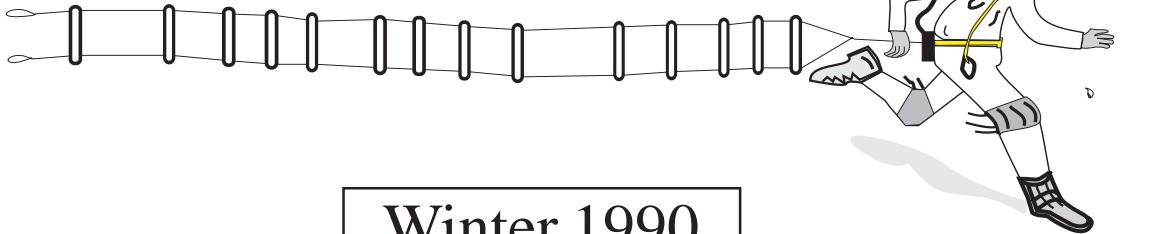


**B E L O W !**



Winter 1990

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## Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club

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Well Christmas comes but once a year, starting in September and ending who knows when! To enter into the “jolly” seasonal spirit, there is the customary Christmas Puzzle, its a bit harder this year, as there is a really extravagant prize riding on the first successful answer to reach the Editorial hovel before the March Club meeting.

What is this prize I hear you gasp - **NO** its not left over raffle prizes from the Annual Dinner, its a copy of “*Snailbeach The Final Frontier II-Down To the Forty*”. This will include the material you saw at the Dinner, but with extra material recorded at the Forty Yard Level (if any) added to it. However as this issue of “**Below**” goes to press, we have not as yet actually recorded any video at the Forty Yard Level, so you will have to keep your fingers crossed and hope we get some really bostin shots!

### Gem Shops

It seems to be the ‘IN’ thing these days for shops, in Up-market shopping malls, to be selling assorted minerals, geodes, gems etc.

Perusing round such a shop recently I was looking at the various Amethyst geode fragments, a snip at £250 or half a geode for £700 (admittedly it was about 2 foot across), little cards of Welsh, Yorkshire, Lancashire or Cornish minerals (£5 for any three !), when I spotted a large open sea-chest draped with velvet and three large stalactites resting on it.

I was some what taken aback by the size of the fragments, (the smallest about 2' 6" long and 2 to 3 inches in diameter) unfortunately there was nobody actually in the shop to ask about the origins of the stalactites, as most of the gems were from Brazil or Peru I assumed they were from caves in one of these countries.

However even if they were from foreign climes, should we really encourage people to buy cave formations from these countries when there would be an outrage if we were to start breaking off formations from British caves and flogging them at exorbitant prices!

### Peter Eggleston is Appealing

#### **Check Your Attics!**

The Club needs more CB “walkie talkies”, both as spares and so a greater number of people can be kept in touch underground.

If you have a **Harvard Zero-Two-Zero or Duette One+One** that you no longer use, Peter will pay up to £20 each for working sets in **GOOD** condition.

You can contact Pete at a Club meeting, or let me know and I’ll pass the information on.

**Kelvin**

# NCA Report on 8mm Anchor Failures

The following report on 8mm anchor failures has been received from the NCA Equipment Committee:-

There have been a number of 8mm anchor failures reported recently. One of these at a re-belay in Rowton Pot, seriously injured the caver concerned. There are an increasing number of the anchor failure reports and it is clear that more are likely to occur.

The reason for the problem appears to be that the anchors were not designed to have the bolts repeatedly removed, inserted and re-tightened, especially in the dirty cave environment. Many of the existing anchors have been in place for over 10 years and are simply wearing out.

