

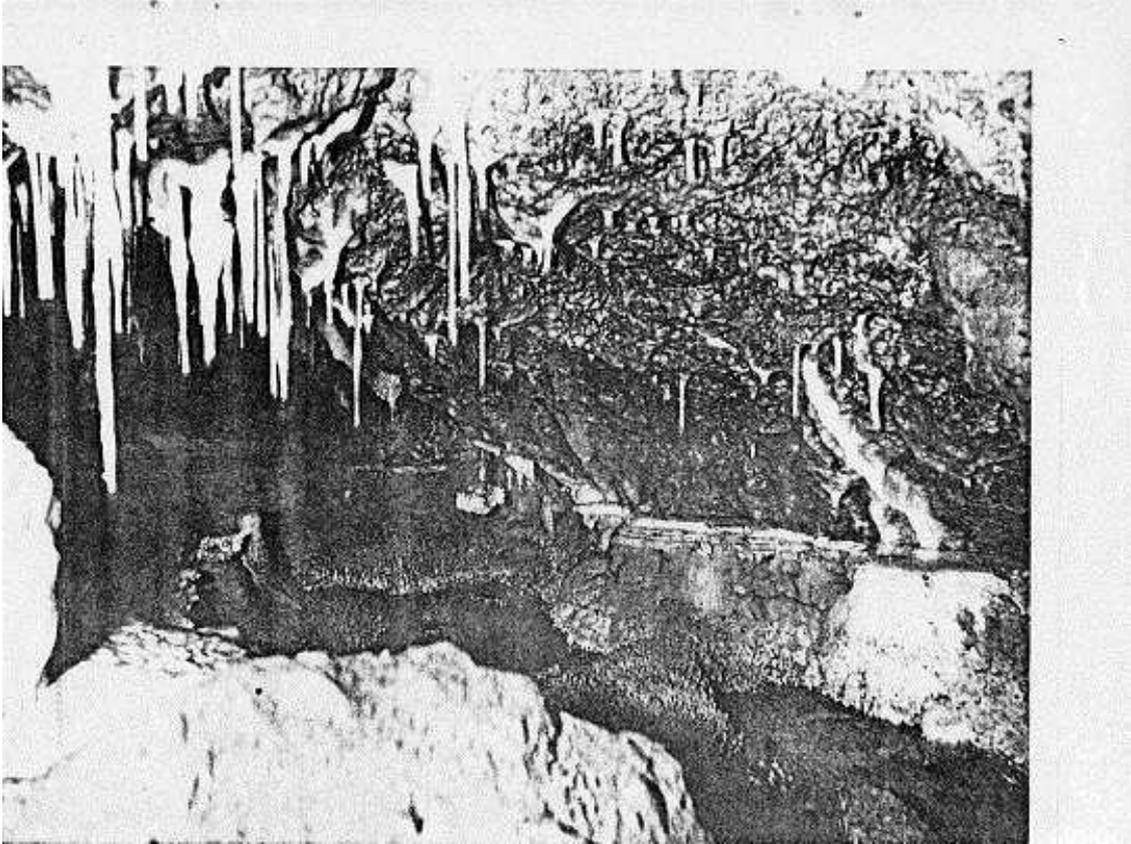
ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



FEBRUARY 1975

NEWS LETTER No 56



Wigpool Iron Mine

The far end of Crystal Pool seen under unusually dry conditions .

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CLUB NEWS AND GRIPES

Those of you that got your news letter at the Feb meeting are in time - those of you that got it later are too late for :-

SKITTLES

Against GSS

At the Rising Sun , Broadwell near Coleford on Saturday February starting

At 8.0 pm prompt

Everybody is welcome - the more the merrier - food laid on - cost about 50p

The increased postage about to happen will make it very expensive to post news letters to members not attending the club meeting . To keep cost down , it is intended to adopt the following distribution method :-

Those attending the club meeting will get their news letter .

Those not attending the meeting but living locally should get their news letter during the month following either through friends or at the Butchers Arms on Wednesday evenings .

News letters left undistributed by the following club meeting will be posted immediately after that club meeting . This way , no one should get a news letter more than four weeks late and we save almost half the postage costs .

