

Autumn 1988

The Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club

I must apologise to members for accidentally referring to the Annual Social as the A.G.M. I trust it did not cause too much confusion (I was not alone in making this mistake).

Lately I seem to have heard of numerous 'silly' incidents underground, for example a party of Industrial Archaeologists from a certain Polytechnic were lead into the Caverns at Dudley with only a couple of Piezo-electric hand torches (the type you squeeze), Cavers were seen in Daren Cilau without hard hats and only Petzl 'head' lamps for illumination in a system that pushes normal Oldham lamps to their limits there could have been trouble. Another party in the same Cave took a member with stitches in his knee in with them - the result a seriously swollen and bleeding knee.

Doubtless these sort of things are happening all the time, but they do seem to be on the increase. As Caving & 'Mining' are now growth sports, with Outdoor Pursuits Centres introducing new people to underground delights all the time (particularly YTS trainees) it is in all our interests that people who venture underground are well equipped and competent after all we don't really want to do a real rescue do we.

## News Round-Up 1

### Coalbrookdale Steam Engine

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum has brought a Coalbrookdale steam winding engine back from the Henry Ford Museum in America. The engine was taken to the USA in the 1920s from Lightmoor Brickworks/Furnace site - reports seem to differ at the moment as to what the engine actually did during its working life.

### Blaen Onneu Pot

Earlier on this year several cavers digging at Blaen Onneu Pot were taken ill with a form of enteritis, one of them ending up in hospital. The pot has been used for dumping and anyone considering digging there should take precautions.

### Stop Press

On Sunday 9th October, a successful trial was made of the 'Mark 1a Video Podule' that Peter Eggleston has been building. With the assistance of Chris Lucas, Edwin Thorpe, Alan Robinson and Kelvin Lake the Podule was lowered down the Well Shaft at Clive, until the point of no return was reached.

During the descent the black & white video pictures were monitored at the surface, as well as being recorded onto tape for posterity.

# Dylife 15th-17th July 1988: Trip Report

**Members Present:** Steve Holding, Chris Lucas, Neal Rushton, Edwin Thorpe and Steve Rodenhurst.

The 'team' travelled to Dylife on the Friday night. Edwin persuaded a farmer to let us camp in one of his fields reasonably close to the "Star Inn" which was visited that night and found to be friendly, provide good food and stayed open late!

On Saturday morning, the flooded Pencerig shallow adit was located, but not entered. The deep adit was entered despite a very unpleasant entrance (sheep bones and faeces), but it did not extend very far. The general location of the shafts were also identified. Following this the Llechwedd Ddfu shaft (SN 8560 9390), containing the remains of a pump rod, south of the road was visited along with the nearby Dylife Deep Crosscut adit this was large but after a short distance the filled "Alfred's" Shaft blocked the way. There appeared to be a resurgence in the floor at this point. A smaller level near the Dylife Adit appeared to be silted up.

Further up the valley Level Goch (SN 8541 9385) was found, but as it appeared to hold deep water it was not initially entered, however Steve did brave the waters later that afternoon. In addition to connecting with an open stope, (also investigated from the surface) some branches were checked. This level appears to be more complex than expected and is worthy of further exploration.

After lunch Penycrocbren hill was crossed. Boundary Shaft (SN 8528 9337) was identified and Steve (who had lugged his wet suit over the hill) travelled about 500 feet up the flooded Dyfyngwm level (SN 8493 9312) to establish that it was open.

On the Sunday, the original 4 were joined by Steve Rodenhurst. The whole party travelled by Land Rover along minor tracks to the general site of Cafatha or Nant-Ddu Mine, then walked along the top of the impressive gorge to Dyfyngwm level. This level was entered by Neal and the 2 Steves; the deep water extended for approximately 600 feet, after a further 540 feet a complex junction chamber is reached.

Two winzes (Fig.1: A and B) descend from the chamber, with a large space cut out above them for hauling purposes. Southwards a branch travels 140 feet to a fall (the first 30 feet under dubious stemples and deads).