The NCA Equipment Committee is urgently investigating an alternative which will be permanent and will minimise damage to the cave environment. It is also investigating the best means of extracting existing 8mm anchors to re-use the same sites. For the present the NCA recommend the following safety precautions be taken:

1. Bolts used must have a clean and undamaged thread.

2. The anchor itself should be checked as far as possible to ensure that it is clean and the treads are undamaged. Excessive movement of the bolt in the anchor is a warning of worn threads.
3. Care should be taken not to overtighten the bolt.
4. Cavers should use a shock absorbing knot (butterfly knot) at single bolt re-belays and a 'bowline on the bight' at twin bolt re-belays. At single bolt re-belays, rather than add to the existing environmental damage by placing additional bolts, consider using the shock absorbing system shown in diagram 1 (opposite).
5. Ensure that all main anchor points are backed up.

If you have any problems with anchor failures, please forward the information to:

**NCA Equipment Officer,  
Dave George  
21, Aspen Court  
Mansfield  
Notts. NG19 0ND**

## News Round-Up 1 by Kelvin Lake

### Wardell Armstrong

Have been appointed to look into methods of landscaping china clay waste tips as part of a DoE sponsored study into reclaiming the white spoil heaps around St. Austell.

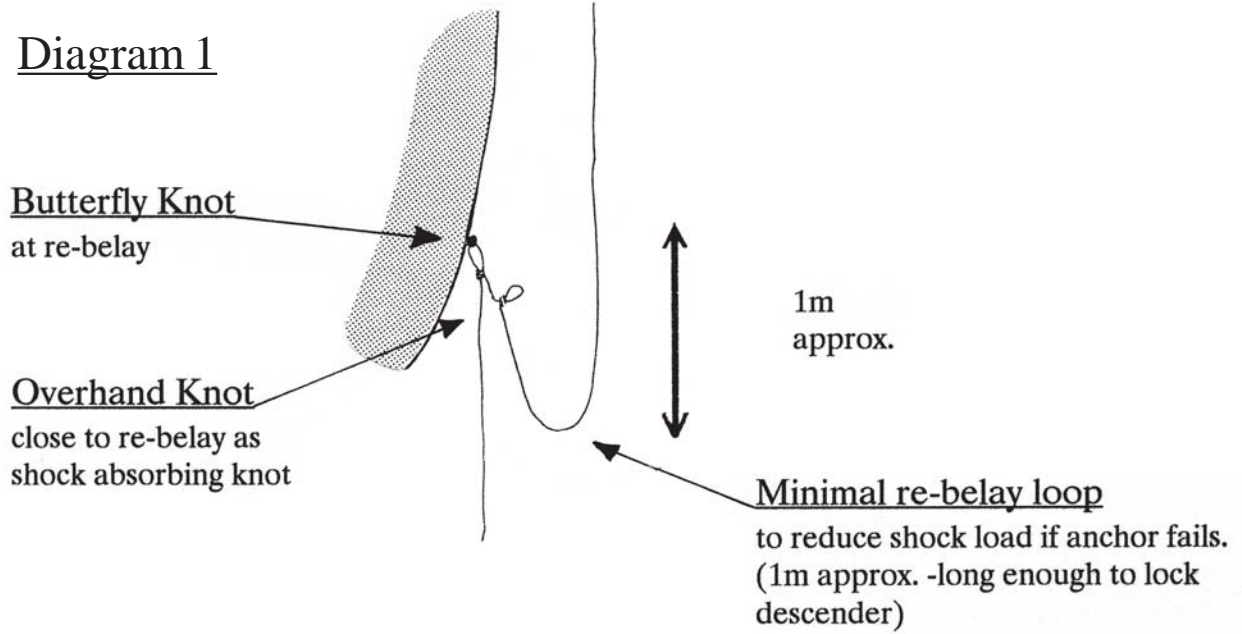
Some research into landscaping the tips has already been done by English China Clays (the world's biggest china clay company).

Wardells are to consider plans for re-vegetating and landscaping the tips and their potential for recreational and agricultural land.

Its surprising how things progress, during World War II school pupils in the Plymouth area were given the task of planting grasses and flowers on the spoil heaps around Plymouth to camouflage them and to prevent the enemy bombers using them for route finding.

