

### Paramedic 'Gong'

Phil Thompson, the paramedic who went down to tend to Pete Eggleston during the Cornwall rescue has been awarded a bronze medallion and certificate of commendation by the Royal Humane Society.

Phil says "it was the toughest job he has ever had to do" - it was the first time he had ever been underground, and he was obviously nervous.

Two other people involved in the rescue have also been given 'awards': Peter Berriman, Ambulance Technician receives an RHS testimonial on vellum and fire brigade Station Officer Dave Edwards a Certificate of Commendation.

### Cornish Up-date

Due to the high-level of interest in Pete's accident at the time, plus the awards (see above) to people involved it seems that the accident will definitely make it on to the BBC's "999" programme.

By the time you read this, Andy Yapp, Stewart Tomlins, Adrian Pearce and Pete Eggleston will have been interviewed (in Bristol) by the programme makers.

The re-enactment of the "drama" is to take place at a tourist mine or museum site in Cornwall (may be in Zennor?).

Rumours that Arnold Schwarzenegger has been offered the part of 'The Stope Diver' are greatly exaggerated.

### Littleton Winders

The 2 electric winders from Littleton Colliery have been brought by Nuclear Electric for use at Sellafield Power Station, Cumbria.

Markham & Co. of Chesterfield have won the contract for moving the winders to their new site where they will be used for the sinking of 2 new hard rock shafts into underground nuclear waste storage chambers.

### Underground TV

On Friday 5th August the ITV Network launched a new series called 'Body Heat', where 3 teams of contestants compete in various macho events.

In the first episode, heavily promoted before hand, the final event was a race from 250' inside Giants Hole to the top of the nearby hill.

The 'course' involved a run, then a 30' climb, followed by another run, then a 20' climb up a waterfall, followed by a dash out of Giants, and a 200 yard scramble uphill (the hill is 1 in 2 in parts).

I think it was the first time underground for all the contestants, but they seemed to make a good job of prussiking up the waterfall.

I can't remember who won - I was not really watching (honestly)!!

*Kelvin*

### Cwmorthin

It is understood that the publishers of the Rhosydd book are to follow this with an occasional series of books on Welsh sites.

One of the first in the series is likely to be an up-dated version of J.G. Isherwood's Cwmorthin book. It is believed that this will incorporate new photographs, including some in colour, re-drawn maps and form a standard for the style and 'look' of the new series.

### Internet

If you have been following all the 'hype' about the Internet or Information Super-highway (as the media like to call it), you will be pleased to know that the Club now has a connection, so we won't be by-passed by the Info-bahn!

The Club's e-mail address is:

scmc@lake22.demon.co.uk

Unfortunately I haven't tracked down any caving/speleo information yet, anyone got any suggestions as to where to look?

*Happy  
Christmas  
and a  
Merry New Year*



# News Round-up 1

## by Ivor Brown

### White Grit

The accounts of the Welsh Mines Preservation Trust show that the organisation spent £50 on repairs to White Grit Engine house, South Shropshire in the year to March 1993 and nothing in the following year. In addition a considerable amount of voluntary effort was put into the project.

### Tar Tunnel

The Tar Tunnel re-opened in mid-September "after refurbishment". Two lengths have been re-bricked, new drains put in, new gas monitoring, new lighting (awful), new fan for ventilation. The reception area has not been re-ramped yet.

### Snailbeach Tips

Work is underway regrading and 'blanketing' the Snailbeach White Tips, further work has been done underground at Lord's Hill and Roberts Level. Three buddles have also been exposed at the bottom of the tips, and may be preserved in-situ.

### An Inspector calls

In September 1994, IJB was showing some members of BCRA around Snailbeach when he noticed a well dressed but yellow jacketed gent at the back of the party. Looking closer he identified him as a member of the Mines and Quarries Inspectorate, who explained that seeing a group he decided to "come along for the ride".

**BEWARE:** Both Snailbeach and the Tar Tunnel are now registered with the Inspectorate. With only 20 deep mines in full production there are still over 40 Mines Inspectors (not counting Quarries Inspectors who have been hived off from their control) - but they also have to keep an eye on over 100 small mines and up to 40 tourist and other mines - they say.

### Lilleshall Help

Information is required by Mr. Michael Lane, Bury St. Edmunds (Tel: 01284-830264). Mr. Lane's grandfather Robson

Moffit was 'manager' at Lilleshall Mines in 1879 to about 1883. While at Lilleshall he employed the Mines Inspector Mr. Wynn's son, but had cause to sack him. The story then goes that there was a pit accident in which 6 men died about 1883 and Mr. Wynn declared that Mr. Moffit was responsible, so that Lord Gower would sack him, which he did.

After this incident, Mr. Moffit became manager at Birchenwood Colliery, Kidsgrave, North Staffs.