The cost of producing the news letter is always increasing and is estimated for this coming year at around £36 ie not far short of our total income from subs . If anyone has any objections to the above plan - or suggested improvements - please let me know .

Otter hole progress is at a complete stop at the moment . The heavy rainfall has flooded the cave and the tides are running at around 15 metres .

Very annoying to the pushing group as they had passed the boulder choke that looked difficult . Beyond is an aven with a height that electric lights will not reach and a 30ft pitch down into a large , open passage that stretches into the distance . Phil is progressing with the drawing of the survey so far (up to the sump) and the opportunity has been taken to photograph the entrance series that is above water .

Alan Marriot made a valiant effort last month and reached the main formation chamber - without a wet suit too .

We still haven't located a suitable (cheap) source of Polypropylene rope yet , but are still trying . Hopefully next month we should be able to order .

OLDHAM CLEAN-UP

Wednesday 26th February has been fixed for the date of the club clean - up in Old Ham . The last attempt wasn't very successful so please turn up and help clean up for this year . Those coming - at 8 pm please - should bring polythene bags , stiff brushes , small shovels and perhaps a lump hammer . If we can muster about 15 people for 1 ½ hours, Old Ham will be tidy again for the next 12 months or more .

The second book in David Bick's series on the Old Metal Mines of Mid Wales is due out around mid March. Quite a few members bought the first part - part two is:-
The Old Metal Mines of Cardiganshire - The Rheidol to Goninan . Price 85p .

The annual Police cadets trip down the mines is coming round again . Help will be needed with leaders and with the loan of lamps . If you are able to help , please note the date :-
Police Cadets Trip 14 / 15 / 16th April 7.30 pm at Old Ham .

Ray Wright continues to get good television coverage for his Clearwell Caves . There is a children's series running on the BBC every Monday that has the credit titles over a shot of Old Churn and the final episode were shot in the mine . During January , HTV showed a programme called ' The Foresters of Dean ' which showed iron being mined in the traditional manner as well as coal mining etc . On Wednesday 5th Feb there was a further programme on TV about the Forest in which the Caves had a further long exposure .

The same evening , HTV ran an article about the possible extinction of Greater Horse-shoe Bats in Southern England . It included shots of the Stone Mines and made a plea by Roger Ransome for more gating to preserve the bats .

MARCH CLUB MEETING

Mr Horton of the Redbrook Tin Plate will be returning to give more details of his works . We had far too little time at the last meeting he attended to get all the questions answered so this time we are setting aside a complete club evening .

This time Mr Horten will be describing in detail the methods that were used to make the finest tin plate in the world . As this is another lost art and took place in the Forest of Dean , it is well worth listening to . Bring anyone you know that might be interested .

CANBRIAN CAE REGIS TRY

Some time ago published a list in booklet form of speleological sites in Wales . These are still available at 20p each from either Alan Ashwell or Frank Bagualey . Address from Jim Hay .
There is also a speedy information service for enquiries about particular sites . Send a SAE with the enquiry to Noel Christopher 22 Deva Close Poynton Cheshire .

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

EGONS Journal No 21 June 1974

Full of club news and trips but including articles from places far apart such as Scotland and Nova Scotia .
Much politics as EGONS is taking a lot more interest in the various area councils for caving .

EGONS Journal No 22 January 1975

This time with an index which is a great improvement .
Similar contents to No 21 but also with articles on climbing , canoeing , caving and hang gliding . A full list of trips of 1974 is included and the Forest is Listed but only for canoeing and walking .

NYLON ROPE AND ' MORNING CLOUD '

An article has appeared in the magazine of the British safety Council on the Nylon ropes used above Ted's Heath's ' Morning Cloud ' The article is of interest to cavers as it involves the breaking strains of what is generally called ' Commercial ' grade Nylon Rope .

Before the yacht broke up in heavy seas , a crew member was washed overboard and lost when his safety line broke . When the yacht remains were washed ashore , the broken end of the safety line was found and examined .

The rope was 1 ¼ inch 3 strand hawser laid nylon and should have conformed to BS 3977 . This gives a breaking strain of 4,590 lbs although those used on the yacht were listed as having only 2800 lb breaking strain . Testing of one of the lines worn by a survivor showed that it broke at 1750 lbs .

