

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



JANUARY 1975

NEWS LETTER No 55



The old Miner's Bridge over the small stream on New Dunn
Third Level - only seen during dry conditions.

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From the Papers

Birch Hill Iron Mine photo's and Survey .

CLUB COMMITTEE FOR 1975

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AGM

The club AGM was held on Thursday 7th November at the Butchers Arms and the above committee was elected . Those of you that remember last years committee will no doubt recognise some of the names . Unfortunately , our annual reshuffle went wrong and we have finished up without a Meets Secretary . For the time being , John Elliott will be arranging any meets asked for but we will have to have a permanent Meets Sec soon or we shall make the wrong kind of name for ourselves . A volunteer would be much appreciated .
The meeting itself went very well under our guest Chairman of Roy Bennet , as usual , took far longer than expected .

Cont.

A somewhat controversial note was introduced at the end when a proposal to change the constitution to admit Honorary Members was discussed but it all came out in the wash and we now have three of them . Many thanks to Roy for controlling a rather loud meeting .

CLUB NEWS AND GRIPES

The clubs 10th anniversary party at Speech House went very well after a slow and cold start . About 85 people bought tickets which was a shame as we had worked on a break-even total of around 100 . However we always had assumed that it would make a loss and the treasurer says he can cover it provided it doesn't happen more often than once in ten years .

Those that didn't go missed the sight of John and Di's proper caving anniversary cake . It consisted of a two layer iced cake with a ladder pitch through a pothole in the top layer into the cave between the layers . With an iced stream , a ladder rigged , two cavers descending , stals both up and down and very tasty eating as well , it set the whole evening off.

Without the wives , the evening couldn't have taken place so special thanks must go to :- Daph , Di , Sue , Heather , Jackie , Margaret and Kath .

Thanks also to John Elliott's parents for supplying some goodies .

Both compasses have been found now so you can stop looking for them . One was found by looking in the tackle book to see who had it . Much to everyone's surprise , it was listed .

If you haven't paid your subs to the club by the end of January , this is your last news letter . £1.25 for adult members , reduced to £1 each for family members .

Both electrolyte and carbide are available now in the club HQ . The electrolyte is in flake form and should be added to one pint of distilled water . Caution - it gets hot .

When taking any electrolyte , bulbs etc from the HQ please enter your name and details in the book provided. The Equipment Officer (Gordon) will then catch you later for the cash .

The club is having some difficulty getting rope at reasonable prices . Rope that costs £2 per 100ft about 18 months ago is now being quoted at £8 . This is only due to profiteering by certain caving suppliers so we hope to locate less greedy sources . In the meantime , those in urgent need of rope can get 1 ¼ “ Fibrillated Tape Polypropylene from Hales in Dry brook . This is the coarse rope that looks like twisted raffia . Price is £1.80 for a 90 ft length in either green or orange . They also do 720 ft rolls .

Until the club gets more rope , more is being made available to members by cutting a 300ft rope that is in new condition into three 100ft ropes .

While the Equipment Officer regularly checks the tackle in store , he cannot be responsible for the state of the tackle at all times . Any club member borrowing tackle MUST check it carefully for damage . Any damage to club tackle MUST be reported to the Equipment Officer as soon as possible .

The Ordnance Survey stopped publishing the Old Wye Valley 1” Tourist Map some years ago which meant cavers had to buy three of four maps to cover the Forest area . However , the new Metric Series covers the whole of the Forest limestone area in a single map and with a slightly larger scale . Ask for - Gloucester and Forest of Dean Sheet 162 at your local friendly dealer . He will want 65p off you for it .

Sue and Di have completed all the work over at Buckshaft that the Forestry Commission asked us to do . A full report has been handed over and we are now keeping our fingers crossed for a supplement to club funds . Many thanks to Sue and Di for giving up their time .

Otter Hole turns out to be more complex than we thought . During the recent wet spells , the whole cave flooded with fresh water . Which means a big river and the possibility of being caught inside for very extended periods .

