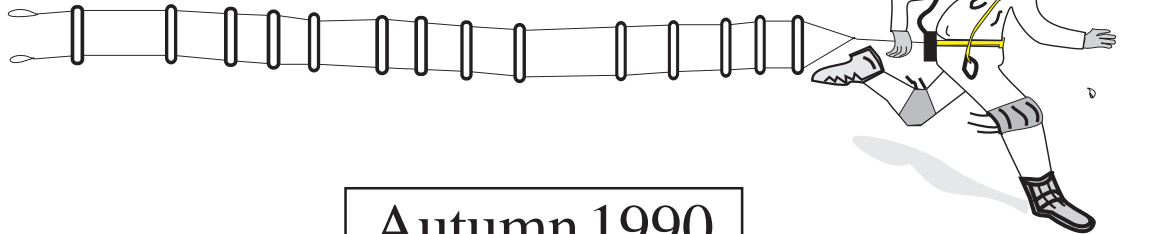


# B E L O W !



Autumn 1990

## Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club

### AGM

This issue of "Below" has been delayed a little to get the Club AGM out of the way, on the off chance that I might have been voted out of the Editors Chair, unfortunately that was not the case.

However there have been a few changes to the committee, Dave Adams and Mike Moore have stepped down from the posts of President and Chairman respectively, with Alan Taylor and Alan Robinson easing themselves into their shoes. I'm sure everyone would like to thank Dave and Mike for all the effort they have put into the Club over the past 2 years.

They haven't escaped altogether though, Dave is still slaving over a hot wordprocessor to produce an updated edition of Account No.7 (Church Aston and Lilleshall) and Mike is still NAMHO Rep.

The post of Vice Chairman is vacant, as nobody at the AGM felt they could devote enough time to the position.

### Annual Dinner

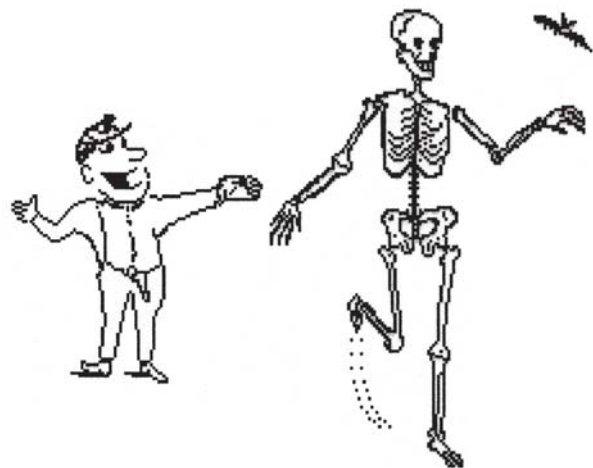
Some 64 Club Members and friends were present at the Annual Dinner on 29th September, the action packed evening was enlightened by Derek Robinson and Juliet Kelly's talk on the Cambridge University Caving Club expedition to Austria (the one that had

the cave rescues - did you spot the slide that was featured in Descent?).

The diners were then forced to the edge of their seats during the auction of Malcom Newtons paintings, as the prices reached the staggering sums of £40 and £70, I didn't dare move incase it was taken as a bid!

Humour ran amok with the showing of a rough compilation video of material recorded at Snailbeach (Meco-Goldwyn-Moore Productions). Then fear gripped the room as Neal drew the raffle, I think I was one of the lucky ones - I didn't win a prize! Finally the whole show was put to sleep with a long winded slide show by someone who should remain nameless, that cut into the drinking time far too much.

**Kelvin**



*Speaker:*

*"You can't leave now - there's another 400 really interesting slides on Snailbeach!!"*

# NAMHO Field Trip

## 24 & 25/7/90

**Members Present:** Steve Holding, Mike Moore, Edwin Thorpe, Vicky Gamblin, Alan Robinson.

We travelled to Alderley Edge on the Friday night, to be fresh for the morning session. Nigel Johnson of Derbyshire Caving Club directed the group to the local Scout camping ground which was set in the middle of the mining area where a group of scouts were found to be attempting a camp-fire meal; despite their apparent lack of success, we soon felt hungry and there was a quick trip to the Chippy before meeting up with Nigel in a local hostelry.

