

Finding Treak Cliff Cavern

A tape recording of a conversation with Jack Beverley of Castleton:

“In April 1926 there were five men working on Treak Cliff, mining for spar. A Mr West of Liverpool was the owner. The five men were William Bradbury, John Webley, Hubert Eyre, Walter Morrison and Hugh Bradwell.

On 8 April, Walter Morrison and Hugh Bradwell blasted through into a passage 5 to 6 feet wide. You could stretch your arms out wide and not touch the sides. The passage was 8-10 yards long, sloping down to a dark hole in the floor with about an 18 inch gradient slope from end to end. This passage had at some time had water rushing through it, as it had grooves along the sides. We only had candles to see by.

When they found this hole, I was off work that day. They said that there was a rush of foul air and a bit of a bang as the air burst out. Walter Morrison came by and told me they had found a cavern. I'd been off work with lumbago but went back to work on Monday and we decided to explore the dark hole.

There was an old jinney rope, used for pulling the wagons up and down the cliff, still tied to the jinney wheel. Walter, Hugh and I carried up the wire rope and dropped it down. Bert Eyre went first, on about 40 foot of rope and after a while we shouted to him to come back as there was no more rope left. He replied “I've got my foot on a ledge; I'll light a candle and see where I am”. He saw that he was on a bit of a bank, 4 or 5 feet wide, sloping down to some large boulders. He untied himself and went to explore round the corner. In a few minutes he was back and shouted “Come on lads, there's the prettiest sight I have ever seen in my life”. So we went down, Walter first, Hugh second and me next. We called to William Bradbury to come but he was 50 or so and said he would wait until the Pennine Climbers came with a rope ladder. He did go down later on, though.

The rest of us saw these stalagmites in the cave and we got a couple each. The longest was 3 foot; Bert Eyre got that. Mine were about 2 foot 6 inches each, one milky white and the other an indigo colour”.