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DERBYSHIRE PENNINE CLUB NOTES.

ON November 16th, 1907, thirteen members and friends spent a most enjoyable evening in the Bagshawe Cavern, Bradwell. Some surveying was done on the upper level, and, later, a most fascinating and but rarely-visited fissure below the dungeon was examined. This is known as the Birdcage, or Bird Cave, and is chock-full of beautiful calcine formations. During the evening, rain fell very heavily over Bradwell, and was responsible for the hurried retreat of three bold men who had penetrated some 150 feet into a water passage, or syphon, at the end of the upper level. In a very short time the water market rose rapidly, in sympathy with the reports of heavy rain-crops—to borrow Stock Exchange phraseology—and our friends saw that their avenue of retreat might be turned into a prison unless they bestirred themselves.

December 7th was set apart for a field day—or, rather, night—in the Speedwell Cavern, Castleton. Thirteen turned up; and, owing to the arduous nature of the work, friends were not invited. Tackle was rigged up over the Bottomless Pit, and we entered this by being let down for eighty feet through a waterfall and channel. The noted “A 1” was then lowered; and we had the satisfaction of being the first people to go a-boating on the Bottomless Pit. No sign of outlet for the water revealed itself to a careful survey. The maximum depth was found to be 33 feet. The return, viâ the waterfall, wet us through completely. Two men then ascended into a hole in the roof, directly over the Pit, using for the purpose a ladder stretched across the abyss. They then roped up, and, a short ladder being passed to them, one man mounted it, whilst the other held it as firmly as possible to the rotten,

clayey bank. The place, however, came to a dead end, at about thirty feet.

The night walk on Kinderscout, on January 18th, 1908, was a great success. Viâ Jacob's Ladder to Kinderlow ; from whence the moon was overpowered by mist, necessitating careful steering to the Downfall, and across to Fairbrook Clough. The backward view as the descent was made to the Snake was grand in the extreme—mist and hill indistinguishably merged—so that we might have been at an untold height, instead of having left an elevation of only 2000 feet. We breakfasted at Alport Bridge, and reached Edale again, viâ the Roman Road and Hope Cross.

The Golconda Lead Mine, near Wirksworth, with its 350 feet of stemple shaft and fine natural cavern, was visited on February 15th.

“Yo sweeten,” drawled old John Bacon, as he gazed at the perspiration streaming down our visages. And we did. But we had not heard “sweat” pronounced “sweet” before.

We were in the depths of the Golconda Lead Mine, and John had been piloting us briskly through a maze of old workings—low tunnels, where we had mostly to maintain a stooping posture, and sometimes to do a crawl.

The Golconda is not one of those spent, or laggard, mineral veins that have been “nicked” during the recent rise in the price of lead. It has been worked continuously for a hundred and fifty years, and mostly by the Bacon family. There was a steady output of galena from the Golconda before and during the boom, and its jog-trot continues comfortably now that the price has fallen so heavily.

The outworks of the Golconda are neither modern nor elaborate. In fact, the appliances are delightfully primitive and picturesque. There is a noble winding drum, composed of timber, and fixed horizontally. It is occasionally worked by horse-power for hauling the

lead ore out of the mine. The dignity and repose of this fixture make a powerful protest against the vain-glories of hustling.

After the slow and serene movements of the stately drum-major, the jerky activities of the jiggling machine seem quite frivolous, though they would be most funereal if contrasted with the furious revolutions of an old-fashioned mangle.

The jiggling machine consists of a rectangular wooden tank, in which an iron sieve is moved up and down by means of a lever, in the form of a ponderous plank, actuated by hand power.

Here, to use homely metaphors, the wheat and the tares are plunged together into a cold bath. The waters are troubled, and the sheep are thus rigorously separated from the goats. As though by magic, the black-sheepish fragments of galena arrange themselves as a compact bottom layer in the sieve, untainted by any speck from the giddier-goatish barytes, which close their ranks in an equally exclusive upper stratum.

In this cool way comes about the final parting, after ages of close companionship. The first rift in an eternity of rest comes when the delving miner insidiously fuses a dynamite cartridge, which he has placed in the bosom of the vein.

No longer capable of complete solidarity, galena and barium sulphate still cling to each other in the individual lumps and fragments that result from the explosion. Tumbled into small iron wagons, sheep and goats, wheat and tares, still very much intermingled, have a tram-ride to the foot of the fifty fathom shaft. Then the drum-major revolves, and the spoils of the mine are brought to the light of day.

The process of disintegration is furthered by the use of sledge hammers, and completed by a simple crushing machine, with a hopper, iron rollers, and a fly-wheel, actuated by hand power.

Then follows the ordeal by jiggging machine, after which the ore is fit to be measured before being passed on to the smelting furnacc, while the caulk is put aside for use in the manufacture of paint, and for sundry other purposes.

When we arrived at the Golconda, the owner and his colleagues were seated round a bucket fire, taking a snack in the "coe," as they call the shed in which they keep their implements, and store the dressed galena.

The miners have a vocabulary of their own, and they use many words that are foreign to persons not connected with their ancient craft.

The snack disposed of, we *i.e.*, Archer, Puttrell, Rains, Smithard, and Winder, accompanied by our right trusty mining friends, Sheldon and the Bacons, got us into the fifty-fathom shaft, and effected an easy descent by means of the stemples, or wooden bars, fixed horizontally therein. The shaft is sunk through magnesian limestone, locally called dunstone, which forms the roof of the vein, the sole consisting of mountain limestone.

The vein is in the form known as a "pipe," *i.e.*, the ore is bedded horizontally or nearly so. Connected with the pipe are "rakes," feeders, and scrins.

Having made us "sweet" in the workings, John Bacon took us down other shafts to a level some four hundred feet below the surface. Thence we clambered up steep slopes of rock and over great spoilheaps to the Golconda cavern, a huge place which has been formed by a great fall of rock from the roof of the mineral vein. The cavern is very symmetrical, and the sides slope towards each other, meeting in a narrow roof which is cleft from end to end. The floor consists of immense blocks of limestone, with flat surfaces and clean fractures, piled at all angles, and separated by deep fissures. Lit up with magnesium ribbon, the northern

end of the cavern is a magnificent sight. Between two great crags is a wide and deep recess, into which water is always splashing from the lofty roof. Here numerous rocks are piled pell-mell, and they are covered with pure white stalagmite of beautiful forms. Crystal pools in the hollows contain many of these little balls of calcite, known as cave pearls. There was but one drawback, if any, to our intense enjoyment of this splendid scene. It was the thought of that fifty fathom shaft up which we had to climb before we could have supper. We were "sweeting" more than ever by the time we reached the top.

