

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



DECEMBER 1971

JANUARY 1972

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FOREST NEWS

The annual general meeting in November was well attended, some faces were seen after a long absence from the monthly gathering. Chairman for the evening was Colin Graham who was able to keep the rabble in order for most of the time.

The officers of the 1971 committee gave their reports (not available here as the editor was late and made a mess up of his own speech) After the resignation of what was left of the old gang a new committee was selected without too much fuss. The big talking point of the night was the constitution change to the annual subs, after much noise the amendments was passed and fees are now £ 1. 25 for senior, £ 1.00 for senior family membership and £ 0 . 50 for junior family membership.

COMMITTEE FOR 1971 - 72

Hon Chairman
John B Court
26 Park Walk
Chase Park
Ross on Wye
Herefordshire

Hon Secretary
Mrs Diana Court
Same as Chairman

Hon Treasurer
Roger A Solari
Fir Tree Bungalow
Wigpool
Mitcheldean
GLOS

Hon Tackle Officer
Cliff Seymour
Roselea
Hillersland
Coleford
GLOS

Hon Librarian
Mrs Heather MacDonald
The Cottage
The Mire
Joyford
Nr Coleford
GLOS

Hon Editor
Roger E Bailey
Rose Cottage
Aston Crews
Lea
Nr Ross on Wye
HEREFORDSHIRE

Hon Meets Sec
John Berry
18 Glynfield
Foxmoor Lane
Ebley
GLOS

Hon Cottage Warden
Roger Gardner
82 Ruspidge Rd
Cinderford
GLOS

After a vote of thanks to the AGM's chairman the formal meeting ended and a slide show was given by John Elliott and Ian Standing.

DARK HILL CAVE

Jim Hay has been digging in this small cave and has reached a point where the way on is blocked by a boulder, this obstruction was to be banged one Wednesday evening but when Jim and Daphne arrived at the entrance they found it had sumped after a moderate rainfall, but digging will continue when the place has dried up.

WILLSCROFT WOOD POTS

This line of pot-holes near St Briavels was recently visited by Jim Hay who found that they are being slowly in filled with farm rubbish.

The club messed about in these holes some years ago but became somewhat discouraged after striking essence of sheep in the bottom of the pot furthest from the road.

SEYMOURS SWALLET

For various reasons, especially as the new camp site nearby comes into use, GSS have gated the entrance. Keys will be available at Ian Standings and Messrs Baileys.

WESTBURY BROOK IRON MINE

The carbide gang has struck again several dumps of the stuff have been found about the mine. Children from the same gang also put their grubby little fingers on some of the mud formations.

In Honey - Comb rift a member of BUSS fell out of a mud tube down to the floor 20ft below and then slid down another 25ft, but no harm was done and he made his way out unaided.

SLIDE LIBRARY

For some time it has been obvious that there is a lack of photographic records of Forest Caving and mining activities. Most of us take 35 mm slides as part of our caving these in time tend to get scattered or lost as the quantity builds up and of course when a member retires. The message behind all this blurb is that the club would like what slides, of the Forest, that can be spared. If there is a particular slide that anyone wishes to keep the club will pay to get it copied. The library will have its own funds, 10/- having been deposited so far, this was profit on a slide show given by Jim Hay and John Court in Birmingham recently. Jim has donated a slide box to keep the existing slides in.

EQUIPMENT

Jim has obtained a stock of new bulbs for Nife or Eddison cells, price is 4/- each to club members. Jim is also investigating the possibility of obtaining new cable, so far samples have been promised but they have not shown up yet.

LADIES NIGHT

These trips are going well, the ladies are venturing as far as the Mendips or Llangatock on Wednesday evenings. This does have its drawbacks as some 3 am return times have been experienced.

