



# **SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB**

## **CLWB OGOFEYDD DEHEUDIR CYMRU**

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**Newsletter**

**No. 112**

**1993**

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# South Wales Caving Club

Clwb Ogofeydd Deheudir Cymru

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**Front Cover photo:**  
Steve West, Sue Mabbett and Pat Hall in The Time Machine, Daren Cilau, by Tony Baker.

**Back Cover photo:**  
Sue Williams in the streamway, Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, by Tony Baker.

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Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are the contributor's own, and not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the South Wales Caving Club.

# Editorial

by Tony Baker

It seems that every time I sit down to write an editorial I start by apologising for the delay in producing the Newsletter. I recently received a letter from a member complaining about the delay, as he had submitted an article some months ago and was still waiting to see it published. The truth of the matter is that I can only publish what people send me, and it is getting material in that takes the time. It is neither economically nor editorially wise to publish a Newsletter with only a few articles, but the flow of material for this edition has been, at best, a trickle. Hence the reason that some of you have been waiting some while to see your work in print. Thanks to everyone whose work is in this edition.

It is still my intention to produce three Newsletters this club year, but as always it's entirely up to you. Get writing. If you've been involved in something interesting, or you've an idea for a witty/informative/entertaining/educational piece on anything that members may be interested in, scribble it down and send it to me. Soon.

One of the biggest problems I've encountered this time has been getting surveys, photographs and so on to accompany articles. As I've written before, I am reluctant to publish long articles without any

sort of illustration, as large blocks of uninterrupted text over several pages are heavy going. I'll repeat my usual plea; if you are writing an article, please try and include something - anything - with which I can illustrate it. This can be in the form of photographs (surface ones are fine, even if they're only vaguely relevant), sketch maps, or rough surveys drawn from memory; if you don't have anything yourself ask around and see if someone else has.

Also, another plea I've made before; if you're putting something together for me, please write or ring and let me know it's coming. This Newsletter was close to completion when an article arrived completely unexpectedly; it made it in, but only because a) someone else's promised photographs didn't arrive and b) I spent a considerable time shuffling everything else and changing page layouts. If I hadn't been able to do this, the piece would have had to wait until the next edition: another long delay.

## **How to submit your work.**

It's so easy. Words can be handwritten, typed or (preferably) on disk if you use a computer. Subject matter is entirely open; anything you feel like writing. It doesn't matter if

you can't spell, or even put a coherent sentence together - just scribble it all down and I'll sort it out, iron out any mistakes, and even send it back for you to check before I publish if you like.

Photographs can be in any form; prints, slides or negatives, in colour or black-and-white, are fine. Captions are useful, even if they only identify the locations where the pictures were taken. Surveys or diagrams should be black-on-white but can be to any grade. The only thing I would ask is that if you include a scale don't put it in written form (i.e. 1cm = 50m) as if I have to reduce or enlarge the survey to fit the page the scale then becomes meaningless.

So there you are; there's no excuse for you not to sit down now and get working. If you're one of those people who I've asked to write up something in particular, consider this as a firm prod to get on with it!

Finally, many's the time I've sat in the warmth of the Copper Beech and listened, enthralled, as cavers have related tales of epic trips to extremely sordid, exciting, arduous or horrible caves. In short, just the sort of thing that would make a superb *101 Great Caving Trips* piece to continue the series. Every caver has at least one such tale: why not write yours down and send it to me?

# Bill Little: A Personal Recollection

by *Eric Inson*

I first met Bill in 1952. It was during my first visit to the Club, accompanied by Noel Dilly. We were at school and still very naive, and Bill was the one who introduced us to "proper" caving and showed us round the (then) relatively few caves in the area. We were shown how to abseil on the tree which used to stand outside the old HQ near Dan-yr-Ogof.

Bill was very much involved in the exploration of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu in the early 1950s. One of his discoveries with Lewis Railton and others was the RAWL series (the R and L are their initials). With Lewis he undertook a considerable amount of surveying, and during an extended trip in the RAWL series the pair became trapped there by floods. After a prolonged rescue, the "escape route" was engineered with Bill taking a major part.

For a while, at this time, Bill lived near me in Cardiff, and the club members of that time used to meet in the Butcher's Arms in Rhiwbina. On his return to Sutton Coldfield, Bill became very involved with the Cave Research Group.

In 1960, a trip to Dan-yr-Ogof

meant taking off all one's clothes, and an icy immersion was followed by re-dressing on the other side. One day Bill appeared in a strange rubber suit which required tailoring skills to make, a liberal coat of French chalk to put on, and careful protection from sharp rocks during use. It was obvious that it wouldn't last very long. When Bill was seen to be wearing the same suit a year later we changed our minds.

In the mid 1960s, a dog found its way under the concrete cap of an old mineshaft near Glyncorrwg, and fell down the shaft. For some days the RSPCA, with local helpers, tried to deal with the situation, but without success. At the weekend, a Club team went to the scene with ropes and ladders. It seemed a relatively easy rescue, and the others decided that Bill, as the senior member of the party, should go down. The dog was duly rescued and the newspaper reporters had a field day. As a result, most of the dog lovers in the country sent presents to Bill. The cash went into the Cave Rescue coffers, and one lady paid for the installation of the first telephone at Penwyllt, together with a year's rental.

I spent several holidays in Bill's company. In 1965 five of us went to Ireland. One of the objects of the trip was to effect the connection of Poulmagollum to Poulelva in County Clare. This was accomplished with relative ease, leaving us with an embarrassment of a certain chemical compound. The next day, Bill and I went back into Poulmagollum with the intention of pushing several promising leads at the bottom of the system. After a few hours, it started to become rather damp, and we wondered if it was raining. Our return found the bedding plane, which was the exit, half full of water and rising fast. We beat a hasty retreat through the connection made the previous day, and shivered for a couple of hours at the foot of a 30m waterfall in Poulelva. Eventually a ladder appeared and Bill was rescued for the second time.

We went to France together several times. In the commercial cave La Bouiche we were made very welcome - Bill's photograph was on the wall, a reminder of a visit made earlier with Lewis Railton. A memorable trip followed. We were later invited to help de-tackle a 150 metre pothole which had been inundated during a

**"Two French cavers and I pulled furiously to raise a particularly heavy bag. When it appeared over the edge, it turned out to be Bill..."**



storm. The French were using large bags, which were very heavy when full of wet rope. Two French cavers and I pulled furiously to raise a particularly heavy bag. When it appeared over the edge it turned out to be Bill.

Bill was very active throughout the 1950s, '60s and into the '70s and took part in many digs. He also had the uncanny knack of arriving at the scene just as the diggers were about to break through. This happened in Cwm Dwr, and in the Fault series.

In the early 1970s he was in a party of 5 exploring OFD "One-and-a-half". An unfortunate slip produced a 4m fall resulting in a badly broken lower leg. At the time Bill was with Neil Jones, whilst the other three were exploring another passage. Neil wrote a message in the mud hoping that they would see it and came out to raise the alarm. In the event, the others came out via Cwm Dwr and did not see the message. By the time I arrived with a comforts bag Bill had been on his own for three hours. He was cheerful

throughout, and had to get himself through the boulders to OFD 1 with his plaster cast being carried behind. The new floating stretcher was given its first real test, and Bill had been rescued for the third time.

Unfortunately his leg never repaired 100% and although it reduced his level of activity in the following years, it did not stop him. He carried on with active cave exploration, including a protracted dig in the Dan-yr-Ogof show cave.

Bill was a great provider of "things that might come in useful" with the result that it was very difficult to clear out junk from the HQ. On one occasion a skip was hired and filled with items that had been in the roof space for many years, but before the contractor could remove it Bill saw it - you can guess the rest.

Bill's driving was legendary. "It wasn't the first hedge that did the damage - it was the second" and "Bill stopped 3 feet short of where the policemen

HAD been standing". Who else would have put the dumper down the hole? Someone else was responsible for the accident which caused Bill to give up smoking. The other driver paid up but the amount was not enough to replace the car with an adequate vehicle, so Bill had to stop smoking - well, at least he gave up buying cigarettes.

Bill was always attracted to fair haired young ladies, that is until the day Elsie stopped at the Gwyn Arms. The result was that after a long bachelorhood Bill took the plunge, and he and Elsie have enjoyed 20 years of happy marriage. We all give Elsie our best wishes for the future.

Bill had many setbacks and problems in his life, but he was never one to complain. He was always ready to help in any project and in any capacity within his means, and particularly with the initiation and training of beginners. In his passing, we have all lost a friend and I feel that an era has ended. I felt very privileged to be asked to read Elsie's address on that first Saturday morning in January of this year.

# Bill Little: Another View

*by Nig Rogers*

I didn't know Bill all that well but I liked him a lot. I wish I'd known him when he was younger and more active. I would certainly have liked to have caved with him, back in the days when he was pushing.

Bill was noted for his underground climbing in the '50s and '60s, when he was investigating various avens in OFD I before the way to II was found. Having revisited the scenes of several of his exploits, I have the utmost respect for what he achieved. Things were different then; no modern protection, no bolts or Bosch drills. Nailed boots must have helped, although they would be frowned upon today by the conservationists. Go to Bat Aven, climb it and you will see Bill's scratchmarks - a piece of caving history in situ. Criticise the damage done to the calcite if you like, but when you get to the top, forty metres up, bear in mind that this was as likely done on the descent as on the way up.

Bill and his mates had free-climbed down, a remarkable feat. If you are critical of the marks left by their passing, then you will probably be critical of the bolts we placed to abseil down when we repeated the route.

Bill was always keen to encourage me and he was always ready to answer any of my questions, especially about places he'd been to first. He seemed to realise that as he grew older and gradually became less active he could still make a valid contribution by maintaining contact with younger cavers: something we should all strive to remember as the years pass by.

The formality of funeral services, particularly the religious aspect, has always left me cold but I duly attended Bill's. However, my good-byes had already been said in a different way. Two days after his death, still saddened by the

news, I had aid-climbed into a high-level passage in a cave at Llangattock. The anticipated major extensions did not materialise, but at one point a magnificent grotto was discovered. Low on the left was a pure white stal boss, lines of helictites covering the walls above, and there, high up on the right, two large bunches of aragonite crystals. As I stared at these in amazement I thought of Bill. The sadness passed, just as he would have wanted it to. Out of reach of even the clumsiest caver, sights such as this will remain for others to see, long after we are all gone. Timeless, as ever, the caves will remain. The grotto was only small, but size isn't everything. It was a gem of a place, just as Bill was a gem of a man.

