

NORTHERN CAVERN AND MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY

Autumn News Letter

1961

July 2nd. PIKEDAW MINE, Malham Moor. - MEET REPORT.

This meet was well attended, although a little late of starting due to waiting for possible late arrivals. D.Platt continued his hunt for the rare and elusive, while several members of the party searched for a missing member of the team with eventual success.

August 11th to 20th. CORNWALL. - R.S.Harker, K.Foster, and C.Wade visited the St Just and Redruth areas. The party was sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Belcham for many years managing director of the South Crofty mines. Mr.Belcham had been very helpful to members of the society when they visited the area the previous year.

The party later visited Bakers Pit Cave, Buckfastleigh, Devon, through the kindness of Mr.Reed. Further north on the return journey the party was entertained by the Peak District Mines Historical Society who ably provided beds and breakfasts and conducted the party through three neighbouring mines.

September 3rd. GILL HEADS MINE, Appletrewick. - This meet was well supported, but the result of the expedition was generally disappointing as exploration terminated after a short distance out of the sight of daylight. However, this lack of distance under the ground was compensated for by several exciting incidents. One such incident was when with great dexterity a projecting railway line was lassoed as it protruded from a stack of deads. Once roped and dragged across the hole, the rail was traversed tightrope fashion by members of the party (with one exception), and the ladder belayed to about three feet of projecting rail beyond the bridge. This traverse, when lifelined was more hair-raising than dangerous, until surveyor J.M.Dickinson encumbered with his paraphernalia, (dictary mislaid), and not realising the existence of the life line, or that someone was still on the ladder, which caused the "whole affair" to vibrate in a fearsome manner.

Exploration ended shortly afterwards and the party then transferred activities to the other side of the valley. Gill Heads Mine was most successfully worked for fluorspar in the early 1920's when we understand it even went as far as America from this mine. There have been other and much more recent ventures at this mine, all having a varied success.

On the other side of the valley from the above mine an interesting old fissure in the form of a stoped out working was descended. This vein working was descended in two 45 foot pitches and from the point of view features has very little to commend it. The three men who made the descent "were a tight fit" at the junction of the pitches, so John Brown a member of the group who loaned the society the narrow metal ladder for this descent; returned to grass. As he reached the head of the pitch the piton securing the ladder pulled out, (the vice president suggested that this might happen even as the party was descending) Brown rapidly descended to where Caleb Wade was vainly attempting to hide under his

helmet. Fortunately John Brown was well held on the lifeline and fell in an upright position, so that he was able to jam, back and foot, in the fissure, from which position he was retrieved unhurt.

August 27th. Mongo Gill Caverns, Greenhow Hill. A large party went down the cavern and upon their return five members of the party set off for Bolton Gill in order to descend the shaft. As the party struggled up the hillside there came the sound, familiar but far from friendly, that of stones falling down a shaft. When the party arrived at the shaft they found two farmers intent on filling the shaft with the small stones to be found around the shaft top. The party explained that a shaft about 10 feet in diameter and over 100 feet in depth would take a long time to fill; hence they had a rest from their labours and watched the team go into action. The shaft was disappointing, as it only proved to be of about 120 feet in depth; however it provided light entertainment. At about 30 feet below the surface, it was possible to leave the shaft by swinging into a small level; a rather more difficult act was the trapeze act to return to the ladder. The party did however return safely, withdrew equipment and left the shaft. As the sun sank slowly in the west and the party wended its way down Hebden Gill, there came to one's ears those muted sounds which informed us that the agricultural technicians had returned to their self imposed task.

"THE LEAD SMELTING MILLS OF THE YORKSHIRE DALES". Although rumour has it that our vice president's book has "banked" his printers, (rumours especially prevalent on Greenhow Hill, Newcastle upon Tyne and Maryport, this is definitely not the case as the firm is entirely rebuilding its premises. Support is still coming in, only this last week from Athens (re old mines compared to those at Laurion in Greece) and from La Plata in the Argentine. A few months should see this long effort in the hands of the many supporters. ---- It is still not too late to secure your copy (and your name in the list of subscribers) at 60/- post paid as a member of the society, instead of the normal pre-publication price of 80/- a copy. Do not miss this last opportunity; contact R.T.Clough, Stoneleigh, Utley, Keighley, Yorkshire. Payment is only to be made when you receive your copy.

General Field Reports, and "activities of a numerous nature!"

On Sunday August 6th. members visited Hell Hole near Appletreewick. Some members attempted to survey the cavern, whilst others explored it. The surveyors however soon abandoned their task due to their relative inexperience in the noble art. When the survey party caught up with the exploration party (under the leadership of Roger Nichols), the 65 foot pitch was already rigged and all that was required was a man to descend. Deciding who should descend proved the most difficult part of the day as the pitch was exceedingly wet. Excuses ranged from "gas lights go out under water" to "I've just put my clean underclothes on". Eventually one member was coerced into the job and begun the descent, a descent punctuated by anguish as various parts of his anatomy became wet. On arriving at a pile of ladder, he stepped off the ladder only to find that the ladder was on a ledge, and that he was standing

on "nothing" halfway down the pitch. On reaching the bottom he looked around without untying the lifeline and then returned to the surface much the wetter. The tackle was not untied, but was threaded out of the cave as it was.