The club needs a new small notice board for details of trips etc to be used in the Butchers on Wednesdays . Must be suitable for drawing pins - can anyone help ?

We accumulating surveys and mining maps and have nowhere to store them . Large surveys are to be covered in the selfadhesive clear film and then stored upright against a wall in a special holder . The smaller maps and surveys really want storing in drawers .
Can anyone help with an old chest of drawers or, ideally , a file unit for plans .

With petrol the price it is , no away trips are being arranged unless specially asked for by a party .
However, will those arranging caving trips please advertise them on the notice board at the Butchers Arms if they need to make up the numbers . Particularly trips in the Forest where new members might like to join in .

Access to Otter Hole is very good at the moment thanks to our fiends in the area . The club has been asked if it cold supply some photo's of the cave for the landowner . Not many photo's exist at present but will the photographers keep the landowner in mind and lend the club slides or negatives for copying .

We need another thorough clean up in Old ham as soon as possible . The committee will probably arrange a date for late February or early March . Work is also required on the entrance - not only the fence and stile but some of the stone walling now needs cementing back in . Please support the next effort .

The library copies of the club news letters need binding into better holders . Has anyone got a source (cheap) of ring binders suitable for quarter size news letters . Let Sue know if you have .

A skittles match has been provisionally arranged for Sat 8th Feb between ourselves and GSS . Venue to be announced , it will be in the Forest area . More details later .

At the club meeting in February , John Berry is giving a talk and slide show on his 24 hour stay down Wigpool with his scouts . He ran into some interesting problems but also carried out a great deal of work during the time down . Don't miss it .

REPORT FROM THE 1973 / 74 - MEETS SECRETARY

Apologies are hereby given for the absence at the AGM of the Meets Sec's report . It is therefore included in the news letter .

The committee decided to try new tactics , that of running trips to certain areas in the Forest , led by someone who knew the area in question .

This was fairly successful and probably warrants further thought .. Members would help if the informed committee members of any areas in the Forest that they would like to visit . No trips to SWCC at Penwyllt were booked because of bad attendance in the past .

The following is a breakdown of the years trips :-

December 8/9 th	Booked SWCC . Attended by JVE and Di Court with Colin Graham of SWCC . Did OFD II (top entrance) to OFDI .
January 20 th	Wigpool Iron Mine led by Jim Hay . Successful trip in Fox Hole and out Steam Hole . Six members attended .
February 10 th	OFD I led by Jim Hay and John Court . Two full parties had the pleasure of Viewing the cave in full flood ie sumped beyond Pluto's Bath and the Main Stream , about 10ft deep . Very impressive .
February 24 th	Buckshaft Hole - attended by JVE , John and Di Court (Phil Schwartz arrived Late and missed the group) A local took us around lesser scowls and then a Descent of a new hole (Hole 23) was made . A report was made in the News Letter at the time .
March	Mendip trip cancelled due to bad weather .
March 24 th	Westbury Brook Iron Mine - JVE and Alan Barmen only .
April 28 th	Trip round Devils Chapel . Well supported by seven members who had an Enjoyable day descending the Devils Ditch and Dug in / Dug Out Hole .

- May 5th Visit to Copa Hill Mine near Cwmystwyth in Mid Wales .
Six members had an enjoyable days mining in this fascinating area .
- May 25 / 26th Weekend camping under Cader Idris . 10 members had a good weekend walking .
- Also during May was a Wednesday evening trip to Manor Farm Swallet extensions . A further trip also took place later in the year .
- June The trip to Pwll Dwfyn was cancelled and I'm not sure if Jim Hay did his walk round the Symonds Yat sinks . (No we didn't go)
- July 20 / 21st Gower camping weekend . The weather was so good and the traffic so heavy that Members couldn't get near Llethrid and Tooth Cave .
- September A Wednesday evening trip to Agen Allwed reaching NW Junction .
- October A Wednesday evening trip to Eastwater Swallet on Mendip .