# Cave Paintings in Wales: A Prehistoric Enigma

by *Mel Davies*

I had been caving for eleven years before a visit to France organised by three of us from the South Wales Caving Club in 1958 enabled me to make an acquaintance with cave paintings (Davies, 1959). In those days the cavern of Lascaux in the Perigord was open to the public, who were admitted in small conducted groups. When the air-conditioning doors were slammed behind us we were transported into a prehistoric, primitive world, dimly lit to provide the right atmosphere, where magnificent paintings seemed to me to be full of menace, even horror. I was hooked, and have been searching for cave art in Wales ever since.

Plenty of books have been published about Lascaux (Taralon, 1958) and more recent work describes the analysis of the pigments used (Leroi-Gourhan, 1982). I know enough about the archaeology of the painted caves to realise that there is no reason why cave art should not have been attempted in Wales, and this article lays down some ground rules about how to look for paintings, etchings,

stripes or hand-patterns. To avoid boring you with lots of grid references, all the caves mentioned are listed in the BCRA book "Limestones and Caves of Wales" (Ford, 1989), an indispensable text-book and guide for anyone caving or cave-researching in the Principality.

The archaeology is quite straightforward - the heyday of the paintings in the Dordogne in France was the Magdalenian period, perhaps 17,000 years ago. There is no exact counterpart in Wales, as our land was then just emerging from its coldest episode, but as the ice retreated so the hunting peoples from southern France moved north in pursuit of reindeer and other edible species. The mammoth was a veritable walking meat factory with useful things like ivory and hair thrown in. On the plains of Russia they even built huts entirely of mammoth bones and tusks. One must beware of transporting a given culture into what might be a slightly different environment, but flint tools similar to those used by the Magdalenians are certainly found in Welsh caves,

so why not palettes and hair brushes? I must admit at once that in 35 years I have never found any.

Comparatively few caves have been properly excavated in Wales, but it seems that the most promising sites where mural art might be found are around the coast. One is looking firstly for plain limestone walls as nearly white as possible. Undulations and protrusions do not matter as prehistoric man (or woman, for who knows?) was skilled in incorporating them into a 3-D effect. Muddy walls are a nuisance but I saw clear etchings in Les Combarelles, France, where a decidedly mucky wall had incisions in animal forms. In Ogof Pant-y-Wennol, Llandudno, during my excavations of 1974-7, we broke through into an inner dry chamber with clean walls. There were bats but no paintings. In the nearby Upper Kendrick's Cave we found evidence of long-standing occupation by man and animals, but the walls were too seamed to carry any recognisable marks. A cave on the Little Orme called Ogof Rhiwledyn

seemed ideal for occupation and decoration; we found the former but clean whitish walls with occasional thin films of stalagmite carried nothing. In Lascaux it is claimed that the stalagmite sometimes forms a protective film, and when we were conducted into Villars cave in 1958 by the Speleo-Club de Perigueux, we saw some paintings which actually disappeared behind patchy stalagmite. Pontnewydd cave and the Cefn Caves have both been excavated during the last decade by the National Museum of Wales, but two of us scoured the walls in 1975, before the Museum's campaign started, without finding any marks even using photography.

We come now to South Wales where, until recently, I considered the best chances to be in Gower and coastal south Pembrokeshire. However, it now appears that few caves were open in the highland zone. Following the identification of bear and deer remains in Powell's Cave, Penwyllt, we have examined the walls, which are dry and clean in part, very closely indeed but without detecting any prehistoric marks. There are unfortunately plenty of more recent ones but even these may be of interest to the historian - who was the person who carved the date 1734 so excellently in Deborah's Hole, Gower? We have to consider Bacon Hole, Gower where horizontal stripes discovered in 1912 (Garrod, 1926) were

sufficiently intriguing to drag over from France the great prehistorian Abbe Breuil. Despite some later reports that he positively identified them, he only said that "they might possibly be Palaeolithic, but there is no proof". I have examined this spot very carefully and, although it is now covered by graffiti, I believe that an excavation at the foot of the wall might reveal a continuation of the ten bands originally found. Other sites examined in recent years include caves on Caldey Island, the Hoyles Mouth near Tenby and many caves in the seldom-visited Castlemartin cliffs.

Only recently has the hunt hotbed up. Members of Cwmbran Caving Club have helped me with powerful lights in the upper parts of the famous Paviland cave. National Trust staff in Gower have co-operated in lowering a rigid ladder over the cliff at Bosco's Den and then hauling it up into the cave. We then hoisted it into roof cavities where interesting red marks which I had photographed, one in the shape of a bull's head, proved to be iron oxide deposits left by trickling water. We did the same in the roof of Bacon Hole in December 1992 but without finding any marks. So the search goes on but I cannot say that the paintings are there waiting to be found. Beware of false alarms and hoaxes; a claim was made in 1980 that cave art and engravings had been discovered at Symonds Yat in

the Wye Valley (Rogers et al, 1981), but the find was ridiculed when examined by experts. Mural art will be difficult to date and will have to be supported by excavated archaeological evidence, however this article is not intended to advocate widespread digging in the irreplaceable bone caves of Wales.

## References

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# Sites of Speleological Interest Around Cefn Cil-Sanws

by Malcolm Herbert

At the end of 1991, a cave close to the A470 north of Cefn-coed-y-cymmer was brought to the attention of a few SWCC cavers. While this provoked a number of caving trips and some digging activity, this article has little new cave to report on, although it will hopefully shed some light on an interesting area. Apologies for the delay in presenting the article, but this seems to be the norm with anything submitted to a caving newsletter.

## Location

The area of interest lies to the north of Cefn-coed-y-cymmer, just east of the A470 as it passes the notorious Cefn-coed cemetery and heads north towards the Storey Arms and Brecon, alongside the Afon Taf-fawr. To the west of this area are the Cefn-coed risings and Ogor Pont y Meirw, the latter lying just north of the bridge that connects the two halves of the cemetery. The hydrology of the area is uncertain (Gascoine, 1989) with no major sinks for either set of resurgences. To the east of Cefn Cil-Sanws is the Nant Glais valley, which

contains Ogor Rhyd Sych and Ogor-y-Ci as well as other minor caves (Stratford, 1986).

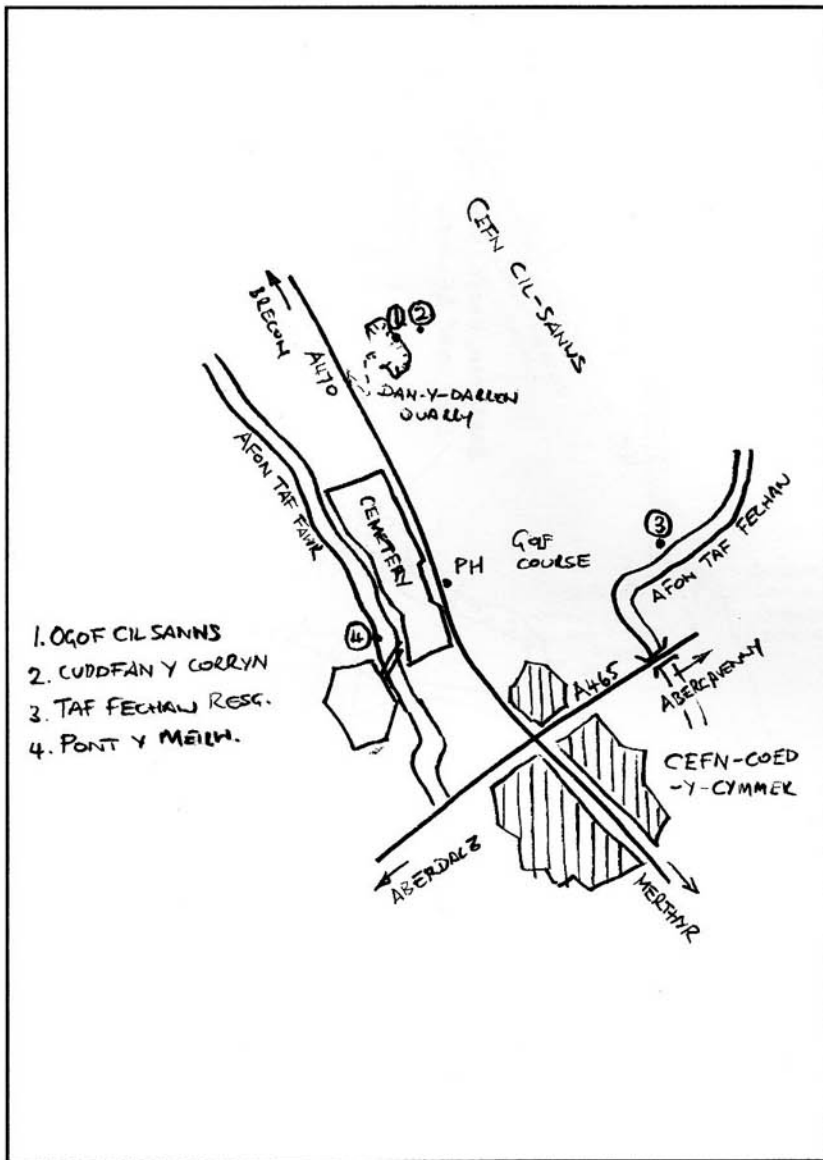
## Ogor Cil-Sanws

This is located in the now disused Danydarren Quarry, above and to the east of the A470 just to the north of the small Jewish cemetery (SO 0245 0910). The cave entrances are about 15m above the centre of the main quarry face. There are other tubes and holes in the quarry face, none of which are easy to reach.