# Shock Absorbing Knots at a Re-belay

Diagram 1



How to tie a Butterfly Knot

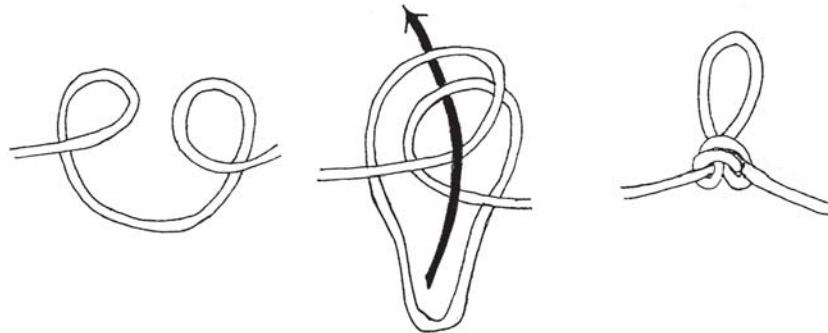
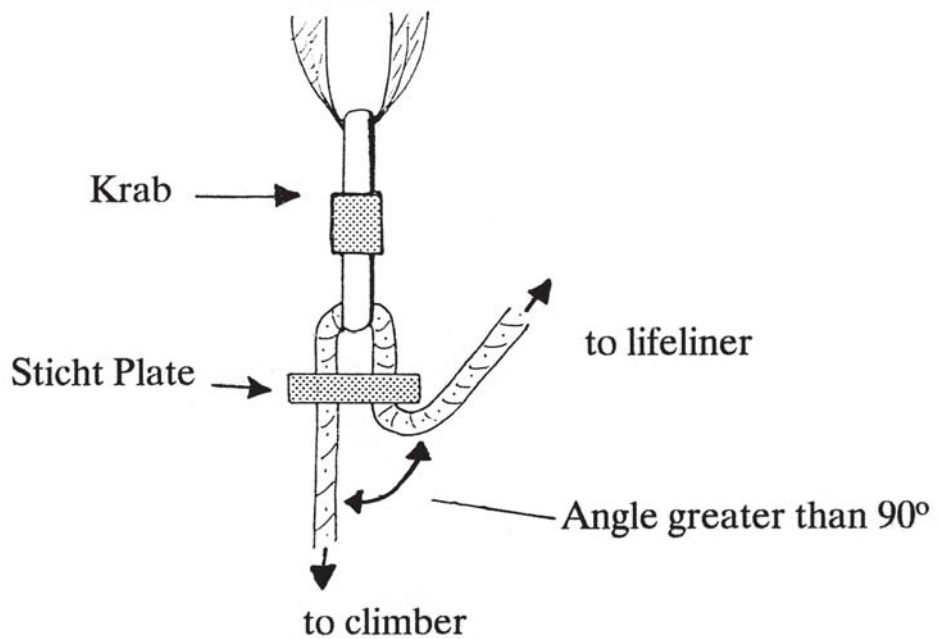


Diagram 2: Correct Use of a Sticht Plate



## Sticht Plate Use A Problem

It seems as if every item of equipment that we are using has problems these days. On occasions the Club has used a Sticht plate for lifelining, however it is important that the plate is used correctly!

Early in 1990 a Sticht plate, belayed to a bolt anchor 2m above a pitch head in Atlas Pot, failed to lock off when an exhausted 'ladder novice' fell near the top of a 20m climb, resulting in a fractured lower leg.

To be used safely the lifeliners end of the rope **MUST** emerge at 90 degrees from the Sticht plate (see diagram 2 on page 3). In the accident at Atlas Pot the plate was belayed in such a position that an angle of only 45 degrees existed between the emerging ropes. It is possible for old, stiff or wet ropes to lock off in this position but newer ropes are likely to run through the plate un-impeded!

Further tests on Sticht plates have also been carried out in America, where it was found to be difficult or impossible to hold a statically applied 200 kg load with 2 hands - this was using a CMI type Sticht plate (with the maltese cross shape). While 200 kg might seem an excessive load, it is considered to be equivalent to a casualty, stretcher and jockey, although I would question whether it is advisable to lifeline 2 people off one rope!