IJB has been unable, so far, to locate details of the accident in which 6 men died - **can anyone help?**

IJB has found an accident in 1875 (some 10 years before) at Lilleshall in which 3 men died when the winding chain broke. The Inspector stated "*if the 'competent person' appointed had really been a 'competent person' who did his duty efficiently the faulty links in the chain would have been detected - and the accident avoided! To prevent a recurrence the general manager has dismissed all persons to whom neglect this sad accident has been traced*".

Perhaps all cavers should bear this in mind when taking on responsibility for shaft equipment.

### Boat Level Plans

Clwyd Record Office have 3 plans in their Holywell-Halkyn Mining and Tunnel Co. collection showing the proposed extension of the Minsterley Boat Level and the Nind Level, all of about 1909. The company does not appear to have done any work on site.

### Sardinia Mines

IJB has just returned from Sardinia where he has been assisting in a Convention to consider "Re-use of Old Mining Sites". Most of the lead, zinc and coal (lignite and 'anthracite') underground mines are either closed or 'ticking over' pending decisions. They have great plans for conversion to tourist mines, theme parks, residential activity centres, business parks etc. Most sites are extensive, heavily

polluted and remote. Visits were made to 2 lead/zinc mines and a underground lignite mine. Also to the Grotto di San Giovanni, where a 2 lane road uses a cave stream passage as a ½ mile tunnel (caving by car!).

### Coal Investments Ltd

This organisation (formerly Geevor Mines) now controls 4 British Coal mines: 2 in Staffs., 1 in Warwickshire, 1 in Yorkshire and 2 small mines, 1 in South Wales and 1 in Cumbria. They are also the "preferred bidder" for Annesley/Bentinck Colliery.

### Old Coal Mines

As from Nov. 1st 1994 the Coal Authority (not British Coal) has been responsible for licensing coal mining operations, dealing with physical liabilities arising out of past mining which cannot be be privatised eg: subsidence damage claims, abandoned mineshafts, managing and disposing of property and maintaining and making available mining records.

Their address is 200 Lichfield Lane, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4RG

### Glyn Pits

Probably the saddest 'preserved' mine site in Britain is that at Glyn Pits. The engines were initially preserved shortly after they ceased work, so were in good condition. They were scheduled in 1974, but all attempts to consolidate or restore them have failed.

The Welsh Mines Preservation Trust have given it one more go, before the site is irretrievably ruined. This involves a staged plan, the first part of which is complete (and involved clearing scrub and general tidying up).

It is hoped eventually to restore the engines, in stages, to steam condition. The site owner is also hoping to create a public forest park and believes a restored Glyn Pits would complement this scheme. Another long term aim is to relay the mineral railway for half a mile to bring visitors to the site.

# Rorrington Mine Update

Last October the south Shropshire project moved to Rorrington Mine, a surface survey was carried out by various Club Members led by the intrepid Adrian Pearce. Meanwhile various other members were in the process of clearing the fall at the first airshaft (not shown on the survey of 1917 and 1963) in the deep adit, this turned out to be a relatively easy task. After lowering the water level Steve Powel ventured on and reached the second airshaft and found a more daunting task ahead. The shaft itself was blocked 20 feet above with hanging boulders and loose soil, while the adit was blocked to the roof with a strong flow of water issuing from the top. Due to bat hibernation and the foreseeable technical problems ahead we decided to retire for the winter recess.

Spring '94 came along and various trips were made to further lower the water levels and to shore up the sides of the 2 airshafts so that we could proceed with digging through the fall. Work continued until July when Pete Etchells and John Davies (with the help of other members) broke through the fall and found themselves confronted with shoulder deep water. They decided to take a quick look and an hour later they returned stating that they had run out of time, but the Adit had continued to various levels and stopes. Mike Moore, John Davies, Rob Southwick and myself retraced their footsteps along a quarter of a mile length of chest deep, very cold water, until No.1 shaft cross cut was reached, but decided not to proceed due to what we believed to be a 'bad air' situation.

On August 14th 1994, with various pieces of technical equipment, exploration resumed again. Colin and Liz Armfield decided to put their newly acquired Davy lamp to the test and proceeded to just past No.1 shaft cross cut, where they detected 'bad air' (Carbon Dioxide) and so returned to the surface.

Mike Worsfold, Rob Southwick and myself proceeded with the oxygen meter to the same point and detected oxygen

levels down to 16.4% and at this point we also made a quick exit.

Knowing that other passages and stopes had been glimpsed by Pete and John previously it was decided to return yet again with breathing apparatus. September 4th saw Club Members kitted out at the entrance of the adit, I decided not to burden myself with air bottles, due to a neck injury (coward). It was left up to Mike Worsfold and Steve Powel to become the hero's of the day. With various Club Members on the surface and with Steve's friend acting as an emergency back-up with extra air, off the intrepid duo went.

Two and a half hours later saw the safe return of the party with an update.

