

# **ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN**

## **CAVING CLUB**



**JUNE 1972**

**NEWS LETTER No 42**

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Hon Sec

Mrs D Court  
26 Park Walk  
Chase Park  
Ross-on-Wye  
Herefordshire

Hon Editor

R E Bailey  
Rose Cottage  
Aston Crews  
Lea  
Nr Ross-on-Wye  
Herefordshire

## **FOREST NEWS**

**Dram Truck Recovered :-** Roger Solari spotted an old dram truck near Sopers Pot at Symonds Yat and the other Thursday a rescue operation took place. The Police were informed that the truck was being removed to a place of safety. John Elliott's latest Land Rover was commandeered and a small working party soon had the truck in the back.

The truck is now in the top club room at the Butchers Arms and is in fair condition considering that vandals had had a go at it. An interesting feature is the crude suspension - solid axles running in half cup bearings.

## **SOPERS POT**

While attending to the dram truck it was noticed that Sopers Pot is now silted up to the top, but the stream is still sinking there. It is doubtful if the pot will be re-opened there are far better digs about.

## **BRITISH SPELEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**

This September the conference will be held at Bristol in the university buildings. As usual there will be an exhibition and a photographic contest, the club intend to enter the contest as well as exhibiting a stand, we won several quid at the Sheffield conference. So get cracking with those cameras, slides, black and white.

## **ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY**

Descent, May 1972 No 21.

South Wales Caving Club, News letter, No 70 and 71.

Plymouth Caving Group, News letter and Journal No 43.

BSA Cave Science Vol V1 No 48.

## **CAVE RESEARCH GROUP CONFERENCE - 17<sup>th</sup> JUNE**

Details of this are in last months news letter but there is a possible addition to the program, this would be a lecture / slide show on Australian caves by the president of the Aussie Speleological Federation, Elery Hamilton-Smith.

## **TRIPS**

Not much has been arranged for the next couple of months due to the bank holiday season.

June - 10<sup>th</sup> / 11<sup>th</sup> Yorkshire.

June - 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> CRG southern meeting.

July - 9<sup>th</sup> cave rescue practice.

## **AGGEN ALLWED**

The boulder choke in the far end of the southern stream series has been dug through, a good round trip is now open.

### **TRIP TO DUDLEY STONE MINES**

After the talk given at the March club meeting, on Dudley Stone Mines, the ladies section decided to visit them.

The trip took place on April 12<sup>th</sup> and was attended by Heather, Di, John Court, John Elliott, Colin Clements,

Cliff Seymour and myself, the men on the trip by invitation only. On arriving at Dudley we changed into wet suits, Di and myself needing help with our zips, our guides for the evening coming to the rescue. We set off to the Big Ben Mine, on the way we passed the entrance to the 144 Mine which got its name from the number of steps into the mine.

Arriving at Big Ben Mine some of the party decided to abseil down the entrance, but after John C and John E had followed one of our guides down the rest went down the slope.

We went in by a large entrance, and then through a fall which was a bit of a squeeze. After the fall we found ourselves in an enormous chamber with an equally enormous passage leading off. I thought we were in for an easy walk through the mine, but before we proceeded on our way into the workings we were shown where they tried to by-pass the fall.

This meant wriggling on our backs through a narrow gap, into a very dodgy area and then struggling out again.

We carried on into the mine completely unprepared for the size of the place. Some of us went through the water to look at Mud Hole, which wasn't a bit muddy, then on to a bit more which should have been the Mud Hole. On the way back to dry ground our hosts threw Di and myself into the water, just to show that they were friendly. On leaving the water we were given coffee and Hamburgers prepared by our hosts.

We went on with the trip which took us by 144 Mine entrance and to look at the canal. It was discovered that John E hadn't been in the water yet so we all did our best to drown him but we came off the worst.

We made our way out to the surface instead of going back the water way and then went back underground by 144 entrance, where there was more coffee waiting for us. We then went back to the cars to change where we then shared our coffee and food with our hosts. Then after a talk, in which we all got at John E, we left for home after a good and enjoyable trip.

Our thanks to Brian Powell who arranged it all for us, and the rest of our guides. The Mines are well worth visiting and only a shortish journey up the motorway.

Daphne Hay.

### **WILL'S HOLE**

Party - John and Diana Court, Jim Hay, John Elliott and Cliff Seymour.

