

**THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN
CAVING CLUB**



OCTOBER 1971

NEWS LETTER No 36

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Hon Sec		Hon Editor
John B Court		R E Bailey

FOREST NEWS

Ladder building has started again and the last few Wednesday evenings has seen considerable activity in the club room at the rear of the Butchers Arms. A steady number is the cutting of C links out of a length of hardened and tempered chain, two cuts per link is required. The job is as boring as it sounds but it must be done, there is a hacksaw, blades and a vice waiting. We have a quantity of 5/8 inch rungs not yet drilled but no drill jig, if anyone can help in the manufacture of a suitable jig a further amount of ladder could be got ready for crimping.

HEADQUARTERS

The top room has been spring cleaned and white-washed, a grand effort by Derek Webster and Jenny Turner who have also erected a fence around Old Ham entrance. The outside light is now in position, so anyone falling off the steps will be presumed to be under the influence. Work benches have been put up for those building ladder. The roof needs some attention before the winter weather sets in, several slates need securing and there is a gap where the roof joins the Butchers wall.

THE BARBEQUE

This started well, the bonfire was blazing, music playing, much beer flowing and sausages burning when down came the rain (a certain short legged bloke had said " but it's not going to rain, " the week before) However as the night was young and an exodus was made to the Court's residence at Chase Park, the speleological 'Mecca' of Ross on Wye. All the hard types live in Chase Park. There the mob caroused till the early hours of Sunday. Several interesting things occurred but won't be told in these columns as the editor might be attacked as well. Several late-comers turned up and finding Wigpool deserted they made their way to the Butchers Arms along with a vast quantity of booze and grub. Coals to Newcastle ? Financially we were just able to break even on the cost of the event.

WEDNESDAY EVENING TRIPS

Most beginners start there caving on these trips, but also on these evenings a lot of serious work is done, this is no reflection on the average beginners ability but there are often times when a large or inexperienced party does not help. In order to give all concerned a fair chance several members have got together and have organised a rota to lead these trips, it is hoped that this will encourage the newcomers to stand on their own feet sooner and show them that it is far more enjoyable to make their own discoveries than to tag along on the tail-end of a party and only see the backside of the man in front during the whole of the trip.

WET-SUITS

Many more suits are being made by club members and the material and pattern is usually from sub-aqua products, before cutting out make a careful check of the leg measurements if you are using SAP pattern or marked out kit, the jacket is usually OK several trousers made to the new style patterns have been found to be too tight. Di Court and the editor have each had this problem and before the riff-raff start their snide comments let me say that Di and myself have a fine pair of appropriately proportioned legs each. Misinterpret that if you can.

DAN YR OGOF

Saturday the 19th September. Party :- Chris Bowen, Cliff Seymour, Roger Solari, Lawrence and Roger Bailey and Jim Hay.

Much to our amazement the weather had remained dry during the week and as we are usually rained off when we visit SWCC we woke early that morning with the prospect at long last of getting into the cave. We made an early start, so early in fact that even Jim was heard to say "but I always get up at 8.30am when I'm down here" this was greeted by those still in bed with cries of disbelief.

We arrived outside Dan yr Ogof gates but found them closed so we lay in the morning sun for a while. At last the gates were opened and we parked up near the entrance and kitted up. Wet-Suited and gear dangling all over us we turned to Jim and enquired about the permit card. A look of shock came over James's face as he realised that he had left the card at Penwylt, however his bacon was saved by Frank Baugly who arrived with a party and was able to sign up a card.

The cave was opened and the lights switched on which made route finding through the show cave easy. Arriving at the lakes we found the water level was very low and we splashed through them. The long crawl appears to have got a bit longer, but perhaps that's just old age. Gerrard Plattens Hall is pleasant to reach after the previous stretch. We then did a quick detour to have a look at Flabergasm Chasm and its collection of great long straws.