On the Saturday morning, we got together with Alans friend, Steve Pope and a reasonably large group from various other NAMHO clubs. Over the next couple of days six very different mines were visited in the company of Nigel Johnson and other members of D.C.C.

1) Engine Vein Mine: part of this mine was effectively a roofed open stope, but there was quite a lot more to the mine and a good hour or so was enjoyably spent examining all parts of the mine. This included a shaft still in the process of being re-dug and a descent down the workings towards Hough Level.

2) Brynlow Mine: this mine was entered via a rather narrow level which was recently reopened by D.C.C. This mine consists of a lot of coffin levels, interconnected by fixed ladders, with opportunities for alternative tight squeezes to descend between levels. Again it was possible to descend to the partly flooded Hough Level.

3) West Mine: after lunch a group of 11 visitors and two guides from D.C.C. had a rather fast trip through this very extensive mine. A complete contrast to Brynlow Mine. West

Mine consists of a very spacious three dimensional maze!

The adit entrance has been blocked off and access is achieved via a man-hole and three fixed ladders. The mine was worked on three different levels and there was a lot of switching between levels using fixed ladders, fixed chains and ropes, but no equipment was required. This mine has had a notorious history, following its abandonment, of numerous rescue's of people lost in the maze's. This included 2 men lost in 1929. They were found dead, 3 months later in a passage 3/4 of a mile from the entrance. West Mine is rather like a spacious OFDII.

4) Hough Level: there were problems with the lock on the entrance to Hough Level, so Alan, Vicky and Steve P. joined a couple of D.C.C. members in abseiling 180 feet into the level.

When the door was opened the more pedestrian of us were able to examine this end of Hough Level. It was a haulage level, joining most of the mines (but excluding West Mine); at this entrance D.C.C. have a small loco, trucks and rails and are slowly re-digging the level.

At the moment there is not a lot to see, but with crawling and wading it is reportedly possible to connect between the mines. However there is still a substantial blockage at Engine Vein Mine.

5) Cobalt Mine: this mine has only recently been re-discovered and it seemed to be with some reluctance that visitors were taken on a through trip. Access was gained by a man-hole and 30 foot fixed ladder, situated immediately behind the Wizard Restaurant, there was a narrow crawl leading to a climb down to a lower level with an eventighter crawl (ask Edwin!).

## NAMHO Field Trip Continued..

After examining this level, there was a ladder climb back up to a higher level and finally back-up to the surface. As the Cobalt Mine has only recently been opened up it has not been disturbed very much.

6) Wood Mine: on the Sunday afternoon only Steve H. and Edwin were left to visit Wood Mine in the company of Nigel Johnson and another visitor.

This was the first mine to be re-opened by D.C.C. and they regularly take visitors around and have an

annual open day; a recent money spinner is to hold children's parties in one of the main chambers [Could we do the same in the 40 yard, workshop at Snailbeach?]. The mine is reasonably extensive, with a lot of variety and well worth a visit.

Everyone enjoyed the weekend and were inspired by what D.C.C. could achieve with only a similar number of active members to us. It is suggested that a Club trip be arranged some-time in the future.

**Steve Holding**

## Gaping Gill Weekend 25 & 26/8/90

**Members present:** Vicky Gamblin, Robinson, Steve Holding, Tom West.

On Saturday, after purchasing a 200 foot rope in Inglesport (everything else being in Snailbeach!!), Vicky, Alan and myself visited Bull Pot. Alan had reported this to be an excellent training pot for SRT practice and this proved to be the case with a number of varied pitches in close succession. The reports of questionable anchor bolts proved to be true!