They had pushed past No.1 shaft cross

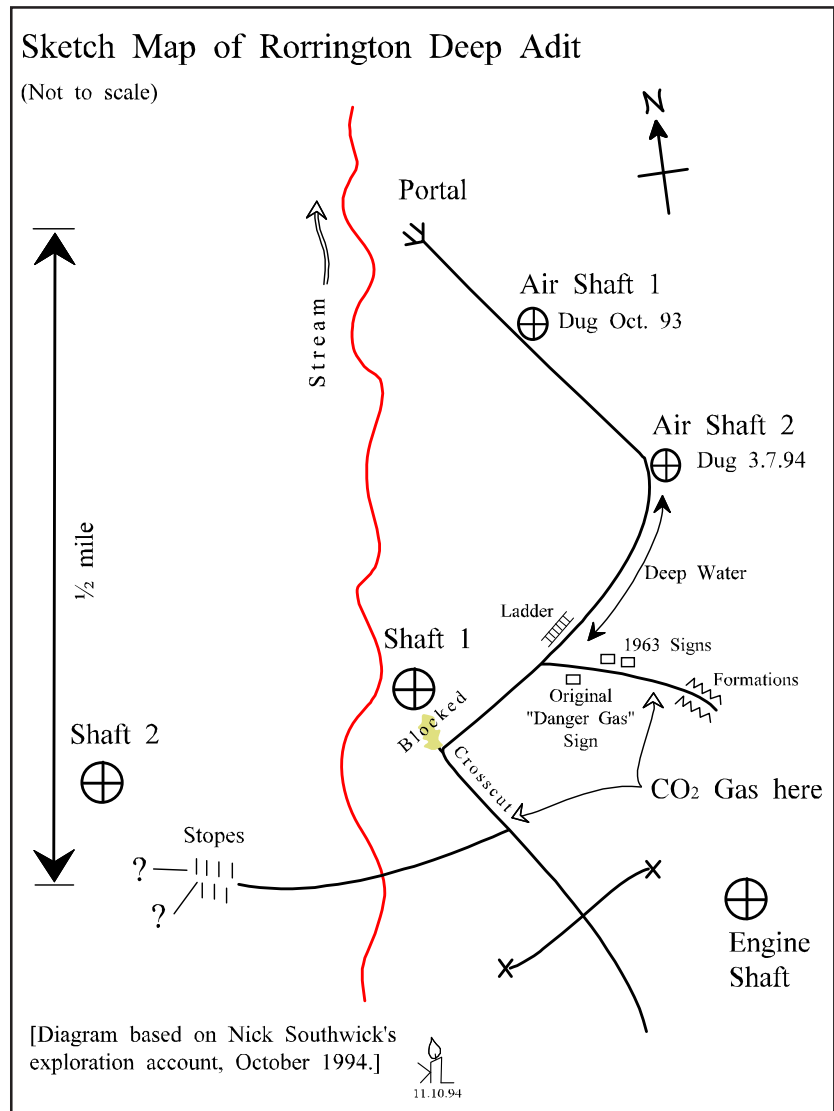
cut and had come to various passages and stope workings - none of which they had time to explore fully. The adit level continued and the air appeared to be getting better, but this could not be confirmed without the oxygen meter (it had been playing up), so the Saga continues .... could someone come up with an idea of how to get air into the far reaches of this interesting mine?

Thanks to all of those members who took part.

*Nick Southwick*

## Notes:

1. No entry to this mine without permission of the estate (via Adrian Pearce).
2. Bad air (CO<sub>2</sub>) conditions prevail in this mine - **BEWARE!!**



# The Dragon Cave Diving Expedition

## Part 2: by Dig Hastilow

Having completed our exploration of the Akiyoshi-dai caving area in the far west corner of the main island of Honshu, we re-filled our trusty Toyota van and headed south again, crossing the impressive suspension bridge that joins Honshu with the southern island of Kyushu.

### Iwata-do

The cave we were heading for was Iwata-do, which has a massive entrance so big they built a temple in it! There is a resurgence a short way down the valley and this system obviously takes huge quantities of water in the rainy season.

The water was very slow moving at that time of the year which made the sumps very clear initially, but once the silt is stirred up then it is also slow for the 'viz' to clear.

We made several recce trips at the resurgence end, initially taking underwater photos before our activities stirred up the 'viz'. Nick joined the resurgence sump to the lake behind the temple, while I dived from the lake end to try to locate the route upstream. In the now murky water the only way on I could find was a small hole in the floor which I descended to 35m (115ft.) to be confronted by a committing squeeze. With my head beginning to feel the effects of nitrogen narcosis I tied the line off with some difficulty and left the squeeze for Martyn.

Martyn slipped through but was

defeated by a narrow rifty section at 40m depth. This obviously was not the main river passage.

Nick went in the next day and in the settled 'viz' located a much more promising hole amongst a pile of boulders. A huge passage immediately opened out in front of him, descending down beyond the 50m (165ft.) level but as he glanced up he realised that the boulder pile he had squeezed through was perched very precariously above his head ..... With the passage going to depths beyond the limit of air diving, and the boulder pile situation looking dodgy we moved to the next site. had Iwata-do been on Mendip.....