It appeared possible to pass although some propping was considered advisable first! Water could be seen travelling towards the fall, but did not appear on the outside of the it.

From the northside of the chamber a short branch through timbered walls travels 40 feet to a floor collapse into several lower levels. At this point was a winze to the next level down (about 50 feet), an ore chute into higher workings with the level clearly extending beyond the collapse with a possible "ledge" on the West side of the narrow stope.

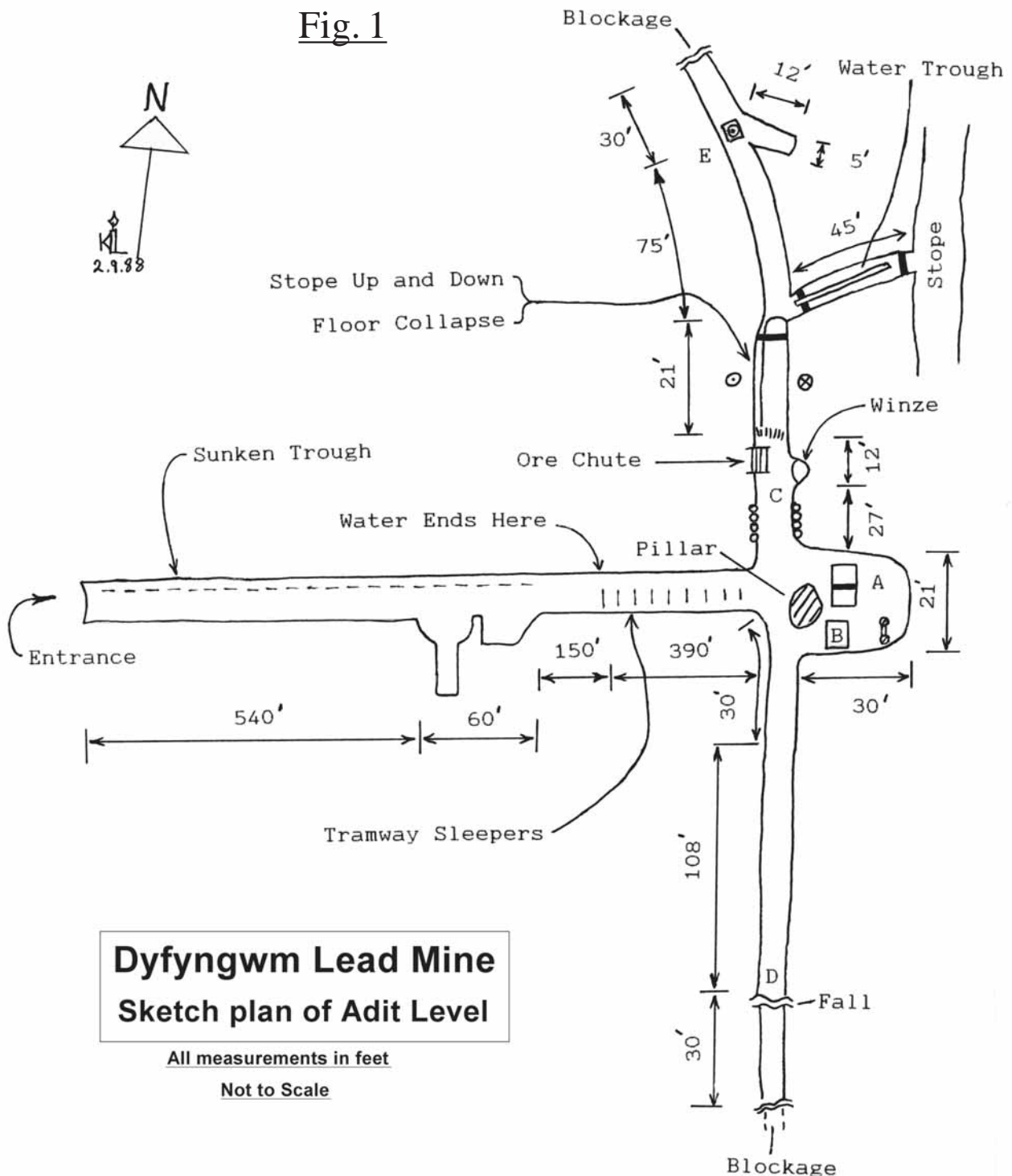
The party returned via the bottom of Dyfyngwm gorge and investigated 2 levels between Dyfyngwm and Castle Rock, one of these soon dropped considerably and contained some large pumping equipment. The level at Castle Rock was visited but was disappointing.