After a brief rest on the road by the car it was decided that we should descend the old shaft nearby; the one having railway sleepers across it, situated near the corner of the New Road where it joins with the green lane to Fancarl Top. The sleepers were removed and 100 foot of ladder was lowered down the shaft, to an audience of several trippers. One member descended and reported the oval shaped stone lining to the shaft to run to a depth of 25 feet, then the shaft ran through good solid limestone, or so it appeared. The oval stone ringing was not supported by timbers as in some shafts, but by the solid rock, which is perhaps safer. Much of the shaft wall was covered with stalagmite cascades in shades varying from white to reddish brown. At a depth of about 90 feet the descent ceased, not on account of the party having reached the bottom of the shaft, but because the stench from the decaying animal matter was too much for the sensitive nose of the explorer. No levels were seen running from the bottom of the shaft. The depth of the shaft to the dead animals was found to be 95 feet. The surface onlookers were amazed to see our member come back to the surface alive and agreed unanimously that it was not the sport for them.

Thus ended a great day in the field so far as the participants were concerned, but the society as a whole did not gain much information, apart from gaining a description of the shaft given above.

On Bank Holiday Monday, the 7th August a party of members attended Hebden Sports, (Hebden Races as one member insisted on calling them). An enjoyable afternoon was spent watching the events and participating in some. Some members even took part in the Ladies Novelty Race. Members also took part in the obstacle race, a very strenuous race indeed. One member came third putting the Society's winnings at 7/6. The climax of the day was the tug - o - war in which the "pot-holers" as we were called, came second. There were four teams in this event; Grassington, Kettlewell, the Hebden and us. The society team beat Hebden by two pulls to nil, Grassington beat Kettlewell by two pulls to nil, but Grassington beat us, by two pulls to one after a great struggle. Our total winnings were nevertheless 25/6, which we spent in The Clarendon. On the whole a very enjoyable day.

TRANSACTIONS OF THE SOCIETY, 1960-I. This the society's learned star of brightness, has the Hon. Editor states received very high praise on account of it's good production, clarity and general appearance. Work is now soon to commence on No.2 so will members who have anything to tell the world of learning please send well worded contributions to the Editor, Stoneleigh, Utley, Keighley. Several important contributions are already promised, including one on a practically untouched subject; The Heraldry of Mining.

BRITISH TRANSPORT COMMISSION FILM UNIT visits Greenhow Hill.

The above memorable visit took place during mid August when several members assisted in the making of a short film dealing with potholâng. In the very short time available members were recruited from far and wide, so as to make this small interlude of epic character.

George Blenkhorn will be delighted to hear that North Pot is 200 feet deep and Len Cook astounded to find that the pot connects with Reindeer Cave. (according to the modified script.) For many years much work has been done to extend Stump Cross Caverns, and many theories expounded on possible connections and extensions throughout the caves 8000 feet of passageways; route finding always requiring care to take one to to ones final destination. To show this on the film, a full scale conference was drawn up, and by far the most difficult route to follow appeared to be the one from Keld Farm to the Miners Arms.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

The Cave Photographic Group, are to present an Exhibition of Cave Photography and Exhibits of Geological and Archaeological interest at the VICTORIA HALL, SHIPLEY, BRADFORD. October 27th - 31st. 1961. Open daily, admission free. Exact times of opening not known.

Dr.Arthur Raistrick will lecture at a meeting of The Yorkshire Archaeological Society at their headquarters, 10, Park Place, Leeds, 1 on Saturday morning, December 2nd. at 11 a.m. The title of the lecture will be "Lead Mining in the Yorkshire Pennines".

The draw of raffle tickets now on sale by the Cave Rescue Organisation will take place at the Ashfield Hotel, Settle, on Saturday, 16th December. The winners will be notified by post.

GENERAL BIOLOGICAL AND OTHER NEWS. D.Platt, Hon.Biological Recorder.

The last batch of specimens received by the Hon.Biological Recorder, are now at the British Museum, the specimen list now at Keld Farm will be brought up to date on the return of these specimens. The B.M. are very busy at present involving work on the Arachnid Order (spiders to most of us) so that some delay is to be expected in the return of the specimens.

The following sites have yeilded specimens to the eight members of the society who have been busy in this field:- Gill Fields Mine, Sam Oon Level, Stump Cross Caverns, Goyden Pot, Eglin's Hole, New Cave (Trollers Gill), North Pot, Silverdale Cave, Swinnergill Mine,(Swaledale) some 28 different types being collected.

Mongo Gill Caverns have not yet yielded anything, J.Holden and myself have both seen several specimens in the pool past Bear Pit,mainly Asopoda and Asellus, but these appear to have disappeared since the water table flooded the passage. Members visiting this cave are earnestly asked to observe and collect in this area.