The recommended 'most effective' lifelining methods for the modern caver are a Sticht plate or an Italian or Munter hitch. While the hitches work well rigged at head height the Sticht does not, so be careful how you use it.

## News Round-Up 2 by Kelvin Lake

### Wheal Jane Due to Close

Carnon Consolidated Ltd. the owners of Wheal Jane Tin Mine, are trying to keep it open, until June 1991, by robbing the mine for Zinc. The ore is quite rich in Zinc, which has a relatively high market price, whilst the price of tin has dropped.

Wheal Jane needs tin prices of at least £6500 per ton to break even. In addition to the Zinc mining, to alleviate the costs of pumping, the mine is to be opened up as a tourist attraction with underground trips.

Further development on the surface, reportedly along the lines of Ironbridge(!) is planned to help offset the colossal pumping costs of £1.5m per annum. The "multi-faceted" tourist development will be

based on the mines surface operations.

By the time you read this outline planning permission for the scheme should have been given.

If the company were to stop pumping, it is unlikely that the mine would ever re-open due to volume of water entering the mine - estimated at 6,000 gallons per minute.

The nearby South Crofty Mine, which is run by the same company has much lower production costs, so the price of tin would have to drop to £3500 per ton from the current £4200 per ton, before South Crofty was threatened.

# Christmas Prize Puzzle

**Across**

1. Base for the C.R.O. (7)
2. Single rope \_\_\_ (9)
3. Name for people who initiate Silver Mines (11)
4. By doing this, you can reach Black Tom at the 40 (6)
5. A drum for holding cable (4)
6. Former West Country Forest and tin mining area (8)
7. You do this to snap or bait (3)
8. Only this makes perfect (8)
9. Comes first, before All-wedd (4)
10. Water course to a mine (4)
11. Semi-numerical pot hole (2)
12. Level into a hill, often for drainage (4)
13. A fault found in caves (4)
14. Cut off by this in Winter (4)
15. Vital element in pitch rigging (4)
16. Used in mines as a support (4)
17. Government body supervising workers well being (1,1,1)
18. Genuine Rolands (4)
19. Metallic mineral (3)
20. A coal mine roof can do this (3)
21. Do this to someone if hit them with a rock (4)
22. Can't do this to a shark oversuit (3)
23. Second part of 28 Across (4)
24. 8mm versions can fail (4)
25. Your latest gear looks \_\_\_ (3)
26. Mineral compound of Cobalt, Nickel & Manganese - black speckles in pepper & salt rock (8)
27. 5.4 version hit Shropshire recently (10)
28. Famous cave with tidal entrance on River Wye (5)
29. A nickname for a pair of safety loops (8)
30. Strip of material used at a re-belay (4)
31. Worked with fireclay at the Rock Mine, doesn't fool everyone when it glistens (7)
32. Tall feature on Lords Hill (7)
33. General name for a mining area or group of mines (4)
34. Hard lumpy stuff, doesn't have to be lettered (4)
35. Layer of minerals or rock (3)
36. A roof can do this or even you if a rope breaks (4)
37. Shallow mining area in St. Georges, Telford: The \_\_\_ (4)
38. Derbyshire lead miners can do this to old mines (4)
39. Pile of unwanted mine material (3)
40. Used in some remote controls & electronic distance measurers (1,1)
41. Metallic mineral deposit underground (4)
42. Main route in a mine (4)
43. Dangerous vapours (3)
44. Good SRT novice Pot in Ingleborough (4)
45. Very old South Shropshire mine site, first electric winder in Shropshire installed here in 1915 (3)
46. Natural underground cavity (4)
10. Its in the air when exiting caves in winter (3)
11. Derbyshire equipment firm (6,8)
12. Foreign caving trip (10)
13. Vital piece of equipment for a Club camping trip (4)
14. Coal, copper, lead, zinc, iron, clay, witherite, fluorspar, limestone, sand, salt and calcite mining county (10)
15. Used on a rope, but also a lamp (9)
16. Powered by gas, steam or electric (6)
17. Permanently water filled zone in a cave (8)
18. Welsh underground "wireless" telephone (8)
19. Person in charge of a mine cage underground (8)
20. A "victim" has to do this on a rescue practice (4)
21. You can do this to a line, but Neal has to take care (3)
22. The 112 yard level is definitely this (3)
23. Very edge of a shaft (3)
24. Compulsory head gear (3)
25. Point where water almost reaches a cave passage roof (4)
26. Crystalline form of calcium carbonate (7)
27. Makes a choke in caves (7)
28. Vertical descent in a cave (5)
29. Worlds first underground rescue group (1,1,1)
30. South Wales cave complex that's a bit of a dinosaur (9)
35. Heavy mineral worked at Huglith - old spelling (6)
41. A Blow George (11,3)
44. Black and White striped level (6)
46. Coniston Copper mine county (7)

