

**THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN
CAVING CLUB**



JULY / AUGUST 1971

NEWS LETTER No 34

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What shul these clothes manifolds, Lo, this hot summers day ? After great heat cometh colds, No man caste his pilche away.		
Medieval advice before entering a cave ?		

Hon Sec

John B Court

Hon Editor

R E Bailey

FOREST NEWS

Buckshaft Scowel Hole

These scowels on the edge of Cinderford lie in steeply dipping strata forming an impressive series of holes and underground workings which rapidly lead down to water level. Over the last few years they have often been visited by cavers who have enjoyed the strenuous and interesting trips they offer.

Unfortunately all this is seen to be lost. In the near future the local authorities will be filling them in, and, surprisingly for some, the club will actively be helping them.

The reasons for this course of action are as follows :- Over the years a council housing estate has grown up in the area and houses are now within a few yards of the most dangerous hole. The tenants, it is presumed have taken to dumping the odd car, old mattress, broken telly, etc, etc, into them and removing or breaking down any fences the Forestry erect. The holes are now not only unsafe but also unclean. The local brats (if you have ever been to a cave rescue practice then you will know what is meant by brats) take great delight in playing around these rubbish pits, a children's den has been found in one little dark hole in one corner of the chamber is a 60 ft deep shaft.

The clubs attitude to the proposed infilling is that while we regret the loss of any such sites public safety must come first. There is also another reason for our cooperating is that if in future further filling is suggested for any hole we will be consulted.

Work is progressing on the survey, each hole or depression has been numbered, see the nearest tree. But help id urgently required as it is a considerable project to undertake, there is something like sixty sites to investigate. Those interested in helping please contact John Court, failing that the regular survey party meets at the pumping at Buckshaft at 8 pm Wednesday.

Filling some of the holes will be quite a technical teat, one small entrance opened up into a chamber of about 2000 cubic yards capacity, in the distance ways leading on down could be seen all with a dip of 70 degrees or more.

CLANNA

Work has been started on clearing last winters flood damage, this not expected to take long. When we left off at the end of last year we were around 70 ft in.

A persistent and strong draught makes digging cold but encouraging.

OLD HAM IRON MINE

This is the most visited mine in the Coleford area if not the whole Forest and it lies on private ground and in spite of the fact that there is a public foot path near by the entrance is still private. Now the farmer has no objection at all to anyone entering the mine BUT he does object to cavers (?) breaking down fences, leaving litter about, playing football in his field and blocking his driveway, some even drive through into the field to park.

Please make every effort to get the message across to these people that this kind of behaviour will not do ! Be diplomatic though, they might be bigger than you.

The farmer has asked us to fence the entrance more securely than the present tangle so if some stout fencing stakes and a length of barbed wire can be obtained the Wednesday evening boozers can set to.

DEVILS CHAPEL

Probably the best known of the scowel areas of the Forest Devils Chapel is a favourite hunting ground for some club members, but recently Mike Howell and Colin Clements discovered that their usual hole had been filled in with potato tops, and, entry to a series of workings had to be made through a little used hole also partly filled with spud remains. Colin has since returned and dug out the filled entrance. Kingsmoor Farm has had a deep hole appear in the field next to the wood at the moment it is protected by a gate laid over it and is blocked so far down with a large boulder. The coincidence of the farm having just raised a crop of potatoes suggests a divine justice of more than the usual speed.

OAKWOOD MILL DEEP LEVEL

Mike Howell reports that the waters have retreated as far as the main level, the coming months should give a further drop, very encouraging for the Land Level as well.

OUT OF THE WOOD

The increasing interest shown by the big mining companies in the metaliferous areas of Wales has prompted several articles in the national press. While reading the Daily Express one day on my holiday I read a report of their men in north Wales trip to the local gold mine. On arriving the reporter tossed a pebble down the shaft and after a short interval up popped Mel Davis, industrial archaeologist and chairman of the Cambrian Caving Council. Given up caving then Mel ?