KEN FAULL AND FAMILY

Just before Christmas we received a letter from the Faull family in the depths of Australia (it took the Abo' ten months to get to Aston Crews) Ken and family are settling down well in the new country and are very happy. Ken is working as a service engineer for a washing machine firm while June and Judy are working in Readymix offices. The two youngest both go to the local primary school while Jacky attends Armadale High school.

Ken has not been caving yet but he has got a sailing dinghy, his Christmas present for the family is a swimming pool in the garden.

For those who wish to write the address is :-

8 Crawley Road
Armadale
West Australia 6112

TRIPS

Jan 9th GCRG practice meet.

Jan 23rd Mendip, August Longwood (provisional date)

Feb 18 / 20th South Wales weekend at SWCC

Feb 10th Slide show at the Ship Inn, Quay Street, Glos, subject Canal Tunnels.

March 4 / 5th Mendips, accommodation and trips to be arranged .

April trips to be arranged.

May 12 / 14th South Wales weekend at SWCC.

June Yorkshire, date to be arranged.

Jim Hay wishes to photograph Ogof Dydd Bryaf in North Wales before it is lost due to quarrying. Stay at SMC near Newport on the Friday evening and return Saturday. Contact Jim for further information.

NEW MEMBERS

Sylvia Milnes

John Hine

Clive Kesterton

Welcome to the club.

FOR SALE

Full size drawing board on raise and tilt pedestal with drawing machine but without scale. Price £ 3.00 , see Jim Hay.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

Descent Nov / Dec 1971 No 19

UBSS Newsletter No 3 October 1971.

The Transactions of the Cave Research Group of Great Britain Vol 13 No 4

DCA Newsletter No 11 New Series.

South Wales Caving Club Newsletter No 69 July 1971.

David and Charles, July 1971 to January 1972 New Books and Stock List.

BSA Bulletin New Series No 4 October 1971.

WHO'S WHO (Speleological Squit)

Who's been abseiling ?

Who's got the seven year itch ?

Who's got the key of the door. Or gate ?

Who had a damn good time in Seymours ?

Who didn't think it was so damn funny ?

Who isn't in the club ?

Who said that he was half a man ?

OUT OF THE WOODS

Conference - Safety In Caving , arranged by the CCPR in co-operation with the National Caving Association.

Topics include :- General dangers in caving.

Accidents - How to minimise their severity.

Cave Rescue

The organisation of caving in Great Britain.

Plus a film, open forum and tea and biscuits.

Symposium - Technical aids in caving , arranged by the CCPR and CRG.

Topics include :- Lamps for caving

Ropes for the caver.

Caving ladders - use and abuse.

Artificial belays underground.

The use of mechanical devices in caving.

Communications underground.

Plus open forum and refreshments.

The conference is on the 4th of March and the symposium on the 5th of March. Both start at 10 am and are held at - Buxton High Peak College,

Harpur Hill

Buxton

Derbyshire

Fee - £ 1.25 (includes coffee, lunch and tea) per day for tickets send a SAE to

The Office Secretary

CCPR

26 Musters Road

West Bridgford

Nottingham NO2 7PL

Ogof-Y-Ci and Ogof Rhyd Sych

Damage has been done to wall and fences at Llwyn-y-Ci farm and the farmer has requested that the following routes be taken :- Ogof-y-Ci , through the farmyard and after closing any gates, straight across the field to the top of the gorge. Climb under the fence (he dumps rubbish here) and down into the gorge. Alternatively walk diagonally across the field to an old track which descends into the gorge below the lower entrance.

Ogof Rhyd Sych - either walk up the river bed from the bridge or, after changing near the barn at Blaen-y-Dyffryn , walk diagonally across two fields to meet the track that crosses at the dry ford.

Pwll Swnd Extensions

Hereford caving club have extended the cave by 2000 - 3000 ft. The extension so far consists of a complex system of rifts, blocked shafts and tight inter - connecting passages, with a final depth of approx 200ft. As a temporary measure the extension is gated because of equipment left in the cave while exploration is in progress.