The "original" Ogor Cil-Sanws was found and explored in 1960 by Mel Davies and others from the British Nylon Spinners Speleological Society. At the time the quarry was still being worked and there was a 12m climb to the entrance. A copy of the 1961 survey, redrawn for this article, shows that the current Ogor Cil-Sanws is somewhat different and the remains of the original cave can be reached from the right hand (south) entrance. This currently has a rather fresh bird's nest in the entrance and consists of a single passage with an awkward

aven to climb. There are two good digging leads in the old cave, not draughting but heading away from the quarry face and into the hill. The cave is not listed in *Caves of South Wales* (Stratford, 1986).

The "new" Ogor Cil-Sanws was dug open in 1984 by members of the Brynmawr Caving Club, from what was originally a side passage of the 1960 cave. Further quarrying has provided the cave with its own, north, entrance. The cave has been extensively dug to reach its current length of over 120m, and provides a number of different leads. The entrance draughts strongly under certain conditions, and after heavy rain a stream flows out, filling the first two crawls with water. After these crawls, the first boulder choke is passed on the right, which leads to a low boulder chamber. From here, access can be gained to a boulder-filled aven, while the way into the cave is via a tight section, which then leads to a sand chamber. To the left, a nice trench passage leads to a horrendous aven filled with suspended boulders, each the size of an Austin Allegro, and



collapsed to form a 3-4m rectangular hole. At the south-eastern corner, there is a hole leading down, which has a roof of grit and a limestone floor, and is home to a number of large spiders; hence the name, Cuddfan y Corryn. Four digging trips by SWCC members have revealed two possible leads, both tight but with comparatively easy digging. Hopefully further visits can confirm its potential, as it also makes an excellent spot to spend a sunny summer's day.

### Taf Fechan Resurgences.

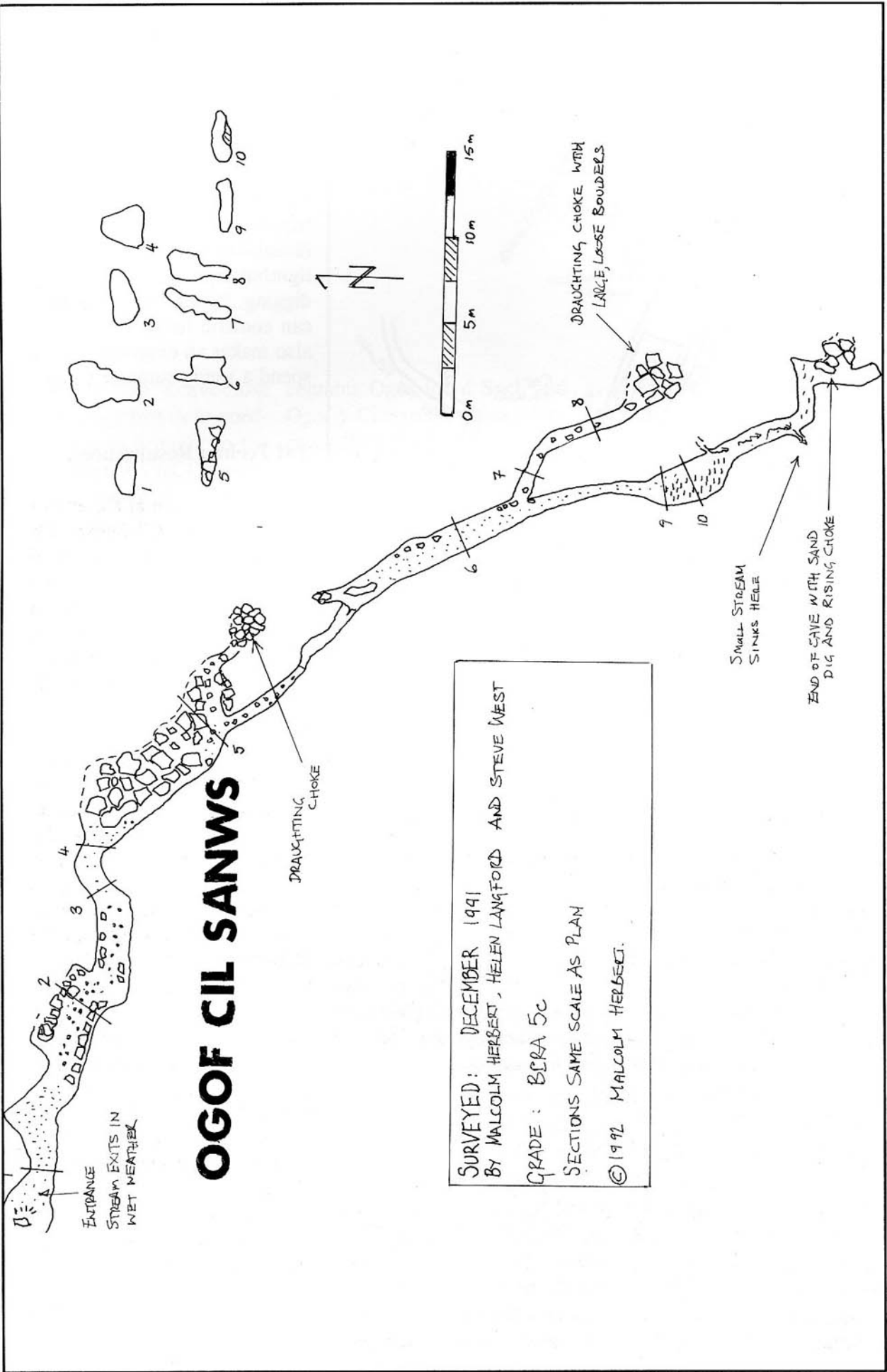
The small stream at the end of the new Ogof Cil-Sanws has been dye-traced to the set of risings in Cwm Taf Fechan (SO 0344 0840). This trace is undocumented, and there are no details of flow times. There are a number of places where the water appears on the north-west bank, some of which have been dug over a number of years by a caver from Troedyrhiw, with some success. He has used resistivity to confirm the presence of cave passage behind the rock face. It would perhaps be a worthwhile exercise for the Greensites project to confirm these results in the near future. There are two other sites further upstream here which would provide good digging potential; firstly, a large amount of water appears at one point from a low opening, while about 30m upstream there is a 2m high passage that appears in the bank of the river. From this a mud slope almost fills it to the roof, but it would provide an excellent project for a large team.

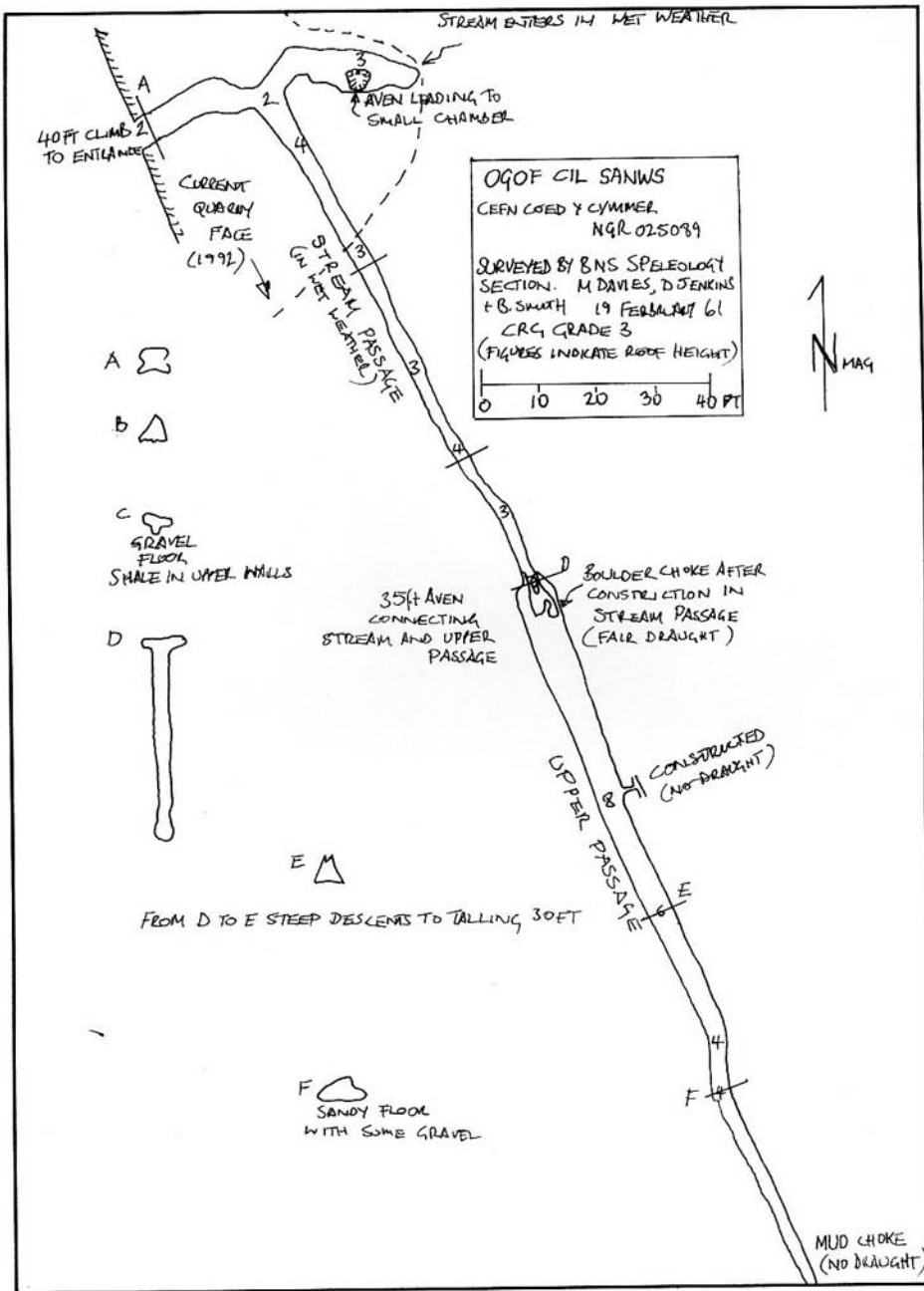
this seems to emit the main draught. From the sand chamber, a low sandy crawl leads to a small stream and the terminal dig. There is no draught in this lower section. SWCC members have undertaken a number of digging trips into the cave, and have looked at the terminal sand dig and the horrendous aven. The dig is worth continuing as it is quite likely to connect to higher level passage again, while the aven needs some chemical persuasion to assist gravity in lowering some of the large boulders that are balanced above the floor. As this is where the main draught emerges, there is

a good chance of finding a way on. The cave was surveyed in 1991, with Helen Langford doing the whole trip in reverse holding the end of the tape and Steve West making his only visit. The original 1960 cave needs re-surveying to tie it in with this survey.