### Inazumi Cave

This cave was our final challenge. As in all the other sites we had the mandatory press conference in order to secure our accommodation.

This is a show cave, the final sump pool of which had been dived by the Japanese for 300m. Martyn, Nick and myself dived off on a recce/photo trip in excellent 'viz'. Martyn turned back at 150m as planned, and Nick and I continued to the deepest point of the sump at 42m (140ft.). Here the sump is at an elbow, we poked our heads through to find an ascending shaft. According to the Japanese cave divers this was the limit of exploration, but there was a line that continued....

Martyn made the next dive, and reached

the end of the line at 33m depth. He laid another 50m of line up to a depth of 25m.

The distances and depths involved at this site were taxing to our equipment. Even in the relatively (compared to England) warmer water, the extended decompression required in only a semi-dry suit resulted in a very very cold diver. The next and final dive of the expedition was made by Nick, and the passage descended again to over 45m (150ft.) depth before reaching a tantalising ascending pot. However these depths mark the limits of safe air diving, and another push on site would benefit from mixed gases and dry suits for thermal protection.

### The mystery dive line?

As we were packing up we were visited by a commercial diver who had seen us on the local TV. Many years ago he had been contracted by the show cave owner to try to locate new chambers so that the show cave could be extended. The feats achieved by this diver and his colleagues in the early 1960's were astounding. Using only single tanks and valves, and single hand held lamps they made extensive penetrations into the cave system often to great depths. On many occasions they had lamp failures and had to grope their way long distances underwater in complete darkness. A valve failure would have meant almost certain death, but fortunately they all lived through their contract. We were impressed.

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## Mine Headframes

There are now over 50 preserved steam mine engines in Britain, but it is doubtful if there are that number of preserved headframes!

Headframes take many forms; stone, brick, concrete, timber and steel and many shapes, some of which are regional.

It is said that traditionally Shropshire headframes are like a letter 'H', those of Staffordshire like a letter 'A' (in much the same way as runner beans are

stacked in an H in Shropshire and A in Staffs!).

Shropshire (Telford) is fortunate it still has headframes at Grange, Blists Hill (2) and Woodside (mock-up) but unfortunate in that 2 wood frames each 100 years old plus, have been lost at Snailbeach in recent years.

No new wood headframes have been built since the 1911 Act said all new ones had to be of iron [*apart of course*

*from the one at Blists Hill and the mock-up at Woodside*].

There are groups of enthusiasts on the Continent actually preserving frames and recording them - perhaps we should organise something in Britain - it seems they need friends more than steam engines, if they are not to go the way of the dinosaur.

*Ivor Brown*

# ‘Below’ Christmas Puzzle

Here is a message from the Editor, unfortunately when typing it on my word grinder, the letters have been lost and replaced by numbered dashes.

## Message from the Editor

Luckily if you solve the clues, the numbered dashes for the answers match up with the numbered slots in the message, so you should be able to decode it [What a co-incidence!]



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38  
 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55  
 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 . 63 . 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71  
 72 73 74 75 , 76 77 78

## The Clues

1. Term used for a shaft that does NOT come to surface

— — — Z —  
71 9 34 29

2. Famous Shropshire Lead Mine

— — — — — — — — — —  
10 37 2 27 18 48 50 13 6 1

3. Last working tin mine in Cornwall - visited at Easter

— — — — — — — — — — F — — —  
14 16 47 11 7 30 8 23 15 5

4. Galena is it's main source

— — — — —  
19 53 17 38

5. A funny cave passage

— — — — — — — — — —  
3 21 22 57 31 11 33 45

6. East Poole .... Engine

— — — — —  
71 26 40 12

7. One of the main minerals produced by Cornish Mines

— — — — —  
15 42 41

8. A Northern Gill, named after a slope

— — — — —  
28 36 39 4

9. The last Shropshire pit to work this, was Granville

— — — — —  
78 16 74 46

10. Winch builder extra-ordinaire !!

— — — — — — — — — —  
11 2 68 58 23 54

11. A waste tip

— — — — — — — — — —  
24 60 15 49 16 47 43 38

12. Club members like rolling in this, it cools the blood!

— — — — —  
51 47 38

13. A secondary mineral produced at Snailbeach - ideal for galvanisers

Z — — — — —  
77 61 6

14. Shropshire Mine with Indian connections?

— — — — — — — — — —  
30 18 9 32 65

15. A natural hole

— — — — — — — — — —  
45 13 59 70

16. A Welsh natural hole

— — — — — F — — — — —  
23 35 16

17. Figure 8, Petzel Stop, Rack

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —  
38 73 20 78 29 69 38 50 66 25

18. Climb up a rope

— — — — — — — — — —  
62 67 47 55 63 27 56

19. Town near Snailbeach

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —  
64 33 34 10 11 53 75 19 57 72

20. Old fashioned winding engine that used a horse

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —  
76 23 8 14 65 44 40 37

21. 3 of these were un-earthed on the Snailbeach tips

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —  
52 47 38 38 46 70 20



# Mines in the Harz Mountains, Germany

1987

Anne and I first visited the Harz Mountains area of Germany in August 1987. In those days the fence between West and East was still very much in place with black, yellow and red marker posts, minefields, sentry boxes and constant border patrols.

