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The Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club

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## Welcome

to the first issue of **Below**, the new look Club newsletter. It has been decided to produce **Below** on a quarterly basis, so a range of material about Club activities, caving and mining etc. can be included.

This issue is quite large as we have included one or two items, which are intended to bring Club members up to-date on Club activities.

Like any club newsletter or magazine, the overall success of it depends upon members contributions. So, if you have any snippets of news, articles about mine or cave visits, items of general interest etc., why not jot them down and send/give them to Neal Rushton or Kelvin Lake - see the back page for their addresses.

## Gas Dangers

When exploring underground cavities we are all aware of the dangers from falling rock, bad walls and false floors hence the expensive lengths we go to, to buy the correct safety clothing etc. However, because the Club mainly explores old metal mines, slate mines and caves rather than coal and tin mines the dangers of gas, be it fire, black, sink, or stink damp, are often thought a low risk. A recent incident reported in "Descent" Magazine occurred at Cwmystwyth Lead Mines Taylor's

Level (OS. ref: SN 8088 7499) involving the Aberystwyth Caving Club and highlights the danger of 'bad' air.

The Club was digging through a roof fall in August of last year. After breaking through the fall a slight 'sulphurous tasting' outward draft was felt from the blind workings. Despite waiting 24 hrs. before exploring the workings, they encountered problems when they reached a small roof-fall 200 feet from the dig. The first person over this fall became unconscious within a minute or two. Two others close to the fall showed signs of apathy towards the situation. Luckily other members of the group were able to move in, and evacuate their affected colleagues.

The theory behind the accident is that, due to bacterial action on the iron and organic materials, all available oxygen was used up. The resultant carbon dioxide dissolved in the mine water, leaving a nitrogen rich atmosphere.

If you breathe almost pure nitrogen your body is unable to produce carbon dioxide this is your body's actual stimulus to breathe consequently, you cease breathing and die in a matter of minutes.

Unlike atmospheres containing carbon dioxide - which induce panting - oxygen depleted air gives **NO** warning !

# Shropshire Rope Trick

This time last year if you had mentioned the phrase S.R.T. to most Club members they would have thought it was a brand of toothpaste. However since the Club trip to Coniston, SRT (Single Rope Technique) has become a popular activity amongst the more active Club members.

Some members see the technique as a means of avoiding tricky struggles on electron ladders, others as just a bit of fun and another means of getting in and out of mines.

To help members learn the ropes or rather rope, the Club has held 3 SRT practice sessions so far, at Madeley Court Centre's climbing wall (2 in April and 1 in May).

All the practices have been well attended - about 10 Club members on each occasion, The added attraction at the May session was the winching of Chris Lucas up and down the wall in the Club stretcher (he survived - just)!

As a result of these sessions about 8 to 10 Club members now possess the full SRT kit i.e.: Ascenders, Descenders, Chest harness, footloops etc. All are at various degrees of 'ability'.

The curious thing that has emerged from these practices is that when 'prussiking' (going up the rope) members with the greater 'avoir du pois' are prone to

adopt a laid-back - almost horizontal approach, no matter how tight the chest harness is fitted, while 'lesser' mortals remain vertical !

Everyone who has attended these sessions has found them very useful and the Club is bound to organise more in the future - although preferably in the dark, so the ground remains 'hidden'.

Kelvin Lake

## A bit of rope . . .

Most climbing ropes today are Kernmantle ropes. These specially designed ropes, first invented in 1953 by the german company Edelrid, are made of two parts; the "Kern" and the "Mantle" - named in typical german fashion by joining simple words together ( Kern = core and Mantle = cover in English).

The Kern is largely responsible for the dynamic properties, while the Mantle is intended to protect the Kern from abrasion etc.

Edelrid claim that the Kern of their 11mm Classic rope is made from 50,400 threads each 25 microns in diameter. While the Mantle of this rope is made of 2,700 cross-braided threads.

A 40m 11mm Edelrid single rope has more than 3,500 km of thread!