### Cuddfan y Corryn

Some investigations were made above Danydarren Quarry, and some large shakeholes were looked at north of the golf course. Directly above the quarry is an area of millstone grit which at one point has





## Conclusion

This area has received little attention from cavers, and virtually no documentation, both factors which make it worthy of further investigation. The distance from Ogof Cil-Sanws to the Taf Fechan risings is around 1.5km, with a vertical differential of more than 100m. Hopefully during the next few months further digging work can be carried out and there may be something new to write about.

Along with the Cil-Sanws area, to the east and west there are other areas of the Central Northern outcrop with few investigated sites of speleological interest. The catchment to the west of Afon Taf Fawr, though not large, is worth further study. To the east, beyond the Nant Glais, there are a number of resurgences including Vaynor Church Rising (SO 0490 1030) that are of interest to diggers.

## References

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- Stratford T, 1986, *Caves of South Wales*, Cordee Press.

# Looking Back

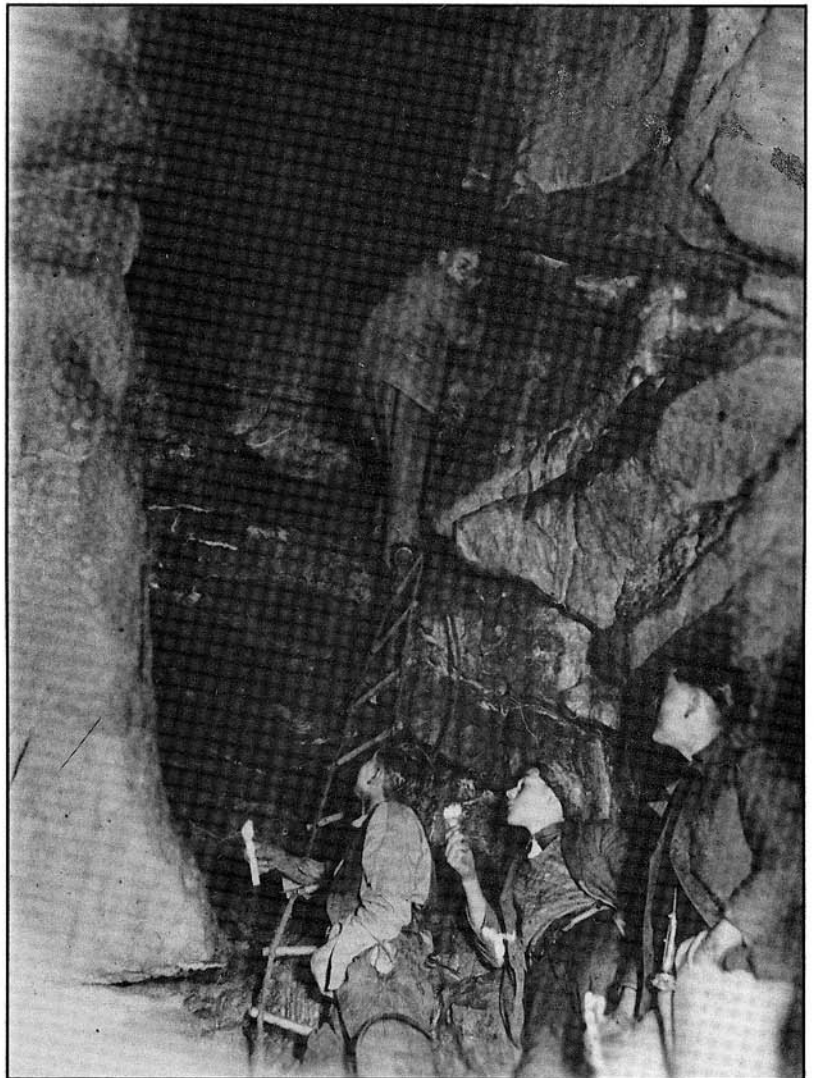
## Photographs from the Collection of Charles Freeman

In the last Newsletter I published a letter from Charles Freeman, which arrived with a set of black-and-white photographs from his collection, mostly taken before the war. Since then Charles (who reports that the Newsletter brightens up his 95th year!) has kindly sent some more pictures, and a selection from both sets is reproduced here.

The captions are based on the information written on the back of the prints, and are therefore rather vague in some cases. Similarly, I have not been able to credit the photographers, as Charles says he cannot remember who took them.

Space permits only a small number of the photographs to be published here, but I have now passed the whole collection over to the Records Officer, with a suggestion that they be kept in a photo album in the library, with the captions written beneath each picture.

The photographs here have been chosen on the basis that they are those most likely to be of interest to members, and will stand being reproduced, but the whole set is a fascinating insight into the caving world of years past, and well worth a look.



Craig y Dinas

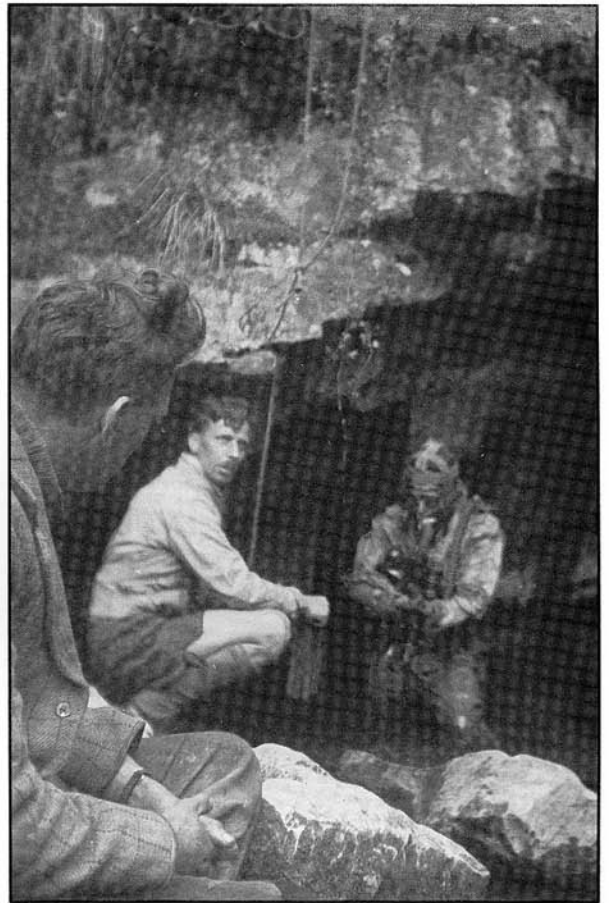
Charles's most recent letter says that, having suffered a mild stroke earlier in the year, he has moved from his house in Sully, South Glamorgan, into a small nursing home nearby. I'm sure

all members will join with me in sending best wishes to Charles in his new home, and our thanks for the kind donation of the photographs.

**Tony Baker.**



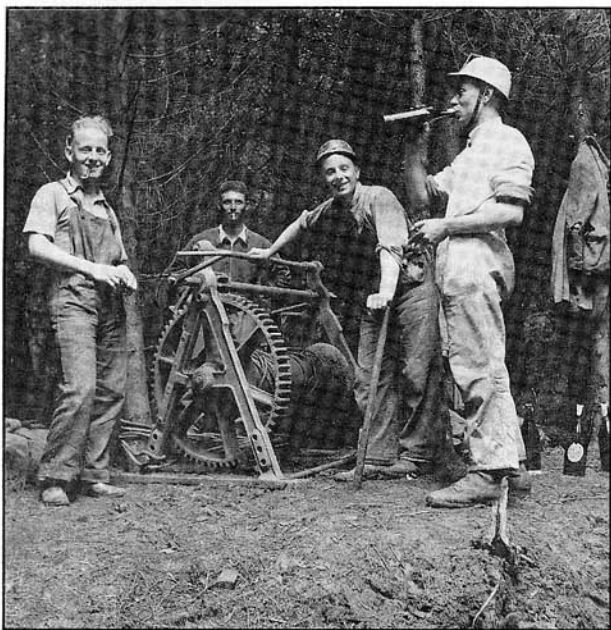
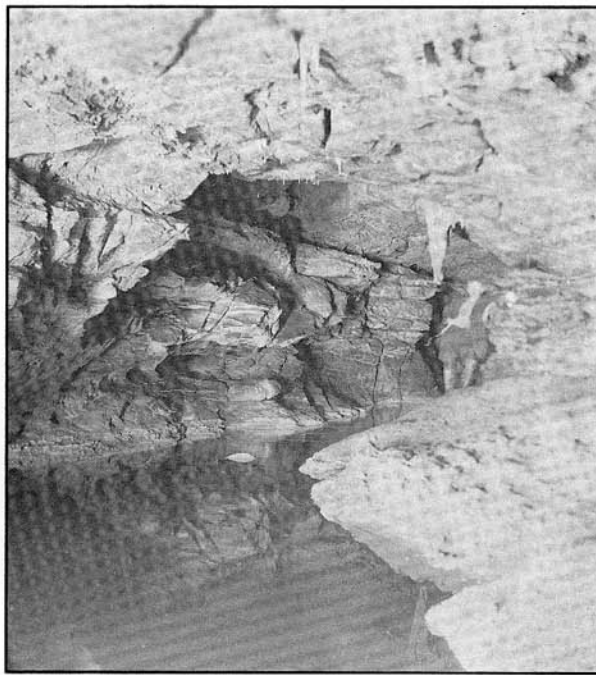
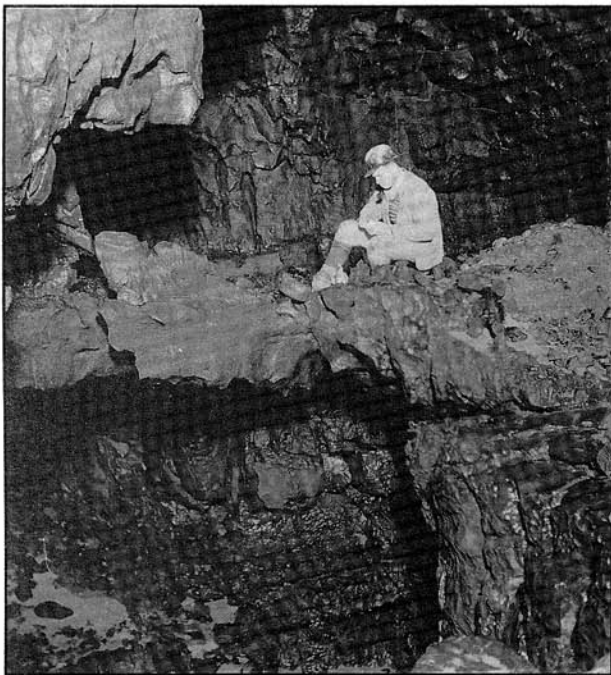
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu



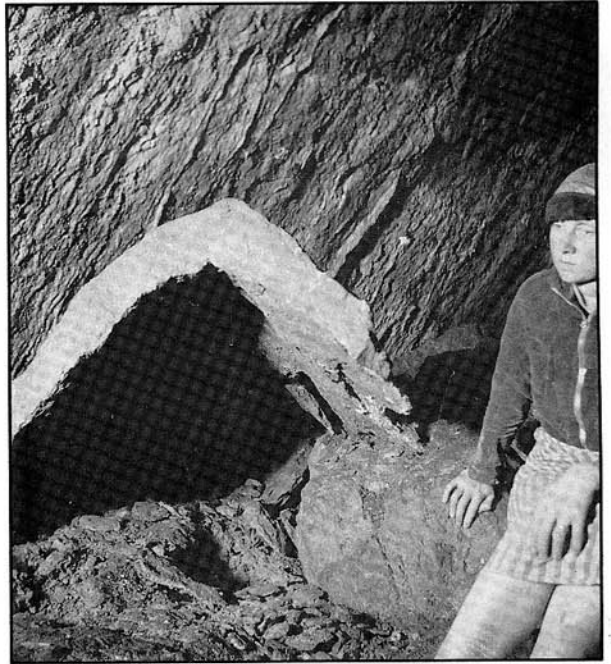
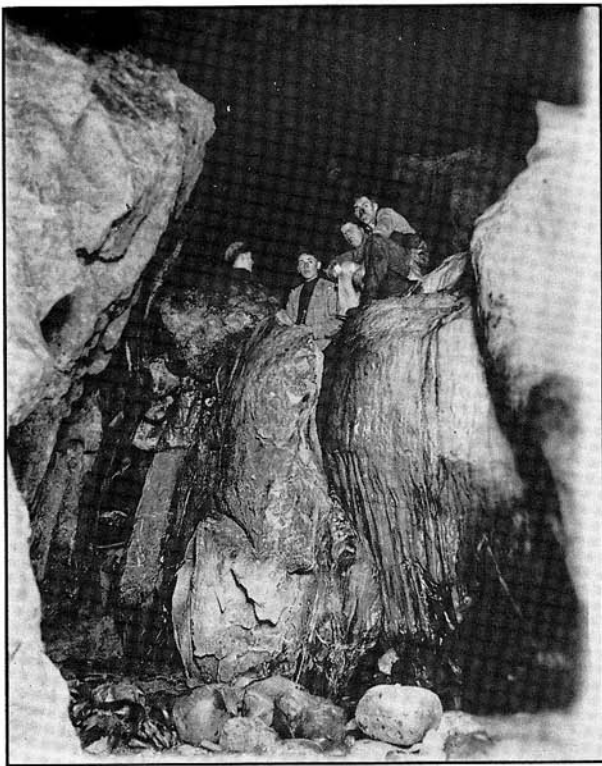
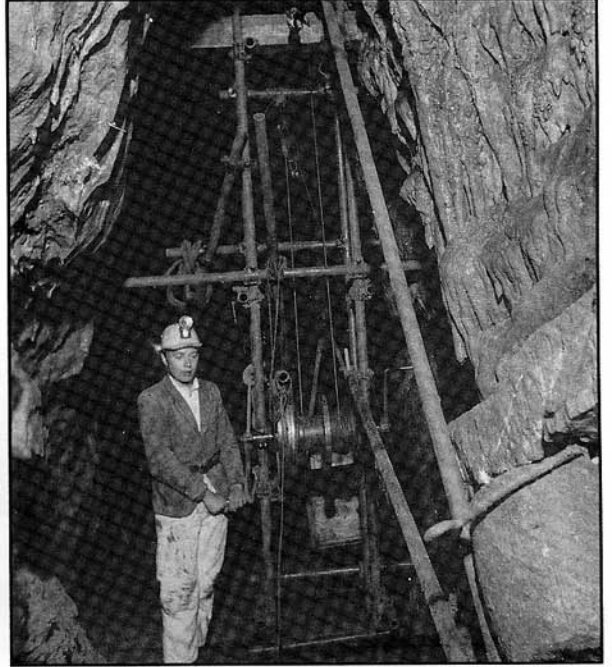
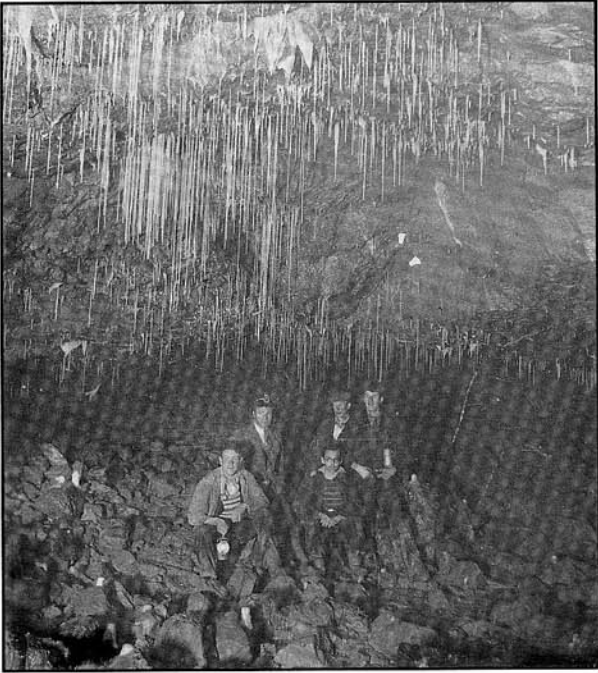
Diving O.F.D., Jack Sheppard and ?



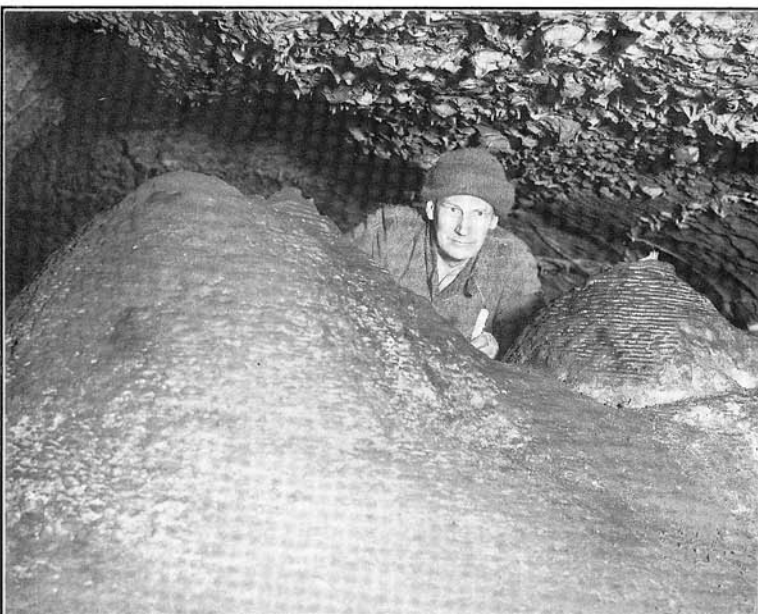
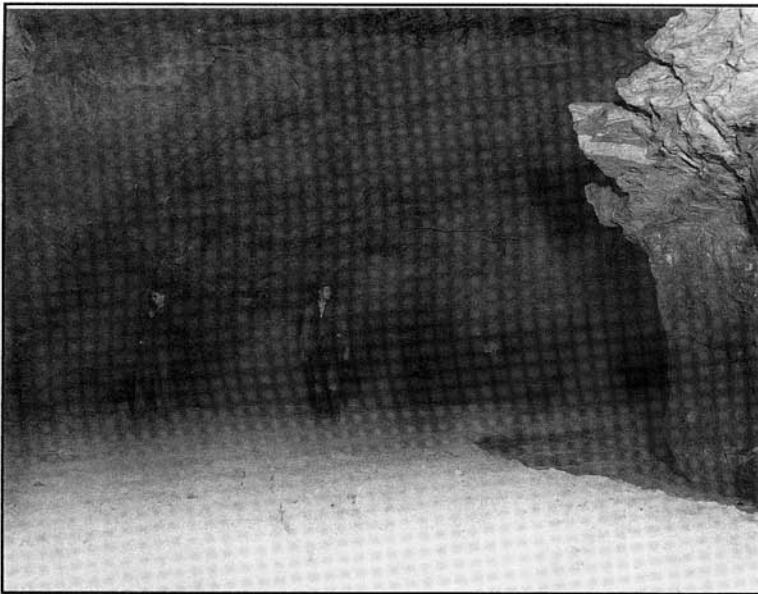
Preparing to dive at Ffynnon Ddu.



