

# Eli Simpson Archive

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## The Eli Simpson Archive

The Eli Simpson Archive is an extensive collection of material covering caves and caving in Yorkshire and Derbyshire. It was compiled by Eli Simpson (1884-1962), the founder of the British Speleological Association (now the [British Cave Research Association](#) (BCRA)), with contributions from other members.

The core of the archive consists of 100 large-format record books. These are generally 250 pages long and contain a fascinating mixture of maps, surveys, photographs, exploration accounts, newspaper cuttings and published articles. The subject matter dates from the period 1920 through to the 1960s, and includes the discovery and exploration of many of the major cave systems in the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District, with lesser collections for the Mendips, Wales, Devon and Scotland, and other ephemera, and Simpson's personal material.

The record books came to light some years ago as part of the material that had been stored away for years in the British Caving Library. The archive has been moved to the National Geological Repository at the BGS for safekeeping, and is now undergoing scanning by a team of volunteers in the BGS offices in Edinburgh. The team of volunteers are mostly local members of the [Grampian Speleological Group](#) who are not only undertaking the digitisation and some indexing, but are also giving interesting insights into the collection with their encyclopaedic knowledge of caves and caving.

## Archive release

The archive is being released in stages. The first stage is BCRA/101Y Yorkshire: Cave photographs and drawings; documents relating to Eli Simpson. These are Eli Simpson's photograph albums, a set of seven volumes of contact prints taken with his Rolleiflex camera, which incidentally is also included in the archive. The photographs show a range of underground photography as well as surface photographs of cave entrances and local views, mostly Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

The second stage for release will be the volumes covering Derbyshire. These are currently being scanned and processed.

**Please note: to enjoy the full functionality of the zoomable viewer, the use of Firefox or Chrome browser is strongly recommended.**

The BCRA and BGS hope you find the archive as fascinating as we do. It is a very important part of British caving history.

## References

Craven, S. Eli Simpson — 16 September 1884 to 01 February 1962; a biography up to 1945. *Studies in Speleology* (1991) 8. 39-56.

Craven S. The British Speleological Association (1935-1973) and its founder, Eli Simpson: with particular reference to activities in the northern Pennines of England. *Cave and Karst Science* (2001) 28. (3), 99-112.

Judson, D. Eli Simpson and the BSA. An account of the speleo-collector 'par excellence', Eli Simpson 'Cymmie' (1884-1962), and the British Speleological Association (1935-1973) as rediscovered from BCRA's Archives. *BCRA Cave Studies Series* 18. 2009.

[The Eli Simpson Archives - the birth of a modern river](#) [Youtube video]

[The Eli Simpson Archives - Eli Simpson and the BSA](#) [Youtube video]

## Yorkshire: Cave photographs and drawings; documents relating to Eli Simpson

### ink to album

### Album title

<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/1</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 1. 1933-1934. Photographs 1-210
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/2</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 2. 1933-1934. Photographs 211-400
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/3</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 3. 1933-1934. Photographs 401-603
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/4</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 4. 1935-1936. Photographs 604-801
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/5</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 5. 1937-1940. Photographs 802-1004
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/6</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 6. 1940-1948. Photographs 1005-1351
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/A/7</a>	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 7. 1948-1958. Photographs 1352-1611
<a href="#">BCRA/101Y/I</a>	Simpson's Rolleiflex camera; 275814 [c.1920].

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