

1967

Undated July Hayfield Wood stream flood overflow tunnel

Nigel Burns

Playing among the extensive “Hayfields Valley Woods” Brislington, Bristol, the pair noticed two of the steel bars which formed a grill covering a shaft and tunnel below were bent apart, just enough to squeeze through. Neither had an idea where this tunnel went, though knew it was there to convey the overflow from the adjacent stream when this water course, next to the Bristol - London Railway began to back up when the small down stream drain conduit which led to St Annes Wood Park caused the flood to back up and threaten to flood the railway itself. As neither had torches they planned to go along the tunnel as far as available sunlight allowed. Once below the grill a large vertical concrete step presented itself, without rope they let themselves carefully down. Within a few metres the pair were at the very edge of light penetrating from the entrance above. Reaching out their hands, NB to touch the left wall, PC the right, they inched forward into darkness, after only a few metres they saw a distant pinprick of light. Continuing to run their hands along the concrete walls they inched along, eventually walking into a huge concrete bunker, with a roof and elongated windows above head level, about four feet long and two feet high. Climbing up into these windows they found this concrete tank overhung the River Avon. It is in fact a spillway containment tank to stop flood waters eroding the riverbank. Unsure where they were along the river they retraced their steps back through the darkness the two hundred metres back to the grill.