

THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN

CAVING CLUB



OCTOBER 2003

NEWSLETTER No 129

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING CLUB

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EDITORIAL - Dave Tuffley

A few activities have taken place since Newsletter No 128, namely the extensions at Miss Graces Lane Cave, Brinchcombe Iron Ore Level, and of course the Otter Hole Rescue in July. All good stuff to fill the Forest of Dean page in Descent magazine and to keep the rest of the caving world reminded of what a fabulous caving area we have here on our doorstep.

The Committee has received moans again about 'we don't know what is happening in the Club'. Fair comment and the fault is again entirely mine as Editor so heap the blame onto me. The reason you have not had a newsletter earlier is that one **again**, despite all the promises, apart from Jan Karvic, Roger Bailey & George Price's contributions, you would not be reading this edition now. Here I must apologise to the Secretary Dave Jackson, as he had also gave me stuff to put in but the thread of that is now out of date due to late nature of this I had to put most of that aside this time – Sorry Dave!

This editorial has been repeated in nearly every edition I have produced and at every A. G. M. Due to the poor response I shall not be seeking re-election as Newsletter Editor at the **forthcoming A. G. M. which incidentally is on Monday November 3rd at the Rising Sun, Moseley Green.**

FOREST NEWS

Westbury Brook Iron Mine

The work is now underway at the Westbury Brook Iron Mine to stabilise the 'Funnel' at the entrance series. It is costing megabucks to complete this S.S.S.I. site and save it from collapsing. In the third week of August there was a large JCB type machine there along with a dumper truck. This kit had started to excavate a trench through the bank outside has cut a trench down into the entrance scowl by the gate. The work has to be done to H. S. E. Standards and so the Mines Inspector was involved and a Mine Manager had been appointed. It was been decreed that the entrance must be put back into the same sort of entrance restrictions as was there originally. This is to ensure that the draught going into the mine is the same as it was previously, and therefore will not affect the bat population soon to be in there. From an article in the local paper, The Citizen, it was revealed that several 3 metre long section of galvanised ribbed steel tubes were to be joined together and concrete poured around the tubes to seal them into position after the area had been sprayed with 10 ton of Shotcrete to stabilise the loose areas. The bulk of the work should have been completed by early October, but entry down the tubes will be by caving ladder, as fixed ladders in the tube have not been sanctioned as they are deemed to be a hindrance to the passage of the bats in flight. Not only that, the bats might just think 'Hey, these rungs are just the right thing to hang off whilst I have my winter kip'

New members welcomed to the Club:

Richard Bounds
Malcolm White
Garry Waskett
Dan Taylor

Brinchcombe Iron Ore Level

After about three years of struggling, the dig finally went on Sunday 20th July 2003. The intension was to chemically remove a large boulder or two to allow us to get through the last part of the scaffolded area. We knew we were almost through because the level beyond was glimpsed through holes in the boulders. However, when George Price, Howie Roberts, Seb' Hall and myself, Dave Tuffley, got into the dig area, there was a hole already awaiting us our arrival. A black hole through the mud and clay beckoned to us to go through. Actually, we decided to do our best to get through before Ladi returned from mobilisation for the Second Gulf War. He wasn't there when we first got in, so we made dammed sure he was not there when the dig went – Ho Ho!

Stepping carefully, both Howie and I made it up through the hole. I say carefully, as the sides of the hole were still very loose and this was secured later with more scaffolding. The first thing we spotted was a smaller version of the 'Sword of Damocles' that is found in Old Ham Mine which was hanging over us. (For those of you who do not know what the Sword of Damocles is, it is a very large but thin boulder just hanging in a vertical position, held by a thread so to speak like Damocles's sword in the Greek Mythology stories.

George passed up some tools to us and then came through himself. Seb decided that he didn't like the look of the hole at all and decide to stay behind and act as the sole survivor in case anything happened. The limestone roof here in this part is

cleft with water worn joints and the floor is covered with compacted clay washed down through from the surface not far above us. Pleasingly for us, and the local authority, the minor road between Soudley and Ruspidge that passes about 10 metres over our heads here and the rock supporting the road, appears to be in good order

Tests were done with dowsing rods prior to the breakthrough, and the results said that there was open passage beyond the fall and the rods again did not lie to us! We walked slowly on for about 10 yards until we came to a fall, which we managed to crawl up through. Several pieces of old cast iron plate rail and a small pile of lime mortared fire bricks and scattered lumps of unburned coal lay amongst the fall. This was obviously the site of a ventilation flue because a large void appeared above which was covered in a heavy black sooty deposit and is identical in appearance to the soot stained workings in the connecting Perseverance Mine where there is another ventilating chimney (for those who do not know). However it was decided to press on down the level leave the searching of this bit to later on.

