

VALENTINE HOLE

Greenhow Hill

During the early summer of 1964, John Rhodes, Keith McBride and Martin Davies spent three months working in Cook's Dig, Stump Cross Caverns, with no success at all. Saturday July 11th happened to be a particularly hot, sunny day which coincided with John not being around to insist on working Cook's. The other two made the most of the sunshine by going to look at a shaft crater about 100 yards east of Stump Cross. Digging in the floor of the crater revealed bones, boulders and fragments of flowstone and gours. It seemed likely that the shaft had connected with a cave, especially as a number of passages in Stump Cross were pointing directly towards it. Also, the shaft had every appearance of being railed off at solid and filled in above the rails, like many others in this area. The following day Cook's Dig ended against a solid wall and the obvious thing seemed to be to dig the shaft.

Re-Opening.

A week later work began on the dig and slowed as time was spent on getting timbers, a hand winch and threelegs. The top of the shaft was mainly loose boulders and timbering these off took up more time. By August 16th solid limestone had been reached at a depth of 10ft. Unfortunately, the original shaft had been considerably larger than the new 3ft square shaft and there was also a 45° misalignment between the two. Even more unfortunate was

the fact that it was 9p.m. on a Sunday evening, and with no time to do any timbering, the shaft had to be left. Inevitably there was heavy rain the following week and the boulders and mud ran into the 4ft gap under the timbers. The timbering was removed and work started again on a 5ft by 3ft shaft, aligned more or less correctly.

From August 29th, Rick Parker, John, Keith and Martin, who were on holiday for a fortnight, spent a full week on timbering. This was all carried to the shaft on a pram rescued from the local tip, as the only other transport at that time consisted of a Honda 50 and an ailing 1949 BSA Bantam. The second week was much more successful and despite visiting other areas, the depth was doubled to 28ft. Rails were laid at the top so that kibbles could be landed on a bogie and moved away from the shaft to be tipped. An electric bell was installed for signalling and Rick, with his characteristic ingenuity, devised a band brake for the winch out of pieces of wood, nails and old drive belting.

Levels In The Shaft.

Work continued steadily until by September 26th the depth was 34ft. Martin found a hole on the east side of the shaft and slid down into a level at a depth of 38ft from the collar. This was a drift driven eastwards in the vein for about 30ft to a dead end. A thin string of galena in a barite matrix was seen in the roof of a 10ft stope, but otherwise there was little sign of minerals. The string had been partially washed out as one wall of the level was natural.

Next day Keith was digging and, as expected, found a corresponding level on the other side of the shaft. A large poised boulder in the entrance to this was something of a deterrent, but eventually John plucked up the courage to squeeze underneath. Beyond were upper and lower drifts in the vein, both rejoining in a few yards in a small chamber where the drive had finished.

On October 11th, John found a drift 10ft long on the east side of the shaft with a small natural chamber at its end. This was 45ft down. On the same day, Tony Gansell, on a rare working visit, found a hole leading down on the opposite side. This had a number of loose boulders around it and the boulder slope below seemed unstable. Martin was volunteered to go down and emerged in a level at a depth of 54ft. In the rocks on the floor was a small tin with a hinged lid - perhaps a candle tin - and fingerprints of the lead miners could be seen in a clay pocket in one wall. Ahead on the floor were four beautiful cave pearl nests. The level extended only 20ft beyond these to where the drive had ended. A small level in the roof also ended within a few yards.

The weather got more disgusting as the Greenhow winter drew on. Working in blizzards did nothing for morale, but by the beginning of January the shaft was 63ft deep with what appeared to be the beginning of another level going off the west side. During the following month little was done, although John and Tony made one descent and dug at the west side. Serious digging re-started on February 14th. Martin went down the shaft, dug at the unpromising east side and had

filled six kibbles when a hole appeared in the mud and boulder floor. A strong draught blew out and within 20 minutes the hole was enlarged sufficiently to allow a man down.

Wearing a lifeline in case the hole was at the top of a stope, Martin slid down into a chamber. He shouted for the others to come down, but expecting it to be only another short drift, they declined, and so he set off to explore alone. Across the boulder floor of the chamber was a slope down into a level heading eastwards. This was 4ft high and had 6" of water on the floor over sleeper holes which could still be seen. After 30ft it turned north and ended in a clay fall which had come out of a joint ahead. A hole over clay to the right opened into another level with a semi-circular roof and a floor of sharp limestone fragments. After 70ft the level, now with packwalls on either side, turned right up a calcited slope and ended in a flattening bed a few inches high. This, presumably the Gill Flattening, contained barite and no galena could be seen.

Dog Cavern.

Martin returned to the foot of the shaft after digging the clay choke partway along the level, finding it would not go easily. He was about to shout up to the others when he noticed a hole in the roof of the chamber. This had been cut by the miners through the floor of a cave and a low natural passage led off. A crawl over mud past smashed formations led to a flat-out section over calcite. This quickly opened into a chamber 12ft wide and 6ft to 10ft high. On the floor, in crack-