# Clive Rescue Practice

Sunday 12th. June '88

Members present:-

Neal Rushton, Steve Holden,  
Alan Robinson, Edwin Thorpe,  
Chris Lucas, Peter Eggleston,  
Kelvin Lake, John Heathcote,  
Shean Bostock.

Visitor: Ben Harrup

Volunteer:- Dave Lucas

The objective of this practice was to attempt to transport a casualty with a broken leg from a point at the bottom of the sand slope to surface as quickly, safely and authentically as possible.

We were very lucky to have Mr. Dave Lucas as our volunteer, as this allowed Club members to act as a team and experience the situation of rescuing an inexperienced underground explorer totally dependant upon us!

The team left the surface at approximately 10.00 am. John and Steve stopped at the winze to rig a haulage system for the stretcher.

The remainder continued on towards the casualty.

At the sand slope the team was spilt into two equal groups, the first rigging a 2:1 ratio haulage system. While the second group reassured the casualty and secured him in the stretcher.

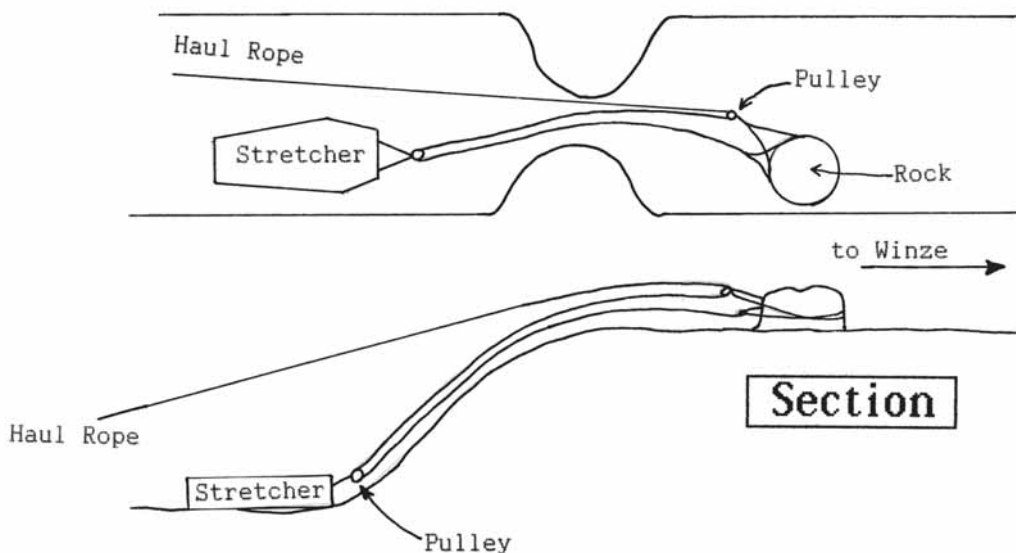
Hauling up the sand slope was difficult, but by one group lifting the stretcher as the other hauled on the rig, it was achieved without a hitch. The ascent would have been virtually impossible without the hauling rig.

Once through the squeeze at the top of the sand slope the stretcher was moved at a steady walk back towards the rubble slope. At the same time the hauling rig was removed.

At the rubble slope it was found necessary to anchor the rear of the stretcher to control the descent and to hand the stretcher between stationary team members,

## Sand Slope

Plan



this caused some problems due to the difference in height of the various team members.