So - not one of our most productive years as far as away trips are concerned . Still we can only cater for what members want . With petrol the way it is , our own area can stand a lot of prodding yet and we may even find those fabled cave systems if we look hard enough . It always helps the Meets Sec however if members would inform him of the sort of trips they want arranging .

Good caving for the year to come .

John Elliott .

Editor :- Lest someone assumes that the above report lists all the caving done by the club , I would like to make it clear that it only deals with trips arranged by the Meets Sec . Lots of other caving took place .

C R O PUZZLE

The AGM of the Cave Rescue Group is in the first half of 1975 . Do you think that YOU have it in you to be a good information Officer or Secretary ? Try this simple puzzle and find out . Answer in the next news letter .

1 - There are five houses , each with a front door of a different colour and inhabited by cavers from different areas . Each caver has his own peculiarity , drives a different vehicle and prefers a different kind of drink.

2 - The caver from South Wales lives in the house with the red door .

3 - The Derbyshire caver drives an Austin .

4 - Guinness is drunk in the house with the green door .

5 - The Yorkshire Caver drinks bitter .

6 - The house with the green door is immediately to the right of the house with the white door .

7 - The thin caver drives a Mini .

8 - The cave diver lives in the house with the yellow door .

9 - Scrumpy is drunk in the middle house .

10 - The Mendip caver lives in the first house on the left .

11 - The caver that likes climbing lives next door to the caver that drives a Ford .

12 - The cave diver lives next door to the caver that drives the Land Rover .

13 - The strong man drinks Mackeson's .

14 - The Devonian caver is small .

15 - The Mendip caver lives next door to the house with the blue door .

Now :- Who drinks Mild ?

&

Who owns the Hillman ?

IRON MINES OF DEAN FOREST

The iron mines of the Forest of Dean was the subject of an illustrated lecture given to members of Stroud Rambling Club by Mr. John Court, of Coleford.

Mr. Court, who is an expert on the old mines and the industrial archaeology of the iron industry of the Forest, described the part he has played in mine exploration in recent years.

Club members were deeply interested in slides showing evidence of iron mining going back to Roman times. They were told of the origin of the 'scowles,' the now beautiful features left by ancient open-cast mining. Mr. Court described the work and life of the iron mines of the past and the importance of the industry.

The Club hopes to hold several rambles to look at the sites mentioned in the talk in coming months.



CAVES by Tony Waltham (Macmillan, £4.95) makes holes in the ground absolutely fascinating. You do not need to be a potholer to be enthralled. After reading this and looking at the fine illustrations, I'm almost persuaded to go down to have a look.

RECHARGEABLE FLASHLIGHT

No Need to Buy Batteries Again!



Franklin & Co., Dept. 1112, 8 Clapham Street, Winton, Somerset.

STROUD CAVERS GO DEEP

The Ognf Fyynnod Ddu caves form the largest natural cave system in Britain and five members of the Stroud Subterranean Ramblers, the caving section of the local rambling club, made a successful five-hour descent to reach The Trident, a magnificent three stemmed stalagmite formation. This huge amber coloured formation is in a chamber some 500 feet down into the mountainside and is reached by a complex labyrinth of passages along which the cavers had to crawl. Some of the passages have underground streams in them and this necessitated thigh deep wading in the icy water.

Future meets will include a descent to one or more of the famous Mendip caves as well as a return to the South Wales area.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

BCRA Bulletin No 2 . November 1973 .

Contains articles on :-

Magic Roundabout Series - Lancaster Hole
Caves and Karst In Southeast France
Cefn Cave , Denbighshire - notes on the survey
Glassnock Cave - Ross-Shire

SWCC News Letter No 75 March 1974

Includes details of the quarrying threat to OFD and Cwm Dwr .