We continued on and soon found a layer of brown sticky mud upon the floor which gradually got deeper as we progressed. It crept up our 'wellies' until it was about 1/3rd metre deep (about a foot for you non-metric Luddites) and this made progress a bit tiring as the roof gradually got lower and we had to walk with quite a stoop. At about 120 metres we came to a fall, which consisted of a very broken rock and mud in a faulted or brecciated rock. The mud had obviously come through the roof here. A look at the old miners plans show an ore body which comes up dip from the Findall Level and crosses the junction with the North/South workings. The ore body must also head towards the surface above us and I believe that the fall is directly on the junction and the mud is being washed down from the open ore body immediately above us. To either side, and partially buried in the fall, are two supporting walls built of sandstone which were probably built to support the junction or an weak area in the roof. It was on the next trip that Greg Jones felt a draught coming from the right hand wall, and this is a good sign that the fall is not a very big one.

Anyway at this point George decided to get his camera out and he shot off a reel of film as we went back out. The ventilation flue was explored by sending Howie, the human ferret, up the steep climb. The way here on soon closed down into a small tunnel which corkscrewed around quite a bit until Howie reached an area, of what appears to be either infill or breakdown. A pile of bat guano was found here, so there must have been a way down from the surface years ago, and a draught was felt coming down through. Later exploration on the surface found the possible site of the entrance. Since then a smoke test proved negative on two occasions, however, the site still looks the most obvious.

The new dig is underway and the pile of corrugated steel sheets that we dragged in over three years ago, have now been laid on the mud making the progress up to the dig face a hell of a lot easier.

Brief history of Brinchcombe Iron Ore Level

In 'The Industrial Teagues and the Forest of Dean' by Ralph Anstis,(published in 1990), it states that in 1796, Thomas Teague started to build a furnace in the valley of the Cinderford Brook and 'the iron it produced was the first from a coke fired furnace built in the Forest of Dean. The iron ore for it came on the backs of mules from the level at Edge Hill.....and probably also from the New Kidschurch and Brinchcombe Mines at Soudley, both of which Thomas and his brother had shares. (ref page 87).

Moses Teague in 1828 set up the Cinderford Iron Company, along with William Montague, William Bishop and two men called Church and Frazer. They obtained the Lime Kiln, Brinchcombe and Buckshaft Iron Mines in 1829 to supply the raw material to the new furnace they were attempting to build on the site of Thomas Teague's old furnace and this was completed in 1829, but closed down in 1832. The furnace however, was immediately resurrected by the Welsh iron master, William Crawshay, who put in a large amount of capital and built further furnaces adjoining the one erected by Moses Teague.

(ref page 112)

James Wood, in his 'Laws of the Forest of Dean' in 1878, recorded that William Crawshay held $\frac{3}{4}$'s and James Teague held $\frac{1}{4}$ of the parts or shares of the Brinchcombe Level under a lease of 1000 years granted by freeminers, Thomas Meredith and George Meredith from 24th June 1829.

The First Schedule of the Mining Commissioners awards to the reorganisation of the mines of the Forest of Dean in 1841 records, on page 274s, the inclusion of the level and mines as follows:-

Buckshraft Iron Mine (comprising the Buckshraft, Trowditch Mine Level, Limekiln Level, Ruspidge Water Pit, Drybrook Mine Level, Brinchcombe Level, Cinderford Iron Mine and share of Perseverance, Cooper's Level, Old Orles, As You Like It, and Hatton's Level Gales.

It goes on to mention on page 279, that the area of the new Buckshraft (sic) Iron Mine could work the Limestone and the Sandstone vein of iron ore. (Note that the name was indeed Buckshraft, and the now accepted name of Buckshaft came later)

Treasure Hunt

An evening's entertainment on a warm summers evening was enjoyed by those who attended the Club traditional Treasure Hunt at the Rising Sun, Moseley green on 7th July. There was a choice of a walking course and a cycling course to be attempted. Greg Jones organised the walking course, and George Price did the cryptically encoded cycling course. There was only one team that entered the cycling event, namely George's mate Dave Newman and George's son Simon, so they easily won that prize (Who said that nepotism was dead??)

The walking course was won jointly by 3 teams and so it went to a tie-breaker. However, this dissolved into total chaos and anarchy and so the prize of delicious cream cakes was shared amongst all the gluttons of the teams.

Mind you, it did not help being told that we walkers had all collectively got one answer completely wrong. It was later revealed that we were all correct except one person – the organiser, Mr Jones, who could not count himself.

Still, it was a good laugh and nice to see some old members faces turn up – Don Dunn and Daph Hay.

The rule for organising the next treasure hunt is usually goes to the group that comes last. However, it was decided unanimously that as our Chairman, who was at home and couldn't be bothered to come, can organise the next one. (Ho Ho, again !!)

It has been decided by the committee that the **Bar-B-Que** will be amalgamated with the Treasure Hunt so that we can get more members attending the latter event, which was a bit thin on the amount of numbers again this year.

Colliery visitor

A visiting dignitary was walking along an underground roadway in a Yorkshire colliery. As he was walking past a group of miners he noticed that one had a very

badly battered helmet. Being both puzzled and curious, he spoke to the accompanying colliery manager

‘Why is that man’s helmet all battered and broken, with a flat area on the top?’