The Sunday turned out to be another very hot day and Tom West arrived at Clapham to join the three of us on the walk up to Gaping Gill where the hillside turned out to be covered with tents and people. After paying our £5 for the winch trip and walking over to Bar Pot, we were somewhat put out to find that the pot was only rigged for laddering.

Fortunately, a member of the Craven Club, who happened to be doing some SRT was happy for us to use his rope on the 120 foot pitch. There was a complaint at us using the initial climbing rope for abseiling, but I was more concerned at the problems of abseiling through a tight squeeze and using a Petzl

Stop (when you cannot get your hand to the handle!). After finding our way to the main pitch, since the ladder was rigged almost in the same place as the SRT rope, there was a bit of a traffic jam and the base of the pitch was thronging with people.

As none of us knew the way to the main chamber of Gaping Gill, we resorted to accepting directions and following the breeze. We were given all sorts of advice on interesting features to visit and even presented with a copy of the survey!

The main chamber was particularly impressive and the winch remarkably fast (I did not have time to get the blindfold out). The cup of tea while waiting for the winch was welcome and the wait was only 20-25 minutes.

The trip was well worthwhile and the £5 on the winch was not begrudged, but if you want to avoid nightmares, it is worth checking that your sit harness is properly fastened before embarking on a 120 foot abseil.

**Steve Holding**

# News Round-Up 1

## by Ivor Brown

### Snailbeach Stage 2

The Snailbeach Lead Mine Stage 2 Study produced by Wardell Armstrong has been circulated for consultation. Members of the Club attended the recent Public Meeting, and have made suggestions about the proposals. Some of the suggestions cause concern, and one wonders whether the cost of filling some of the old workings is really justified, or if the conversion of buildings like the compressor house, blacksmiths, miners dry etc. around George's Shaft into dwellings is suitable for such an historic site.

### Lancaster Study

The University of Lancaster have produced their draft study of the archaeology of Snail-beach. They haven't come up with anything new, but they do conclude that Snailbeach is one of the most important lead mine sites in Britain!

*[I think we could have told them that for £60,000, Ed.]*

### Snailbeach Water Supply

On 15th July IJB tried to follow the Snailbeach water supply leat to its source, it is still clearly visible for over a mile and in part still contains water.

The end was not reached, after a mile the ground became marshy and a shaft with inspection cover and aluminium ladder, can be clearly seen, probably the water supply to a farm.

On the return, studied the ruins at Blakemoorgate (deserted mining village). There was a Methodist chapel here but the site could not be located. Only 2 buildings now have a roof, but there are a couple of excellent underground potato "hods" with roofs supported by early mine rails.

### Harbury Church. Wakefield

Going through the 1826/27 records of Harbury Church near Wakefield recently I found two puzzling references.

After the Sunday service a collection was made to go to the disaster fund at Pontsbury (1/- 10d contributed) and similarly for a Donnington Wood disaster (1/- 4d contributed).

What were these disasters? There does not seem to be any mention of them locally.

### Peat Ban

Support the "ban peat from gardens" campaign and help save Whixall Moss, (Shropshire) a peat bog threatened by the horticultural peat industry.

### Recent Publications

**Grubenpferde in Englischen Shropshire** (Pitponies in Shropshire, England), Der Ansch-nitt No.3 1990 (Journal of the German National Mining Museum, Bochum).

**Journal of Geological Society**, London, Vol.147 1990.

Contains a good article on Murchison with special reference to Shropshire - it is quite fascinating.

Written by Hugh Torrens a member of the IGMT Advisory Group.

*[Members who have copies of SCMC Account No. 7 - Church Aston/Lilleshall will be aware of Murchison through Dave Adams' work.]*

# Silvermines Ireland

The mines are located close to the village of Silvermines approximately 20 miles N.E. of Limerick town.

They were first worked in the very early 19th Century and as the name suggests they were mined for silver. However the potato famine which hit Ireland in the 1840's brought economic disaster to the country and as a result all mining ceased.