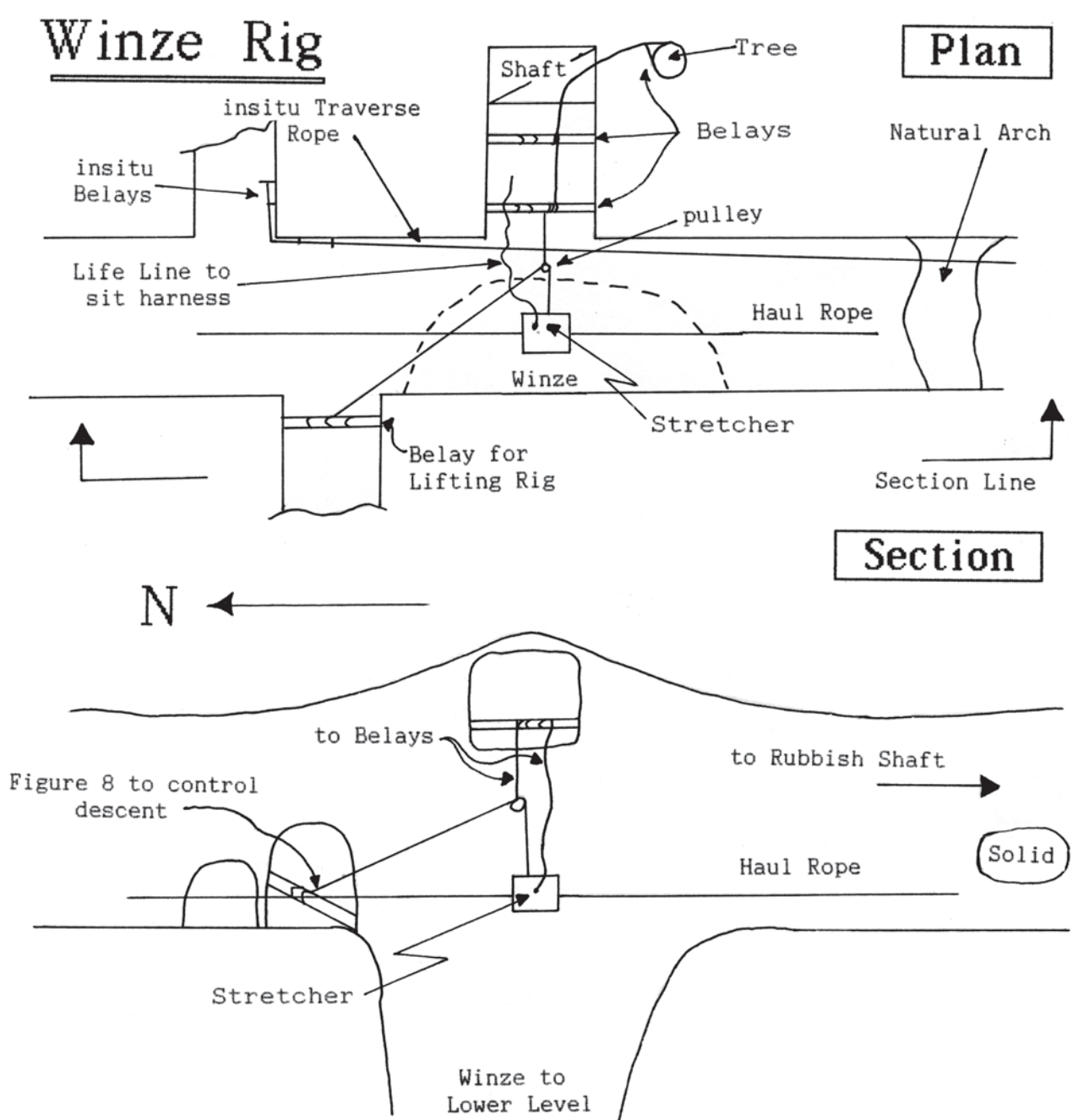
Fatigue was beginning to set in by the time the stretcher reached the winze (2 hours to here), but the teams were able to take a short break while the rig was completed and the stretcher checked. Use was made of the casualty's sit harness to provide a lifeline this is necessary with our stretcher.

The main lift for the stretcher was provided by a pulley secured in the upper level, from where the lifeline was also anchored.

While one team lifted the stretcher, another (on the south side of the winze) pulled it across.

The stretcher was accompanied by John (belayed to the in-situ traverse rope) over the winze, to guide the patients feet around obstacles.

Once successfully over the winze, the stretcher was brought to the rubbish shaft and raised with a 2:1 hauling system. John acted as "guide" when bringing it up the shaft.



The practice was completed in 4 hours.