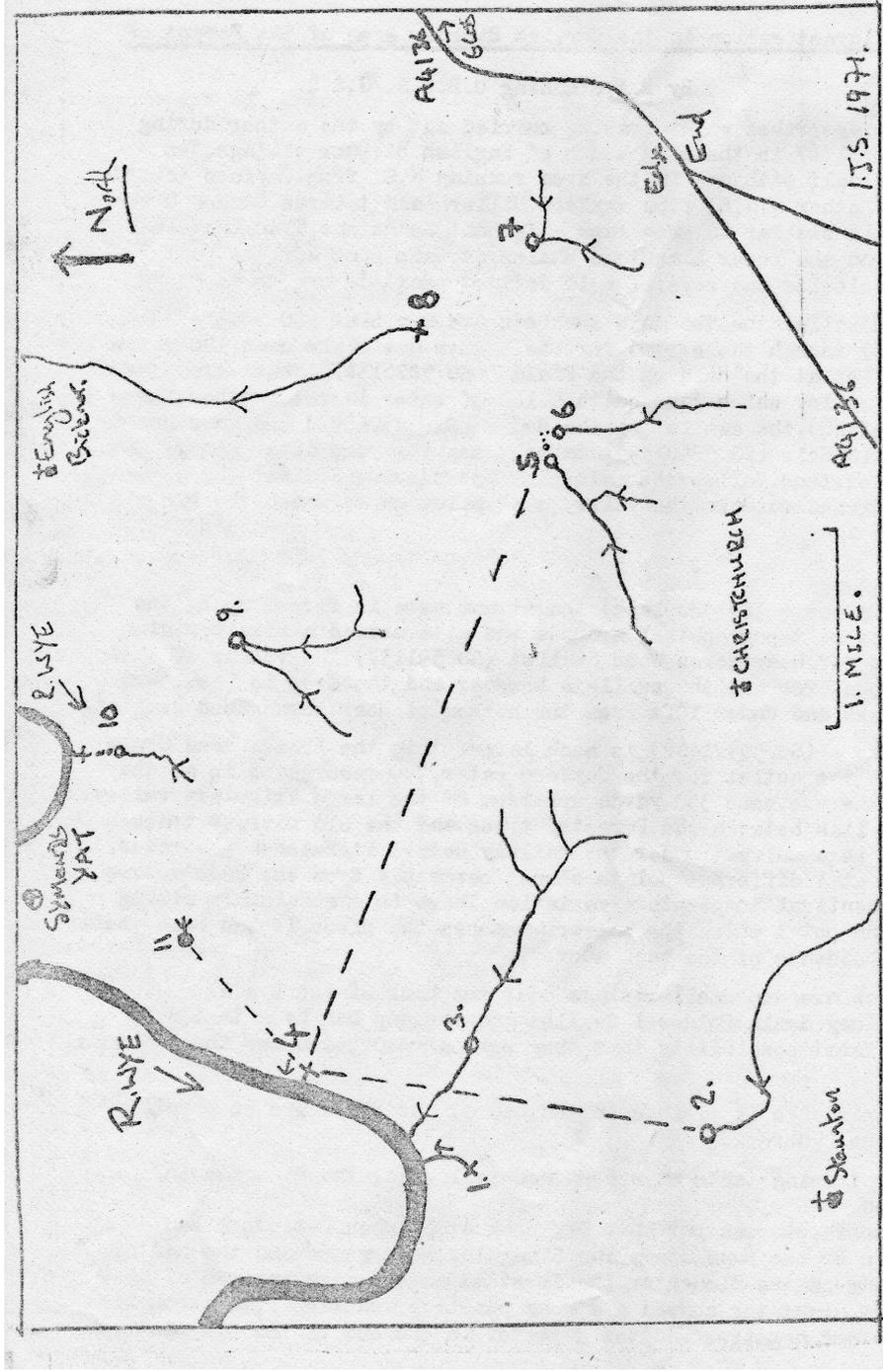
After passing through The Grand Canyon we arrived in Monk Hall, so named after the stalagmite found there. We spent a little time in Hanger Passage admiring the clouds of straws in the roof. The Green Canal was very refreshing after our plod through the passage. I found the water was very cold to the hands, others with inferior wet-suits found even more sensitive areas. Cliff had a shock when he found he couldn't touch bottom, he should believe some of the things the Bailey's tell him.

