

The teeth which were found there in a cave recently ( see last months news letter ) have been identified as belonging to a species of pig, a very old pig it might be said, but still a pig.

The club intends to do a leaflet on the Symonds Yat area for the Forestry Commission and articles on the various limestone and cave features are needed. Please contact John Court or Ian Standing.



### **COMMITTEE CHANGE**

Due to conflicting interests Malcolm Sterry has resigned from the committee, his position as tackle officer has been taken by Geoff Broadman.

### **NEW MEMBER**

Ian Hale. Welcome to the club.

### **CONGRATULATIONS**

To Pete Blake on his marriage to Miss Petula Lyne.

### **FURTHER PROGRESS IN WESTBURY BROOK IRON MINE**

Recent digging by Laurence and Roger Bailey has opened up a large area of workings in the mine to the extent that the majority of the southern end of the mine is now accessible, the northernmost part so far reached within 100 ft of the shaft considering distances travelled. An account follows :-

Party R and L Bailey - We entered the mine at 10.30 am carrying a considerable amount of kit including a 10 ft pole, this proved a little difficult in places but we managed it. We arrived at the site of our last dig and proceeded to 'maypole' up to a very promising hole, this proved to be a dead end, as was to be expected after lugging the pole in all that way. We then carted the now familiar pole up into up-dip workings to prod another hole we had noticed the week before. In a lull between struggling with the pole and shouting and swearing at one another I noticed a gap which appeared to open out. Abandoning the pole, much to our relief, we had a quick dig and soon had a hairy little crawl into a small series. After some draught testing we discovered a small air way or winze, this popped up by the side of the first level. We trotted along the first level for a long way, the mine opens out into workings. We passed a cross out which leads into a rift type working and a most interesting hole in the floor with a drop of about 30 ft into a large churn. We pressed on along the main level noting with interest that the old men had used the way after it had fallen in, in several places ways had been dug through. We went so far that we expected to see the shaft at any moment, but we came to the inevitable fall close to the remains of an old tram. We then explored up-dip but ran into falls, returning to the truck we then descended a shoot and found ourselves on a mystery level which lies midway between No's 1 & 2.

We named this the 'Sprag Level' after the quantity of wheel sprags which we found. These look like an assortment of pokers with minute shovel ends.

There is still plenty of plate rail in the level and many relics. We discovered a water washed winze which, though a bit hairy was climbable and this led down to the second level. The level ran north for about 100 ft to a fall, but we noticed a very strong draught going into the fall. There was workings above us but we decided not to tackle them as we were a long way in and there was only the two of us.

Prospects are very good for further progress and this weekend has brought us a lot nearer to the Stenders. The air movement northwards leads us to think that the shaft is capped and not in-filled, the official records are conflicting. The end fall on the second level might be bang-able, but the whole area needs a close examination. The mine is now so extensive that it needs a minimum of three to carry kit and we don't intend to go to the far end without that number along. On the way out we banged a rock in one of the squeezes, we intend to carry on doing this the further in we get. We emerged at 5.30 pm.

**Laurence Bailey.**

## **THE DEVON WEEKEND**

John and I joined Jenny and Derek and travelled down to Devon on Friday evening. The journey was surprisingly easy and not too long, we found the DCC hut comfortable and well equipped.

On Saturday John and myself followed Derek into Bakers Pit. The entrance is in a rubbish tip near a cemetery. This cave mainly consists of numerous passages and tubes weaving in and out of a massive boulder choke system.

Derek led down to the stream ( a very small stream passage with no water ) and through several of the entrance series passages and chambers. John became overheated and so after seeing him out Derek and I went to look at the new extension. Here we found some undersized, clean formations and explored the maze of passages. Deciding we'd had enough after about three hours we headed out to join Jenny and John with the intention of doing Pridhamsleigh cave after a break for dinner.

Bakers Pit is very muddy and most of the passages are small and it is somewhat reminiscent of the iron mines. Because of the mud the trip is fairly strenuous as you slip and slide along. Wet suits are not recommended as John will tell you.

### **Di Court**

Having coded down and done some sunbathing whilst waiting for Di and Derek, we wandered down to the Pengelly Cave Research Centre, an anticlimax considering the noise they make, which was closed and had lunch. Then down to the main road to give passing motorists a thrill to see four decidedly dirty cavers, whilst we walked to Pridhamsleigh.

At the farm we met a party of cavers from Swindon, who were a beautiful shade of mud all over and they were still smiling. We weren't, we thought that ( a ) we had left the mud in Bakers and ( b ) that Prid' was clean, wrong.