The Harz was the highest part of the border dominated by the Brocken at 1,142 metres (3,747ft.) topped by the domes of its early warning stations on the western side. Two thirds of the old Harz mining region were thus inaccessible in the east.

## Clausthal-Zellerfeld

On the 26th August we arrived at Clausthal-Zellerfeld, once two villages which combined to make the chief mining town of the region, sitting right on top of the mineral veins and once surrounded by masses of early mine workings and deep shafts. But this is no Snailbeach, there are no tips to be seen today, no old headgears, in fact no obvious remains at all. Even the famous mining museum is by no means easy to find and requires careful searching for.

All the remains have been carefully landscaped and what is not built on is covered with trees. No doubt with time and guidance one could find sites of interest remaining, but time was not on our side. Also there was a constant problem with the deterioration of timber structures so that from an early period most headgears and working areas were contained in large timber buildings whose function is not obvious outside.

The Museum, once located, in the northern half of the town is fascinating and contains many working models of winding, pumping and man-engines, many artefacts and a large three dimensional plan of the whole area.

The guides give long enthusiastic descriptions of local mining and the working practices of the last century, but unfortunately only in German! Having seen the many models, maps

and artefacts one could be excused for leaving, but a semi-inconspicuous door at the rear of the museum leads into the yard on which an array of buildings containing the crushing and sorting house, windlass shaft, a gin operated winding house, a hammer house, and a waterwheel power house.

A passageway beneath the crusher house leads down into a series of mine tunnels which appear so authentic that they may be original! In these are man-size dummies illustrating various types of underground work, and the foot of a full size man-engine with cast pump tubes etc.

This tunnel eventually emerges in the waterwheel house. Whether all this is a total reconstruction or was part of an actual mine site is nearly impossible to tell, although the museum itself is of some antiquity, unfortunately all the written information was in German.

Afterwards we did find some dumps by the roadside and a limekiln which reminded us of Wales, also a reconstructed full scale exhibit of a waterwheel flat rod pumping system.

A 6 mile mining heritage trail proved disappointing as all the remains had been bulldozed long ago. All that remained were triangular yellow plaques among the trees which indicated that this or that mine had existed there from say 1532 to 1891 etc. There had been some attempt in places to reconstruct exhibits such as a charcoal burners hut etc.

## Samson Mine

The next day we went to the town of St. Andreasburg, as usual there were no signs until we found the actual buildings of the Samson Mine which closed in 1910. The first contained a very deep shaft with a totally enclosed wooden headgear and the other a gigantic wooden waterwheel.

There was the 'Fahrkunst' a double pole man-engine, quite remarkable, with a museum of mining artefacts nearby.

The pathway led down into a pit and then through a tunnel to daylight.

1992

Three years later Germany was reunited and the ghastly border fence removed, in 1992 Anne and I decided to make a second visit in an attempt to visit mining sites which were said to be plentiful on the eastern side of the old border.

On the 18th August we made a return visit to the Museum at Clausthal-Zellerfeld studying with interest the many wooden working models, and the underground galleries allowing more time than previously.

The next day we went back to the Samson Mine at St. Andreasburg, but the site was not yet open and with large numbers of children noisily waiting we moved across to the St. Catherine Mine opposite. This was an adit leading to very extensive workings of which we only saw a small part, our guide was an extremely knowledgeable ex-miner who demonstrated drilling techniques etc. but unfortunately only spoke German.

He showed us several worked areas including a massive floodlit stope. Afterwards as Samson Mine was now closed for the day we drove along miles of forestry tracks looking for signs of mines which were marked on the map but we saw nothing of interest.

## Into the East....

That evening we crossed over into the old East Germany beyond the lines of striped concrete columns which marked the old border and the now very derelict watchtowers.

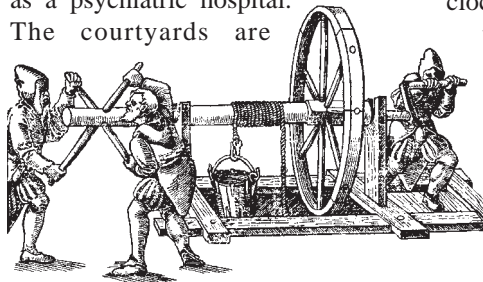
We thought that we would find numerous untouched mining sites in the East but here with little time for intensive search we were disappointed.