We quickly passed along the 'Go Faster and Go Slower' passages and found ourselves under the Rottenstone Avens (also known under the original name as The Minuteman Silos) a vast circular shaft reaches up through many layers of rock to what appears to be a flat roof, it's a very impressive hole. It's fascinating to watch drips of water come hurtling down from the heights above and make a morbid comparison of a body coming in the same manner. We examined the old camping site that the original explorers have left, a remarkable amount of gear rotting away and we expressed some admiration for the chap who had humped a gas cylinder through the long crawl, but he must have been too puffed to take it back.

The highway led us to the Rising and from there a fixed ladder took us to the bottom of a 50ft climb, we carefully made our way up to an interesting traverse into the Blow-Hole. This led along a low passage to the top of a fifty foot rift down which we abseiled / scabbled into Birthday passage. A rift led to the top of a 40ft pitch. This is a great bit of cave, descending the ladder one finds oneself in a very large stream passage - The Great North Road. After a quick lunch for those who had brought some, we travelled upstream till we reached Pinnacle Chamber. As time was getting short we made our way back towards the pitch.

We found the climb up the rift to the Blow Hole passage less difficult than we had thought it might be, though one had to be careful, the same can be said for the Rising and of the Blow Hole.

The Green Canal woke us up again when we floundered through it but we were soon sweating it out in the Long Crawl, it's even longer going back. Reaching the lakes we had a clean up of bodies and kit and then emerged into a still bright evening.



SURFACE AND UNDERGROUND DRAINAGE OF SYMONDS YAT AREA.

- 1. Old Stone Well.
- 2. Whippington Brook Swallet.
- 3. Sopers Pot.
- 4. Slaught-ter Rising.
- 5. Dry Sink.
- 6. Hole in Field.
- 7. Hoarhorns Wood Swallet.
- 8. Brooks Head (Grove Rising).
- 9. Redhouse Swallet.
- 10. Coldwell Swallet and Rising.
- 11. Symonds Yat Swallet.

STREAMS: ——— SWALLETS: ○ RISINGS: + PROVEN UNDERGROUND FLOW: - - -

PRELIMINARY HYDROLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE ENGLISH BICKNOR AREA OF THE FOREST DEAN

By P A Standing UBSS - GSS

INTRODUCTION - This article describes water tracing carried out by the author during the period of August 1966 - April 1967 in the area south of English Bicknor village. Two valleys in particular are dealt with, one in the area running NE from Joyford towards Brookes Grove and the other NNE from Hillersland towards Common Grove. The geological succession is similar in each case - Pennant Sandstone, Trenchard Coal measures, lower dolomite and the lower limestone shale's. Streams sink off the coal measures into the lower dolomite and several well defined swallets are to be found.

SWALLETS - In the Joyford valley the two main swallets are Dry Sink (SO 58131373) and Wet Sink (SO 58171373) though the stream for the latter now sinks some 120 yds SE of the original swallet at the Black Hole in the Field (SO 58261367). There are several other small sinks in the valley which take quite a lot of water in wet weather. These are Barn Swallet (SO 58261386), the swallet in the Hedge (SO 58521387) and an unnamed swallet at (SO 58311372). Kiln Hole (SO 58401395) takes a small stream after heavy rain.

In the Hillersland Valley the main sink in Redhouse Swallet (SO 573314989). The stream which of old, flowed on down the valley over alluvium, to reach the Wye via Common Grove.

POSSIBLE RISINGS

1 - Brooks Head Grove Resurgence - (SO 58691436). The stream here is forced up by the lower limestone shale's and on topographical grounds the site seemed a likely rising for the Joyford Sinks and for Hoarthorns Wood Swallet (SO 591137). The volume of water is not sufficient to account for all the swallets however and the drop is less than 50ft from Joyford sinks and under 10ft from the bottom of Hoarthorns Wood Swallet.

2 - The Slaughter Resurgence - (SO 55571462) is much larger than the Brooks Head Grove one and was reputed to be the outlet for the Joyford water. The resurgence is on the Gloucestershire side of the Wye, some 350 yds upstream of the large tributary valley through Mailscot Wood. It lies between the forestry track and the old railway track and flows for some 50ft in a culvert under the railway before it reaches the river.

Water enters the culvert at four different points almost certainly from the same source as all the waters show identical temperature variations. There is a subsidiary rising a few feet upstream of the point where the culvert reaches the river. It has been the cause of considerable subsidence of the bank above.

