

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING CLUB



NEWS LETTER

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Editorial

Over the past two years, the Newsletter has not had an Editor and this has resulted in very irregular publications. I hope that this year will show an improvement. Although I have volunteered to edit the Newsletter, I do not want to do it alone and so will need articles from some of you and, most importantly, general news of what is going on. Also, I think we could do with a small covering on Industrial Archeology which is part of the Forest history and usually linked with mining in some way.

Some black and white photos would be nice - so how about doing some photo-projects - there is no lack of subjects such as sinks and cave entrances, the jetty in Noxon Park, Honeycomb rift in Westbury Brook, Old Ham first landing ----- let's face it, there is a lot that needs recording.

So let's make it newsletter year by working together.

John Elliott.

General News

Otter Hole

The dry end to the summer has meant that the cave is still open and, of course, being visited regularly. Access has been tightened up and Pete Capper is now in charge of keys and access control.

There is a preliminary survey available now - at a scale of 4 cms to 100 metres it shows all the main cave features and accurately places the cave in relation to the surface. Survey standard is to ORG Grade 5. See John Harvey at the Butchers Arms for your copy at a cost of 25p. each.

The ladder that was on the second pitch was removed some time ago but was left at the top of the pitch secured with a padlock for the convenient use of Club members. Pete Capper has the key to the padlock but recent inspection has shown that the ladder wires are fraying. It is strongly recommended that you take your own ladder in and the damaged ladder is to be removed.

A lecture with Graham Crisp's superb Slide - Sound sequence was given to the people of St. Arvans. The hall was packed which gave the talkers greasy tummys. Needless to say, the audience were more than interested in the cave below their village and we've made some

more friends. Over 250 worth of posters have been sold in the village and there are three more similar talks that have been requested.

For access information and keys to Otter Hole contact:-

Peter Capper
Dunraven
Clearwell
Nr. Coleford
Glos. Tel. Coleford 3622.

Skittles Match

This was held in Chepstow in early November and was organised by Hades Caving Club. A very poor attendance from RFDCC did not help an otherwise enjoyable evening. Which side won is still a matter of debate.

Lydney Park Estate

Some confusion over permission to cave on Lydney Park Estate has arisen but Ian has met the Estate Agent and the position is as follows:

Before going onto the Estate, contact the Estate office (during office hours) and also contact the local Police to let them know that the vehicles to be parked are yours and not poachers. The deer park area is out-of-bounds.

When Ian has sorted out the official (written) position, further details can be given in the newsletter.

Annual General Meeting for 1978

The AGM was held at the Butchers Arms on the normal first Thursday in November and attendance was rather low. Gordon Clissold took the Chair and the Club is grateful for his efforts and for doing it so well. A summary of the main points from the AGM :-

The Club is financially quite well off - mainly due to poster sales where the initial costs have been covered and all income is now profit. A proposal to increase Club fees was not passed. In future, the Club books are to be audited before the AGM - this was proposed by last years Treasurer only to bring the Club into line with normal procedure in organisations.

As there is some doubt about the number of Otter Hole gate keys that are about, the lock is to be changed in the near future. There are rumours that the gate key has been copied by other Clubs.

The Club ladders are getting on in age and it was agreed that they should all be tested and tagged for identification. Any equipment

out on loan should be returned for examination and tagging.

The mining relics were thought to be suffering from inadequate protection and it was agreed to tidy them up and offer them on loan to the Gloucester Folk Museum.

A new complete list of the contents of the Library was nearing completion. A number of publications were missing and had not been properly booked out. It appeared that it was the more expensive publications such as caving books that were missing.

The following Committee was elected :-

Chairman.	John Harvey	Secretary.	Ian Calder
Treasurer.	Paul Gladstone	Meets Sec.	Colin Shapter
Equipment.	Jim Hay	Librarian.	Chris Bowen
Editor.	---	HQ Warden	Pete Capper

John Elliott volunteered to be Editor after the meeting to ensure that newsletters are produced

Committee Meetings

The first Committee meeting was held on 6th November and the summary of the minutes of that meeting are on the Club notice board.

Relevant points for Club members are :-

Summaries of the minutes of all Committee meetings will be published on the notice board at the Butchers.

All Club meetings (first Thursday in each month) will start promptly at 8.00 pm with Club business which will last a maximum of 45 minutes. This will be followed by a talk or discussion etc.

Each Committee member will give a short summary of events in his area during the 45 minutes business.

The notice board in the Butchers is the responsibility of the HQ Warden (Pete Capper) and notices for the board should be referred to him.

Caving/mining trips are to be arranged by the Meets Sec. for one Wednesday evening and one Saturday/Sunday per month. Details of meets will normally be published two months in advance.

The next Committee meeting is to be held in the Stroud area on Tuesday 12th December. Otter Hole will be high on the Agenda with discussion on access and control and preservation. If you have any

points to raise on Cfer Hole or any other subject - please contact any Committee member.

Trips Colin Shapter Tel. Wotton - u - Edge 2443

Wednesday 13th Dec.	Box Stone Mines
Saturday 16th Dec.	Fant Mawr or, if dry, Little Neath River Cave.
Thursday 5th Jan.	Club Meeting
Saturday 13th Jan.	O.F.D. I.
Wednesday 24th Jan.	Lamb Leer

Symonds Yat West

R. Gillespie

Mike Barnard, Bernie and myself, went up to the "Party Cave" at Symonds Yat West above the ferry. We looked at the old mine workings accompanied by a chap Kenny who claimed to know of the existance of the inevitable tunnel down to the river. An hours poking around convinced us that there was no tunnel down to the river, though it didn't need Kenny to tell us that.

Well, Bernie mentioned some natural rift that he'd explored with Mike the week before and I wanted a look. It took a few minutes hard work and then we'd got through about 40 feet of crawls into some sizeable chambers. Some were 20 ft high and the air seemed to be fairly fresh around the place. The place seemed to be fairly well visited as the route was worn and inside were arrows and signs saying "End" & "Cut" etc scratched on.

We lit a candle and checked for draughts and at the end of the passage, I spotted that the end wall might just have been closed off by a fall and that we were on top of the collapse and the passage could continue underneath. It stank of urine and no-one else has looked there so I started to pull out rocks. The work took half-an-hour and by then, with Bernie's help, we had a sizeable entrance down which I took cautious descent. On arrival, I found myself in a new chamber about 8 ft high and 30-X 10 across. The place was covered by a strange mineral form (gypsum?). False floor had collapsed leaving the sides adhering to the walls.

Checking with a candle, I found draught coming out of a 6 inch fissure in the floor in one corner and it looked as if we were on the top of another collapse. The weird mineral around had a crystalline, spun appearance and it formed plates and pencil rods all joining up together. It was rough on hands and clothes.

It didn't seem worth much more effort so we came out. There was another side chamber full of crystal on one side of the passage and down a bit so we had a look there. I noticed a similar dig place and

we started pulling out rocks but couldn't get down. So we tried a few feet away and in an hour I'd cleared away enough to get a Bernean entrance. I couldn't quite do it with two pullovers on.

It seemed as if our dig had taken us past the collapse and down the side of it to below the level of the roof. Below a small length of passage was open. Bernie reported up to say that there was still some draught and that possibly the passage continued. Anyway, we intend to go back to carry on.

I do not think that we found a cave but it is interesting and the crystals and deposits are attractive and make it worthwhile.

Club Secretary

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Club Editor

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