Certainly there were signs to mining museums, but these were usually closed for the weekend. There was a working mine at Straberg, approached by a

very rutted track, and a coal mine in the industrial area of Halberstadt, all very primitive. We passed on to the town of Colditz and its infamous Castle.

This was hardly changed since its use as a P.O.W. camp in World War II, having reverted back to its original use as a psychiatric hospital.

The courtyards are



always open and there is a small museum in the Tiergartenstrasse.

The chapel area can be seen with a guide. Perhaps the most famous relic is the unsuccessful French escape tunnel which started at the top of the clocktower, descended via the clockweight shaft into a cellar and then passed up a shaft and beneath the chapel floor to another downward shaft.

Well worth the visit.

*David Adams & Anne Covey*

### Old Ing Flood

A caver died in Old Ing on Sunday, October 2nd, during a flash flood. Peter Ball, an experienced caver, had gone with a Student Union Caving Club group to help with their trip to Horton in Ribblesdale. The 2 parties in Calf Holes and Brow Gill came out safely, despite rising water, and their leaders then went to Old Ing to assist the third party, who were already on their way out.

It is believed that Peter positioned himself at the bottom of the Cascades to help less experienced cavers and is thought to have either slipped or been swept into the stream by rising water, despite being on a rope.

Efforts at resuscitation were made by cavers who reached him but he was dead when brought out. The other members of the party were all brought to safety with the assistance of the cave rescue service. Four sustained minor injuries during the rescue and were treated in hospital before being released later Sunday night.

### Note:

Despite there being no flood warning for Old Ing in Northern Caves Vol.2, ALL caves in the area (Calf Holes, Brow Gill, Birkwith, Dismal Hill, etc.) are all liable to flash floods.

*Speleo Scene*

### Bus Death Dive

Last September in Munich, the road collapsed under a bus causing several deaths as it plunged into the cavity.

The collapse was caused by the construction of a new underground railway. To make things worse when the road collapsed a water main was ruptured, filling the hole with water.

### Pump Out ?

It is hoped that the 1833 hydraulic powered pumping engine at Old Glencrieff Lead Mine, Wanlockhead will be preserved.

The engine was abandoned in the 1920's, when the mine closed and re-discovered in 1983 about 180 feet down the shaft. Roof falls have since blocked the tunnel to the pump-room, and it is proposed to dig an access way through the falls to reach the engine - this should take about 4 years.

### Aberllyn Mine

Forest Enterprise in North Wales are prepared to consider and "exploration lease" for mines in the Gwydyr Forest. The idea being that the liability for the mine passes to the lessee. Initially such a lease may be granted for Aberllyn Mine, although their legal department are currently assess the implications of granting such a lease.

The problem is who would take on such a lease?

### Arsenic Bug

Engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have discovered a micro-organism, christened MIT-13, which eats arsenic.

Dianne Abbot at MIT was investigating how to treat severe arsenic pollution, left over from 19th Century American mining operations when she discovered the bacteria. If arsenic is taken away from the microbes they wither and die, provide them with more arsenic and they thrive.

### TGV Crater

A French TGV train travelling at 183mph was suddenly confronted by a large hole in the track bed at Ablaincourt-Pressoir last year. Luckily the driver managed to stop safely, and a derailment was avoided.

It seems that the hole was due to the collapse of tunnels dug under no man's land during the 1914-18 war. No plans exist of the tunnels and it is likely that there are many more waiting to make their presence known.

### Chatterley Whitfield Returns?

A consortium of interested parties is investigating the possibility of re-establishing Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum, with the aims of preserving a valuable part of the North Staffs. heritage and providing an underground experience for visitors.

The British Coal collection which is currently at Caphouse Colliery would be returned, and the 'Museum' would appreciate any help, advice or artefacts.

A source of income for the project could be royalties from a drift mine that is planned for the site, although it is hoped that financial assistance will come from the tourist industry, and surrounding businesses.

For further information contact:  
Fred Leigh,  
"Rose Bank", 11 Church Lane, Oulton,  
Stone, ST15 8UL.

## 50 Years On

This year has seen several war-time 50th Anniversaries, notably D-Day. However a little closer to home in Staffordshire, another 50th Anniversary was remembered on Sunday 27th November, with a memorial service to the civilians and soldiers killed in the Fauld Mine disaster, near the village of Hanbury.

A minutes silence was observed at 11am, before a procession of people made their way across the fields for a short ceremony beside the memorial (NGR: SK 182 278) to those killed in what is claimed to be the *“largest explosion caused by conventional weapons in both world wars”*.

### The Explosion

It was just after 11am on 27th November 1944 when a bomb store at 21 MURAF Fauld exploded. The Air Ministry had started using disused galleries in Fauld Gypsum Mine for the storage and repair of bombs in 1938. By 1944 the workforce comprised a mixture of civilians, soldiers and Italian P.O.W.'s, engaged in dismantling and repairing a variety of bombs.