OGOF PFYNNON DDU

It is now possible to make a through trip from OFD I to II, quite a trip. The connection is in the region of Dip Sump ? Through trips must be led by OFD leaders and arranged with the farmer at OFD I entrance as his water supply is drawn from the resurgence. It can be deduced that the way through is somewhat muddy.

CWM DWR

This entrance cave to the Pfynton Ddu complex is to be gated to keep out non-club, midweek cavers who could be a danger to themselves as well as the cave.

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Electrolyte for your NIFE cells or Eddison cell can be obtained from the club at the following rates :-
£ 1 per gallon made up to the correct S.G.
60 p for 3 lb of salts.
Bring an appropriate container or bottle.

CONGRATULATIONS - to Ian and Dianne Standing on the arrival of a daughter. Born July 9th 1971, named Jessica.

No reports have been received yet on how the Rock House resident baby sitter (don't deny it John) is coping with nappies and all that.

Come on the Hay's the Standings are leading by a head in the maternity stakes.

RIP - THE NAILSWORTH STONE QUARRIES

Known to many local cavers were the various underground workings for Cotswold stone at and around Nailsworth. Following a fatal accident at the end of last year to a person who was running a one man quarry as a pastime the Nailsworth UDC decided such quarries were unsafe and should be blocked up. As a result several quarries have been lost to cavers. They have been blocked off with concrete walls leaving only grill entrances for the bats.

The saddest loss is the Balls Green Upper Quarry. It contained over a mile of pillar and stal galleries of average cross section 30 square feet. In places the height reached 50 ft with magnificent dry stone walls between the pillars.

In one section were two fine heavy timber and iron cranes one still in working order. The quarry yielded several old oil lamps, some of which are in the clubs collection together with odd tools. A better collection is held at Stroud Museum there by GSS members in 1967.

The early history of these quarries is vague. Presumably quarrying of the fine oolite stone has been carried on at the outcrop since Roman times. Due to the steep hillsides =, the overburden soon became too great and thus they went underground. There are a number of small scale developments. According to a 90 year old inhabitant of Nailsworth, a Mr William Mortimer who died in 1970 such places were worked in the winter months by cottagers employed in casual agricultural work during the summer.

Certain sites were developed way beyond the means of a few labourers such as the two Balls Green Quarries. So were those which ran from Rockness Hill to Shortwood. These must have been worked by companies and a considerable labour force.

I have in my possession a plan of Balls Green Upper dated 1903. Quite a few galleries were still in existence at this stage but a lot more were added up to the 1930's. By 1927 United Stone Firms (who owned a lot of Forest quarries) were running them. Their catalogue of that year has four fine photo's, three below ground and one of the dressing sheds.

Stone was used locally and exported far and wide, particularly for ecclesiastical and educational buildings. Many of the stone mullions at Gloucester cathedral were replaced with Nailsworth stone. Some unfinished mullions still remain underground.

Explosives were never used. Blocks weighing several tons were wedged out by a series of bolt holes and sawn to size. A horse drawn tram road ran stone to the entrance from which road transport must have delivered it to where it was wanted and to the M R railhead at Nailsworth.

The roof was secured by wooden wedges which did not always hold. In the lower quarry is a dram squashed flat by a block with a fine dram behind it and a length of track.

In the late 1930's an attempt to revive them came to little. A lot of good stone was robbed from retaining walls and the like.

A joke from Mr Mortimer's collection was often told about a would be quarry-man trying to sell stone to the County Council " Ah yes that's inferior oolite " said the would be purchaser. " Its not inferior tis good stone " replied the vender.

No modern survey was ever completed by today's cavers or industrial historians. Local members of the Glos Ind Arch Soc, started one in the upper quarry, GSS members started one in the Balls Green Lower. Neither was ever finished or published. Photos are far and few between and in private hands. It is sad that nowhere is there held any collection of information on them for posterity. Such an idea was voiced many times and was always one of those things which would be done in time. Now it is too late and nothing exists.