Manager: ‘That man is the best miner we have got in this colliery. He comes from Cinderford, in the Forest of Dean. Yes, he is a superb worker and he alone was solely responsible for the saving the lives of 25 miners here during a roof cave-in’.

Dignitary: ‘How did that happen?’

Manager: ‘The roof was starting to give way and so he stood under the main steel beam, supporting it with his head whilst all his mates escaped’.

Dignitary: That’s incredible, but how come his face is in such a mess?’

Manager: ‘Oh, that’s where we had to hammer him into position’.

Buckshaft Pumping Station closure

Severn Trent are rumoured to be strongly considering closing the pumping station on the site of the shaft into the Buckshaft Iron Mine. The station was built in the late 1960’s to pump water from the massive reservoir of water in the combined Perseverance, Shakemantle, Buckshaft, St Annals and Westbury Brook Iron Mines. This total catchment area must easily amount to many millions of tons of water. The Buckshaft shaft was cleaned out of all its detritus of dead sheep and just about any rubbish you can think of, and then massive pumps were installed. The Club was involved in monitoring the water levels when pumping was first tried out and it is rumoured that despite pumping flat out for about a month, the water level fell 2 to 20 feet, depending who you listen to.

The station was always a standby station as the main Wigpool Water Treatment Works complex was served by water pumped from the River Wye at Lydbrook.

English Nature is concerned that the bats in the S.S.S.I. site would be affected by a change in water levels. As mentioned before, no pumping regularly takes place so no change of water level, apart from natural water table movement, will occur. Maurice Febry, Dave Priddis and George Price (our own pet batty people) all contributed comments to this effect.

Old Bow gate vandalised

Bars have been cut out of the Old Bow gate by someone using bolt croppers. This is yet another case to follow Wigpool, Westbury brook, Cannop Drift Coal Mine and the gated caves on the Doward, all being vandalised to gain entry. Both, John Harvey, the Deputy Gaveller, and Julian Gwilliam, who owns Cannop Drift Mine, will call the police and prosecute anyone caught perpetrating such deeds.

Oakwood Mill Iron Mine

The mine has now been abandoned by the contractors and the gale is back in the Deputy Gaveller’s Office in Coleford for a period of about 12 months. However, underground visits can be arranged with the Deputy Gaveller, but the keys to the gate are being retained by John Harvey, as he still has a need to inspect the place for any possible corrective action. He will arrange an evening visit if a ‘small number’ wish to have a look. In due course FODCCAG will have control of the access in line with the current Access Agreement.

Otter Hole Rescue

John Elliot was leading a party of cavers who were making a cave safety film in Otter Hole on 22nd July. On the other side of the sump and with an incoming tide Laura Trowbridge fell about 1.5 metres in the area from the streamway and up to the extension. She severely injured her pelvis but luckily for her there was a caving doctor and two cave rescue first-aiders in the filming party. Even more luckily for Laura there was an international cave rescue conference taking place at Penwyllt, the H. Q. of South Wales Caving Club and subsequently there was a large turn out from this event from West Brecon C R, GCRG, Dudley Cave Rescue, Mendip C R, and just about anywhere else. John Elliot, whom we are all going to blame for this, made his way out before the sump closed along with another member of the party and raised the alarm.

As soon as the various Cave Rescue bodies appeared, an advance party was sent in including a cave rescue doctor. This party endeavoured to make her condition as stable and as comfortable as possible before the sump could possibly close again. Then slowly she was moved towards the sump and then passed through. Her progress was very slow and the last 20 metres were the slowest of all due to the constrictions of the immediate entrance.

Outside were the local and national press, along with just about all the television companies you could imagine, all trying to report the action and all getting in the way for a while. The local Plod put in an appearance at the entrance in order to keep the hacks from getting in the way. However all subsequent reporting was very accurate and factual due to the combined cave rescue control keeping them fully informed of exactly what was happening. There was no sensationalist tabloid headlines to mar the occasion, thank God.

When she was brought out she was taken down the river bank, and whilst understanding rescue members kept the press back, she had a little word with her parents who had been patiently waiting for hours at the entrance. Severn Auxiliary Rescue then carried her across the mud and down into one of their inflatable boats and she was then taken downstream to the Air Ambulance and then evacuated by air to the hospital in Newport

It was a superb event for portraying the combined cave rescue services in the most positive light and was very good P.R. for us all. Most people like me must have gone the best part of 40 hours without sleep and I certainly was still knackered the next morning – and I never went into the place, unlike a few others

Laura has made a good and speedy recovery and we all wish her well and it could well have been one of us.

National Association of Mining Historical Organisations

2004 NAMHO Conference

This event will be held in the old mining village on Coniston, in the heart of the English Lake District 23rd to 25th July 2004.

It is being organised by the Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining Historical Society where papers are invited on 'The Extractive industries of Cumbria', so get writing. There is varied programme of lectures, underground and surface trips will be available.

Conference booking forms will be available January 2004. It is advised to book your accommodation early, as the Lake District is a very busy place in July.