SWCC News Letter No 76 June 1974

Geology of OFD By Paddy O'Reilly
Possibility of OFD IV and V etc by Clive Jones .
Boreham Cave , Yorks - Diving extensions by M Farr and R Sdari .

The British Caver Vol 62 July 1974

Contains to many articles to list . It covers all British and continental caving and is
Financed from the sale of caving books . Well worth reading and is the place to look
If you are thinking about buying any caving books .

Plymouth Caving Group - News Letter and Journal No 58 October 1974

Contains Devon cave information
Access restrictions
Short history of Kitly Caves

Plymouth Caving Group - News Letter and Journal No 59 December 1974

Contains articles on Cave decorations
First Aid - Fractures .
Wheal Benny Mine

Orpheus Caving Club News Letters No's 8 - 9 and 10 August/ September 1974

No 8 Resistivity Meter . Lathgill Head Cave extensions .
No 9 Self Life-lining / Abseiling . Trip reports
No 10 Trip reports . Abseil 6 Bar Racks for £4 .

Descent No 28 June 1974

Thrupe Lane Swallet
Caving news from all areas
Caves of Great Orme and Little Orme - Mel Davies
Chemilight Emergency Light .

Descent No 29 August 1974

Loss of Roger Solari in Agen Allwed
Cave Photography - Part 1 By Alan Coase
Miss Descent Results
Dalebarn Cave
Know your Ropes - Part 1 By M K Lyon
Dangerous Faults with home made ladders

Descent No 30 November 1974

Know Your Ropes - Part 2
News from Australasia
Rappel Rack
Cave Photography - Part 2

LOST

Large offset -D Screwgate Krab . Probably on a Swildons trip . Return to Jim Hay if found .

FOUND

One pair caving boots - approx size 7 . Found in Andy Solari's car Boot . Contact John Elliott if that are yours but hurry as they fit him .

British army type trenching tool - brand new . Found after Robin Hood shaft rescue practice . See Jim Hay if it yours .

Two carbide lamps in the Clearwell Caves area by school children from the Secondary Modern School at Berryhill . Contact the reception office at the school if they belong to you .

A Krab by John Elliott after Copper Hill trip . He will require a detailed description before letting it go .

WANTED

Good black and white photo's of Forest Mines to publish in the news letter .

FOR SALE

Anything you care to put in the news letter for sale . Second-hand wives for sale notices only accepted if they are in good condition .

BIRCH HILL IRON MINE

The workings of this gale were known to local cavers some time ago but had been visited infrequently until recently when it appeared that the quarry face was coming close to the main level and it might well be quarried away .

The club decided to try and complete a record as possible and surveying photography trips started and much activity was seen there for some weeks . A collection of slides are held in the slide library , some black and white prints were taken and the results of the survey are published here . Very few relics were found , the most notable being a hod and shovel but John Hine recently found a high level climb which led to a collection of picks , crow bars , a shot hole scraper and a sledge hammer . Oh yes - and a brown enamel teapot . Some photo's were taken of these before they were removed but , unfortunately John's camera was faulty and they haven't come out . These tools date around the 1920's so are not very old but I think interesting enough to be worth preserving .

One thing we noticed was the number of rust oysters on the bars and scraper . They had obviously been standing in water for some time but were found in a dry high level passage and the picks , although rusty , showed no signs of having been under water .

The section of workings so far surveyed is entered by a small hole at the bottom of the quarry face and on the right . Other entrances higher up on the left did once connect but are now blocked .

An original entrance could once be found near the junction of the tram road and quarry track but there is no trace of this now . A hole has recently appeared in the path leading down the side of the quarry and this connects via vertical joints to the workings so far surveyed . Further workings can be entered in the higher ground directly behind the quarry but these were worked separately (but under the same gale) and so there were no connections to the quarry area of workings .

One of the main reasons for particular interest in this mine is that it lies in the pennant sandstones of the coal measures and is the only known area where iron is found in workable quantities in the Forest coal measures .