**This page -Top left and right: Dan-yr-Ogof; Bottom left and right: Excavations  
Opposite page - Top left and right: Lamb Leer; Bottom left: Craig y Dinas; Bottom right: Reads Cave**







**Top left: Above Coral Cave, Mendip Hills.**  
**Middle left: West Mine, Alderly Edge.**  
**Bottom left: Bee Hives, Carswark Cavern.**  
**Above, top: Llygad Lluchwr.**  
**Above, bottom: Main Chamber, Carswark Cavern.**

# Castlemartin Coast Boat Traverse

by Mel Davies

The Castlemartin coast of south Pembrokeshire has 10 miles of limestone cliffs. Magnificent scenery - but are there any caves? I started hunting in 1966, and by 1971 Cwmbran Caving Club had notched up five caves, all archaeological, with the bonus that one - Ogof Gofan - had remarkable stalactite formations. All this is written up in the book *Limestones and Caves of Wales*, while club Journal No.5 (September 1969) gives a humorous account of John Parker's dinghy traverse with Dai Parry along the foot of the cliffs. By 1971 we had graduated to an engine-boat traverse with the local Coastguard Officer; exciting, but we did not have the right equipment to record all the caves we spotted. However, we did conclude that only by boat could caves in these high cliffs be located. Attempts were then made to procure other boats, but when the purpose and situation was explained, various boat owners showed marked reluctance to take their vessels close up under 150ft high cliffs.

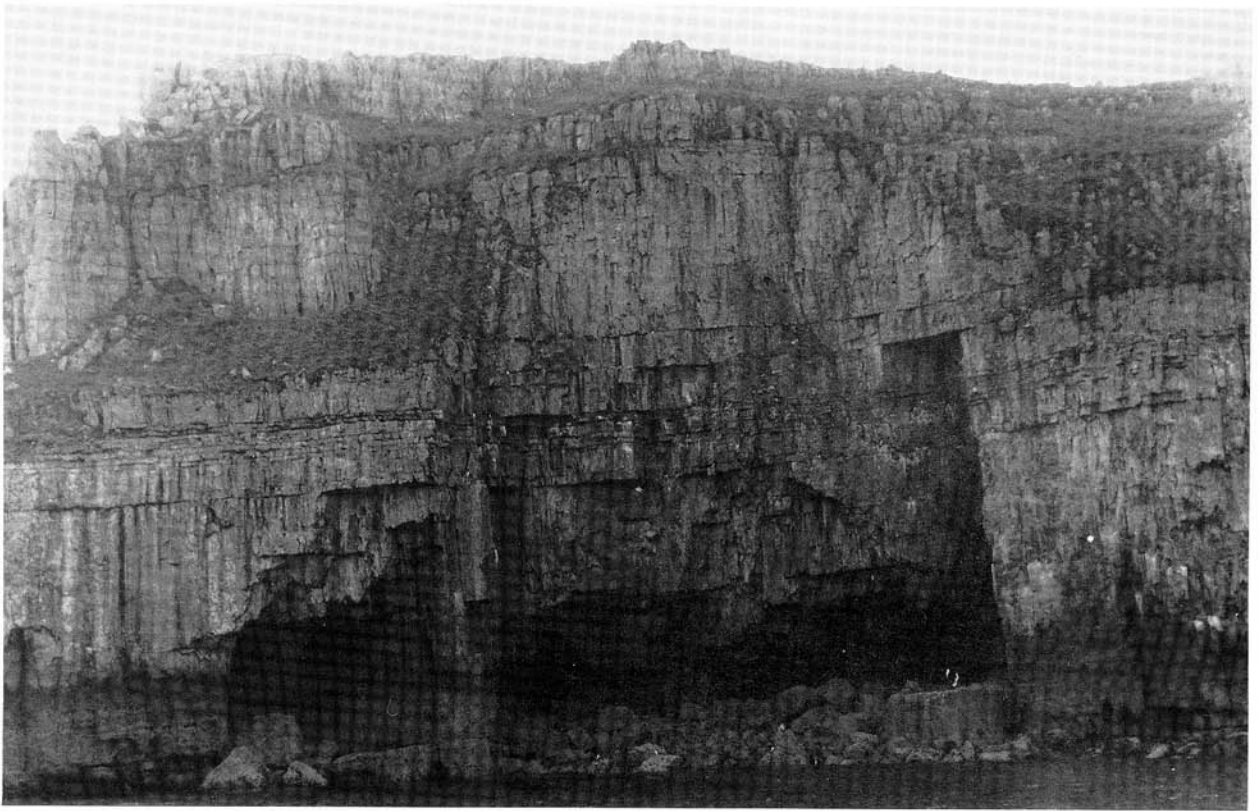
There the matter rested, although Cwmbran Caving Club continued their occasional visits to Castlemartin, the last one being in February this year, while the North Wales Caving Club came down in 1977 and the South Wales Caving Club visited in 1991. On each visit something new was looked at, but it has long become clear that time is wasted rigging equipment over the cliff edge only to spend just a few minutes in what turns out to be a short cave. It was time for another boat traverse.

The Castlemartin Range Advisory Committee meets every so often to discuss conservation and access on Army property, and Robert Kennedy proposed at the last one that I should join the next boat traverse. Robert is a retired archaeologist who used to join us up to 1971 in our cave digging, in fact he was the only archaeologist brave enough to do so!

Friday 4th June turned out sunny and calm - ideal conditions for

a bird census and cave photography from the Army launch. We all met in Pembroke Dock under the "command" of Lt. Col. Michael Portman. The local warden for the Countryside Council for Wales, Bob Haycock, was there to count the birds, helped by the National Trust warden, and a Pembrokeshire Coast National Park ranger was present to check on the many climbs now published in climbing guide books. For my part I was able to identify and photograph the known caves including a cave under St Govan's Head which Graham Stark of Cwmbran had almost reached in February; the cave looked even more promising from the sea so Graham will have to try again (after improving his SRT technique!).

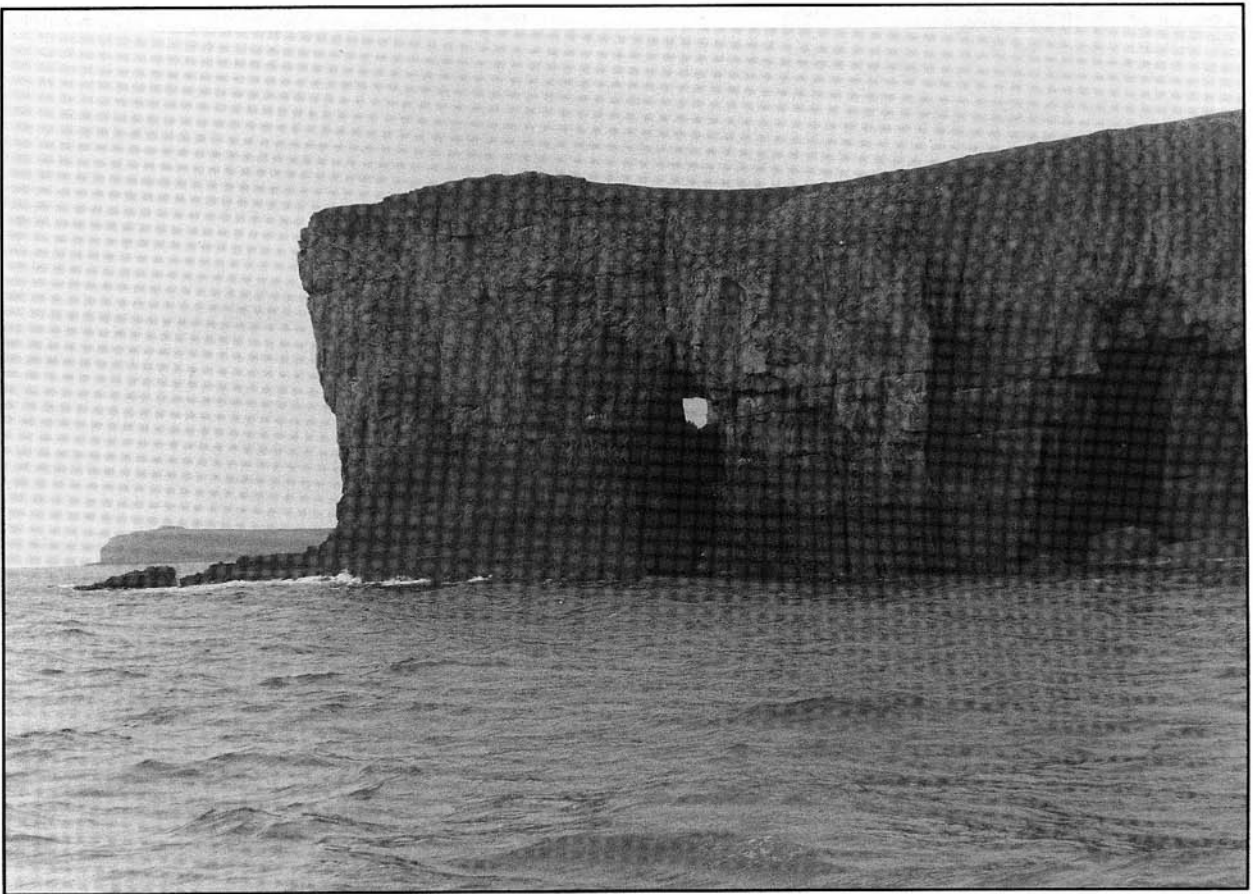
Eventually I took 39 photos, and later examination of the prints with a magnifying lens has revealed 81 new caves. Most of these will be sea caves of no great length, but statistically some will be large, probably



**Stackpole Head, east side with two large sea caves. Unfortunately access is only possible at certain low spring tides but we hope to return on the appropriate dates this year. Photos: Mel Davies.**



**Barafundle Bay on the extreme right; two sea caves and at least one bedding plane visible. Access easy at ordinary spring tides.**



**An excellent view of the extremity of Stackpole Head, east side, with St. Govan's Head in the distance. One cave penetrates the cliff from east to west, and nesting birds can be seen silhouetted inside it. There is also a sea cave which may well penetrate correspondingly for a fair distance. Access is believed to be only possible by descent over the cliff. All these cliffs are 50-55m high.**

well-decorated, and even archaeological. To explore them all will take some years going by past performance as the bird nesting season is "out". Access to some could be by cliff descents and traverses, while others will need SRT or ladder climbs. It is unlikely that bats will be seen let alone disturbed; in all the caves we have visited on the coast over the last 27 years we have encountered bats in only one cave - Ogof Gofan - and even there we saw only two. It is evident that coastal caves are not favoured hibernacula, possibly due to draughts and air pressure changes caused by wave action. This factor can be surprising at times, and storms

coinciding with high tide when the explorer is in a constricted tunnel can cause pain in the ears akin to that suffered by cave divers.