The green growth at Goyden Pot was observed to be sycamore by "yours truly" D.P. Ann Mason Williams of C.R.G. has noted a similar occurrence in Wales (plane tree) and would like further samples of soil and plant structures in sterile containers which she herself will supply. We hope to help her in this matter shortly. Will members please note that an excellent supply of collecting equipment is now available at Keld Farm. (The small collecting bottles can be carried in ones helmet without hardly knowing it.)

BIOLOGICAL MEETS. - These are held every first Sunday of the month at Stump Cross Caverns. The purpose of the meets is to study underground fauna, and habits thereof in this cavern as far as the stream passage. Fellow workers are asked to help in this project which will run parallel with the one now running by Mr. P. Schofield of the Northern Speleological Group at White Scar Caverns near Ingleton. White Scar has so far yielded 10 types of COLLEMBOLA and the very rare BATHYNELLA NATANS.

The pH determination to fine limits of water samples taken from caves.

Mr. A.R. Nicholls has solved a pressing problem but still continues with his investigations. Water samples are to be collected in clean bottles (samples not less than 5c.c.) and left at Keld Farm or sent direct to D.P. who will send them on.

FLORA - Fungi can now be accepted in small amounts. Only sterile tools and containers to be used for collection, specimens to be passed on quickly to the recorder. Surface flora if noted in detail will be recorded. ---- Colour Slide. - An excellent colour slide has been made of the Pyramidal Orchis submitted by J. Holden. Slides or true colour photographs can be obtained from D.P. at 3/- each.

Northern Exploration Group meets.

This group often hires a large motor coach for its outings and it would be of considerable help to the group if members of the society wishing to attend N.E.G. meets would use the coach and thereby help to defray expenses. A tackle fee is also payable. It will breed ill feeling if members going on N.E.G. meets arrive in their cars with the coach half empty. (It makes one wonder if there would not be easier to go on ones bicycle.) D.P. is willing to act as a "go between" on N.E.G. meets provided the fare is sent to him with the booking, or 5/- deposit on booking.

X. CRAVEN MOOR SURVEY, Stump Cross area Greenhow Hill. M. Dickinson

Althou the work is a long way from completion, the underground survey programme has been carried out. On the surface the main triangulation network has been laid down; the work has taken much longer than anticipated, but with continued good weather it is hoped to complete the survey by Christmas or early new year. A very accurate survey of the Show Cave and No.3 Shaft has been made. The final co-ordinated plotting shows that No.3 Shaft is 46 feet from the final boulder fall in the Show Cave. A section through the Show Cave shows us that we can expect No.3 Shaft to reach cave roof level after another 15 feet.

Unfortunately there have been delays in "digging" for the last few weeks culminating in a broken down winch. It is hoped to remedy the matter in the very near future.

Field work - In order to increase our field programme next year especially with regard to the recording and mapping of caves and old mining sites, it is intended to run a short course on elementary surveying during the coming winter. The trouble is at present in that the society, although it possesses a very remarkable collection of surveying instruments, there are very few members who can use them.

If you are interested in learning the rudiments of surveying or are already experienced in this work and feel that you could be of some help, please contact the Hon. Recorder. The course will not be run unless sufficient people appear to be interested. This proposed training scheme will be carried out at Keld Farm with practical work underground and around Greenhow Hill. For those living too far away to attend on Greenhow, the course may be taken by correspondence, if desired.

A D D I T I O N S T O R E C O R D S O F T H E S O C I E T Y .

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| 86 | Subterranean Passages of the River Nidd. | 25 inches to 1 mile. |
| F87 | Lower Ceirog Cave, North Wales. | |
| F88 | Afon Meirchion Cave, " " | . |
| F89 | Cefn Cave, " " | . |
| F90 | Monastair Cliff System, Northern Ireland. | |
| F91 | Aghinrawn Cave, " " | |
| F92 | Pollnabrock Caves " " | . |
| F93 | Cloolagheen Swallet, " " | . |
| 94 | Ogof Agen Allweid (C.R.G. No. 10) | |
| 95 | Stump Cross Caverns (Show Cave) NCMRS. | plan and section, 1:250. |
| F96 | Traligill Tree Cave, Sutherland, NCMRS. | |
| F97 | Allt Van Vamh Cliff Caves, " " | . |
| F98A | Cnoc Nan Uamh System " " | , plan. |
| F98B | " " " " " " | , section. |
| F99 | Traligill Lower Cave, | |
| 100 | Higher Ground of Hebden Moor Mining Company, (Varley 1865), | plan. |
| 101 | Lower " " " " " " (" 1866), | " . |

R E P O R T S (Field).

The following reports have been received from various members, who are to be congratulated on their efforts. It is hoped that more members will acquire the habit of sending in reports of their activities. REPORTS :- Swaledale, Caves of Sutherland, Gasegale Gill Trial, Loweswater, Mosedale, Loweswater, Beckside, Buttermere, Dunmail Level, Grasmere, Ruthwaite Mine, Ireby, Cumberland, Robin Hood Mine, Bassen-thwaite, Cumberland.

LIGHTING - The White Rose Pothole Club have a number of Edison Lighting Sets, and the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue have CEAG sets for sale at about 20/- each, supplies are limited, but a few may remain unsold by the time one reads this newsletter.