On the drive back the site of Cafatha Mine was inspected and a large shaft (SN 8332 9310) noted.

Note: Subsequent to the visit, it has been noted that Bicks book gives a map reference for a level at Cafatha which is near the steel bridge; this is a significant distance from the shaft and may be worth visiting. John Heathcote has also reported that the level between Dyfyngwm and Castle Rock leads via a 40 foot descent to extensive wet workings.

Steve Holding

**Fig. 1**



**Dyfyngwm Lead Mine  
Sketch plan of Adit Level**

All measurements in feet  
Not to Scale

# Dylife Revisited: 12th-15th August 1988

## Members Present:

Steve Holding, Alan Robinson,  
Vicky Gamblin, Neal Rushton,  
Stuart Walker, Peter Eggleston  
and Kelvin Lake.

As a follow-up to the July Dylife trip, it was decided to investigate Cafatha and Dyfyngwm Mines in more detail.

Cafatha was visited first. The site of the level (SN 8382 9318) was located, but found to be run-in. A nearby air shaft was descended by Alan, but found to be flooded to the roof (dead sheep adding to the interest). To reduce the water level Stuart dug at the entrance, but, with little initial effect.

The main shaft, with the remains of a balance bob and skip road at the top and about 160 feet deep was descended by Neal, Stuart and Kelvin. About 50 feet down the shaft narrowed to a rectangular section and was very wet due to a stream 'trickling' down! Two levels left the pit bottom, the South-westerly one completely flooded the other (to the North) badly silted with limited, static air. The latter was probably a crosscut to the second shaft.

Steve spent his time pacifying a farmer who was convinced we were sheep rustlers.

In the afternoon the whole party entered Dyfyngwm level, Kelvin tested Steve's new ex-R.N. Dry suit (it passed, luckily) while Pete braved the 'O-Zone' without the aid of a wetsuit!

At the main junction the party split into different teams, Neal and Steve investigated the fall in the southern branch (Fig.1: D). Neal passed the fall before securing it and found a substantial blockage further on. Another 'team' started clearing the ledge across the floor collapse (Fig.1: C).

Vicky and Stuart descended the right hand winze from the junction (Fig.1 & Fig.2: B), this dropped about 40 feet to a blind narrow level, it was 'blocked' off from the main winze (Fig.1 & Fig.2: A) by a gate of rails and bits of pump rod. Stuart also descended the first 2 ladder stages of the man-way part of the main winze (the first ladder is missing) noting a couple of 'blocked' levels.

After a pleasant evening in the Star Inn (although it had no water!) and a damp and windy night, Pete, Steve, Kelvin, Neal and Stuart returned to Dyfyngwm on Sunday (gingerly donning wet gear!).

Stuart completed the descent of the man-way in the main winze. He entered a level some 40 feet below adit level which connected with parallel workings below the northern branch, being visible from the winze at point C.

There were no further open levels above the water, which was about 80-90 feet below adit.

The ledge across the floor collapse was eventually cleared giving access to 2 more branches.

The northern one ended in a blockage, although a small square 'climbing' shaft (Fig.1 & Fig.2: E) gave access through deads to a short section of blocked stoping. The eastern branch, dipped downwards, emerging near the top of a partially filled stope. In this tunnel was the remains of a water trough in the roof, and a peculiar recess in the south wall (See Fig.3).

Having exhausted all the more obvious routes, Stuart climbed the Ore Chute, this passed through a 'roof' of stemples and deads into a significant amount of stoping and open sky could be seen, unfortunately a lot of sealed plastic bags (assumed to have unpleasant contents) had been dumped from the surface.