3 - Coldwell Rising - There are two small risings near the bank of the Wye at (SO 567158) and (SO 569157). They drain Coldwell Swallet and the gap has been tested by M Sterry. There seemed a faint possibility that they were a resurgence for the Redhouse water.

4 - Unknown Rising - The existence of risings in the bed of the river Wye is possible as also are springs in the Lydbrook.

FIELD WORK - Three water tracing tests have been done, all using the fluorescein / activated charcoal method. 1.28.8.66 - 8 ounces of fluorescein was put into Dry Sink at 12 noon. Detectors had previously been placed in Brooks Head Grove. The Slaughter Resurgence and the bed of the Wye, 30 yds downstream of the Slaughter. The first detectors were removed after 6 days and the one from the Slaughter showed a strong positive reaction with alcoholic potash. Brooks Head Grove was negative and the detector in the bed of the Wye was washed away by floods.

Cont.

2. 24. 12. 66. - 8 ounces of fluorescein was placed in Redhouse Swallet at 6 pm. Detectors were put in the Slaughter, Brooks Head Grove (at Eastbach) and the two Coldwell risings . They were removed from the Slaughter after 7 days and 14 days and from Brooks Head Grove and the minor Coldwell rising after 14 days. The main Coldwell rising after 14 days. The main Coldwell rising detector was lost. All samples were negative even under ultra violet light. (tested by D P Drew) .

3. 16. 4. 67. - 8 ounces of flulorescein was put into the Hole in the Field at 7 pm. Detectors were placed in the Slaughter and Brooks Head Grove (at Eastbach). They were removed from the Slaughter after 3.4.5.6 and 7 days from Brooks Head Grove after 7 days. All samples from the Slaughter were strongly positive. Brooks Head Grove was negative.

CONCLUSIONS - The waters of Dry Sink and the Hole in the Field (Wet Sink) have been shown to re-appear at the Slaughter Resurgence. The tested flow line is 1 ¾ miles long and represents a vertical drop of 400ft. The waters from the two swallets are assumed to units shortly after sinking, and the cave systems should be particularly interesting geological, it will be developed under the cap rock (e.g the coal measures).

There will probably be considerable development along strike joints to the west, and the water tracing time lag of 72 hours maximum suggest that there will be plenty of open stream passage.

The Redhouse water was confidently expected to resurge at the Slaughter. With all water tracing, however, positive results are more reliable than negatives.

FURTHER WORK - A lot more water tracing remains to be done. Redhouse Swallet needs to be retested and the Dry Sink trace should be repeated to get a more accurate assessment of the time lag from sink to rising. The other small swallets in the Joyford Valley will probably drain into the Dry Sink system but Hoarthorns Wood Swallet may well go elsewhere.

On the wider hydrological basis it would be interesting to get some flow measurements at the sinks and rising mentioned. Permanent V notched weirs could easily be installed at the Slaughter and Dry Sink and at the latter could be incorporated into a new dam. Flood pulse tests for the Dry Sink / Slaughter flow line might well provide interesting facts about the sort of cave systems we shall find at Dry Sink. One thing above all else needs to be done, however, and that is the continuation of digging in the area. A system is undoubtedly waiting to be discovered by those prepared to put a bit of work into the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - The author is grateful to the Bailey brothers, A C Day and I J Standing for collecting charcoal bags and assisting in any other ways.

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FURTHER WORK IN JOYFORD AND THE SYMONDS YAT AREA 1967 - 71.

For one reason and another this important work by Peter Standing did not get published and our knowledge has increased considerably since then. Much of this was well reviewed by R Solari in RFDCC newsletter No 29 Feb 1971 in his paper - Thoughts on a Symonds Yat Master Cave.

In particular, it is obvious from flood observations that the Whippington Brook water does not rise at Old Stone Well as had been assumed. It is reported that R Solari has water traced it to the Slaughter Rising but no report is yet published.

In my opinion, Redhouse Swallet water must rise at the Slaughter but Hoarthorns Wood Swallet could trend towards the Lydbrook Rising.

I J Standing.

WHO'S WHO

Who had an invite.

Who lost Ogoff Ffynon Ddu 1.

