

Cave and karst images: the rediscovery of an important historical record.

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A fascinating collection of British Geological Survey records, dating back to its establishment in 1835, is archived in the Library Strongroom at the Survey office at Keyworth, Nottinghamshire. Among the contents are letters, files, maps, medals, lantern slides, prints and other ephemera that seldom see the light of day, except at the specific request of BGS staff or visiting researchers.

Recently the Strongroom was upgraded by installation of modern rolling stack shelving. Following the upgrade a new numbering system was adopted and the archive items were moved to new shelf locations. While trying to locate an item within this changed system, a casual glance inside an album that was being moved revealed unexpected contents. The album, which measures 14" x 11½", is hard bound in green cloth, with 115 pages held between the covers by two brass screws. Photographs on the first page stood out as old but generally good black and white images – the first of many of similar quality. They were dated 1932, and they carried short descriptions of the activities taking place. The images on the first page showed Lost John's Cave, on Leck Fell.

Turning further album pages revealed more fascinating images – in fact they were more than just fascinating, even to a non-caver – illustrating a totally enthralling and historical journey through the caves and surface karst landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales. Spectacular images of stalactites, cascading waterfalls, rock balconies and towering shafts, some with rope ladders, were made still more interesting by the inclusion of a motley collection of remarkably happy-looking people. Most surprisingly the explorers' clothes didn't really seem appropriate for descending caves, let alone climbing rope ladders – collars, ties, jackets, khaki shorts, one man sporting what looks like a pickelhaube helmet, one lady wearing a bright print dress!

Along with these intrepid explorers, some of whom reappear over and over again among the photographs, the locations move on from Lost John's Cave, and lead through Alum Pot and its related caves beneath Ingleborough, Sleets Gill and Douka Bottom [*sic.*] caves in Littondale, and Manchester Hole and Goyden Pot in Nidderdale... and a plethora of other well-known and less well-known caves in areas such as Chapel-le Dale, Ribblesdale and Troller's Gill. Many views of the surface landscape, old buildings, camp sites and interesting-looking activities are interspersed among the more numerous underground images. In total the album contains more than 300 black and white photographs dating from the years 1928 to 1932, but not presented in chronological order.

Also contained in this album are twenty-five Royal octavo (9½" x 6") sheets of closely-typed notes, including a bibliography, and nine hand-drawn and coloured copies of maps and cave surveys of the area, on sheets about 13¾" wide and of various heights, perhaps trimmed from larger sheets such as an artist's or draughtsman's pad? Apparently the undated notes were compiled by Eli Simpson, later the founder of the British Speleological Association, who also drafted the maps and surveys in 1931. There is no explanation as to why these papers are in the album, but perhaps they were intended to describe the geology and explain hydrological relationships in some of the areas photographed.

Perhaps inevitably these black and white images evoked feelings of wonderment, verging on awe, perhaps with a tinge of amusement, for a non-caver viewing the caves and their ragged explorers through the lens of this long-ago photographer. But also they raised the question of whose creations they were.

An inscription in the front of the album gave the photographer's name as H W Haywood, of 8 Portland Crescent, Leeds, and also



Time for a break in the Vestry, part of the New Roof Traverse route in Lost John's Cave, Easter 1932, [Image No.P617264 from the first album of the H W Haywood Collection].



A novel way of transporting rope and ladder on the way to Sulber and Nick pots, September 3rd 1933 [Image No.P640564 from the second album of the H W Haywood Collection].

provided the information that the collection was presented to the Geological Survey by Miss Haywood in 1935. Continuation of the original and temporarily forgotten search, led to the chance discovery of a second album, of the same external dimensions but with a tan coloured cover. The inscription in the front cover was similar to that in the first album, but with FRPS (Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society) added after H W Haywood's name. This affiliation perhaps helps to explain the generally excellent quality of the images and also gave a clue to follow-up later as to where to enquire for more information about the photographer.

More immediately though, examination of the second album revealed that it was almost as interesting as the first, containing more than 130 black and white photographs. Once again the images, which date from 1932 to 1934, illustrate areas and caves throughout the Dales region, from Barbondale in the west to Fountains Fell in the east, via Easegill, Leck Fell, Kingsdale, Simon Fell and the Birkwith area in Ribblesdale. Many of the same characters reappear, and some of their activities are still more "of the time" than those in the first album.

Subsequent enquiries to the staff at the National Media Museum (NMM) in Bradford led to confirmation that Harold Wadsworth Haywood was a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and that the NMM's own collection includes about 20 of his images. They also pointed out the existence of a note about a lecture he had given, and an obituary from the *Photographic Journal* of May 1935¹. It appears that Haywood² presented a lecture on the Alum Pot area to the Society shortly before he died on 03 March 1935 in his fortieth year. His obituary included the information that he was the founder

and President of the Leeds Cave Club, but made no mention of a wife or children. It thus seems likely that his photographic collection and related papers were donated to the Geological Survey by a sister³.

The individual photographs have been captured as high resolution digital images. In addition, the albums are being digitised as whole page images to provide a facsimile reproduction and will be available soon. Anyone wishing to enquire about the availability of any of the images or to view the H W Haywood albums can do so by prior arrangement at the British Geological Survey Library at Keyworth in Nottingham.

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Notes:

- ¹ Anon. 1935. Obituary: H Wadsworth Haywood, FRPS. *The Photographic Journal*, Vol.LXXV [New Series LIX], p.301.
- ² Haywood, H W. 1935. Alum Pot and its caves. *The Photographic Journal*, Vol.LXXV [New Series LIX], 252–254.
- ³ Craven, S A. 2007. Written (e-mail) communication, 21 March 2007. Dr Craven reports that other obituaries appeared in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* of 04 March 1935, pp 3 and 9, and in the *Yorkshire Post* of 05 March 1935, p.5.