Contact Hon. Sec. CATMHS: S. Barker, The Rise, Alston, Cumbria. CA9 3DB

Or sheila.barker@cybermoor.org

Accommodation list is available on the CATMHS www.catmhs.co.uk and NAMHO www.namho.org & www.mininghistory.org websites.

By the talk in the pub at the time of writing, it appears that a sizeable group from the Club will be attending this event



"Brother Nathaniel, burning a witch is a serious business"

Cotswold BS-AC Newsletter (and Website)

The winter non-diving season was broken up with four caving trips organised by a Mr John Hine (alias 'The Mole'). We met near to Clearwell Caves, in a lay-by where we kitted up in a car and 'molerbike' headlights. Eight divers attended the first session. Roger Turner; Tony Hyde; Rich Laity; Paul Hudson; Katherine O'Connor; Paul and David Cooper and Nigel Potts, who made the initial contact with 'The Mole', who led us to a small door in the roots of a gigantic tree. He opened it up for us and a totally different world lay before us. Mole can certainly spin a yarn or two. But not only that, he is a wealth of caving experience and what an enthusiastic caver he is! The first trip was more of an educational experience really and later trips were more physically demanding. Unfortunately, our numbers dwindled a little – session by session but I know we all got something quite special out of this underground world that we were very fortunate to see. I, personally, will never forget one occasion when we huddled together in a small shaft and 'Mole' asked us if we could spot something unusual. Gale was the observant one, and pointed out a round circle like the end of a copper tube. Mole put his finger in and pulled out a mine worker's clay smoking pipe. This small but significant event made me think more about the people who went before us than almost anything else. What was life like then? Certainly a different way of living! There were a number of little incidents like this, little leather pouches for carrying candles, there were no caving/miner's helmets like ours; the actual space in many areas to actually swing a pick-axe, they must have scraped the skin off their knuckles on so many occasions. Events like this helped us divers feel that each trip was really worthwhile. I won't talk so much about our penultimate trip Mole, as you did so much for us, on all the others ones.

Thanks again Mole from Cotswold 332 Branch British Sub-Aqua Club.

If you ever want a dip under water then give us a ring.

Nigel Potts.

(It is thanks to people like Mole who are prepared to do the difficult job of taking visitors and beginners underground. Without this type of dedication, we may well be short of a few new members – Dave Tuffley)

Liability Insurance for Cavers George Price

You may have read in the caving press about charges to the way cavers purchase 3rd party insurance. For those who haven't below is a brief outline and also how the committee feel we should move forward.

Reasons for change

The basic need for changes in the way caving insurance is administered comes about as a result of two underlying factors. Firstly, the cost of insurance has risen substantially over the last few years and looks to rise substantially again on renewal in October (£10 per head as a rough figure).

Secondly, changes in the way the BCRA and NCA are structured, aimed at producing a single unified caving body, means that it is more appropriate for the new national body to be responsible for running the national caving insurance scheme. The proposed changes are a major step in the establishment of a new national body, the British Caving Association.

Future Arrangements – clubs and individuals

From this autumn insurance will be sold to individuals rather than clubs. As a result people who are members of more than one club will pay only once for their cover. It will be up to individuals to purchase their insurance direct from the new national scheme, **subject to their club policy**. Each individual will be issued with a membership card, which they can use to prove they are insured.

Of course, it will be still possible for clubs to purchase insurance on behalf of their members, if they choose to do so. This would involve a lot more administration as the club will be making an application on behalf of each individual in the club, instead of for a block of members as they do currently.

Clubs will need to think in terms of insuring themselves against liability arising out of their own events, projects, workshops, training procedures, publications etc. The club premium will also cover officers in the course of their duties, non-club volunteers who engage in club activities that do not involve going underground. Small numbers of people who are not full members of the club but participate in underground activities will also be covered. This will ensure cover for prospective members on underground trips.

The above has been discussed at length and the feeling of the committee (at the moment) is that the club administers the purchase of the insurance on behalf of our members with the option of members to purchase their own if they wish to do so. Persons purchasing their own insurance must provide proof of insurance before joining/ renewing their membership. By doing this we can ensure that all our members are covered. The present insurance cover has been extended to the end of October so by the AGM we should be able to give you the details (ie the cost) and how the new insurance scheme is to be run.

Dave Tuffley – I wish to add to George's article that the Access Agreement with Forest Enterprise, through FODCCAG, insists that **all persons going underground** must have a suitable third party liability insurance with a minimum coverage of £2 million. If you think you can get away without paying for **any insurance** then think again !!!! You will not get away with that and FE will insist that you will be banned from going underground in the Forest of Dean – **THIS IS NOT AN IDLE THREAT ISSUED BY THEM.**

Spring Fever Extensions in Miss Graces Lane Cave.