One or two comments are worth making:-

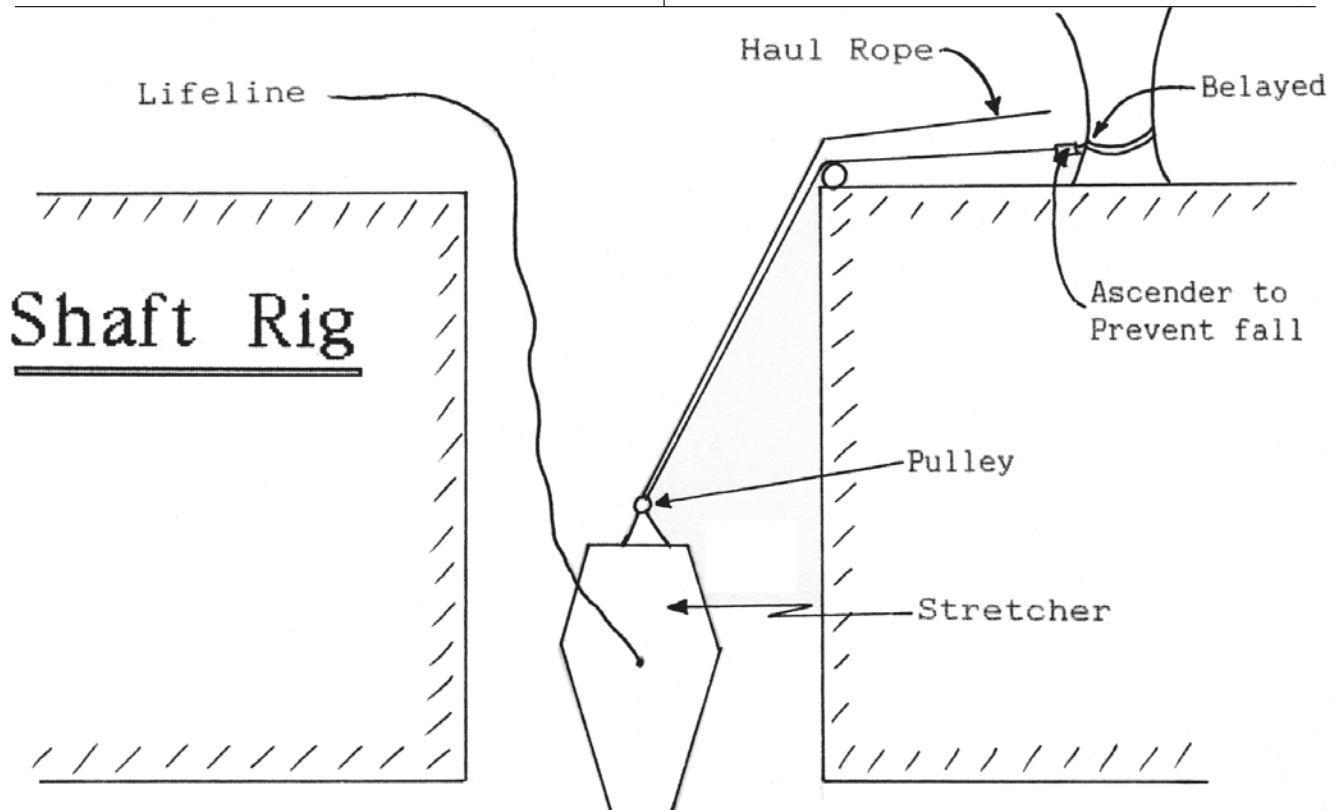
1. The casualty's sit harness must be used as a back-up.

2. In long rescues bound undamaged limbs may become cramped, where possible they should be left free particularly

arms which the casualty can use to 'defend' him/herself!

3. Rigging should be simple, set up quickly and by any team member.

4. It is desirable to have a surface co-ordinator to organise tackle additions, replacement, back-up teams, and the 3 services.



5. Obstructions and sustained injuries must determine the speed and method of moving the stretcher.

This one practice has in **NO** way been sufficient to fulfil our obligation to ourselves and others to be proficient at rescue. It has shown that small teams can successfully complete quite elaborate rescues in very respectable times.

Other practices must follow, further organisation must take place, the true responsibility of the Club **must** be ascertained and acted upon!