Normally the storage areas were lined with 2' 6" of concrete, however the area which exploded was un-lined - being a newly acquired gallery about 90ft. below ground.

In all some 3,500 tons of high explosives blew-up, creating a crater about 300 feet deep and ¼ mile in diameter.

The explosion was so great that it destroyed buildings in the village of Hanbury (¾ mile away) and the shock-waves registered on seismic equipment in Geneva as an earthquake!

Seventy people were killed, 18 of which were never recovered. Amongst the dead were the occupants and livestock of a farm on the hillside above the mine, which along with all the buildings literally disappeared.

The explosion also destroyed the dam wall of the reservoir which served the plaster works, causing 6 million gallons of water, mud, boulders and trees to cascade into the factory and mine

workings, where 27 lives were lost. (*The mine has survived and is the largest operational gypsum mine in Europe. There was a club trip back in the summer - any chances of a trip report? Ed.*)

### The Scene Today

The village pub (The Cock Inn) has been rebuilt and has several photographs and news-cuttings of the incident - including a very interesting aerial photograph showing the crater and debris 'scatter' zone.

If you follow the Red way-marked footpath from beside the pub, after crossing 3 fields you reach the lip of the crater (the path on down the hill towards the mine takes you past the reservoir site and the route taken by the flood water).

Nature is gradually reclaiming the crater, but it is still an impressive hole, with large white lumps of gypsum scattered about, some of which has been laid out in the shape of a cross in the bottom of the crater.

In 1990 a memorial stone, of fine white Italian granite, was erected by Hanbury Parish Council on the crater lip. The stone was a gift, (organised by the Commandante of the Italian Air Force Supply depot at Novara, a sister depot of No.16 MU RAF Stafford) from the firm of Cirila & Son, Graniti-Milano (At least 9 Italian P.O.W.'s died in the blast).

If you continue on the Red way-marked trail, the route passes the disused concrete escape shaft of the bomb store (now sealed) and you eventually reach the village of Hanbury via the Memorial Hall (another building which had to be rebuilt after the explosion destroyed the original).

As you walk along the road back to the pub, the now disused school (a mock Tudor Symmetrical building, built in 1848 and financed by Queen Victoria) was used as a temporary mortuary following the explosion.

There are several survivors of the blast still alive today and one of them, Mr. Malcolm J. Kidd, has provided this

account in a letter via the Landlord of the "Cock Inn":-

*“.. Contrary to regulations, two 1,000lb. bombs from a crashed aircraft arrived in the mine. My sergeant told me to stencil on them 'for dumping in deep water'.*

*I did this and went out of the mine for the 10am break. Whilst in the rest room a civilian said 'I will get some stillsons, take the noses off those crash bombs and we can send them out again'. Fortunately for me I was ordered to return to a part of the mine some distance away from the bombs.*

*Whilst working on some sea mines which were dropped by parachute, I heard a boom, the lights went out, there was a rush of air, dust everywhere, a second rush of air and then silence. Fortunately I managed to find a torch which I kept for emergencies and leading my party got out of the mine to find blazing boxes of incendiary bombs which had been jolted by the blast.*

*Later looking for survivors, I was nearly shot by the RAF regiment who were trying to kill terrified sheep and cattle from nearby farms, one of which had a blazing huge burn caused by the blast.*

*I was present at the enquiry but was not called to give evidence and shortly after posted to Italy and ended up in Yugoslavia helping Tito until the war ended.*

*There is no doubt in my mind the civilian (who had been promoted from a cleaner) had put a wrench on the nose pistol, turned it, crushed the detonator inside, exploded the bomb which then caused a sympathetic detonation throughout the new area, which being un-concreted allowed the blast to go up and take the top of the hillside with it.”*



**Ironbridge and the Electric Revolution** by Michael Stratton, 1994, published for National Power, £9.99. The story of Ironbridge A and B power stations, 1930's to present.

There are rumours that the remaining station is about to close. During their life the power stations have used many tonnes of Shropshire Coal.

### Through Thick and Thin

S. Rayska, 1994. The history of Johnson Poole and Bloomer, 1844-1994. JPB have been involved as consultants regarding Staffordshire and Shropshire working mines and old mines since they were founded by Henry Johnson. Among the Shropshire operations mentioned are Moor Farm, Langley Fields (Dawley), Moelydd Lead Mines (Oswestry), Sir Thomas Meyrick's Wombridge & Ketley Mines, Prestage and Jones Jackfield Mines, Alveley Mines and Ridge Limestone.

**"Abandoned Limestone Mines in the West Midlands - Evaluation of Treatment Methods"**, by Howard Humphrys & Partners and available from D. of E. Publication Sales Unit, Government Buildings, Lime Grove, Ruislip, HA4 8SF. Price £25 - includes case studies on 2 Staffordshire Mines.