Hearty thanks to Rob Davies and Descent for publishing his article in issue no.168, on the ins and outs of the use of the Testo 405 air velocity testing meter in cave exploration. The article was excellent on all accounts, leaving no doubt in my mind that it would be worth investing in one. It took several months to discover a cost effective source, but once it arrived we wasted little time in putting it to the test. A brief trip into Miss Graces Lane Cave testing a few of the easiest to get to prospects gave a collection of interesting results. One surprise was a positive reading in the top of the choke at the end of the original 12 metres of small north passage we found at the base of the 40 foot ladder. A location we had tested using traditional methods on numerous occasions, but it had never proved conclusive.

Steve Simpson and I soon returned to pop the single large boulder filling top of the passage. Once cleared this revealed a 6 inch layer of compacted mud above, picking this out to exposed more hanging rocks. Shining a 4 LED torch up between a gap, the light skimmed one side wall the rest of the light was lost to blackness.

Telephone calls were made to all the members of the digging team, with news that a break through may occur. The next day, Sunday 23 March, a group of 4 returned armed with a long poking bar. Brief consultation concurred that John Mallabone was the most expendable member present, so he bravely probed the hanging choke. Within half an hour John and gravity had dropped enough to enable him to make a committing squeeze up into a chamber 6m wide 12m long and 6m high with three open passages leading of. The application of a lump hammer from above on the choked boulders eased the squeeze, allowing Steve and Rachel Mayo slightly easier access.

We wondered off along the largest 8m high passage, soon arriving at another chamber 10m in diameter with a dome roof, a large passage continued straight on, and another even bigger one lured us to the left, this we followed encountering numbers junctions, rifts, passages and chambers. Eventuality we found another large dome roof junction, but on this occasion our excitement was soon damped when we realised we had completed a round trip and were only rediscovering the same dome roofed junction we had already discovered.

After 3 hours of exploration and an estimated 300m of new cave, we decided to exit leaving large open passage to come back to on another occasion when the missing members of the original digging team could share the on go explorations.

The next trip revealed more large passage and chambers heading North. Chris Nurden found a branch off to the West, at the end of which Dan Taylor spotted a link leading down to a series of rifts and tall fault passage heading North South. Further trips have expanded the complex array of rifts and passages.

All the easy open passage we have spotted so far has been followed, but harder pushes and anything that needs digging that would take more than a few minutes by hand have been put on hold while we catch up with the survey work. We remain confident that the final survey statistics of what has been explored to date will raise the total cave length from 340m to over 1 ½ kms.

Jan Karvik.

Otter Hole unspun Roger Bailey

Dave Tuffley - After July's cave rescue in Otter Hole, where Laura Trowbridge fell and fractured her pelvis whilst filming a cave safety film (!!), various stories emerged in caving circles and in the press of just how and when the cave was first discovered.

Roger and Laurance Bailey, several of the founding members of this club and both foremost in the discovery and subsequent exploration of this fabulous cave, have decided to put pen to paper and give us a true version of its discovery, mainly to dismiss the incorrect, or maybe rather selective stories that they feel were being bandied around at the time of the feeding frenzy of the local and national press and television coverage of the rescue.)

Local History

The BCRA Transactions volume 6, Number 4 of December 1979 gives a brief history of the opening of Otter Hole. However, the following definitive history is based on Laurance's digging notes, written within twelve hours of them occurring, giving a blow by blow account of the opening of the cave. Also, information which came to light in 2000, is included. It is prompted by the increasingly erratic, or "spun" accounts of the development of the Forest of Dean into a caving area in its own right. It is sad to reveal some of it, but we have had nearly thirty years of this nonsense.

In the early Seventies Dave Parker, then a fellow member, approached Laurance and myself and told us of a small cave he had been shown on the banks of the Wye, near St Arvans, by George Gardener a local man. The cave is just above high water mark and had a strong resurgence exposed downstream when the tide was out. It had a good draught at times with the air moving through a tight bedding plane. Apparently it was known to the locals as "Otters Hole" as these animals were believed to live in it.

Dave had tried to get G.S.S. members to dig it but no one was interested. One founder member had been heard to remark "It's only cracks and fissures anyway." Oops! I believe Dave had also taken Chris Bowen and Roger Solari down but Roger had discounted the possibilities. At the time we were busy building a two storied extension at home and were unable to do any serious caving while that was under way.

By 1974 our time was freeing up and one evening we went down the riverbank with John Elliott, Phil Schwartz and Heather McDonald to view the prospects. We got to the entrance and there was a good draught emerging from the bedding plane or any hole or crevice you looked at. From a small amount of debris and broken stal' we see that some lump hammer work had been done to the edge of the bedding plane. Not what you could describe as "Four years of digging". To crack the way on needed some careful thought, chemical persuasion and hard work we said, and being in the good old days then, we had it all and decided to start on it after our holiday.

Being rained off early from a not perfect Pembrokeshire Laurance and I got back down to the cave and decided on a new approach to deepening the bedding plane which looked very solid and instead to drive though on the lowest level we could as the rock there looked more amenable to "plaster charges". We prepared our way by "removing" a large flake and a lump of rock blocking the way down. We then recruited Phil Schwartz and tried to get Dave P. involved but he never turned up at the rendezvous and after several episodes of wasting valuable hours we gave up on him. He did turn up once when we had packed up and were coming away and once

on one evening with Gordon Burch to clear blasting debris which was put exactly where we told them not to put it.