The only areas of Dyfyngwm not yet investigated are the stoping

below the missing floor section and any areas which may be accessible through Boundary Shaft.

To round the day off the open stoping on top of the hill was visited. The probable route in the top of the Ore Chute was identified, along with substantial amounts of rubbish.

Boundary Shaft was also visited and checked to confirm that it was open - to what seemed a great depth ! A balance bob gudgeon block along with various other items of metalwork survive and may be useable for Initial belays.

The mine between Dyfyngwm and Cafatha was not visited on this trip and remains to be investigated.

Steve Holding

**Fig. 2**

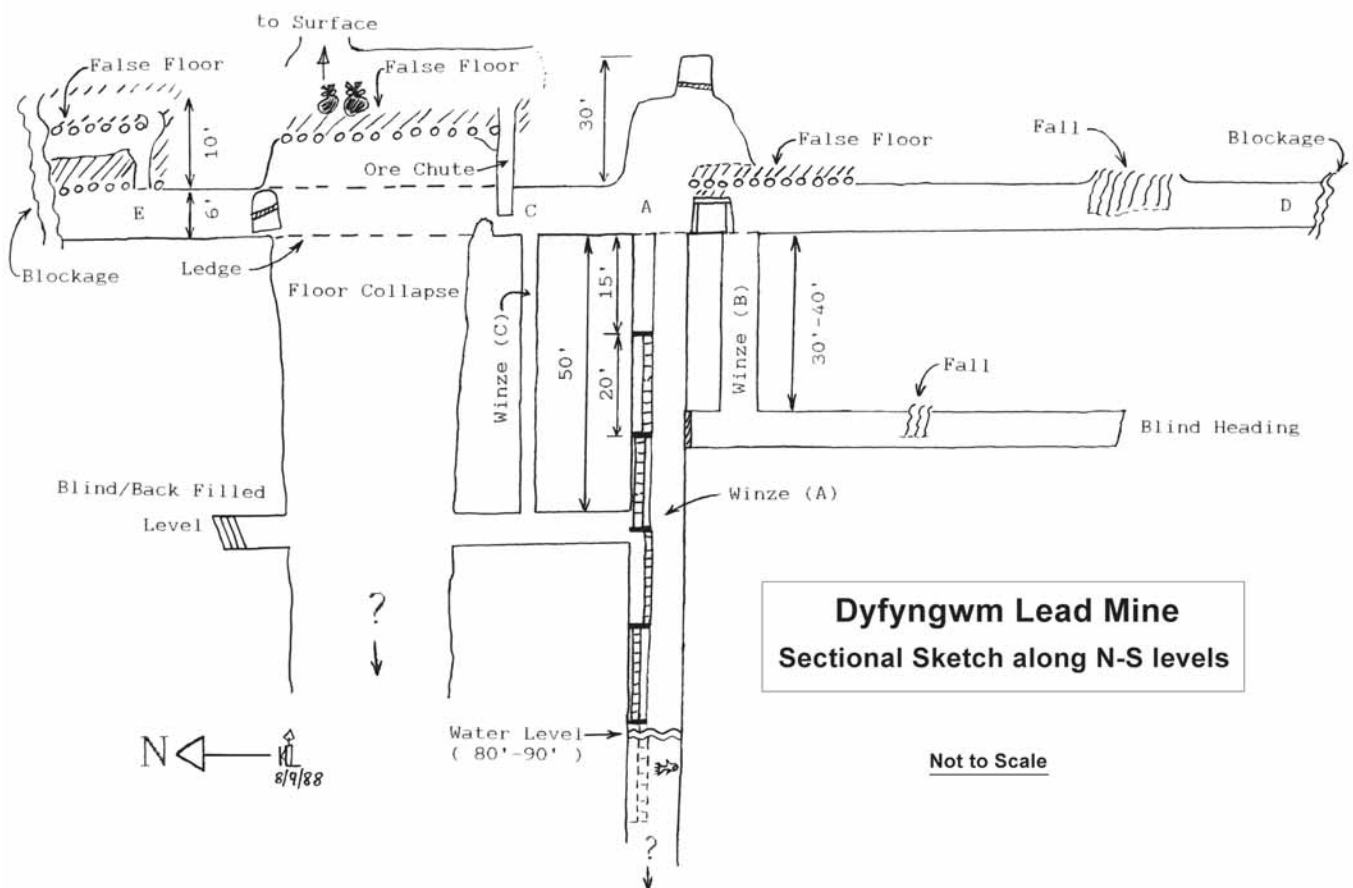
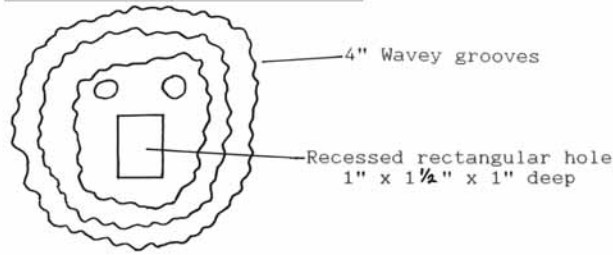