In conclusion I must say excellent job was done by all.

Neal Rushton

(Rescue Officer)

\*\*\* In February the slope of the bank supporting Blists Hill Museum village slipped onto Coalport Road affecting 3 museum buildings (the sweet shop, blacksmiths and plasterers shop). It was initially thought that the Washbrook Culvert below this point may have collapsed, as has happened twice before, although it now seems likely that rain, combined with the fact that the buildings were built on the top of a brick and tile waste heap was to blame.

\*\*\* Several other slips have occurred in the roads of the Ironbridge Gorge recently, including near the Free Bridge and at Landslip at Buildwas on the new Ironbridge Bypass. The latter has caused a considerable delay in the opening of this section of the bypass.

\*\*\* A large opencast site at Newdale (by the M54 at the Wellington Junction) is exposing many old workings. They are opencasting to a depth greater than many of the old shallow pits in this area. The site is operated by Shepherd Hill (under licence from the NCB) and covers over 50 acres. It is expected to produce about 250,000 tons of coal.

\*\*\* A £60,000 contract has been let to study the stability, conservation and visitor potential of the Snailbeach Mine. Wardell Armstrong the contractors (Ivor Brown is assisting) called a meeting in the Village Hall on 2nd March 1988 to inform local residents.

\*\*\* During a site inspection at Snailbeach it was noticed that Perkins Level entrance had been filled in, that the caravan office of the Spar works was disintegrating and records blowing about the site. The County Council has served an enforcement notice on a company for removing large volumes of Spar without permission.

\*\*\* A meeting has been held at Grinshill to consider opening a small museum of mining and quarrying in conjunction with the quarrying company.

\*\*\* Grinshill Quarrying and Conservation Committee has been set up to study ways and means of interpreting the quarry site and adjoining areas. Dr. D.Thompson is the Committee Secretary.

\*\*\* Excavation work has recently discovered the possible entrances into the shaft-canal system at Brierly Hill, Coalbrookdale. A shaft has been located of 10 foot diameter, said to be one of the two shafts, each 120 feet deep, leading to a tunnel several hundred yards long. The outer entrance to this tunnel is believed to have been located (although currently sealed) and the owner is keen to look inside.

A dig is to be organised at Coalbrookdale this summer and hopefully members of the Club can be involved.

These shafts were operated in a similar way to those at Hugh's Bridge, Lilleshall, although references often state that those

at Coalbrookdale were larger - presumably in diameter and depth. They were primarily used to convey material, e.g.: coal, limestone etc. to the Coalbrookdale Works.

\*\*\* The proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society (March 1988) contains items on the Shelve Inlier, Clee Hills and Limestone Mining in Shropshire. An item also notes that trilobites found at Bergam Quarry have been named Bergamia.

\*\*\* The 3 mammoth skeletons recently found in a **kettle hole** at Conover, near Shrewsbury, are now on display at the Cosford Aerospace Museum until October 30th '88. The bones were not actually buried in peat, (as widely reported by the "professional" media) but in the clay underneath the peat. It is generally excepted that mammoths were extinct before the end of the last glacial advance, while peat is superficial deposits laid down after this period. If you are interested in visiting the exhibition the cost is £1.50 for Adults, 0.75p Children & O.A.P.'s.

Ivor Brown

## Old German

Several books give the origin of the word 'Corve' as being from the old Dutch word - meaning wicker basket (this word apparently does not exist in modern Dutch).

However the Dutch got the word from the old german word 'das Korb'. So strictly speaking Corve is an old german word, as so many of our mining words seem to be.

## Krab Kode

In case you wondered what those cryptic letters U.I.A.A. that appear on Karabiners mean, they stand for Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme - the international organisation of Alpine clubs.

They are responsible for devising the standard tests for all climbing equipment e.g.: ropes, krabs, ascenders, descenders etc.

## Krab Kitty

As a result of the rescue practice at Clive. Several 'short-comings' in Club tackle have been identified. The main one, is that of Karabiners. While most Club members possess their own Krabs, they are usually of the alloy type, rather than steel.