During the testing , it was also established that a 180 lb dead - weight load falling through 6 ft imposed a peak load in the rope of 10 times the weight .

The significance for cavers is that ' Commercial ' Nylon is often bought by cavers to take advantage of the higher strength , lower stretch and lower cost compared with the climbing grades . With the possibility that the rope strength may be down to around 1700 lbs , a fall of six feet could be fatal . Unfortunately , no manufacturer could be identified for the ropes so all nylon of this type is under suspicion . It argues for either buying the correct climbing grades or sticking to the now common caving rope of Polypropylene .



"Shouldn't think the ancient Romans excavated much iron down here, professor - just look at these primitive implements!"

has lucky stars shining for her during the Wimbledon fortnight.

To end on a somber note: there may be a disaster to do with parholing or mountaineering, especially in June and October when Mercury is retrograde.

From a Womens Magazine forecasting events for 1975. They may be a couple of months out so I should give up now.

FOR SALE

Gordon has the following equipment for sale and both he and the Treasurer would be glad to see some of it sold .

Carbide Cap Lamp	1 Only Left	£2.20
Carbide	Price not fixed but about	10p per lb.
NIFE Cell Cables	1 ½ metres Long	50p
3 Cell Main Bulbs	3.6 volt 1.0 amp	23p
3 Cell Dip Bulbs		5p
Electrolyte Flake	Enough for 1 pint	20p
TEXOLEX Headbands	2 Left	£2 each
TEXOLEX Headband Strings	6 Left	5p
Nylon Tape for Slings	3000 lbs	27p per yard

Large Ammo Boxes soon at 75p each

2 Cell Main Bulbs soon at 23p each

LOST

The club was once given a fine copper shield by some Newport members with the club's name etc on it . It has not been seen for some years - does anyone remember where it might be ?

One carbide deputy lamp is missing . It was brought to the Butchers Arms about six months ago and hasn't been seen since . Did anyone take it and forget to pay ? Cheques for £3.50 to the treasurer please .

WANTED

Articles of all descriptions for the news letter .

A club trips officer .

FOUND

Nothing -----nothing but it fills up this little space at the bottom of the page .

BATU CAVES REMEMBERED

Margaret Hay

These caves are situated just outside of Kuala Lumpur in Malaya . As my father had been posted out to Batu Cantonment , very near to the caves , and he had visited them several times .
Batu caves area consists of a limestone outcrop absolutely riddled with both small and large cave systems . The main caves are reached by a flight of stone steps (272 in all - we counted them) As, at the time , there was only a small Hindu Temple in the topmost cave , why the steps are there at all is a mystery in itself . The main cave was a vast cavern with a small opening at the top showing blue sky above . This the tourist cave . There was even an ice - cream ' Johnny ' at the top to sell ices or orange drink to the poor fool who'd made it to the top (272 steps, remember ?)
On going in to the cave you would normally drop a couple a couple of cents into the offering dish of the temple and , in return , the priest would bless you and give you back a Frangipani blossom . Courtesies having been exchanged , you were then quite free to explore the cave . This was not difficult since there was only the one cavern there and a circuit round it completed the exploration . Much more interesting was the cave half way down the steps (or up if you got too tired) The excitement of wandering through a pitch black tunnel with only a torch with weak batteries was almost too much for one eleven year old , (this one) . When I did eventually get a stronger torch , I wish I hadn't . The floor of the cave consists of bat dung , approximately 4 - 6" deep crawling with maggots and other revolting wildlife . I say approximately because for one was not going to get down and measure it . I think it was our second or third trip in before we realised that the wearing of flip flops (thongs) was not exactly a good idea . However , my brothers decided , being so much older and wiser , that since the maggots hadn't hurt us up to then , they were unlikely to in the future and we all continued to wear flip flops.

Cont.

This cave , and the one at the foot of the outcrop , was very extensive and we were always warned not to go too far in . I didn't need warning , I knew it was a damned silly idea . We did go in as far as the Chinese who collected the bat dung , not very far by RFDCC standards but enough for rather frightened children , each trying to prove himself , or herself , braver than the others .