In the meantime we had noticed that somebody was working on the bedding plane, we thought this must a local group waking up to the possibilities. It was in fact Roy Bennett and two others from B.E.C. Roy had spotted the cave resurgence some time before by studying the riverbank with binoculars from the Wyntors Leap area. He had kept the information to himself for a considerable time before getting his digging gang together. There is a lesson here!

Laurance, Phil and myself carried on with our drivage, and very soon with being there for hours at a time, we were struck with how the draught literally switched on and off depending on the state of the tide. The only answer was that some way in there was a tidal sump!

After six weeks of hard work and defiantly not four years, we saw we were about to crack the entrance after another charge. As the "upper team" was not interfering with our work, which we felt they must have known about, we decided to risk delaying our breakthrough for a week to try yet again to get Dave with us for the forthcoming event. Gordon Burch was tasked to get Dave dragged out of Bottom Cottage to be available for the following weekend.

Came the day, Saturday the 14th of September 1974 and the four of us, checking that the rival diggers were still having a hard time we laid a charge, cleared the rubble and prepared to see what we had entered.(we had taken to borrow the other teams bucket to collect plastering mud, we had always replaced it in the position we found it but this evening we forgot - more of this later)

We dropped down the other side of the bedding plane and found ourselves in a low passage which got lower and looked restricted in front. However after some chisel/hammer & spade work and got through. A short way on we reached a corner and looking right saw a substantial passage leading away, **THIS WAS IT!**

Pressing on for some distance I looked at the open way forward and how far we had come and said to the others "This is the best thing we have done". Dave then sat down and said "I'm a founder member of G.S.S." and started to list the members of the aforesaid Society who should now take over. O gawd! I thought this is going to be Aggen Allwedd all over again (ask Hereford Caving Club about that). Talk of a similar nature continued to the point where we stopped our initial exploration, was sustained back to the entrance and halfway back up the hill at which point we said "Look Dave, we sorted out how to tackle the job and did the work and nobody from G.S.S. has lifted a finger towards it or wanted to! We want two weeks to see what was further along the unexplored open passage we have just left before any other group is involved". This was agreed too and we left it at that.

However on the following Monday evening a large party from the other side of Westgate Bridge, breaking caving etiquette in a big way, rushed down to our discovery. Here they met Roy Bennett and Co who had just found their missing bucket close to a "Large Hole" to quote a B.E.C. newsletter . Some "conversation" took place and some of the party went in but were soon stopped by water left by a high tide.

The Saturday of the breakthrough was the last time we saw Dave in the cave, even after repeated requests for him to join us.

We had no problem in having Roy Bennett with us in exploring this great cave, we thought he deserved it and our trust was rewarded. He always pulled his weight and never let us down in any way!

In October 2000 Greg Jones showed me an E-mail he had received from Martin Courtenay-Blake who now lives near Edinburgh but had lived in St Arvans until he was eighteen, and in those days was enamoured of George Gardener's daughter.

Martin said that towards the end of the Sixties or possibly the early Seventies he had been approached by a couple of chaps in a Land Rover who announced that they were members of our club and were looking for local knowledge about caves in the area. (I did ask around but no one owned up, however in conversation later with Martin he said he had thought again and the mystery two came from Bristol) Being a student of geology and knowing the area extremely well he took them down and showed them the entrances along the riverbank. The two cavers showed great interest to one site which they thought was worth a return visit but they would need blast the entrance to progress further.

After returning from the river bank the cavers asked about any sinks in the area and Martin showed them the Itton sink which was "all was duly noted" and after Martin requested to let him know of anything came of what he had shown them the two departed and Martin never heard of them again.

So summing up:-

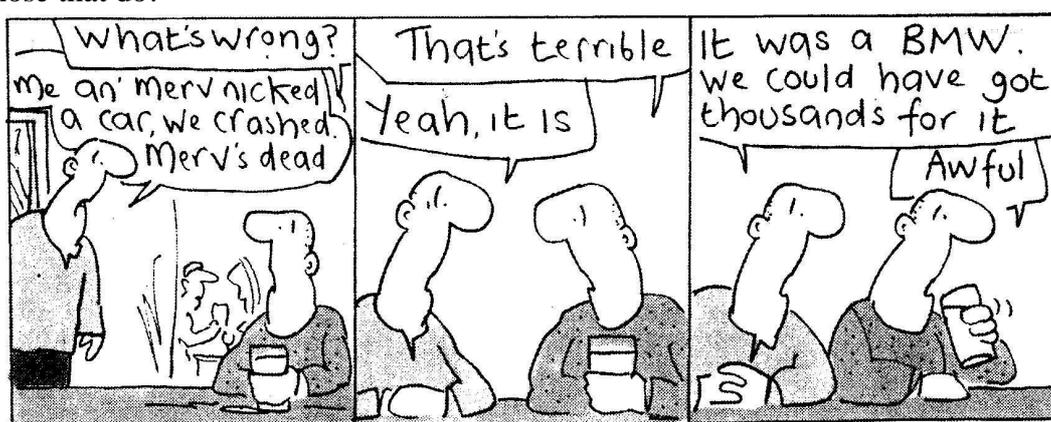
Knowledge of the cave was in the public domain as:-

Locals knew of the entrances along the river bank. One caver, as far as we know, found the entrance. Three of the caving community, as far as we know, were shown it. Therefore it is not possible to say who "found" the cave. The site had not been dug "For four years" and when we started no one was working on the cave which was thus "up for grabs".