The Silvermines re-opened in 1968 and lead and zinc were mined there until 1982 when the mine finally closed.

Both old and new surface workings are visible, including an early 19th Century pumping house with a winding house built onto it. Many of the buildings relating to the 1968-82 workings can still be seen. Trays and trays of borehole core samples could be found in three buildings which also contained empty bottles of acid!

Some of the shafts are covered over with sleepers, but the main entrance to the mine is by an adit. Opposite the adit, footings to a winding house were visible (1968-82 workings), which hauled the trams along the adit, up to surface.

We entered this adit and walked down an incline for about 70 feet, it then split into two levels. The lower level was flooded, but the upper level went into the hill at 180°.

This level was approximately 25 feet wide and 10 feet high and also had double tramping lines. It seemed to continue inwards for quite a distance, but due to safety reasons we returned to daylight.

Further up the hill we saw signs of open cast mining. As we approached these workings it was with great surprise that we saw galleries on the face of the quarry - great pillars of rock with pools of water below. It was almost as if we were in a slate mine.

Once inside the galleries we could see many levels going into the hill. On entering one of these levels we came across the main tramping level, which we believed to be connected to the first adit we entered. Numerous galleries seemed to be leading off from this main level. Double tramping lines could still be seen as well as the remains of electrical lights and tubs.

It was very tempting to investigate further but again for obvious safety reasons we reluctantly returned to surface.

Further exploration revealed similar workings but in addition we came across winzes in another gallery.

**Kim Dempsey & Andy Yapp**

# Parys Mountain Latest Update

Over 400m of underground development work on the 280m level of the new Parys Mountain Mine have been completed by Anglesey Mining - this is approximately half the planned total development.

The first underground bulk sample has also been removed from this level and is being tested in an on-site pilot plant to gauge its content.

The underground exploration is still continuing, with 11 boreholes completed, 6 for structural information and 5 to evaluate the ore-body

The target date for commencement of commercial production is early 1992.

# News Round-Up 2

## by Kelvin Lake

### Swildon's Strippers

If you visit Swildon's there have been a number of complaints from local people about cavers changing in the open. The nearby Maines Barn (the floor of which has recently been repaired by Gotham Caving Club) is provided for cavers to change in, so please do NOT frighten the locals by divesting yourself in public - you can be arrested for it.

### B.S.L Standards

The National Caving Association's Equipment Committee, has recently reported that the B.M.C. are pushing to have all oval karabiners scrapped for climbing. This is likely to mean they will cease to be available from shops, however certain caving hangers and pulleys do need them!

As an aside the N.C.A. also note that none of the current British made karabiners carry the U.I.A.A. stamp.

In the next issue of "Below" I hope to include a brief item about the recent problems with sticht plates, the N.C.A. guidelines on 8mm anchor bolts and suggestions of butterfly knots for deviation instead of the more common figure of eight.

### Mike Clough

Mike finished working at Crewe at the end of June and now works for Bridgnorth District Council (0746-765131 ext. 252). He is Senior Planning Officer with responsibility for development control in the northern half of the District which includes the historic mining settlement of Broseley.

### P8 Ladder

Crewe C.P.C. have successfully stabilised the ladder in P8, Alan Robinson tells me they have made a good job of it too.

### Herne Hill Caves. Maltby

Due to a recent rescue call-out to this cave the entrance, in the corner of the supermarket car park, now has a door and padlock. DO NOT ask for the key at the supermarket - they know nothing about it, they will think you are doing your Manuel impression, key?

The keyholder is:-

Mrs Alice Rodgers, 7 Petal Close, Maltby, Rotherham. Telephone beforehand to check that it is convenient to call (0709 812035).

### Obituaries

It is with great sadness that I have to report the loss of two well known and much respected figures in the caving world; Alan Rodgers and Dr. A.Price.