Much of the Castlemartin coast is a Site of Special Scientific Interest famous for bird life, its botany and magnificent scenery, so every care is taken during cave searches and visits. Permission must be obtained from the Army authorities prior to each visit, and we hope to make a start during the autumn of 1993. With 81 holes identified I am sure that some will prove to be wet, cold, very muddy, extremely tight but also exciting, well-decorated caves.

# The Lion

by *Pete Francis*

I looked up at the lion; the lion looked down at me. It wasn't what I'd expected. Please don't misunderstand me, I don't mean the lion; the lion was more than I expected. After all, they'd said, "They're mountain lions... There are mountain lions around...If you're lucky you might see a mountain lion..."

In my book a mountain lion should be like a thin and scrawny dog that takes one look at you and slinks away. This one wasn't and certainly didn't.

It wasn't what I expected in as much as I didn't expect to see one, in whatever shape or condition, so soon. After all, I'd only gone for a walk into the gorge to acclimatise, to get the feel of the place, to get in tune with it all. I mean, we'd only just arrived. The others probably thought I'd slinked off to get out of putting up the tents.

And so close! I mean, it's all right if there are bars, but there weren't any, and even if there had been I'd still have felt uneasy. And so close to the camp! I mean, I'd only walked a few hundred yards over a flat, dusty, rock-strewn river bed to reach the narrow entrance to the gorge. Well, it was more like a

canyon I suppose, but I had only gone forty or fifty yards into that. I mean, you couldn't go far, all that clambering up and down over boulders and large, irregular rock outcrops. It didn't give you much time to sort yourself out.

I'd just clambered round that corner back there, the one with the awkward climb down that I'd jumped in the end, just turned the corner, happened to look up, and there it was.

I looked up at the lion; the lion looked down at me. That's not quite right really. I mean, I was sort of squinting up at him outlined on the ledge ten feet above me with the sun glaring off the rocks behind him, making them a lighter shade of fawny-grey than he was. No, that's not right either. I wasn't thinking that poetically, that precisely at the time. But he certainly was staring at me.

I mean, what do you do? What's the correct procedure? Is there some form of proper etiquette? I remember my first thought: "Take a picture of him, quick, otherwise nobody will believe you." I think I almost started to, almost reached for the camera around my neck, but then I

remembered it wasn't there. I'd left it safely in the tent back at base camp. After all, I hadn't expected to find anything interesting on that first stroll.

The lack of that one, small defensively useless item suddenly made me feel completely naked, as if I'd walked into a busy hall full of people, with no clothes on, and they'd all suddenly turned round to look at me, and there was no place to run to, to hide my vulnerability. Only it was worse, I mean, if I'd had the camera, I'd have had something to do, something to cover my private fears with. Now I had nothing, I could only stare back at the huge animal that stared at me. It was really huge, too - at least eight feet long, not counting its long, bushy tail. I saw a stuffed one in a shop in Tehran later, when all this seemed like a strange dream, and it was still just as long. I shouldn't even be calling it a "he" really, I mean, in shape and appearance it was an exact copy of an African lioness. Except for the bushy tail. I remember thinking, asking myself right then, if African lionesses had bushy tails - I couldn't remember. I put the

**"If it had been a wild-eyed Kurdish freedom fighter I could at least have tried to converse with him, even if it had only been in sign language..."**

thought to one side, to check again, if there'd be an "again", that is.

I remember wondering what she was thinking, looking down on me. What was going on behind those cool, unflickering eyes? Was she thinking what a good snippet this would be for her cubs when she got back? "Guess what I saw in the gorge today dears? It was this really peculiar two-legged creature..." Or would she just take me back to show them?

I stared up at the lion; the lion stared down at me. If it had been a wild-eyed Kurdish freedom fighter I could at least have tried to converse with him, even if it had only been in sign language: "That's a nice taped-up automatic rifle you've got. Does it shoot well?" We met some later, not very forthcoming chaps but then, freedom fighters seldom are, or so I've heard. But at least we'd been able to converse, after a fashion, to explain that we were mad British - no sorry, European, they didn't like the British - cavers, on some ridiculous jaunt to try and find the deepest cave in the world. But you can't do that with a lion, they just wouldn't

understand. On the journey out, on all that long body- and nerve-wracking road, through all those countless breakdowns when we'd looked in despair at our old, brightly-painted, ramshackle bus that villagers loved to stone, always in the back of my mind had been the hope that I'd be the one, the one to catch a glimpse of that most elusive of Iranian creatures, that the Kings of Persia had loved to hunt from their chariots back in the mists of time. Only my dream had come true a bit too soon, before I was quite ready for it to begin, and the damned creature wasn't being elusive enough by half, nor was there any chariot in sight. Come to think of it, I could have done with some of that jolly old mist right at that moment, though there was fat chance of that wish coming true under the baking hot sun.

A mosquito buzzed playfully around my left ear. I was about to brush it away angrily, when caution got the upper hand.

"No, just leave the poor creature alone, Pete," I cautioned myself quietly, "it'll probably go away in a minute." I felt it gently settle on my earlobe and, with

professional precision, start to bore a hole in it. A vision of the limpid, stagnant, evil-smelling pool of water adjacent to the camp site swam before my eyes. We'd labelled it as malaria-infested immediately. Had I taken those anti-malaria pills? Another vision, of me fading away in a malarial fever, rose before my eyes. The lion twitched an eyebrow, probably bothered by a close relative of the occupant of my left earlobe, and suddenly I forgot about the effects of wasting illnesses in desert climates. I hoped it wouldn't bite her, wouldn't annoy her in any way. I almost felt like waving my arms at the minute parasite, shooing it away. No, perhaps not, after all the gesture might be misinterpreted, one never knew.

Perhaps if I raised my arms and flailed them around, made myself as big as possible and emitted loud roaring noises, that might do the trick? No, not with the midge, with the lion! Someone had once told me that that was the thing to do with large, troublesome animals, just wave your arms and intimidate them into submission. On the other hand, perhaps the lion

**"I wondered what my  
loved ones would say  
when they heard the news:  
Famous Cave Explorer  
Eaten By Lion..."**

might take that as a decidedly unfriendly action, and I wanted to stay as friendly as possible with her at the moment. I brushed the thought aside as impractical and undiplomatic; after all, I was in a foreign country and having a unique opportunity to view, at close quarters, an endangered species. Except that I felt like the endangered species, or rather, specimen.

Time seemed to be passing very slowly; it often does, you may have noticed, when you have nothing much to do. I seemed to have nothing whatsoever to do, I couldn't think of a thing, except maybe to pray. I wondered what my loved ones would say when they heard the news: Famous Cave Explorer Eaten By Lion. They'd be very distressed, upset and put out, but not as distressed, upset and put out - plus half a dozen other, far stronger adjectives - as I would be. After all, I'd so much more to do in life, so many more things to experience before experiencing being eaten. And it was right at the start of the expedition, before anything had happened (except meeting the lion, of course). I mean, I hadn't even had my

money's worth out of the expedition yet! I wondered flippantly if my next of kin would get a rebate; the other expedition members seemed a pretty decent lot, would be bound to see that I had fair play. I wondered if lions possessed a sense of fair play.

"No, stop it!" I told myself decisively, "pull yourself together and do something positive." But then, after thinking of nothing positive I could do, I lapsed back into my shrinking state of terror.

As expedition food officer, I'd managed to get a really good sponsorship deal on Goblin Beefburgers, and there were two hundred cans of them only a few hundred yards away at base camp, right now. Later we were so fed up with them, we even used them as depth gauges, hurling them down likely-looking shafts to see how deep they were and if it was worth our while descending them. If only I had one with me now, I could quickly open it, wave it in front in the lion's nostrils, and while she was distracted by the tantalising smell, quietly sneak away. No, I had the feeling that the lion's opinion of them would

have been similar to ours.

I stared up at the lion; the lion stared down at me, and then it moved! Was this to be my final minute? Would it, with one, victorious, soul-splitting roar languidly pounce on my defenceless mortal coil and heartlessly, painfully, rip my frail body to pieces, coating those emotionless, sun-baked rocks with my blood, to slowly fade away under that merciless sun, as my memory soon would too?

The lion moved, looked casually away to the far horizon and, without a backward glance at me, ambled easily off, to disappear a moment later behind a large rock.

I gazed up at where the lion had been, a mosquito buzzed contentedly on my left ear lobe. Without a thought I absent-mindedly crushed it between my thumb and forefinger. I gathered my thoughts, emotions and trousers together and, slightly shakily at first, but with growing confidence in the state of my world, walked thoughtfully back into camp.

"Hi lads! Guess what I've just seen?"

# Powell's Cave, Penwyllt:

## Identification of Bones from the Excavations of 1926

by Mel Davies

The existence of bones from an excavation in this cave came to light in 1992 while the archaeology of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu was being investigated (Davies, 1992). Mr John Barrows held a small collection at his home in Pen-y-cae and these were identified by kind permission of Mr Barrows in December 1992. A letter which he produced suggested that more bones from the same excavation might be found in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. These were traced by Miss E A Walker (1992, 1993), Archaeology Department, and they were subsequently identified the same month. Miss Walker located a report showing that the museum's part of the collection had been examined in 1927 by Mr E Smith under the guidance of Mr R H Burne, F.R.S. of the Royal College of Surgeons, but nothing seems to have been published. A brief description of the cave together with two excellent photographs was published in 1927 (Stevens, 1926-7) but, while referring to bones, it provided no species identification. Later J Wilfrid Jackson made a passing reference which was inaccurate but worth quoting in full:

"In a cave near Penwyllt which has been quarried away, antlers of red deer and remains of brown bear have been found." (Jackson in Cullingford, 1962).