R.F.D.C.C. alone opened the cave. No doubt at all, I was there!

As to Slaughter Stream Cave the Forest's other large cave, soon after it was opened I was talking to John Sibley about how he negotiated with the landowner to formalise the permission for access and digging, the final clincher was the fact of the insurance policy the club now had. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's etc" as the Good Book says.

In short, "If you can't make history yourself then don't rewrite the history of those that do!"



RFDCC
MEMBERSHIPSEPT 2003.
 Paid up insured members.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	BAILEY	ROGER & LAWRENCE	ROSE COTTAGE, ASTON CREWS	ROSS-ON-WYE	HFDS	HR9 7LW	01989 750456
2	BAYLISS	PAUL	30 CHURCH RD.	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 2EA	01594 827814
3	BELL	ANDY & ANNE	6 QWAIN PLACES	CYN COED	CARDIFF	CF2 6HN	02920 752189
4	BERRY	JOHN & RICHARD	HARANOVA, CAMOMLIE GREEN	NR COLEFORD	GLOS	GL17 9QA	01594 860581
5	BISHOP	CLARE	FAIRVIEW, LOWER MILKWALL	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7LF	01594 832691
6	BOMFORD	CARL	6 MAIN RD. MILE END	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7BY	01594 810531
7	BOUNDS	RICHARD (01291 689780)	THE BUNGALOW	TIDENHAM CHASE	CHEPSTOW		01291 689201
8	BOWEN	CHRIS	DOWNEND COTTAGE	HORSLEY	GLOS	GL6 0FF	01453 833719
9	BREAKSPEAR	MIKE	1 SOUTH VIEW	BOX, Nr CORSHAM	WILTS	SN14 9LP	01225 742179
10	BROADMAN	LADI	PENWANT BARN, ELLWOOD GREEN	NR COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7LZ	01594 832023
11	BROWNING	TERRY	9, MELBOURNE DRIVE	STONEHOUSE	GLOS	GL10 2PJ	01453 822101
12	CAMERON	CRAIG	ROSE COTTAGE, ORCHARD WAY	BERRY HILL, COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7AQ	01594 834481
13	CASTLE	MALCOLM & HELEN	HILLSIDE, MAYHILL	LONGHOPE	GLOS	GL17 0NP	01452 830368
14	CLARK	ANDY	SUNSHADE COTTAGE	LOWER REDBROOK	MONMOUTH	NP5 4LZ	01600 716970
15	CLEMENTS	COLIN	BELVEDERE, MAY HILL	LONGHOPE	GLOS	GL17 0NP	01452 830982
16	COOK	MALCOLM	42 CHURCH ROAD	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 2EA	01594 825079
17	COURT	DIANA	ROCK HOUSE, BOWENS HILL,	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 8DH	01594 835749
18	CROWTHER	ANDY & MARY JACKSON	5 DOWN HATHERLEY LANE	DOWN HATHERLEY	GLOUCESTER	GL2 9PT	01452 730367
19	DAVIES	ANTHONY	WEST WINDS, THE SCOWLES	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16	01594 810874
20	ELLIOT	JOHN & GLEN TITCOMBE	2 ROSE COTTAGE, FARM RD.	Ruardean Woodside, Ruardean,	GLOS	GL17	01594 543881
21	FEBRY	MAURICE	WYN PARRE, 18 OKUS ROAD	CHARLTON KINGS	CHELTENHAM	GL53 8DU	01242 242160
22	GARDNER	ROGER	50 VICTORIA ROAD	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 8DU	01594 834113
23	GARMAN	BROTHER ALLAN	ST JOHN BOSCO HOUSE	121A Reading Rd. Farnborough	HAMPSHIRE	GU14 6NZ	01252 554300
24	GRAHAM	COLIN	43 COVERHAM RD, BERRY HILL	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16	01594 836368
25	HALL	SEBASTIAN	FERNDALE, MARSH LANE	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7WA	01594 833063
26	HARP	ANDREW & NICOLA BAILEY	BEDDIS COTTAGE, NEW RD.	PILLOWELL	GLOS	GL15 4QZ	01594 564898
27	HARRIES	DAVID	BEAR COTTAGE, SEVERN STREET	NEWNHAM	GLOS	GL14 1BA	07778 358426