**Down**

1. Famous tin mining county (8)
2. Rocky outcrop on the moors in Devon (3)
3. Time taken to leave the 112 yard level (3)
4. Vertical hole in the roof of a cave (4)
5. Butterfly or Artillery \_\_\_ (4)
6. Deposit ON clothing after a Snailbeach trip (3)
7. An in-famous video group (1,1,1)
8. Female of the species that gives its name to a mine entrance (3)
9. Cavers are considered this by the public (3)

# News Round-Up 3

## by Kelvin Lake

### Geevor Tours

The tour of Geevor costs £12 per head for a 2-3 hour underground tour which includes descending 1,500 feet down the Victory Shaft, and eventually reaching the 2,200 foot level out under the sea.

If you are interested in a tour, guided by one of the miners, you have to book early as the tours are over-subscribed.

### P.D.M.H.S. Appeal

At long last P.D.M.H.S. are in a position to rebuild the Mine Agents House at Magpie Mine. "Older" Club Members will recall that it was destroyed by fire in 1967, and apart from the National Park Authority re-roofing it, little has been done since.

The Society have now acquired a long term lease for the mine site and are trying to raise funds to rebuild the House. Although they hope to get some funding from charitable trusts **ANY** donations, however small will be gratefully received.

If you wish to contribute, send your cheque (payable to "PDMHS Ltd." and marked 'Magpie Cottage Fund') to :-

**Mr. R. Paulson, Hon. Treasurer, Holt House,  
Holt Lane, Matlock, Derbys, DE4 5GQ.**

As an aside, the lease, specifically excludes any underground exploration and any unauthorised descent of shafts on the site. Written permission is needed from the land and mineral rights owners before going underground.

### Mining Museum to Close

The superb Peak District Mining Museum at Matlock Bath is due to be closed as the site owners, West Derbyshire District Council plan to re-develop the site. The museum may be moved to new premises, but nothing has been finalised yet.

In light of PDMHS long term lease at Magpie could this from the venue or would housing items like the Coalbrookdale hydraulic pump prove too difficult?

Where ever it goes, I hope they will be able to re-create the climbing shafts, etc. which form an integral and enjoyable part of the museum for visitors of all backgrounds.

### Silica Mine Tragedy

A participant on a company leadership course in July, Neville Groom, apparently fell in the Glyn Neath Silica Mines and died. The post mortem later revealed that the cause of death was a heart attack.

Let us hope this tragedy does not prompt the authorities to attempt to seal the mines - as has been considered in the past, by "blowing" in the entrance. For novice tours the mines are ideal, yet they still provide an opportunity for more sporty trips, with cave divers regularly exploring the flooded levels.

Incidentally the valley below the Silica Mines contains the remains of an ICI Black Powder Works (formerly Curtis and Harvey). The site has recently been purchased by the Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority, who intend to construct an archaeological trail around the site.

[A compilation video tape of a "guided" tour of the valley with a former works employee and featuring Edwin Thorpe as the interviewer is available from I.A.Recordings (running time 2 hours!)]

### Cumbrian Rescue

A major rescue was staged during November at Coniston Copper Mine, when a Youth Hostel Warden was seriously injured after falling 100 feet down one of the shafts. Christopher Brown from the Copper Mines Youth Hostel was finally airlifted to hospital after an 11 hour operation.