The entrance is quite impressive for at least 15 ft and then mud, Prid' Cavern is a phreatic system which at some time in its history became filled with a nice liquid mud ( possibly from the nearby cowshed ) . Most of the mud washed off the walls and roof but there is enough on the floor to suffice.

The cave is complex due to its rather random Phreatic nature and I am sure that a caver with the right mental attitude would enjoy its twists and turns, slides and climbs, you've probably by now got the idea, my mental attitude wasn't right. The highlight of the trip was an active stream way about ¼ mile from the cave, the sun was beautiful and it was lovely to get a clean wet suit again.

### **John Court.**

## **ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY**

DCA. News letter No 10 new series May 1971  
Orpheus CC news letter new series Vol 7 No 4  
GSS news letter for March / April and May / June  
CRG transactions Vol 13 No 1  
UBSS news letter No 2 new series May 1971

Colin Clements has had made 50 ft of fixed ladder to go into Westbury Brook, the ladder is in 5 ft sections and when it has been painted it will be taken in and fixed in position. This is a very generous gift and will greatly help in the exploration of the mine.

Please note that the club or individual members take no responsibility for any accident or damage to equipment resulting from failure or positioning of any fixed aides left in Westbury Brook Iron Mine.

### **TRIPS**

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> - Day trip to Neath Valley. Trips to be arranged as required.

Sat / Sun 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> - Yorkshire weekend.

Sat 26<sup>th</sup> / Sun 27<sup>th</sup> - South Wales weekend.

July

Sun 11<sup>th</sup> - Cave Rescue Practice. Old Bow Iron Mine.

### **C R G NORTHERN GENERAL MEETING - WHERNSIDE MANOR DENT YORKSHIRE**

Sat 19<sup>th</sup> / Sun 20<sup>th</sup> June - Subjects ' caves of Ethiopia and East Africa ' Dr A C Sutcliffe.

1970 Nepal Expedition Dr A C Waltham.

Recent Hydrology Work in the Craven area. Dr A F Pitty

### **CAVE SCIENCE COURSES AT WHERNSIDE MANOR**

Photography Underground	July 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup>
Karst Hydrology	Oct 8 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup>
Limestone Geology	Oct 29 <sup>th</sup> - 31 <sup>st</sup>

Each course begins at 9 pm on Friday and ends at 6 pm the following Sunday. The fee of £ 4.50 covers accommodation and all meals, as well as the use of the centre equipment and transport during the course.

If you are interested, bookings can be obtained by letter, just write stating the course required and enclosing a deposit of £1 to - The Warden, Whernside Manor, Dent, Yorkshire.

## **SELF LIFE-LINING**

**By John Elliott**

Self life-lining has a very important part to play in modern caving especially when one is contemplating trips in caves with quite a few long vertical pitches. The disadvantages with the standard method of double life-lining are obvious if you use them often. For a start you have to drag into the cave a rope of just over double length of the pitch and miscellaneous belays and crabs to make it secure, not using the same belay as the ladder of course. And how many of us bother to take in a pulley to help reduce friction on the rope. Personally I favour a very cold draught so that he can life-line us up in comfort after we have finished our meditations below. However this tends to breed club rebels.

While Roger Solari and I were caving with French ( in France ) we could not fail to notice the cunning device which they used for life-lining themselves up their grotty long French type pitches. They called it the Petzaler, and basically it is a ratchet device for gripping rope one way and letting it run the other, giving something akin to a prussiker.

Back in the homeland we discovered that the same thing could be bought in North Wales climbing shops as prussikers. They were sold in pairs for about £4.50 and are called Cloggers.

So now a big hard hairy type caver enters a deep pot hole with his length of rope equal to just over the length of the pitches he intends to descend. When the ladder is rigged members of the team can be life-lining down in the normal fashion, and then gaze in wonder as their hero scorches down the single rope ( abseiling actually ) and arrives besides them, probably with a burnt b----- . If you are not a hero then they'll wonder what the hell your doing.

For descending the clogger is best attached to your waist-length by means of a sling giving a few feet of slack, then as you climb down you have to release your clogger by pressing down the pin provided and slide down below you, then climb down and do the same again. It doesn't seem to work to bad in practice. Going up is much easier as the rope will slide through the clogger and only jam if you fall off. It is very desirable to have the rope held below in some way so it doesn't follow you up the pitch. Remember, of course not to let anyone stand directly below the pitch, falling rocks and all that.