Alan Rodgers had been the National Caving Association Treasurer for a number of years. Despite a heart bypass operation about 9 years ago, he had maintained an active roll in caving, although in the past year he had become increasingly ill this did not stop him in his work for the N.C.A. He will be a hard act to follow. Donations are being sent to the British Heart Foundation in his memory.

Dr. Price, had been Chairman and co-director to Dan-y-Ogof Caves Company for a number of years. He was largely responsible for the drawing up of the conditions of access to the system, in the mid-60's which have remained largely unaltered since.

He established a rapport with the caving world on access and conservation in the show caves, which serve as a model for other such sites in the U.K.

D.Y.O was his life interest and it was his wish that his ashes should be scattered in the caves.

# Twenty Five Years Ago by Ivor Brown

From early Club Newsletters

## April 1965

(NL No. 10): Church Aston shafts descended. Still working on Ceiriog Winch.

Club assembled collection of mining tools for Dawley New Town Historical Exhibition. Ten tons of red shale purchased for Club House car park.

Subs: ID/- p.a.

## May 1965

8 expeditions reported this month, 6 of them to Wales.

Mr. Gaydon interviewed members of the Club for the Victoria County History.

## June 1965

Expeditions to Derbyshire, Minera, Snailbeach, Park Farm, Dyddbyraf.

New Town exhibition transferred to Shrewsbury Art Gallery.

## July 1965

Whit camp in the Lake District, also trips to Blaen-y-Nant, Halkyn and Park Farm.

## August/September 1965

No newsletter due to change of Editors (IJB to C.Lears).

Trips to North Wales continued.

# Oxlow Re-Opened, Knotlow Grot

## Oxlow Open

Access to Oxlow Caverns, Nettle Pot and Maskhill Mine has been restored with effect from September 1st.

If you visit these sites you **MUST** call at Oxlow House Farm **BEFORE** attempting to cross any part of Mr. Rowland's land and give him the party details, you may have to pay up to £1.00 per head. **DO NOT** park in his roadside fields or farmyard.

If you intend to visit, contact the Derbyshire Caving Association to obtain the access routes - although I do have a rough route/sketch map if you are interested. The conditions of re-opening are quite strict about the path followed across the various walls and fields.

Any repeat of damage, disrespect or abuse will cause the farmer to close his land to cavers for a much longer period next time.

Members of the D.C.A. and Darfur Pothole Club have been responsible for repairing walls, building new fencing and stiles and negotiating with Mr. Rowland, so it is up to us as visitors to support them and observe the access conditions.

## Knotlow

Earlier in the year there was a severe pollution problem at Knotlow due to carcasses being dumped in a shaft nearby, causing rotting bits of flesh to flow down the streamway into Crimbo Swallet, however you will be pleased to hear that the matter has now been rectified (ie: floated away!)

# Littleton Street Mine Project Award

The £7m, two and a half year project to stabilise and infill the Littleton Street Limestone Mine in Walsall has been awarded the Institution of Civil Engineers Midlands Association's, 1990 Award.

The award was made to Ove Arup (Consulting Engineers), Fairclough and Walsall M.B.C. for the innovative techniques and environmental benefits of the project for stabilising the unsafe workings and removing 3 colliery spoil heaps.

Littleton Street Mine, last worked at the turn of the century, was completely flooded and under risk of collapse due to erosion of the limestone supporting pillars. Remote sonar surveying equipment was used

to obtain information about this 50 metre deep mine.

The void was filled with 800,00 tonnes of rock-paste, a mixture of colliery spoil, pulverised fly ash, lime and water, which was injected through 22 bore holes.

It is claimed that Fairclough used a sophisticated control system for the injection process, linked to a mainframe computer! However at the end of the day, they still had to call in M & J. Drilling Services to "top up" the areas where the paste injection was not entirely successful.