Fig. 3

**Dyfyngwm Lead Mine**  
**Odd hole in wall**



## BOOKS

### The Lead Mines of the Alyn Valley

by C.J. Williams.

The Alyn Valley is an area that has seen considerable mining activity, involving people such as Wilkinson and John Taylor and producing famous mines such as the consolidated Mold Mines, the Halkyn Deep Level and the Halkyn Mines sea level tunnel. This 40 page booklet is well researched and very readable, containing some interesting photographs and maps. Several Club members have already purchased this booklet and have been very pleased with it. If you want a copy its available from: Clwyd Record Office, Price £3.00 by post.

### A Bibliography of the History of British Metal Mining

by Roger Burt & Peter Waite. Published by the University of Exeter & NAMHO, this is the first complete bibliography of recent literature relating to the history of metal mining in Britain. It contains references to about 500 books, 100 University theses and almost 2,000 articles from over 300 different journals & periodicals. Price: £8.95, however there is a 35% discount to NAMHO members on 5 copies or more, so if Club members are interested contact Kelvin Lake so we can get a group order together.

## Mining Museums

Two places to keep in mind for next year:-

### Cefn Coed Colliery Museum

Situated next to Blaenant Colliery near Crynant on the A4109. This museum is mainly a "surface" museum, although it has an easily accessible "underground" gallery. The main feature of the site (once the deepest anthracite mine in the world) is a large steam winder (now turned by electricity). Opening times April-October, daily 11am - 6pm.