28	HAY	JIM	PROSPECT HOUSE	RUARDEAN WOODSIDE	GLOS	GL17 9XW	01594 542068
29	HEMMING	BARRIE	CHARLTON VILLA, EVENLODE RD	MORETON-IN-MARSH	GLOS	GL56 0HU	01608 650603
30	HEMMING	TIM	SUNNYDALE, LANSDOWN	BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER	CHELTENHAM	GL54 2AL	01451 810996
31	HINE	JOHN	THE GROTTOGE, 2 CULLIS LANE	MILE END, COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7QF	01594 833217
32	JACKSON	STEVE & JACKIE	BELL HOUSE, 113 HIGH STREET	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 2TB	01594 826537
33	JACKSON	DAVID	23 REDWIND WAY	LONGLEVENS	GLOUCESTER	GL2 0XD	01452 522481
34	JONES	GREG (mobile 07974 008519)	41 BUCKSHAFT ROAD	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 3DS	01594 827334
35	KARVIK	-JAN	1 ELMDALE	CHEPSTOW	MONMOUTH	NP16 7LD	01291 625741
36	KOUBA	ROBERT	5 CASTLEFORD GARDENS	TUTSHILL, CHEPSTOW	MONMOUTH	NP16	01291 627882
37	LEVINS	GRAHAM	1 STONECROP CLOSE, Broadfield	CRAWLEY	WEST SUSSEX	RH11 9EP	01293 510567
38	LOUGHER	ANDY & KAREN BUCKLEY	4 VALLEY ROAD	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14	01594 824094
39	MARDEN	TONY	UPPER DOREY'S MILL	EDGE, Nr STROUD	GLOS	GL6 6NF	01452 812459
40	MAY	MICHAEL	3 THE BARRACKS, PARKEND	LYDNEY	GLOS	GL14 4HR	01594 560194
41	MAYO	ANDY & RACHAEL	BATWELL FARM	SHIRENEWTON	CHEPSTOW	NP16 6RX	01291 641837
42	MOORE	JUDY	HOLLY COTTAGE, ELLWOOD	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7LZ	01594 832683
43	NEGUS	NICK	THE BARN, TEWKES ROAD	THE LEIGH	GLOUCESTER	GL19 4AQ	01242 680767
44	NEWMAN	DAVE	MORELLO HOUSE, GLEBE ROAD	NEWENT	GLOS	GL18	01531 821668
45	NURDEN	CHRIS	71 SEVERN AVENUE	TUTSHILL, CHEPSTOW	GLOS	NP16 7EE	01291 620145
46	PARRY	STEVE	24A LITTLEDEAN HILL ROAD	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 2BE	01594 829585
47	PRICE	GEORGE & SIMON	EAST LODGE, GLOUCESTER ST	NEWENT	GLOS	GL18 1AE	01531 821743
48	PRICE	ARTHUR	FROCESTER COURT	Nr STONEHOUSE	GLOS	GL10 3NT	01453 823250
49	PRIDDIS	DAVE	NORVIEW, RING FENCE	WOOLASTON COMMON	LYDNEY, GLOS	GL15 6NX	01594 528194
50	ROBERTS	HOWIE	6 SUNNYMEADE CLOSE	DRYBROOK	GLOS	GL17 9HB	01594 541130
51	SCHWARZ	PHIL	4 THE BARRACKS, PARKEND	LYDNEY	GLOS	GL15 4HR	01594 563292
52	SEYMOUR	CLIFF	ROSE LEA, HILLERSLAND LANE	CHRISTCHURCH, COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16 7NU	01594 832717
53	SHAPTER	COLIN mobile 07786551959	NUTWOOD, 81C WEST END	STREET	SOMERSET	BA16 0LQ	01458 441602
54	SMITH	MARK	2 BURTON COTTAGES	JUBILEE RD, MITCHELDEAN	GLOS	GL17	01594 544170
55	TAYLOR	DANIEL	81 GOLDFINCH CLOSE	CALDICOT	MONMOUTH	NP26 5BW	01291 424514
56	TAYLOR	PAUL	9, MASSEY ROAD	GLOUCESTER	GLOS	GL1 4LG	01452 505673
57	TWIFFLEY	DAVID	30 COOMB DRIVE, BUCKSHAFT RD	CINDERFORD	GLOS	GL14 3EF	01594 824343
58	TWISSEL	LES	9, FAR WESTRIP	STROUD	GLOS	GL6 6HD	01453 765400
59	WASKETT	GARRY	38 STOCKWELLS	MORETON-IN-MARSH	GLOS	GL56 0HQ	01608 651808
60	WHITE	MALCOLM	10 WESTOVER COURT	CHURCHDOWN	GLOS	GL3 3AA	01452 859202
61	WHITING	BERNIE	HILLVIEW, HANGERBERRY HILL	LYDBROOK	GLOS	GL17 9QS	01594 860094
62	WRIGHT	JONATHAN	BRIAR BANK, WHITECLIFF	COLEFORD	GLOS	GL16	01594 839133
63	WRIGHT	RAY	CLEARWELL CAVES	CLEARWELL, Nr COLEFERD	GLOS	GL16	01594 832535
64		AS OF 1.9.03					