We left SWCC headquarters on Sunday morning and headed for Dinas Rock area. John Court passed us on the way, but John Elliott knew a short cut so they were surprised to see us there first. After a morning's sunbathing we had lunch and it was then decided to have a look at Will's Hole.

Cont.

To get to the cave you have to climb down the girders on the old miners track which brings you to the cave entrance. John Elliott and Jim had a quick look around while waiting for the rest to follow. After everyone was down we started to explore the cave.

We followed a small stream which led to a sandy in-filled sump, worth looking at when it dries out. Jim, Di and myself followed the stream in the opposite direction, while the two John's were taking photo's. Jim found a very interesting small hole which I think was draughting quite well, but he did not push it. I went to the far end of the cave to a boulder choke. This came to a sandy crawl, but neither of us followed it up. We then joined up and made our way out slowly. The next item on the agenda was to take a look at an extremely interesting Silica Mine.

Afterwards three of us went for a swim in the river, which was very refreshing, so we all decided to call at the Drum and Monkey on the way home.

Cliff Seymour.

### **A TRIP TO GOATCHURCH CAVE - BURREINGTON COMBE - VIA LAMB LEER**

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May at 6.30 pm a party consisting of Colin Clements, Ian Fraser, Cliff Seymour, Diana Court, Daphne Hay, Heather Macdonald, John Elliott and myself, set out from Coleford to visit Lamb Leer cave in Somerset.

Unfortunately no one arrived to bring the key to the cave and lead us into it, and having waited for some time we decided to make a trip down Goatchurch Cave. This was suggested by John Berry, from Stroud who joined us at Lamb Leer, who knowing the cave well could therefore take us on an interesting and sporting trip.

I am a complete novice, this was only my second trip underground and I would have felt considerably less confident had I realised the full implication of that word 'sporting'.

We entered the cave down an easy walk way - iron railing stakes had been placed down this first chamber in preparation for making it a show cave, this idea had obviously been abandoned. Then we went down a series of narrow passages which seemed to go either vertically up or down and provided several awkward manoeuvres. None of the chambers in this cave were particularly large and were linked by one or more narrow passages giving the members of the party plenty of scope for negotiating interesting routes. I did not notice any formations and for the most part the system seemed dry. However, about half way down we passed through a chamber with water flowing close by, a reminder that the formation of the system was still in progress.

So far the trip had been relatively easy going but I did not trust the twinkle in John Berry's eyes. Next he led us through a narrow squeeze minus helmet and cell - he invited me to try it next. I managed the squeeze without too much trouble but what John had omitted to tell me was that I would have to go head first downwards for about 10ft.

Cont

Colin came next and got stuck in the squeeze but with assistance from the rear, retreated safely. Diana negotiated an even narrower squeeze parallel to the first one, it was almost completely round and very difficult to move in it, it was so narrow that she said that it felt like the 'squeeze machine'.

The third route from this chamber to the next was relatively easy and we all proceeded on down to the last chamber reached by a narrow 'drain-pipe' several yards long. John explained that this pipe had once been as narrow as the previous squeeze but so many cavers had used it that it was now quite easy to negotiate. When I arrived in this chamber John told me to switch off my lamp and I waited curiously to see what was to happen. He then shouted to each caver coming out of the pipe to keep his head down to avoid damaging the overhanging formations (fictitious of course). This provided much amusement for those watching, as the unsuspecting victim crawled across the chamber nose to the floor. I knew that twinkle was evil.

Then we made our way back up again, firstly through the drain-pipe and then up to the higher chambers. By this time I was tired and very grateful for the encouragement, not to mention the support of the other members of the party. I therefore did not attempt to climb an aven as a short cut to an upper passage. I left that to more intrepid and experienced ladies like Diana and Daphne, it proved to be quite awkward and the air down below was a shade blue when everyone had made their way up. John led myself and others up an easier route (is anything easy going vertically upwards on a slippery slope with muscles that feel like pieces of wet string?)

I have omitted to mention that Diana was wearing shorts. However, she said that the rock was quite pleasant to the skin, not as cold as expected and not as uncomfortable as one would imagine. Has she started a trend? The men were in favour, needless to say, but there were certain hazards attached to this mode of attire. I think I will stick to a more protective outfit myself.

Next we came to another vertical climb, John had fixed a hand line here on our way down as the wall was formed of smooth flowstone. It looked very slippery and those string muscles felt rather frayed by now, however I was looking forward to that bottle of beer and a Cornish pasty so I gritted my teeth and just about got to the top under my own steam. Then quite shortly we emerged out of a very muddy hole just below the main entrance. All in all a very interesting and sporting trip and so the others said, a well worthwhile substitute to Lamb Leer.