There's a moral in this which Forest cavers ought to bear in mind. If any site could possibly be threatened get it recorded on paper and photos before it's too late. What better place to house it than club records.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

Plymouth Caving Group. News letter and Journal June 1971 No 38.
South Wales Caving Club. News letter No's 65, 66, 67 and 68.
Show Caves in Austria.
Union International De Speleological Bulletin 1971.
Descent May / June 1971 No 17.
Westminster Speleological Group News letter.
CPG News letter No 4.

TRIPS

Sunday 8th August . Swildons Hole - Mendip
Introductory trip for those who haven't seen the cave before (wet suits not required) plus harder trip for those who want it.

Sat / Sun 21st / 22nd August (provisional) - Ogof Dydd Bryaf North Wales plus a Shropshire lead mine.
Stay at SMC cottage on the Friday night, ODB and its 130 ft entrance shaft on the Sat. Sun visit a lead mine.

Sun 5th Sept - Lamb Lear - Mendip.

Sat / Sun 18th / 19th Sept - South Wales Weekend. 12 beds booked.

Sun 3rd Oct - Little Neath River Cave.

Sat / Sun 16th / 17th Oct (provisional) Mendip weekend. It is hoped to book UBSS cottage for the weekend and book St. Cuthberts Swallet.

WHO's - WHO

Who launches his canoe straight from his roof-rack ?
Who set Edge End on fire ?
Who thinks Juke Boxes are ghastly ?

There are others but I have been warned off from printing them.

THANKYOU

To Reg Williams and Geoff Broadman for equipment donated.

DUG IN DUG HOLE AT DEVILS CHAPEL

After studying many surface depressions and holes at the unmapped area of Devils Chapel I came to the conclusion that there was a large area of mined limestone in which no exploration had been carried out and a possibility of some of the workings connecting with the upper levels of Tufts Mine Level which at the moment cannot be entered.

None of the holes and surface depressions went any distance but one of the holes (surface depressions) was found to have a strong draught coming from under an old tree stump. It looked a likely hole to dig. Rod Stewart and myself spent one day digging, but on arrival the next week we found that a large rock had fallen down the depression completely blocking the entrance and digging that week was abandoned .

The following week Sparky Parker and myself attacked the rock with a big sledge hammer, and, several hours of hard digging we were through. The way was straight down a very long passage dipping at about 60 degrees for about 80 ft. At the bottom of the pitch was a skeleton of a very old large deer without antlers. At this point very extensive workings led off in all directions. We headed in a northerly direction (towards Lydney) checking out down dip workings on the way. After going about ¼ mile we headed up dip to see if there was another way out, and, sure enough we saw daylight shining through a small entrance slit about 2 inches wide and 6 inches long. After about half an hours digging we had dug our way out. To date only one party has been back in the hole and there is still a lot of exploration to do.

Mike Howell.

BRITISH SPELEOLOGICAL ASSOC' NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1971

University of Leeds Union - 10th to 12th Sep 1971.

Lectures are as follows :-

Sat - Jenolan Caves, Australia - T Taylor.

Some recent Explorations in the Northern Dales - P F Ryder and C Carson.

Dentdale, Present and Future - M H Long.

The Mining District of Mid - Wales - S J S Hughes.

Also on the Sat - N Antrum will introduce S Perou's films of Gaping Gill.

Sunday - Water tracing with optical brighteners - H Crabtree.

British Karst Research Expedition to the Himalayas, 1970 - A C Waltham.

The Little Neath River Cave - A G Wilkinson, PA Standing and M D Newson.