If you have any large steel krabs that you no longer need could you donate them to the Club Krab Kitty.

The advantage of steel krabs is that they can withstand pulls from odd angles without breaking - they tend to deform first. Unlike alloy ones which may fail suddenly.

# Saturday 24th. September

7.30 pm

## Club A.G.M.

at the Red Lion, Myddle.

(Meals available - book in advance with Mike Moore, as numbers are limited)

Speaker: Paul Deakin (PDMHS)

(on Gouffre Berger, France  
and the Derbyshire Mines)

On Sunday there will be a trip down **Clive Mine**

The Red Lion at Myddle has been used by the Club in the past, recently it has changed owners and been refurbished.

The building is quite old and of historic interest, it is mentioned in Goughs History of Myddle (1707) as having originally been built as a barn, then moved to its current site and converted by Richard Haddocks a carpenter, into a dwelling, where he sold Ale - and we thought that the current barn buying and converting craze was a new idea!

### NAMHO 89 Conference

Next years NAMHO conference is being held at the Charlotte Mason College of Education, Ambleside. Conference starts

on Friday 14th July with registration at the college that evening.

A series of lectures and field trips have been arranged for Saturday and Sunday, although the conference closes at 2.30pm on Sunday, activities will be organised through to mid-day on Monday 17th. July.

The costs: Delegate fee: £6.00 per head, bed and breakfast at the College £9.80p per head. Evening meal £4.50. There will also be a Saturday "do" at approximately £5.50.

All these costs are approximate at the moment, but if you are interested in going contact Mike Moore, The Club has provisionally reserved 8 places - so make sure you are one of them.



# Trips & Events

5th. August 8pm, Last Inn, Newport, monthly club meeting.

13/14th. August Cwmystwyth Lead Mine trip, contact Mike Moore or Neal Rushton for more information.

2nd. September 8pm, Last Inn, Newport, monthly club meeting.

18th. Sept. Minerva (possible Grand Turk) contact Mike Moore

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## BOOKS

**Twelve Mines in the Broseley Area**, (A6 71pp card-cover) by A.J.Mugridge, The Orchard Press  
This book represents the combination of various smaller pamphlets, produced by Tony on the individual mines. This 'pocket-sized' issue gives brief histories of each pit, gleaned from various sources - including the memories of local people, some of whom worked in or close to these pits. The book contains some interesting facts about mines in a much neglected corner of Shropshire's mining area. Printed in a limited edition of 100 copies (cost £2.00), you'd better hurry if you want a copy.

**Brick and Roofing Tile Manufactories of the Severn Gorge** (A5 42pp card-cover) by A.J.Mugridge.

Other than Randall's book of 1877, little has been written on the works in this area. This book attempts to redress the situation and provide a more detailed and complete history of the brick and roofing tile industry, starting with Hollygrove Tilery in 1690 and ending with the closure of the Benthall Pipe Works in 1980. The book makes fascinating reading and includes previously  
Mining Museums

unpublished accounts of working at the various factories. Printed in a limited edition of 100 copies it costs £3.50.

Both books are available from The Orchard Press, Unit 3, Maws Tile Works, Jackfield.

## Mining Museums

**The Yorkshire Mining Museum at Caphouse Colliery**. Opened in June 1988, providing the public with access to real, underground workings.

Visitors descend a 450' shaft, to gain access to the actual museum. The underground tour covers various tableaux with life-sized figures 'recreating' different mining periods, including a modern coal face. The guides are also ex-miners, so they know what they are talking about (unlike many guides at a lot of so called industrial museums).

Surface exhibits include an 1876 steam winding engine, the last wooden headstock in Yorkshire, a Dosco Roadheader, the pit head baths and a working haulage railway.

The museum is on the A642 halfway between Huddersfield and Wakefield. For further information phone the museum on: 0924 848806.

# S.C.M. Club Officers

President : David Adams

Chairman : Glen Taylor

Secretary : Steve Holding

Treasurer : Bob Taylor

NAMHO Rep.: Mike Moore

Tacklemaster &  
Rescue Officer : Neal Rushton

Newsletter Editor: Kelvin Lake