# News Round-Up 4

## by Ivor Brown

### Museum Cottage

A derelict building, probably a miners cottage dating from 1834 adjacent to the car park at Grinshill has been offered for use as a museum or to the IGMT as an exhibit for Blists Hill.

### Moss Saved

Whixali Moss has been purchased by the Nature Conservancy Council to be preserved as a peat bog.

The peat quarry has been closed. This quarry was the first one ever visited officially by IJB (in 1950). It had a narrow gauge railway system at that time.

*[In fact a diesel loco and "train" of wagons still exists on part of the system near the peat factory. Ed.]*

### Ludlow O.A.P.'s

According to the Daily Telegraph (Nov. 3, 1990) evidence of the oldest land animals ever discovered, dating back 414 million years, have been found in a sandstone deposit near Ludlow.

### Indonesian Mining

IJB spent some time in October 1990 in Indonesia. He was based in Java and was supposed to be checking and evaluating consultants' reports for a company changing over from tin dredging and timber production to opencast coal mining.

However because of doubts about the report, most of the time was spent in the jungles of Samatra. Seeking coal outcrops in fast-flowing streams in the monsoon period with leeches, mosquitoes and snakes (not forgetting other nasties and tigers too!) does not make a holiday.

It was interesting though!!

### Mining Pictures

An exhibition of paintings by Martin Eldridge entitled "Snailbeach to Stiperstones" had many excellent views, often from unusual angles, and was a real sell-out. The mining pictures fetched £65 to £400 each.

### Elton Gallery

An exhibition in November, at the Elton Gallery, Coalbrookdale, sponsored by British Coal covered the recent rescue dig at the Newdale Opencast site. One find seems to be a section of the earliest piece of iron rail in the world, dating from 1767.

### Ladywood Bridge

The proposed new Ladywood Bridge at Madeley Wood almost rests on the adits shown on the earliest mining map (1621) known for the area. See diagram 3.

### Twenty Five Years Ago

From early Club Newsletters

### October 1965

Six trips had been made to the Brasgyll Gorge, a cave named Cathedral had been found. Members descending a 120ft. shaft at Burgam found explosives but little else.