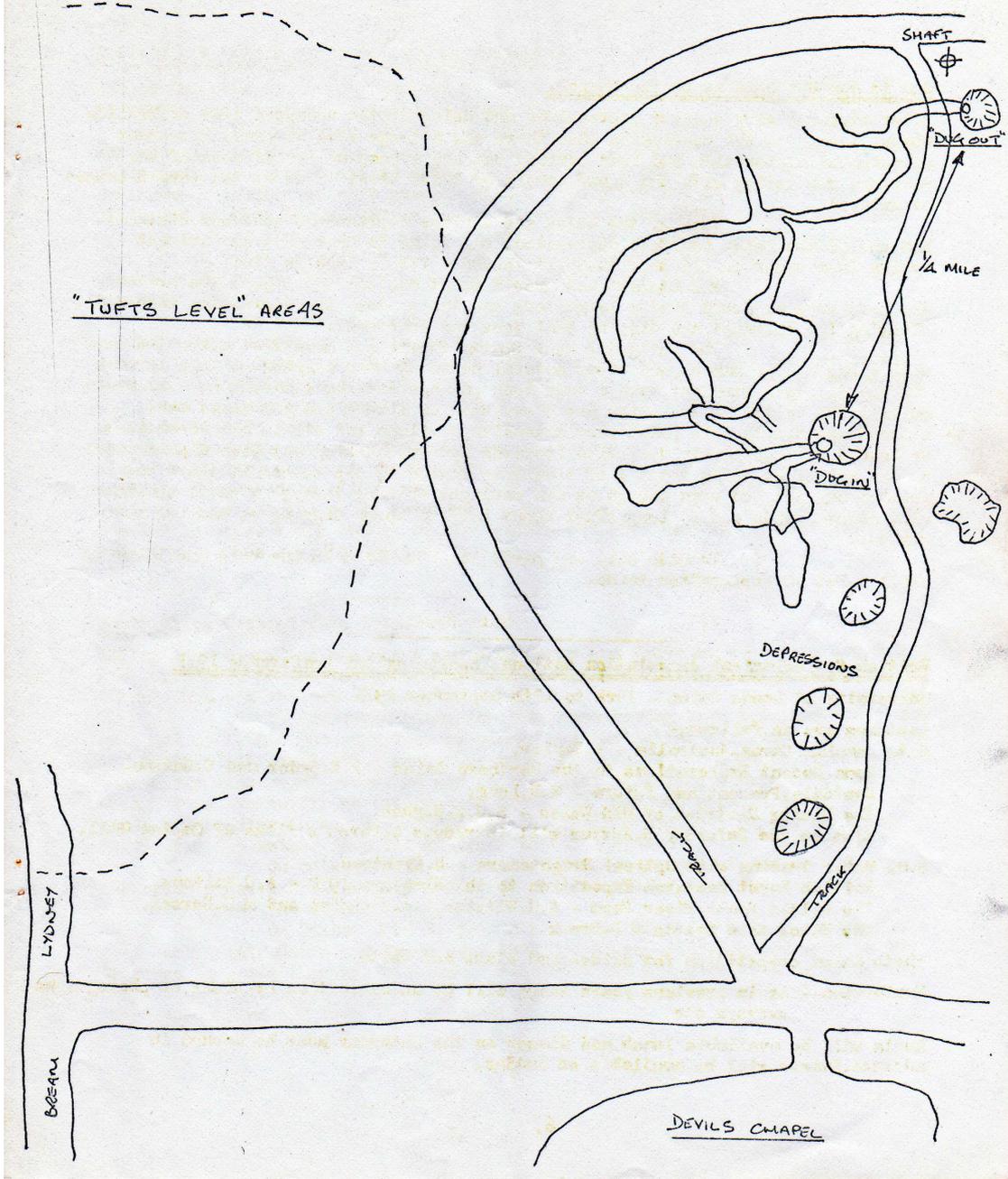
The Black Keld System - D Brock.

Photo salon competition for slides and Black & White.

Exhibition - As in previous years there will be an exhibition by clubs of photos, surveys etc.

Meals will be available, lunch and dinner on the Saturday must be booked in advance. Snacks will be available on Sunday.

"DUG IN DUG OUT" AT DEVILS CHAPEL



JOINT GSS AND RFDCC TRIP TO YORKSHIRE

Out of the nine of us that arrived at Winskall five of us actually wanted to go caving and we soon decided upon Iraby Fell.