**Pete Etchells**

## BOOKS

**Mines of the Gwydyr Forest**, by John Bennett & Robert Vernon.

A5 size, paperback - to be published in 7 uniform parts. Parts 1 (June 1989) and 2 (March 1990) now available at £4.95 and £6.25 respectively from: Gwydyr Mines Publications, 7 St. Johns Way, Cuddington, Cheshire CW8 2LX.

Despite a long and fascinating history the mines of lead, zinc and sulphur in Gwydyr forest, to the west of the river Conway have been poorly covered in print. This new series will change all this and the significant remains, mills, water wheel pits, leats and reservoirs will fit much better into their historical perspective.

**Part 1** covers the Llanrwst Mine and its neighbours. **Part 2** covers the Hafna Mine and early ventures in Gwydyr Nant. Each tells the story of these workings from early times right up to the more recent period. The workings were often intermittent, but each period left its relics, its underground workings and spoilheaps. What these books lack in early photographs

(because they just do not exist) is more than made up by excellent diagrams, maps, plans and detailed drawings.

These are well produced books, ideal for the specialist but perhaps a little expensive for the general reader.

**Ivor Brown**

**Force Crag: The History of a Lakeland Mine** by Ian Tyler. This book traces the developments at Force Crag Mine from the early Elizabethan workings to those of the 20th Century. This is the Lakeland's last surviving metal mine, and was worked for lead, black zinc, silver and barytes.

120 pages, with 44 plates and sketches. It costs £6.29 plus £1.00 postage - this is a special discounted price, to S.C.M.C. and N.A.M.H.O. members. If anyone is interested, I will get an order together alternatively the book is available from: Red Earth Publications, 7 Silver Street, Marton, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0NQ.

**Kelvin**



# Visit to Slate Mine

## 24/7/90

Grid Ref: OS 147 754 694 - about 1.5 km NE Fair Rhos.

Just to show that we are alive and kicking! We had a look at this abandoned mine as part of a walk in the area.

The mine is obvious from various spoil heaps present. Some surface artefacts are to be seen: bolted foundations for machinery, steel hawsers and large axles with wheels. The drainage adit is blocked but water is seeping through and along the remains of a stone walled culvert.

One shaft is blocked but another higher up the hill is open and about 15m deep - by the gravity method, still higher up the hill a stope breaks to the surface with timber supports clearly visible. The depth of the stope was difficult to ascertain i.e. deep!

The other side of the hill is being open quarried at the moment.

**Dave Jukes, Jackie**

This Issue of "**Below**" has been sponsored by

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*Pardon me fella's,  
but is this the way to Snailbeach ?*



# Corwen Slate Mine

7/5/90

**Members present:** Roland Gibson and Pete Eтчells.

We received some strange looks from passing motorists as we changed into our gear (no wisecracks please) at the bottom of the incline which runs down to the A5, there is room here for one car.

We then walked up the incline which still has some haulage cable and a few wrecked trucks scattered about. On reaching the top we descended into the open pit and entered the underground working by the only access through a hole in the N.W. corner.

The line of chambers lie approximately in a W.N.W. to E.S.E. direction and on this level are all connected, on the lower level perhaps about 3 or 4 chambers are connected and then for access to the next group you have to come back up to the “entrance” level, walk along and go down again.

All the out-by adits are run in, one with a “**DONOT ENTER**” notice.

There is a further level above “entrance” level accessed up an incline that still has track, and winding drum foundations at the top, this level is only small but has a nice hand winch intact. In fact there are about 5 or 6 winches in the mine with three of them in working order.

There is still a lot of track with points etc. in place especially on “entrance” level.

On entering the workings if you turn left and follow this working around to the right, a vertical hole in the floor of a small chamber is encountered. This emerges after 10 feet in the centre of the roof of a lower level chamber with about a further 30 feet of free abseil. (Bolts and hangers in place at top all in good condition). Can't remember how many times we abseiled through the hole but quite an experience hanging there up by the roof and looking around the chamber below.