On looking back , I remember that only on a few occasions did we have to bend our heads and I can't ever remember touching the wall on both sides at the same time so the passages were not small . There were many side passages leading off but these we never explored , it was enough to wander through the main route and watch the bats clustered in their hundreds , perhaps thousands on the roof or walls .

Like caving in the Forest , once outside the air seems stuffy and uninviting , but there was one more interesting sight to see . My brother had once claimed to have seen a five legged cow and been laughed at , but there , at the foot of the steps , was a five legged bullock . The fifth leg growing from its shoulder and hanging down over one side like a plait . This bullock was scared and was very well looked after by the priests from the temple .

In the time that we visited the caves , the temple and the main cave were still very natural , the temple consisting of only one or two candles placed on a ledge with a small rope fence around . Since then , however , a pavement walkway with electric lights on posts has considerably altered the appearance of the cave . Why the cave was chosen as a holy place I don't know , but each year a very large festival or pilgrimage takes place in which those who would make penance are subjected to punishments such as pulling a trolley heavier than the weight of a man by ropes attached to hooks threaded through the skin , or having spears stuck through the chest and threaded with coloured ribbons until the man looks like a peacock . The mystery is that these people do not bleed , say they feel nothing and suffer no after effects . It could be that they are hypnotised by the priests .

Several years later , a documentary was shown on TV about the BATU caves , one point of which sticks in my memory . BATU caves contain the highest concentration of poisonous life for its size than any other area in the world . All I ever saw , apart from the maggots and beetles etc was one snake skin and one anaemic scorpion which hared off at a rapid rate of knots .

CRO PUZZLE ANSWERS

No one has shown me any correct answers . Either you were all not interested or it was too difficult - I suspect the latter . For those still struggling , here is the answer :-

MENDIP	YORKS	S. WALES	DERBY	DEVON
YELLOW	BLUE	RED	WHITE	GREEN
DIVER	CLIMBER	THIN	AUSTIN	SMALL
FORD	L. ROVER	MINI	AUSTIN	HILLMAN
MILD	BITTER	SCRUMPY	MACKESON	GUINNESS

WHO'S WHO

Who said “ she wouldn't let me go to bed until I did it “ ?

Who got picked up for streaking ?

Who's wife wouldn't go home ?

'SQUAD' Section

Since a certain contributor stopped writing for the Newsletter, some numbers have shown signs of 'withdrawal symptoms'. For those numbers, here is a 'Squads' special.

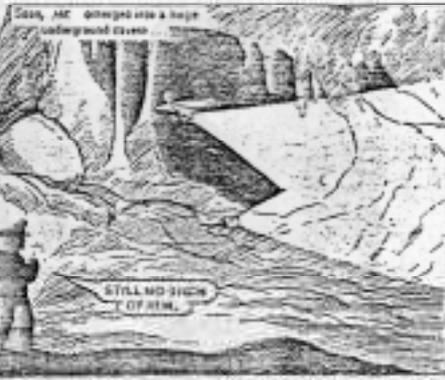
Young Gordon starts out in a head-on collision with the forces of evil. He's a hero, and he's got a special power. He's got a special power. He's got a special power.

General Gordon





I use night binoculars, equipped with thermal light beams, but the way an object absorbs heat is not always predictable...



Soon, we entered into a large underground cavern.

STILL NO SIGN OF HIM.



NO 19 1977

HEY! OVER HERE!



IF HELPT ARTER! CRAWLED DOWN THIS TUNNEL. THIS BOULDER ROLLED AND TRAPPED ME!

DON'T WORRY! I'LL SOON HAVE YOU OUT!



IT'S NO GOOD—THIS BOULDER'S TOO HEAVY!



WOW! JUST A MINUTE AGO, THIS WAS A TUNNEL!

Teaching me the best
way to do things...
I'll be glad to help you
if you need it...



Quickly unrolled by the machine, the machine took control and
and then used machine at temporary speed



...and the great machine
was brought up



THAT'S IT—YOU'VE
SHIPPED THE BOULDER



CAN YOU COME,
MR. REARDELL?



WE'LL FLY YOU
HOME NOW.

THANKS, GENERAL TACHT.
GOD POT-HUNGALAH
WITHOUT TELLING COOPER AND
HIS KEMOT

MAN WHILE NOT HERE