We drove as far as possible up the track then walked across to the entrance which is in a large dry shake-hole. A short distance inside the first pitch (wet) was rigged and descended followed fairly quickly by the next two pitches. Next came a section of rift passage with a rope climb, and, on to the final pitch and we were in Duke Street. We wandered along the large sandy passage, had a quick look at the sump and made our exit. For rescue purposes raw-bolts have been placed above each pitch which meant all our ladders were about 5 ft short. John C made a not too wobbly stepping stone for Colin A, and we made it without any difficulties.

On Sunday two others from GSS and one of the Bolton lads joined us for a trip down Sunset Hole. John E assured Sue it was a dry trip. After we arrived at the ladder pitch at the end of a long stream passage she was soaked through and getting cold so she went with Colin A. When we had rigged the pitch another one deserted us (it did look rather horrifying) but the rest of us decided to carry on.

The pitch turned out to be a lovely 50 ft just against the rock. From the chamber at the bottom we climbed up the other side (with the aid of a ladder) and went through the Bolton Extension. By this time we reached a rift and managed to climb down it only Jim and I were left, and, my light decided to go out and so we returned. We soon made the surface and then discovered Sue did not have a dry change of clothes. She had worn her boiler suit over her ordinary clothes, J V E's fault of course.

Diana Court.

SOUTH WALES WEEKEND JUNE 1971

Whilst John Berry led his merry men plus Gary and Spade on a trip into OFD II (top entrance) to the top waterfall John, myself and John Elliott went into Tunnel Cave via the top entrance.

We traversed along the rift remembering bits here and there and soon got well into the cave. Then we recognised the Letter Box, squeezed through and realised it wasn't. After wandering round in circles for a while we set off to thoroughly explore, of course we weren't lost, just exploring a section we hadn't seen before. Eventually we returned to ground we new and soon followed the correct route out staring in awe and wonder at the transformed Davy Prices Hall and exited via the rather damp old entrance to the amazement of the tourists.

On returning to the cottage we discovered J B and Co had been exploring as well. However Gary and Spade did eventually find Top Waterfall and, I think enjoyed the trip.

On Sunday John E joined his mate Colin for a long photo trip. John, myself, Garry and Spade went into OFD top entrance and went to the Crevasse to point the way to III, as a late start did not give us time to do the trip. We then attempted to find the Columns but ended up exploring all the passages leading off from Top entrance.

Diana Court.

BUCKSHAFT SCOWELS - LOG OF HOLES AND INVESTIGATIONS TO DATE

Wed 23/ 6/71 - Jim and Daphne Hay, John and Diana Court, Jeff Williams.

Starting at Buckshaft we decided to number all the holes and depressions, trying to tie up with the numbering the Water Board had given us on previous work done for them. We soon found this impossible and started our own numbering sequence, painting the appropriate number on a tree by each hole. We made rough surface notes, noting which holes needed further checking or exploration.

30/6/71 - Diana Court did further surface work making notes and numbering holes above Buckshaft.

7/7/71 - John, Diana, Jeff W, David S, Stewart H and Colin Clements carried out further surface work and some underground exploration in holes in the plantation above the Pumping Station. The undergrowth here is very thick and it was decided to leave the remainder until this has died down.

14/7/71 - A party who hadn't done Buckshaft went down to explore while John, Jim and Daphne surveyed hole No 8a. Diana did numbering of holes and surface notes on all workings below Buckshaft.

21/7/71 - John, Diana and Daphne explored all workings below Buckshaft and found some to be fairly deep. On our return the Baileys joined us and gave information about holes which now appear to be blocked up, but they remember entering.

Information So Far Obtained

Hole No 1a :- Small round depression about 8 ft x 8 ft shallow and blind.

1b :- Small round depression about 6 ft x 4 ft x 2 ft deep, blind.

1c :- Round depression 15 ft x 10 ft x 4 ft deep, blind.

1d :- Small scowle working about 155 ft long and 3 ft deep.