### November 1965

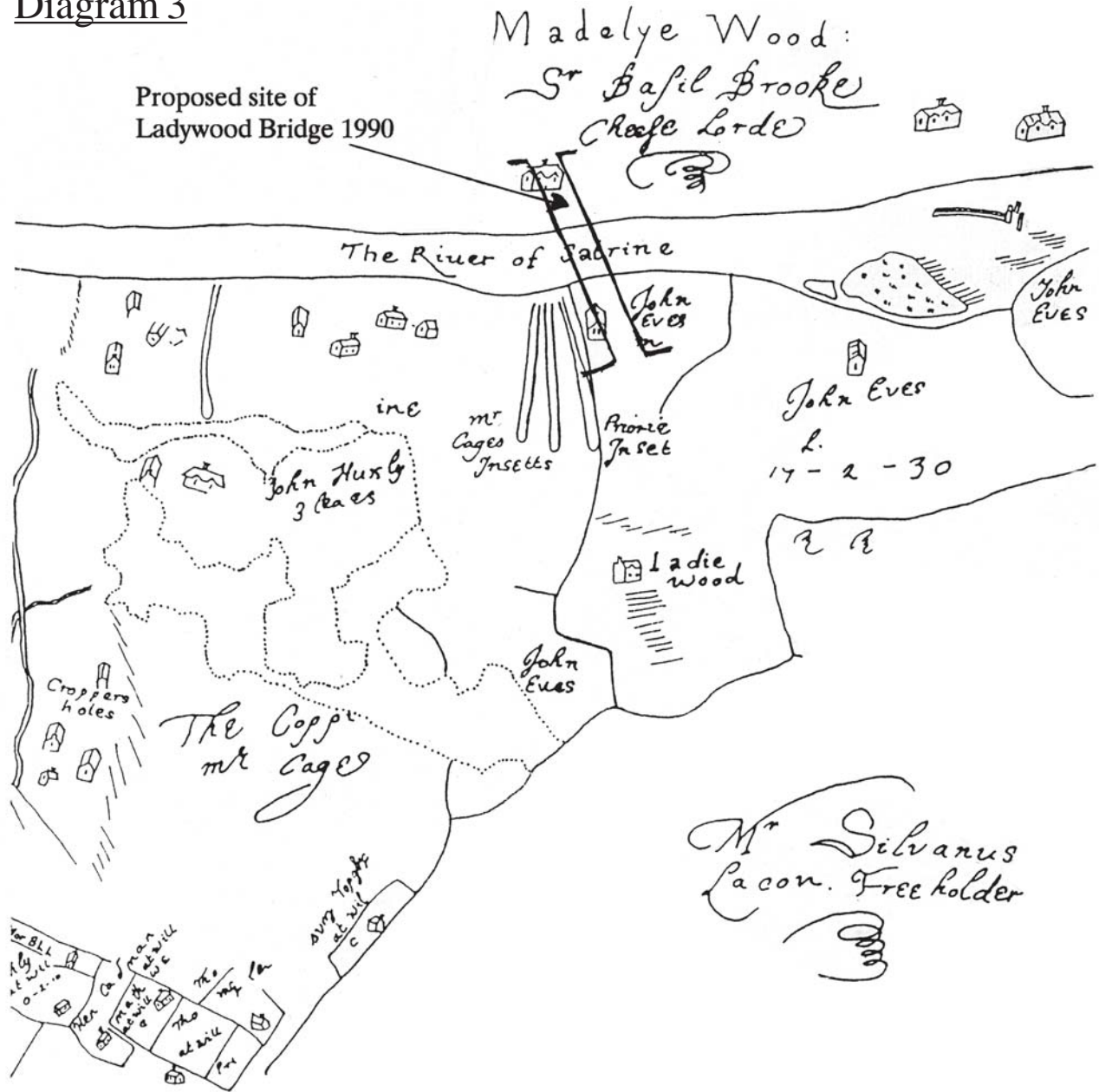
Visits to the above continued and there was a rescue call-out to an accident at Minera. The Club produced its own Christmas Cards. IJB published his first Book Review.

### December 1965

Visits to Corwen and Horseshoe Pass Slate Mines amongst others. Limestone mines in South Shropshire located. Christmas and New Year Parties held at Club house, beer to be provided by DRA.

# Early Mining Map c1621

Diagram 3



The earliest mining map of part of the Coalbrookdale Coalfield.

Extract from “**The Plott of Broseley**” c1621 by Samuel Parson (SRO1224/1/23) showing ‘insetts’ that is “adits” on the south bank of the River Severn almost beneath the proposed Ladywood Bridge, 1990.



# BOOKS

## The Mines of Shropshire & Montgomeryshire with Staffordshire and Cheshire

by R.Burt et al.

This is the ninth volume in the series on the metalliferous mining areas of Britain. Drawing on official government statistics, it gives details of output, ownership, management and employment at over 250 mines. Grid references have been added.

The soft back copy containing 104 pages costs £3.95 (postage extra) and is available from:

The Mining History Group, Dept. of Economic History, University of Exeter, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX44RJ

Every member should have one, at this price a real bargain, especially as the Club logo appears on the dedication page.

Hard back copies cost £7.50.

## Minerals of the English Lake District - Caldbeck Fells,

by M.P.Cooper & C.J.Stanley

The main part of this book is a survey of 175 minerals noted in the veins of the Caldbeck Fells. Each mineral is fully discussed, including, its colour, crystal form, where it has been found and where it is now stored.

The book is well illustrated with colour pictures of about 25 specimens, most of the best ones were discovered over 100 years ago (the specimens not the photographs!).

The book is very well researched and presented. For mine historians it includes a chapter on the brief history of the Caldbeck Fells Mines and an Appendix which lists all the minerals found at each mine - I hope it won't cause a spate of "dump" robbing!

Published by the Natural History Museum, it costs £14.95.

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