## Show Caves

### Kitley Caves

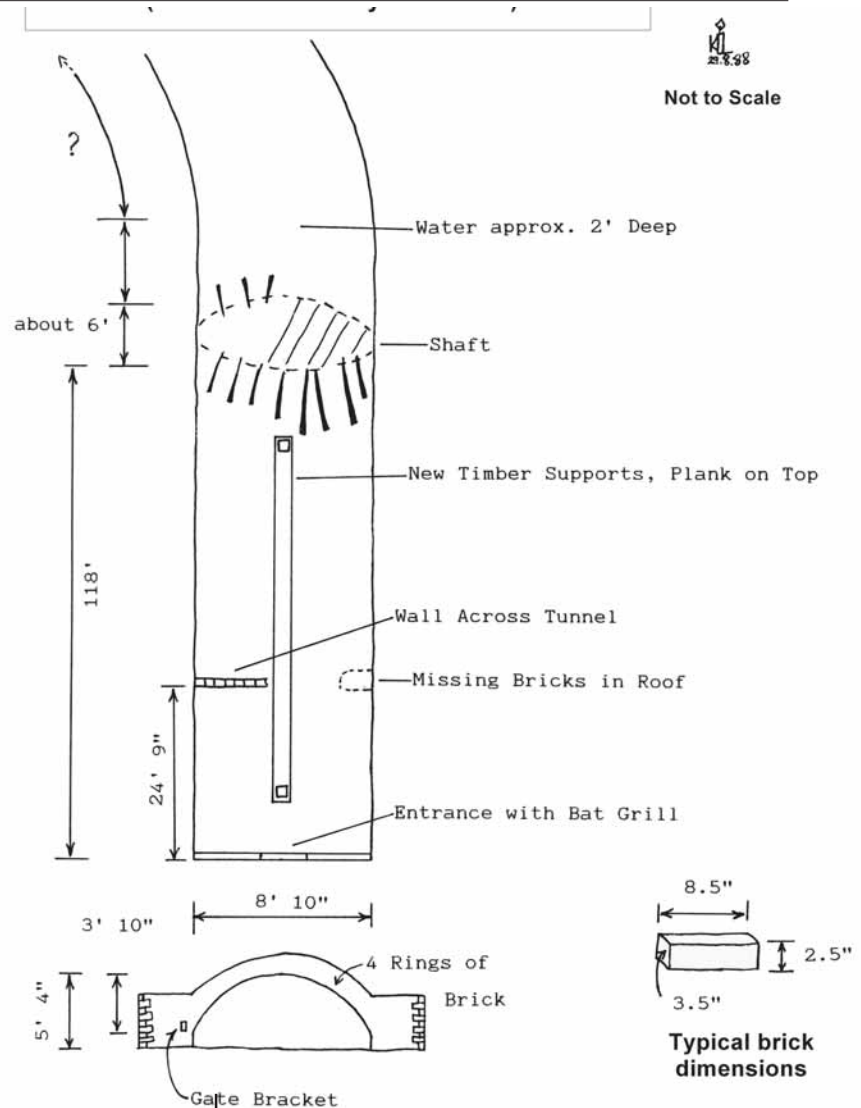
These caves are on the Kitley Estate, Yealmpton near Plymouth. Guided tours take the visitor into the easier parts of the caves, which are open to tourists 10am to 5.30pm over Easter and from Spring Bank holiday to the end of September. Access is possible to the 'harder' sections of the caves with special arrangement from the Kitley Estate Manor Office, Yealmpton.



# Tramway Tunnel Telford Town Park

(on site of Stirchley  
Ironworks)

Fig. 4



Situated close to the Silkin Way, this tunnel is usually protected by a locked bat grill to prevent children entering un-supervised.

The tunnel was originally investigated by the club some 10 years ago. It heads towards the Ever Ready factory, although it appears to curve away after the first 150 feet. It is presumed that it once linked with the Hinkshay Colliery and was used for bringing materials to the Stirchley Ironworks.

At the present moment the first 118 feet are easily accessible. However the fill in the shaft at this point looks a little precarious and some support is

advisable before continuing further. The concrete capped shaft was located on the surface by using a tape measure as a life line through the thick undergrowth.

Beyond the shaft, at the time of the visit, the level was flooded with 1 to 2 feet of water. Due to the aversion therapy of Dyfyngwm Mine we didn't venture into the water.

Since visiting the tunnel someone has been in and knocked several roof supports down. Steve Holding has undertaken to contact the Council to get the gate padlock replaced.

Peter Eggleston & Kelvin Lake

Institution of Mining and  
Metallurgy Library

NAMHO has reached an agreement with the I.M.M. where members of NAMHO affiliated organisations (i.e.: the S.C.M.C.) can use the resources of the I.M.M. Library at 44, Portland Place, London, free of charge and obtain photocopies at member rates. This does not entitle you to borrow items, the use of their postal service and computer and literature searches will still be charged at the full rate.

However you do need to be able to identify yourself as a member of a NAMHO affiliated organisation - perhaps we need some form of Club membership card.

Sand Mines

A Burton-on-Trent firm has been awarded the contract to infill abandoned sandstone workings beneath Reigate, Surrey yes you've guessed it with sand !

It is estimated that 17,000 tons of sand will be needed to fill the whole cave system under the town centre. Let's hope they are more successful than the 'Sand-fillers' of Dudley.

Lilleshall Limestone Adit

Dave Adams has persuaded the Contractors working at the Quarry in Lilleshall to place a bat grill across the entrance to the adit, on the basis that it might be used by bats for roosting, rather than have it filled in. The adit doesn't go very far, but at least another Shropshire 'hole' has been kept open.