2 :- 50 ft long scowle working. One half 20 ft deep with small entrance at one end, not yet explored, might go. Other half of scowle on 80 degree dip and goes down for about 130 ft on this dip. Hole number 3 joins about halfway down and hole number 4 joins at the bottom. Small amount of rubbish in this hole.

3 :- Dangerous hole of 30 ft to rubbish reached. Goes on for a further 30 ft estimated. Splits two ways and both join into hole No 2.

4 :- 30 ft long gully working rubbish filled. Descended in middle of gully to a depth of 20 ft to rubbish. Appeared to continue for at least another 12 ft. Gully is 4 ft wide at this point.

5a - Small depression 8 ft x 6 ft x 2 ft deep blind.

5b - Large depression 20 ft x 25 ft shallow, blind.

5c - 40 ft long gully 15 ft deep 5 ft wide on average. Some rubbish, blind.

5d - T shaped gully working 15 ft deep, small amount of rubbish. Passage leading from end of long section to end of short section .

5e - Two small depressions filled with boulders, blind.

5f - Crescent shaped gully working a little overgrown, appears blind.

6 - Large surface workings. Some rubbish, blind.

6a - Known as Jackson Hole by the locals. Large surface hole with extreme amounts of rubbish. From bottom of rubbish a large inside chamber (still with large amounts of rubbish) which has a passage leading down eventually to water table.

There are several entrances to this chamber, one other from the surface.

- 6b** - Side entrance to Buckshaft Scowle, about 6 ft in diameter.
- 6c** - Depression 15 ft x 8 ft x 5 ft deep, blind.
- 6d** - Depression 10 ft x 3 ft blind ? To be checked.
- 6e** - Depression 25 ft long. Possible entrance in east end but looks solidly blocked.
- 7a** - Small entrance hole leads into chamber 12 ft x 10 ft x 15 ft. The roof is very thin with tree roots exposed at the north end of the chamber with some surface run-in. The bottom of the chamber is solidly filled. Some rubbish inside. The entrance is dangerous as the roof is thin. It may be possible to collapse the entrance into the chamber and then fill.
- 7b** - Shallow gully working, blind, appears safe.
- 7c** - Depression covered with brambles. Connects with 8a underground. Has 100 ft shaft beneath it though no entrance from surface. Dangerous.
- 8a** - Small entrance hole leads down and at a depth of 15 ft a passage connects with 7c. Also connects with hole No 9. Voice connection made. After 15 ft the hole is driven down dip at least 60 ft almost vertical, ladder needed to descend. This is a complex and dangerous hole, difficult to fill. Note this hole also appears to be a children's den.
- 9** - Large shallow gully working. No apparent entrances but voice connection made with 8a.
- 10** - Shallow depression, appears to be blind.
- 11a** - Small depression with a small entrance in the bottom. From entrance working descends on a angle of dip to 15 ft deep. Here there is a choke but no confidence in its stability. From inside it is obvious the entrance is running in and is not safe.
- 11b** - Shallow depression, blind.
- 12** - Steep hole not yet descended. Very close to hole No 13 and possibly connects (fenced).
- 13** - Large gully working 7 ft wide x 40 ft deep to rubbish where it is about 20 ft across. Hole is furthest and appears blocked by rubbish but further check needed.
- 14a** - Small depression with rubbish in bottom.
- 14b** - Small depression, blind.
- 15** - Deep depression under Yew tree. Loosely filled but depth of 15 ft is visible further check needed (fenced)
- 16** - Shallow working in bank, blind.
- 17** - Slight surface depression on edge of clearing, possibly in filled by Water Board.
- 18** - Large surface working.
- 19** - 10 ft diameter hole previously filled by Water Board but fill has disappeared. Inside chamber at least 2000 cu yds and goes down. Appears to be an in filled surface connection to the north but no sign on surface. Inside chamber is 8 yds x 8yds x 30 yds deep and continues down for at least 100 ft. The walls of this chamber are well decorated with calcite. It may be possible to plug at the bottom of the chamber. All on 50 degree to 60 degree dip.