Who can't go caving on his own.

Who couldn't find the columns.

Who wears pyjamas.

Who owns Westbury Brook.

Who's spending there family allowance on a colour television.

There are lots mote of that sort of innuendo, anyone wishing to put the knife in please inform the editor who will not reveal the source.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP

The treasurer of GCRG has issued an appeal for cash to bolster the funds of the group, which are described as being in an extreme state. Donations may be sent to the treasurer at his home address, or see him at the Butchers Arms on a Wednesday evening. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the GCRG.

Hon Treasurer
Mr C Anderson
143 Hawlett Rd
Chelt
Glos.

CAVE RESEARCH GROUP

Next year the group will be holding its southern meeting in the Forest of Dean, and RFDCC will be acting as host.

Venue will probably be Clearwell Castle. The meeting usually consists of lectures and discussions on the Saturday, with an evening meal, followed on the Sunday by trips above and below ground in the surrounding area.

THE THROUGH TRIP THAT WASN'T

We planned to do the through trip from OFD II top entrance to CWM DWR on the Sunday following the DAN-YR-OGOF trip. News that a dry connection had been made between OFD I and OFD II altered our plans and we decided to go on through and come out of OFD I. Originally the party was to be 5 strong but we met two Yorkshire lads in the Gwynne on the Saturday night and invited them along. Then just as we were leaving, three others asked the way through and we decided to go as two parties, meeting at the lower end for the route through into I.

A careful study of the survey beforehand showed that the route was straightforward and we could see no real snags except for the 55ft ladder climb where someone would have to climb up first without a lifeline. Direct warnings from SWCC about the difficulties of the route were laughed off as typical and off we went. The top entrance was crowded with four parties queuing to go under, but we managed to push through and lose our followers. Roger was following behind with the other half of the party so we didn't spend too much time looking around but pushed on down to the stream way. First snag was at the maypole as it wasn't, it had broken in two some time before from corrosion but fortunately without any injuries. A ladder was rigged to the old (very old) securing line and we carried on, leaving the ladder for Roger's lot to collect. The main stream was very low and fast time was made down to the confluence where we had to start thinking about breaking new ground for us.

With the survey in mind, we set off out of Piccadilly and finished up in the passage at the bottom of the pitch. Only, instead of a 55ft pitch up on the right hand wall, there was a 30ft climb up a hand line on the right hand wall. This didn't look at all right but I went for a look and found it even worse. At the top a very tight passage led off and the only hopeful sign was the heavy draft. Roger had turned up by this time and, after a short conference, we decided it couldn't be the way and that it was the wrong passage. Roger disappeared to look other ways and shortly re-appeared to say that he had found a pitch on a right hand wall. Everyone moved round to this passage and found that it was a pitch alright but was only about 25ft. Typical South Wales exaggeration we thought and put a ladder up on the light double line and the ten of us started up.

The early climbers soon found that the passage went about 100ft and then dropped 35ft back into a large passage. This too didn't quite fit in with the route we had remembered but we pushed on down, once all ten were up the first pitch and the ladder was free. I was first and found that upstream the passage was blocked by a boulder choke while downstream it sumped in mud. The only way off led through a small passage with a good draft. This passage was a bit small and muddy but appeared to be of the right type and direction. At last we were on our way.

The small crawl led into a large passage with a stream in it and this passage led into another passage with a stream. This was definitely the way now - in half an hour we would be into OFD I and then out to enjoy the sunshine. Just round the first big corner I found some taped off formations - funny, it was unusual for formations to be taped off so quickly in a new extension. The passage looked a bit familiar too but then all the big dry passages in OFD look the same. I carried on down to a big junction and there things really look like something I had seen before. It is funny just how long the brain can take to adjust itself to a situation it doesn't want to recognise - we were back on the main route out of OFD II towards CWM DWR.

The rest was a big anticlimax made much worse by the long and dirty haul out of CWM DWR, the visitors were not too unhappy as they didn't know the route but RFDCC was distinctly unhappy.

What finally finished the day off completely was the laughter of SWCC members when they told us that the 55ft Divers Pitch had been by-passed some time before and was now a 30ft climb up a hand line on the left hand wall.

Jim Hay.