OGOF FFYNNON DDU SURVEY

This is again available from SWCC and consists of the plan, two sheets and a small book. Price £ 1.50.

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AT CLANNA

The large resurgence at St Anns Well near Clanna has been dug for about eighteen months by various members when time and water levels allowed.

As the resurgence is in Limestone Shales it would have been left alone but for a powerful draught which was increased as the dig progressed providing a spur to the labouring diggers. However hard work has had its rewards and 300ft of cave is now open with good prospects for further extension.

The entrance to St Anns Well Cave is a low crawl in water for about 30ft, it is at this point that last autumn's digging began as the previous winter's flood water had brought down a pile of boulders and blocked the passage. The few feet of cave then open had not been affected by the floods and work was restarted to re-open a small rift which had been in-filled through banging.

After the rift was cleared out a low chamber was found, at the end of this a passage banged open and a larger rift chamber was entered in which it was possible to stand up, very unusual in a Forest cave. Along a side rift "big black spaces" could be seen. Mr Nobel was put to work and soon the way on was open through a network of rift passages.

The passages are very varied in shape and size but in general the size is very encouraging considering that it all flood ways and not the main stream. Some tight sections are to be found the best of these is a classic squeeze, in the caving sense, being short, tight, pretty to look at and a truly great destroyer of boiler suits. Fortunately the passage opens up after this and one can have a breather and gather up one's torn coverings. Quite attractive formations are to be seen through the next section and pressing on along a low crawl the noise of rushing water becomes audible. The water can just be seen in the bottom of a boulder choke but the stream is lost into the depths. The choke itself is very muddy and held up progress for a while, at first we tried to follow the water but it was found that by going up into the top of the fall an easier way through was found.

After more muddy digging a large passage (in Forest terms) was entered, walls about 10ft apart and the roof about 5ft above a deep boulder floor. After 30ft a large choke again blocks the way and this is the end of the cave at the time of writing. The choke should be dig-able with care but this may not be the way to go, it is possible that the passage is an ox-bow and more investigation is necessary before carrying on.

The discovery of this cave proves that it is possible to get a small system in the limestone shales but it must be realised that unless more substantial limestone is encountered the chances of a descent cave being there are limited. It is obvious that as soon as the passage becomes a reasonable size the roof is weakened and in it comes.

Biologically it is an interesting cave, a fish has been seen, a bat graveyard found, springtails observed in small pools, a white millipede noticed and hundreds of copulating mosquitoes.

Laurence and Roger Bailey.

At the end of October, the Forest was visited by a large party from Birmingham Polytechnic Carabiner Club for a trip down New Dun. After the trip, one of the visitors - Brain Powell - presented us with a peg he had removed from the roof of first landing in New Dun. Our Club members had assumed these to be some sort of surveying aid or even an oil lamp holder but the correct explanation is somewhat different.

EARLY MINE SURVEYING - Brain Powell - BPCC

Mine surveys as we know are maps drawn to show the layout that a mine has, or had, because, as we all know, surveys are more often than not out of date (often by a few hundred years) At the time the galleries and levels were cut, how did the miners know and maintain the correct direction ? Most instruments used in surveying would be totally beyond the comprehension of most miners, yet levels can often be found that are as straight as an arrow.

If a miner was ' chasing a vein ' the direction usually controlled itself, but suppose a gallery had to be cut along a mathematically worked out line to join two workings together ? The method devised by the Cornish miners was crude but surprisingly accurate. Evidence of their methods can also be found in the Copper Mines of Anglesey, the Iron mines of the Wye Valley and mines all over America and South Africa. Probably in every one of the world's mining areas lies the ghost of a Cousin Jack (as they were known) Cousin Jack was very much in demand all over the world, especially during the 19th century. Their method was to drill an ' upper ' at the start of a new gallery in the roof at the centre - line point of the new and existing passages. A timber plug would be inserted together with a flat nail having an eye hole in the head. From this a string with a stone tied to the end would hang as a plumb-bob. The miner would commence work as directed by the surveyor for a few feet, then a second ' upper ' would be drilled in the roof at the exact centre of the new gallery. Another plumb-bob would be installed in the hole. A candle now completed the scene.