### "Sixth Annual Report by Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel to the Secretary of State, 1993-4"

Reports on the work done on making safe the limestone mining areas of Staffordshire and Shropshire, although no work is reported in Shropshire in the year given.

Work is reported at the following Staffordshire Mines: Cow Pasture Mine, Sandwell; Cinder Hill Mine, Wolverhampton (final cost of infill and grouting £3.5 million) and at Wolverhampton Street Mine, Walsall.

Proposals have been drawn up for East Castle Mine, Dudley (£5.3 M), Hurst Hill Mine, Dudley (£10.6M), John Adams Mine, Walsall (emergency works to prevent further damage to Mellish Road Methodist Chapel) and Three Crowns Mine, Walsall (about £0.5 M).

A "strategy and programme for treatment of limestone mines" has also been drawn up separately. Copies of both reports are available from the Dept. of Environment, Marsham Street, London.

*Ivor Brown*

One mile from Beddgelert on the A498 road to Capel Curig.

Open all year round. The fascination of history and the wonders of modern-day technology combine to create an unforgettable experience at this Prince of Wales award-winning family attraction, set in the heart of the stunning Snowdonia National Park.

Each stage of the mining process is clearly explained by audio presentations, as you make your way around the quarter mile route which rises 140 feet via stairways to emerge at the Victoria Level for a breathtaking view of the Gwynant valley and surrounding Snowdonia mountain range.

### SCMC Special rates:

If you present your Club Membership card at the desk you can get a 10% discount on the entrance fee.

Bookings/inquiries to:

Sygun Copper Mine, Beddgelert, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 4NE

Telephone: 0176686585  
24 Hour infoline: 0176686564



## Mining Videos (available from the Club)



If you are interested in doing a bit of armchair mine exploration the following videos, produced by I.A. Recordings with help from Club members, may be of interest to you.

### A Tour of Clive Copper Mine £14.95

A comprehensive guided tour of Clive, with Edwin Thorpe acting the 'experienced' expert and Kelvin Lake the 'novice'. The tour covers both the upper and lower levels, plus the Northern stope (the access to which is now a bit dodgy).

### Clive Rescue Practice £9.95

An action packed record of a Club rescue practice, featuring the 'infamous' maypole winze traverse!

### Snailbeach

£14.95

The rise and fall of Snailbeach, once renowned as the "richest per acre of ground in Europe", is traced in this production through the use of historic photographs, animated plans and sections, and unique underground video footage.

### Collections from the Archives

The following tapes contain almost all the footage recorded at the given mine, and are intended as a resource base, not a finished production:

- C.15: Dudley Tunnel '88 to '89, £14.10
- C.18: Donisthorpe Colliery, £11.75
- C.20a: Snailbeach-Final Frontier, £9.87
- C.23: Bagworth Colliery, £11.75
- C.28: Morse's Level, £9.87



## Mineral Spot

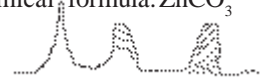
*Smithsonite* - Zinc Carbonate.

Formed by action of carbonated water on Zinc Sulphide or as an alteration product. In Britain, once known as Calamine. Commonly associated with lead-zinc deposits. Occurs as crusts, stalactites, or botryoidal masses. Generally white or grey in colour, harder and heavier than calcite.

Porous variety known as 'dry bone', often found in surface weathered veins that once contained sphalerite.

It was used in brass making and as a mild abrasive/polishing material.

Common chemical formula:  $ZnCO_3$



## Club Officers

**President:** Alan Taylor

**Tackle & Rescue Officer:**  
Neal Rushton

**Chairman/NAMHO Rep:**  
Steve Holding

**Training Officer:**  
Alan Robinson

**Vice Chair:** Malcolm Newton

**Conservation Officer:**  
Nick Southwick

**Secretary:** Adrian Pearce  
*scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk*

**Bat Officer:** Mike Worsfold

**Treasurer:** Bob Taylor

**Membership Services:**  
Mike Moore

**'Below' Editor:** Kelvin Lake  
*e-mail: scmc@factree.org.uk*

## Diary Dates '94

For organised Club trips please refer to  
Adrian's Monthly Meets lists.

**10-11 December:** Mines in Kent &  
Surrey. Contact Adrian Pearce.

1995

**7 January:** Snailbeach Project.

**4 February:** Snailbeach Project.

**11 February:** Derbyshire Caving  
Association AGM, 10am Monyash  
Village Hall, Derbyshire.

**19 February:** Gwent Cave Rescue Team  
AGM

**5 March:** Cambrian Caving Council  
AGM, 11am Gwesty Bach Inn, Brymawr,  
South Wales.

**18 March:** National Caving  
Association AGM 10.30am venue to be  
arranged.

**6 May:** Council of Southern Caving  
Clubs AGM 10.30am, Hunters Lodge  
Inn, Priddy, Somerset.

**15-16 July 1995:** NAMHO Conference,  
National Sports Centre, Lilleshall,  
Shropshire - hosted by US!