Apart from the other uses, such as prussiking, and it's valuable here because it can't fall out off the rope until the crabs taken out. This device can also be used for climbing fixed ropes. Picture it, your leaders free climbed up into a hitherto unobtainable passage, he lowers a bit of rope and commands you to climb. Hay-presto, you whip out your cloggy and your with him in no time. You're a hero as well.

The disadvantages seem to be apparent, when you climb on very muddy ropes, unless you test it carefully before you move you may end up back at the bottom. Gritty ropes may eventually wear teeth smooth so this should be checked for. Also the cloggy must be subjected to shock loads, which in normal use it shouldn't.

Presumably this will have a detrimental affect on the rope, and the caver that's on it.

Reference - SWCC News letter No 68.

## DARK HILL CAVE

NGR SO 56750548

Dark Hill Cave was discovered by GSS members around 1965 and was given an unfortunate name as it is some distance from Dark Hill. It actually lies in the upper Slade Brook valley and is slightly higher and on the opposite side of the valley to Slade Brook Rising ( SO 56760553 ). The entrance is quite difficult to find during spring and summer as the top cover is heavy but the two easiest ways are :-

To start at Slade Wood Rising ( SO 56860534 ) and to work around the hill into Slade Brook Valley on the same contour line or, to descend into the Slade Brook 100 ft downstream of the rising and then to climb the hillside opposite where forks are exposed.

Either way needs good protection from brambles. Who first entered the cave ? I do not know but a girl friend of John Dryden apparently reached the end in 1965 and reported the way on blocked by a Stal Bank. Pete Standing tried at some time later date but was stopped by the carcass of a dead fox part way in.

Various members of the FODCC tried at intervals but were stopped by the tightness of the passage and the awkwardness of the bends. I had been in on a number of occasions but always behind some fat B----- That declared it impossible and backed out.

Now that I am my new slim Jim I fancied another try and persuaded Sparky - another lean un - to follow me up.

We had arranged to meet at the main road turning at 10 am and, as usual, I didn't get until 10.30 Sparky wasn't there so I drove down the track to the holes to see if he had gone on but he had either been and gone or was later than me. It turned out to be the latter as I met him up the road after I had decided to go home. We had a quick look at his impressive dig - how many have seen the 40 - 50 ft deep rifts in this wood ? And then motored down to Slade Valley and changed. Knowing that the cave is a flood resurgence, I had brought a wet suit but Sparky went the brave way and kitted out in dry clothing with a Stinky for light. The tightness also persuaded me to wear a hood and carry a two cell but Sparky refused to be parted from his helmet.

The entrance took some finding and needed clearing of vegetation before we could enter but what was ominous was the smell of fox inside. A preliminary venture showed that little had changed since my last visit and shouting brought no reply from a fox, so we retreated and prepared for a full push.

The entrance is a fairly tight u-bend but the chamber inside is just big enough to turn round in and contains some large but dirty stals. Beyond the passage tightens in width but maintains a height of about 3 ft until a point is reached where the passage kinks to the left and the floor drops about 18 inches.

This is about the most awkward point in the cave and gives rise to grave doubts about returning the same way. However, this is not the point that has stopped people before but beyond it is a stal boss that apparently reduces the passage width to about 4 inches. It would appear that the apparent width beyond the boss combined with the tightness just in front of the boss has caused most to give up at this point. To my surprise, right up at the boss, the passage again kinks left and opens up in width and height. The going beyond is very easy until just before the final chamber where a large stal curtain blocks all but the bottom foot of the passage. A squeeze through here leads into the final chamber where the way on is blocked by a combination of fallen roof blocks and calcite flow. The route on is under the blocks but it needs a contortionist to get round the corner and underneath into the small muddy passage. There was sufficient room in the final chamber for both of us to have a good look round so it should be possible to weld a bar and prise some of the blocks loose. No draught was apparent but the way on looked very promising and the flowstone is extremely good. We got out fairly easily although the kink gave some trouble - I don't think Sparky will take a helmet in again - but I think the bit that sticks out needs banging off. In general, the cave seems to offer good prospects of extension with the possibility of a way into Slade Wood Rising as the general direction curves that way. The day was rounded off by a quick visit to Sparkies dig to have a look at it and to put some small charges on some large jammed boulders hung up above the dig. The charges produced a bang out of all proportion to their size and the resulting smoke made further work impossible. We therefore pushed off home well satisfied with the days work. In doing so we were additionally lucky as we would have been roped in for cave rescue had we visited the Butchers Arms - as it was I was one of the few that got Sunday lunch.

**Jim Hay.**