The ore was Haematite and formed in veins and joints in the sandstone and so worked similarly to the stoping of the Lead Mines with false floors separating each level in the vertical joints .

(This gave me quite a headache in drawing up) The deposits here have a second reason for interest in that they give evidence that the ore bearing solutions came from above . The ore is restricted to the crop associated with the Yorkely Coal Seam . The pennant sandstone underlying the Yorkely coal are not ore bearing (No traces have been found in the extensive quarries to the west) and there are no records of ore being found in the Coleford High Delph which lies directly under the ore bearing ground .

Just a few more notes on the present day working - over the period we were surveying , several large blocks have come down just inside the entrance and a further entrance has opened up . In fact the area is very unstable and care is needed in passing this section .

It would be interesting to finish this project by surveying etc the workings above the quarry and previously mentioned . I believe Mike Howell and Phil have had a good look around and found some interesting relics of an older nature . The quarry itself is also worth seeing . It is worked on the old method of drilling and splitting and the iron bearing joints can clearly be seen in the quarry face . It is owned by Mr J Hopkins who some of us know as he is a previous Chairman of GSS .

The working history of the mine is fairly short . The gale was originally granted in 1858 to a Mr T R Stopford from Macclesfield . A William Fox . Henry Morgan of Newnham Lane End near Coleford worked the gale on his behalf . The first ore to be extracted was in 1906 when 276 tons were produced . Extraction of the ore continued rather spasmodically until 1932 . The gale eventually reverted to the crown in 1945 due to non payment of rent . I noticed that in Dreghorn , the small mention given to the mine says that it was worked as recently as the second world war but careful examination of records in the Gaveler's Office show that the last extraction of ore was in 1932 .

The photo's (taken from colour prints from slides) show the passage shapes on the main level .