Bats Underground



A conservation code covering bats has been produced, basically the main points to remember are:-

Don't warm up hibernating bats  
Don't shine bright lights on bats  
Don't make excessive noise or smoke underground  
Do check for bats before blasting (Edwin take note)

All bats are now protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take any bat or to disturb roosting bats. It is also illegal to intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for roosting.

British Geological Survey

The B.G.S. have their own computerised bibliography of mining publications and would like to hear from anyone producing new publications so they can be added to their list. Contact M.J.Gallacher, B.G.S., Murchison House, West Mains Rd, Edinburgh EH9 3LA.

Video Grubbies

Live television pictures have been successfully transmitted from a depth of 18 fathoms feet inches from the bottom of a flooded swing bin by Peter Eggleston. With the addition of a longer bit of wire it is hoped to reach the bottom of Lords Hill Engine shaft or at least the water at the bottom. A more detailed report of this epic attempt will appear in the next issue of Below.



# An Experience: Cabin Shaft, Minera

18th September 1988

**Members Present:** Martin Allen, Shean Bostock, Peter Eggleston, Kelvin Lake, Chris Lucas, Alan Robinson & Edwin Thorpe.

Plus 2 members of the North Wales Caving Club: Tony King (our guide) and Dave X (he wished to remain anonymous).

The party broke all the rules in arriving half an hour early at the meeting point in Minera, to be greeted by a surprised Tony King who had kindly offered to be our guide for the day and advised us that the trip would be mainly crawling with a couple of ladder pitches.

In a cheery mood the party made their way to Cabin shaft where a 30 foot ladder pitch was quickly descended. The objective of the day was to move through the mine and down into Grand Turk.

It soon became obvious that this mine was not like most of the mines the Club has visited lately. There were very few places where you could stand upright, and it was like a labyrinth, levels branching off in all directions. Thankfully Tony kept us on the straight (?) and narrow and lead us to a 15-20 ft ladder pitch up into what seemed like a very small tramming level. About 100 yards along this a tight squeeze was encountered (along with a high grumble level from E.T. who was convinced we'd get stuck).

Negotiating the squeeze was quite a feat, with it ending in a sort of 15 foot vertical spiral with a cringe around a small boulder supporting everything else. The North Wales Club had only opened this route after many years of

digging and blasting and had almost given up hope of breaking through.

Beyond the squeeze a small chamber lead to yet another even tighter squeeze, which was made more difficult by being on a very slippery clay-covered slope giving very little purchase for the larger party members. After a long period of shoving & grunting this was successfully passed. The other side of this 'hole' was the 50 foot descent towards Grand Turk. Only Martin, Alan, Chris, Kelvin and Dave decided to go down.

At the foot of the ladder pitch a small hole led along a crawl for about 100-150 yards (it just seemed like miles!) entering a natural streamway with ample crouching room.

Downstream lead to a sump which the N.W.C.C. hope will link with other parts of the Mine/Cave system. Near the entrance to the sump passage a short mine level gives access to a vertical shaft which apparently contains remains of dams & sluices at the top and seems to have been the mine's main drainage level.

After making the exhausting journey back to surface which almost defeated some of the party, and scraping the worst of the muck of us, we went to the top of the mountain to see the N.W.C.C. winch operating on Weston Shaft (300 feet deep). The North Wales Club have a very impressive professional set-up and deserve to be congratulated and supported in their efforts.

Kelvin Lake 

# S.C.M. Club Officers

President : David Adams

Chairman : Mike Moore

Secretary : Steve Holding

Treasurer : Bob Taylor

NAMHO Rep.: Mike Moore

Tacklemaster &  
Rescue Officer : Neal Rushton

Newsletter Editor: Kelvin Lake

## Future Trips

As planned trips do not always come to fruition, it has been decided not to print future trips, Steve Holding has undertaken to keep members informed of trips. If in doubt about any trips, contact Steve. The monthly meetings are still held on the first Friday of each month at the Last Inn, Newport and start at 8pm.