Judging by the rope marks at the top it has been used extensively.

Walked around the surface remains and found another broken winch half way down the hill on the way back to the car.

A good trip of about 5 to 6 hours including investigating the surface workings.

**Pete Eтчells**

You may have already had a copy of this report on Corwen, however due to problematic “little grey cells” errors crept into the earlier version, this should be the definitive version!

## Club Videos

### Clive Rescue Practice

Follows the SCMC's intrepid band of rescuers, as they boldly rescue where no man has been rescued before. Stare in amazement as the helpless victim crosses the Maypole Winze (90 feet straight down!) without flinching - well almost.

Complete with Library case and designer label for **£5.00 + £1.20 p & p.**

### A Tour of Clive Copper Mine

Edwin Thorpe brings all his charm and talents to bear as he guides a “newcomer” to the mine around its assorted features. Coupled with dynamic computer graphics a brief insight into Clive Mine's development and history is possible, as Edwin explains (all without the aid of a script!).

Complete with library case:  
**£9.50 + £1.20 p & p.**

## Letter to the Editor

Having just read the latest newsletter and the mention of Neil Moss in the book review.

I thought he entered a tight descending passage head first minus ladder, got into difficulties and became increasingly disorientated by oxygen deficiency and acetylene inhalation from his carbide lamp, eventually dying from asphyxiation.

My point being that it was the head first entry that was the prime cause of this fatality.

### Dave Jukes

The Neil Moss accident is covered in the book "Race Against Time" by Jim Eyre and John Frankland in some detail on pages 48 to 53.

The account given is basically that members of the British Speleological Association were attempting to explore a narrow shaft off a high level chamber about half a mile from the end of the tourist cave.

The party had estimated the depth of the narrow shaft as 40 feet, but lowered nearly 75 feet of ladder down the very tight shaft. As Neil squeezed down the shaft (in a very muddy exposure suit), he kicked the spare ladder down below him, eventually landing in a small recess on a pile of loose rock and ladder.

He then tried to push the boulders blocking the way, on down the shaft, trapping the spare length of ladder amongst the debris, and thus reducing the air flow.

When he was tired and tried to ascend the ladder, he found he could only raise his feet an inch or two - not enough to reach the ladder rungs. The ladder couldn't be lifted from above, because it was trapped amongst the boulders.

With his body filling the elliptical 18 inch wide slit, it is thought that he was gradually overcome by lack of oxygen, due to his efforts and probably his carbide lamp - which was noted as getting very dim with a faint flame.

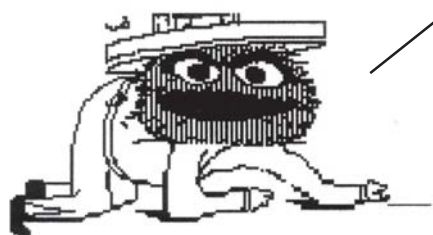
Due to the lack of a decent rope which could be used as an immediate lifeline when he got stuck ("No lifeline had been thought necessary as it was impossible to fall down the ladder"), the narrowness of the shaft and the lack of ventilation this accident unfortunately became a tragedy, despite the C.R.O.'s efforts.

Eyre and Frankland conclude that this accident is a classic example of how something trivial underground can lead to disaster. While inexperience, faulty equipment and failures to recognise and act effectively upon a serious situation, even lack of co-ordination amongst the emergency services (a lesson here for us I think), all played their part.

I really would recommend members read this book, it is both horrific and educational reading.

**Kelvin**

*You were right, that sump was contaminated!*



# Club Officers

**President :**

Alan Taylor

**Chairman:**

Alan Robinson

**Vice Chairman :**

Post Vacant - applications to the Secretary.

**Secretary :**

Steve Holding

**Treasurer :**

Bob Taylor

**NAMHO Rep.:**

Mike Moore

**Tackle & Rescue Officer:**

Neal Rushton

**'Below' Editor :**

Kelvin Lake