Cont.

- 20a - Shallow depression, blind.
- 20b - Gallery working 10 ft x 4 ft deep in filled with rubbish and brushwood. Check possibly goes.
- 20c - Round shallow depression with rubbish, appears safe.
- 21 - Long surface gallery working 25 ft - 30 ft long, 8 ft - 10 ft wide and 6 ft - 10 ft deep.
- 22a - 6 ft diameter depression, blind.
- 22b - Large shallow depression, surface working only.
- 23a - Long surface gully working, fairly shallow.
- 23b - Depression 15 ft diameter 6 ft deep, blind.
- 23c - Shallow depression 20 ft dia'.
- 24 - Working on angle of dip with small entrance at depth of 15 ft. This is the hole the Baileys say did go into a very large chamber well decorated with a side entrance, possibly 23c.
- 25 - Two depressions one small, the other about 10 ft dia' , both blind.
- 26 - Large depression 20 ft dia' 6 ft deep with possibly in filled entrance.
- 27 - Very large deep surface working, about 30 ft x 40 ft x 30 ft , rubbish filled.
- 28 - Very large deep surface working, about 75 ft x 40 ft x 20 ft deep, filled with rubbish and abundant overgrowth.
- 29 - Large hole 40 ft deep 80 ft wide 30 ft across, blind.
- 30 - Large deep scowle, 60 ft deep, with mans walk-in entrance. Passage follows down on 60 degree dip for about 100 ft then becomes mud in filled. Large passages and chambers all the way. Several other entrances in scowle one linking and some connecting to next scowle, not yet checked. Extensive workings, needs surveying.

GLOS CAVE RESCUE GROUP

Those of you that have call-out information forms and have not yet returned them please do so.
 Those of you that have not yet joined GCRG, but should have, please contact John Court, Malcolm Sterry or the information officer of GCRG he is :-

**Mr I J Standing
 Rock House
 Bowns Hill
 Coleford
 Glos.**

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE REGISTRY

Before the holiday period, a meeting was held for the area Registrars and all interested persons to arrange details of the revived GCR. It was held in the Butchers Arms (where else) and by general agreement was informal although minutes were taken for reference.

After a general review of the previous history of the Registry for the benefit of newcomers, the area limits were discussed. All were thought to be satisfactory except for the Cotswold area where the boundary was badly defined and difficult to interpret. The two area registrars concerned agreed on a more suitable boundary (a main road). Also agreed by all present was the exchange of information with Cambrian on the overlapping areas and the ignoring of coal mines as sites until a later date.

A fairly long time was spent discussing the recording system and final decisions on the method of updating sheets was left until we have some sheets to up-date. The preference to each section of the registry was to be in the form of a quarter of a 2 ½ inch map mounted in the front of each section. Although this meant cutting up the expensive maps, it was agreed to be a better form of reference. Stickers had been obtained to attach to complete rough sheets that had been transferred to final sheets so that the area registrar had an easy check on uncompleted sheets. Similarly, rough sheets rejected by the registrar as uncompleted, would be returned with a green slip explaining why they had been returned.

In general, it was hoped that any rough sheet started would be completed for typing within six months. Any still lacking information at the end of this time would be publicised in the hope of getting more information.

For cave rescue purposes, the registrars duplicates were to be forwarded to the information officer of the group.

The finances of the registry showed it to have around £4 in hand but this would soon be soaked up in odd expenses and type-writer ribbons for the final copies. As both clubs had originally agreed to support GCR it was agreed to ask both clubs for a further donation of £5 to purchase a second set of 2 ½ maps and to look at the possibility of buying the adhesive transparent covering material at a reduced price. As well as the further cash from the clubs, they were to be asked if they would be prepared to support the registry for a period of two years when the progress would be reviewed.

In return for the cash, the two clubs would receive regular details of the registry progress including a hoped for news-sheet both giving and asking for information. The meeting closed when a group of unruly cavers entered the Butchers and insisted on talking about caving proper.

Jim Hay.