This was arranged between the plumb-bobs so that everything was in line. The shadow then determined the line to be cut. A refinement was to position the candle so that the width of the shadow was exactly the width to be cut. The plumb-bobs were leap-frogged as work proceeded with the surveyor correcting the line occasionally. A pilot gallery was usually cut first, so that when it was enlarged, the ' uppers ' usually disappeared except for the first in the original working. Often where two passages join, the remains of the timber plug and nail can be found. Good examples can be seen in the roof of the incline down to the oil in New Dun Mine.

DERBYSHIRE WEEKEND - 20 / 21st November

The trip to Derbyshire was fairly well attended with seven of us making the trek up to the Orpheus CC cottage - John, Di and myself in one car and Gary, Roger, Andrew and Bob in the other. We had booked Giants and hoped to do the Giants - Oxlow through trip if we could find someone to do the exchange. When we arrived, we found that the Giants fee had increased to 25p and that it was also 10p to exit through Oxlow making caving a bit expensive.

As usual, the decision as to where to go was left until the next morning when Orpheus offered us enough extra ladder to do Oxlow on its own. That made 200ft of ladder but we still were not sure that we had enough of the right lengths. Another visiting club was also doing Oxlow and intended to go on through to Giants so we took the easy way out and decided to use their tackle. This meant no ladder to take in or bring out - a marvellous way to cave. The other club were not starting until late so we used the Saturday morning up by a tourist trip down the Blue John Mine and a bit of our own mining in an abandoned Fluorspar mine. Around two o'clock we changed in very cold weather and set off down the 55 degree entrance pitch just as it started to snow. The four entrance pitches of 40 to 50ft were relatively easy and only a little damp so the bottom was reached with only a little trouble with a missing life line. A 30ft pitch up a fixed ladder then led into a long crawl series leading towards Giants. At the far end - about 1000ft - we missed the turn and found ourselves at a sump we recognised from the survey. Back tracking to the avens put us on the right route which turned out to be a very tight wet crawl that prevented some of the party from going on. As it seemed unlikely to be the correct way and we didn't fancy paying 25p anyway, we reluctantly turned back into the crawl series towards out.

The outward trip was uneventful except for the delays caused by the two old men at the back. Climbing the pitches was a decided relief from crawling and the 55ft entrance pitch was managed by all in the fastest possible time with enthusiastic help from above where there was a full blizzard blowing.

The snow had increased since we went down and changing was given up as a bad job. Roger etc disappeared at high slippery speed down the road and we set off to follow them in John's Viva. Snag number one was a hill that took four runs and then was only managed by adding Di's weight in the back. The drive of 15 miles back to the cottage took nearly 2 hours and included digging through a snow drift at one point. As we reached the cottage, the long suffering car battery gave up and the last stretch was done on a dead engine.

No thought was given to beer except to send Spade out for some as the cottage was warm, had food in it and we had it to ourselves. The other club turned up much later having gone on through to Giants - yes we did go the right way in the crawl - and found themselves in some slight trouble with a girl on her first caving trip. This put us all very firmly in our place as we had turned back in wet suits and she had only normal clothing on. Our excuse was that we couldn't afford the 25p.

The following day saw all the snow gone after rain but no caving was done for various reasons. Di and I reckoned we had pushed John the 15 miles home and had had enough, John had to change his battery and get the car going, and the others tried but couldn't find a cave with enough room left in it to get inside. After being sympathetic with a caver that had fallen off the third pitch in P8 and broken his arm (but had then climbed out) they too headed home.

Apparently there are even tighter sections beyond where we turned back in Oxlow with passage heights around 7 inches and as much crawling as we had already done. All together a different cave.

Jim Hay.