

## CAVE NOTES: A PHOTOGRAPH OF JACK AND NANCY WEEKES

by

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A portrait of John and Ann Weekes, the "Jack and Nancy" of Cheddar legend, has been known from an early 20th century reproduction on a picture postcard of a photograph stated to have been taken in 1860. This has previously been published by this Society (Tratman, 1975, Irwin, 1988). The photographer responsible for this copy photograph is at present unknown except for the initials located at the lower left of the postcard picture. These are A.Y.R. No local photographer is known by these initials.

The photograph not only shows the couple outside their cottage, but also the original entrance to what is known today as Gough's Old Cave. Above the entrance is a sign which on the picture postcard is unreadable. The postcard, a bromide print has, understandably, lost much of the finer detail of the original photograph. However, an original print has now been found. As would be expected it is considerably clearer and crisper in its detail. The photograph, a sepia print, measures 18.5 cm × 10.4 cm and is mounted on cream card, 26.5 cm × 18 cm with a light brown printed frameline approximately 0.6 cm from the outer edges of the photograph. The title, located centrally below the frameline reads:

AT CHEDDAR, SOMERSET  
Photographed by Archibald Coke.

No mention is made of the names of the individuals appearing in the photograph, the only evidence as to it being Jack and Nancy is that which appears on the picture postcard. There can, however, be little doubt that it is that couple for it complies closely with the known history and data available in the library at Longleat House.

Mention is made of Archibald Coke in a previous paper (Irwin, 1986), for the 1879 pamphlet published by Richard Cox Gough states that photographs of Cheddar Gorge by him were available at the cave entrance. (Gough, 1879). Nothing further is known about this man and no more information is available at the Royal Photographic Society Library at Bath.

The finer definition of the original print shows the faces of the couple more clearly, though the woman has moved during the long exposure and there is a fault in the negative on the man's face. The most interesting detail to be seen is that of the sign above the cave entrance. There are two words, the second is undoubtedly "CAVERN". The first is a word of seven characters of which the fourth and fifth could be "TT" or "DD". The first two appear to be "CA" or "CH". The most likely interpretation is therefore "CHEDDAR CAVERN". If so, this will be the first known record of this particular name. Previously, no

name had been recorded before 1869, when it was known as "The Great Stalactite Cavern" (Green, 1869).

A copy of the photograph is to be made under controlled conditions, as this may allow more detail to be revealed.

#### REFERENCES

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