As an introduction to caving it was challenging and enjoyable, I learnt a lot including a few new oaths and in spite of the cricks in my neck and the bruises everywhere I shall be going again.

Sue Clark.

## **THE AGM OF THE GLOS CAVE RESCUE GROUP**

This years AGM was held as usual at the Butchers Arms but had lower than normal attendance - this notwithstanding the round of free drinks by courtesy of Bill Little. Colin Graham took the chair and had a more than usually difficult job with two very contentious subjects on the agenda.

The meeting started fairly promptly even though few were present at that time as it was obvious that time would be short. Nothing of note arose from the minutes or from the correspondence so the meeting quickly passed on to the officers reports. Derek Appleing, secretary, covered the years progress and events in general, particularly noting that we had not managed a annual social event this year. He suggested that in future years the job of organising such an event might be better done outside the committee by one or more members of the group. The treasurers report by Colin Anderson was about the only bright spot of the evening as it was obvious that a great deal of work had gone into the treasurers work during 71 / 72. A vote of thanks was given to Colin for his efforts.

Malcolm Sterry as Tackle Officer had little new tackle to report as the new stretcher is still in the making and the winch looks further away than ever. He did suggest that the Group needs rope and that this was something for the new committee to consider.

Items 8 and 9 on the agenda were then discussed at length. A proposal that they should be considered in the reverse order to that on the agenda was accepted so that the two items then read :-

No 8 Discussion - What is the purpose of Cave Rescue Practices ?

No 9 Discussion - Whether the organisation should continue in its present form, or whether benefits would be gained from restructuring.

The first was fairly easily disposed of - compared with the second anyway - and general agreement was reached on the purpose being to practice cave rescue techniques. Dissatisfaction was voiced on the number of beginners that turned up on these practices, which only emphasized the shortage of skilled cavers.

The general view that the practices should aim at a fairly high standard and leave training in basic caving to the clubs.

Item 9 provoked a great deal of discussion, not because of disagreements but because of doubts on how suggestions could be implemented. This resulted in the constitution being distributed to all present and it slowly became obvious that while the suggestions - mainly from John Court - had general approval, they could not be introduced without constitution changes. For this, notice had to be given and so it was left for the new committee to decide whether an EGM was necessary or whether they could re-organise themselves to take account of the proposed changes. The basis of John's proposal was that the committee should be divided into two levels. One to be the administration level with a secretary and treasurer and the other to be cave rescue level with active cavers filling tackle officers and multiple wardens positions.

Although, as said, this found general acceptance, quite a few people were in favour of retaining the chairman's position. Without a constitution change it had to be retained anyway. All unanswered questions arising from this extensive discussion were left for the new committee, this being elected in a hurry in the short time left from those that had shouted loudest in the previous discussion.

Cont

Those elected were:-

Chairman - Ian Standing.

Secretary - Jim Hay  
10 Park Walk  
Ross-on-Wye  
Tel - Ross 3924

Information - John Court  
26 Park Walk  
Ross-on-Wye  
Tel - Ross 3455

Treasurer - Tony Day

Equip' Officer- Cliff Seymour

Two Members - Colin Graham and Diana Court.

Look out for more information after the committee has had the first meeting of the year.

**CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL - AGM AT PONTYPOOL ON MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>.**

Jim Hay, John and Diana Court attended this years AGM of the CCC, partly to see what had developed after missing last years but also particularly to see what was happening to Ogof Dydd Bryaf in North Wales.

The meeting was primarily concerned with conservation following the publication by Pengelly of a massive survey on cave damage on behalf of NCA. The immediate danger to OFD appears to have passed and it looks as if the Cwm Dwr Quarry Cave entrance can be preserved as well. Ogof Dydd Bryaf was a problem as it appeared that somebody was using the cave as a lever to have the quarry closed down. Naturally the quarry owners were unhappy about this and had withdrawn access permission.

Unfortunately just as we were planning a trip there. It was also agreed that it would be unwise of the council to issue any certificates of fitness to lead beginners and to leave the decision to issue them or not to individual clubs.

The next meeting of CCC is to be held at the Butchers Arms later in the year and following that, Jim Hay will be one of the four CCC reps at the National Caving Association's AGM.