BIRCH HILL IRON MINE

SURVEYED BY: Δ. COURT. I. J. STANDING. 1974

N.G.R. 601/101

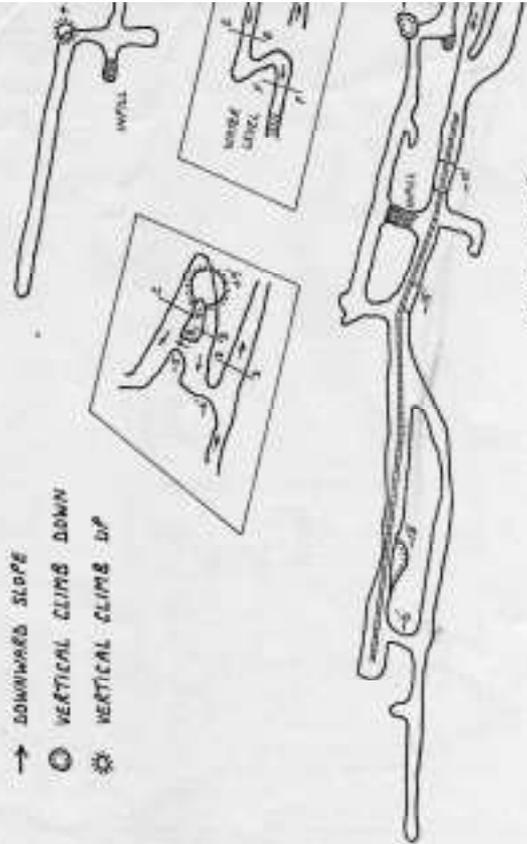
C.R.G. GRADE 4

PLAN SCALE: 1" = 30 FEET

→ DOWNWARD SLOPE

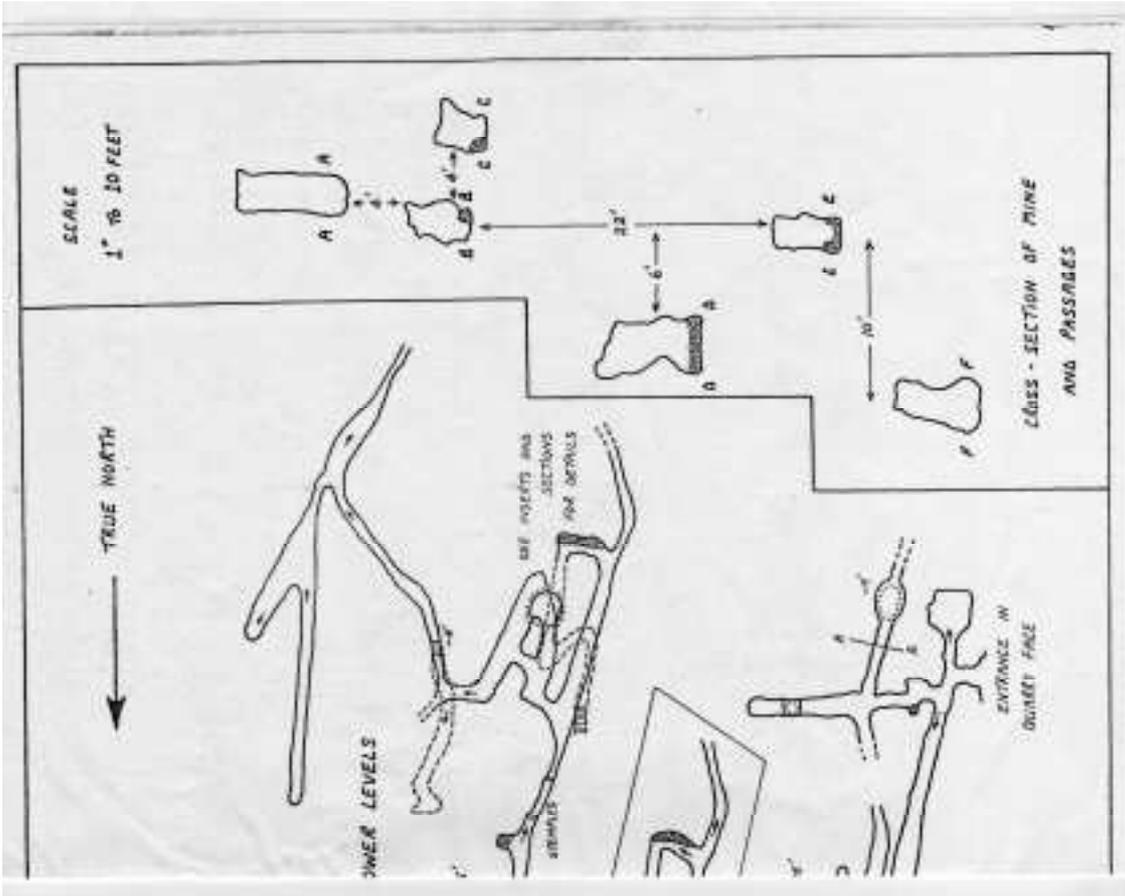
○ VERTICAL CLIMB DOWN

⊗ VERTICAL CLIMB UP



UPPER LEVELS

Please find second half of plan on next page . This plan was to big to fit on the scanner .



The tonnages of ore extracted from the gale were as follows :-

1906 - 276 tons	1920 - 54 tons
1907 - 89 tons	1921 - 168 tons
1908 - 49 tons	1922 - None
1909 - 49 tons	1923 - 7 tons
1910 - 480 tons	1924 - None
1911 - 208 tons	1925 - None
1912 - 422 tons	1926 - 25 tons
1913 - 250 tons	1927 - 157 tons
1914 - 17 tons	1928 - 153 tons
1915 - 587 tons	1929 - None
1916 - 63 tons	1930 - 8 tons
1917 - 163 tons	1931 - 35 tons
1918 - None	1932 - 2 tons
1919 - 274 tons	

References :-

Gaveller's Office - Coleford

Forest of Dean Iron Ore Field - F M Trotter

Geology Explained in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley - Driehorn .

D. Court

I J Standing

December 1974 .