The cave in fact survives practically intact and much remains to be excavated. Finally, O'Reilly *et al* mention the cave twice but omit all reference to the bones (O'Reilly, 1969). A recent examination of the cave revealed a shaft from the surface about 6m long which seems to penetrate to the cave some 4m from the entrance. If this was open in ancient times, it could explain the presence of the animal species described below - they simply fell in through the shaft. However, at the foot of the shaft there is today a deposit blocking it, resembling waste from a limekiln, so the "shaft" may have been merely a fissure which was later widened without too much labour to form a limekiln. In this case the animal bones would have been introduced through the present entrance. There is no visible evidence that animals or bones were introduced through the upper entrance about 50m away, and through which today daylight enters the cave.

The circumstances of the original opening of the cave as described by Stevens are interesting. It was discovered in the latter part of 1926 (at NGR SN 850154, alt. 270m AOD) close to the road, but by what means is not clear. Road widening or quarrying seems the most likely answer and the discovery was apparently widely advertised in the local press. Unfortunately a search through the November and December issues of the Cambria Daily Leader for 1926 in Swansea has failed to turn up any reports but further searches are in progress. Stevens then states

*"...that the remains of extinct animals had been found there, and the cavern was described as being notable because of the abundance of beautiful stalactites. Extraordinary reports were circulated concerning the size, and other features of the cave."*

Stevens and some local worthies - Dr A Lloyd Jones, Mr W H Jones (of Swansea Museum), Mr Walter Riches (an experienced cave excavator) and Mr. Llew. E. Morgan (of Dan-yr-Ogof fame) - then visited the



cave on January 15th 1927 but without excavating.

Mr Morgan took photographs which show the entrance and a nice array of stalactites both later published by Stevens with a sketch plan at 35ft=1inch, and there is a third photograph held by Mr Barrows which shows boxes containing bones. Stevens theorised about the possible origin of the cave as

*"...in all probability a relic of a much earlier stage of the present drainage system - a conduit which carried underground waters when the floor of the valley was at a very much higher level than it is now."*

Today we know that the cave lies almost over Pillar Chamber in the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu system, although no connection is present, so Stevens' hypothesis was quite accurate.

### **Bone Identifications**

The bones are currently housed in two collections - a small one held by Mr John Barrows at Y Grithig, Pen-y-cae, Swansea, SA9 1GD, and three boxes full at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. As this is an anatomical list only, the collections are not differentiated and it will be seen that Brown Bear is the main species represented in both collections. It has only proved possible to measure the lengths of the bones in the Museum.

**BROWN BEAR, *Ursus arctos***  
There is only one skull and half a mandible; the skull is represented by the left zygoma,

frontal and occipital bones and part of the left orbit. The alveoli and teeth are missing and the bone has the flat forehead typical of brown bear rather than the cave bear (Nilsson, 1983). The mandible is from the right side with alveoli for I2 and I3; present are C, P4, M1, M2 and M3. The alveolus for P1 and P3 is partly erupted below the ridge on the buccal side; the canine shows flaking of the enamel but only slight signs of wear. The top of the coronoidal process is slightly damaged while the articular process is complete. Both these bones are greyish-yellow in colour; there is no clay on them, no tooth marks and none of the polish recorded on some of the bones as indicated below. The rest of the bones are now divided into left and right side respectively - see the table opposite for details.

Also in the Museum collection were five metacarpal or metatarsal bones of brown bear; what could not be confirmed as bones of bear were seven rib fragments, three lumbar and one thoracic vertebrae. Labelled "carpal" was a bone 40mm long and a bone labelled "ursus" 33mm long both of which may well have been bear, and a phalange 47mm long which seems too long for a bear phalange. In the Barrows collection were seven vertebrae which may be bear, and nine metacarpal or metatarsal bones and seven claw bones all of which were certainly bear.

Many of the Museum bones had 1mm holes drilled near their ends which indicates that part of the skeleton at least was once wired up in articulated form,

possibly for display. This is not surprising as all the bones are in a good state of preservation.

Some of the bones in the Barrows collection had a curious, shiny patina absent from those in the Museum. There were no tooth marks on any of the bones and the pick marks of the excavators were relatively rare.

Clearly two individual brown bears took refuge in or fell into Powell's Cave as the absence of tooth marks on the bones proves they were not carried in by carnivores. The dentition shows that these were not old individuals which might have died during hibernation, so their presence in the cave remains unexplained.

### **RED DEER, *Cervus elaphus***

This species is represented mainly by antler fragments;

Antler fragments 10.4cm long, 48mm maximum thickness;

14.5cm long,

27mm maximum thickness;

10.0cm long,

36mm thick;

Antler tine 63mm long its base fixed in stalagmited clay 25mm deep;

Antler fragment 92mm long with a thick coat of stalagmite;

Antler tine with complete tine point 80mm long.

Large beam of antler 28cm long with base attached from an individual at least six years old; the beam was shed naturally and it carries no tooth marks or scratches.

Tibia of red deer, right side, distal end 85mm long with a full width of 51mm and broken anciently straight across; the hollow stem had nothing inside

## Bone Identifications: Brown Bear, *Ursus Arctos*

### LEFT

Humerus, 31.8cm, complete, Foramen supratrochleare closed.  
Humerus, distal fragment, 25cm, darker brown than previous bone and with thin flakes of stalagmite.  
Scapula, yellow distal fragment, 24cm, with 15mm indentation caused by a pick and cranial edge damaged  
Scapula, brown colour, more broken than previous bone, 21.5cm, fragments of yellowish-brown clay (not red) adhering and flakes of stalagmite.

Radius, complete, 28.4cm

Radius, complete, 27.8cm

Ulna, 25cm, part of distal end missing.

Ulna, 32.0cm, break fixed with glue, complete, slight stalagmite.

Femur

Tibia, 14.2cm, both ends missing, yellower than tibia opposite.

Tibia.

Fibula, 17.8cm distal piece.

Fibula, 43mm distal piece.

Calcaneus.

Astragalus.

### RIGHT

Humerus, 31.8cm, complete

Humerus with proximal end missing.

Scapula, brown colour, fragment of distal end, 14.5cm matching the one opposite.  
Scapula, 11cm fragment with coracoidal and articular process and part of acromion.

Radius, distal end, 19.7cm, distal width 56mm.

Bone labelled radius but not confirmed, 78mm.

Radius.

Ulna, complete, 32.3cm.

Ulna.

Tibia, 28cm, damage to proximal end, pick mark on stem; brown earthy colour.

Tibia, 25.6cm, proximal end cut off squarely; yellowish brown clay, patchy stalagmite.

Fibula, 15.4cm distal piece.

Calcaneus.



Looking towards the entrance of Powell's Cave



Entrance to Powell's Cave. Photos: Tony Baker.

and there are faint scratches on the caudal side, possibly marks from the teeth of fox or a similarly sized animal.

Bone 35mm long labelled red deer carpal (not confirmed).

All these red deer remains could be attributed to a single individual but more difficult to explain is the preponderance of antlers in relation to the bones.

A possible answer is the casual nature of the excavation coupled with the survival properties of antler compared with bone in certain cave sediments.

#### HORSE, *Equus sp.*

Femur fragment, 85mm long, side unclear but this can be determined from the trochanter tertius which is complete.

Tibia, right side with proximal end missing (Barrows

collection).

Tibia fragment, 76mm long, possibly right side; Museum collection and possibly part of the previous bone.

Astragalus, two bones from the right side.

Phalange I, two bones, side undetermined but the one in the Museum collection is eroded.

On the basis of the astragalus bones, there are two individual horses represented, both by a rear leg. The bones are not in such good condition as the bear bones being grey in colour and seamed as if exposed to air for a considerable time. There are no tooth marks but the tibia in the Barrows collection is severely damaged.

#### OTHER SPECIES

Badger, left mandible fragment.

Sheep or goat, four bones and a tooth, some from a juvenile.

Pelvis fragment, about sheep/goat size.

Labelled bones, but identifications unconfirmed:

Fox right mandible fragment, 12cm long.

Fox tibia, 12.2cm long, both ends missing.

Ox scapula fragment, 81mm long, but seems small so could be deer or even the proximal end of an ox radius.

Ox right ulna, 82mm long. Ox femur, 20cm long.

Roe deer mandible, 78mm long.

Unlabelled molar fragment, 40mm long, which may be ox or deer.

Bird, two metacarpus II & III bones from a small species.

Also in the Barrows collection was a bag of very small bones some of which were rabbit and frog while others may have been small rodents and/or bats. In the Museum collection were small fragments of teeth, ribs and vertebrae which were not identified.

The museum accession numbers were 34.389/1 to /24, 34.389/25 to /46 which means they were accessed in 1934 some seven years after initial identification.

### Comment

While there is no direct evidence to suggest how the bones entered the cave, the lack of tooth-gnawing marks suggests that the various animals comprising, at minimum, two brown bears, two horses, one red deer, a badger, sheep or goat, two birds and possibly ox, roe deer and fox entered by falling through the shaft, or by taking refuge via the present entrance. In either case the remainder of each skeleton must be still in the cave as the diggers of 1926 were only curio hunters, not archaeologists, and their searches (for which we must be grateful) were not exhaustive. Certain major bones are missing, for example three bear femur bones out of four, and similarly with three astragalus bones. The horses are so poorly represented that either a vast quantity of horse bones still remain hidden in the cave, or the few scraps recovered fell accidentally down the shaft as clean bones long after the animals died. This process would explain the "weathered" condition of the horse bones. Another aspect

missing is the apparent lack of evidence for human activity. There are certainly no human bones in the two collections, but also no flint tools, pottery or charcoal traces. Of course, some or all could easily have been overlooked by the curio hunters. Bear bones, not readily differentiated between cave bear, *Ursus spelaeus*, and brown bear, *Ursus arctos*, occur frequently in those caves which have been excavated. For example they are known (Campbell and Bowen, 1989) from:

Worms Head cave, Bacon Hole, Cat Hole, Bosco's Den, Crow Hole, Minchin Hole, Longhole, and Ravenscliff cave in Gower alone;

Ogof Pant-y-Llyn near Llandybie, Hoyle's Mouth and Longbury

Bank caves near Tenby and Ogof-yr-Ychen on Caldey Island.

They are absent from Leather's Hole and were not found in the comparatively shallow excavations in Ogof-yr-Esgym, Glyntawe. Bear remains have also been shown to be present over vast periods of time (Sutcliffe and Zeuner, 1957/58) from at least the Penultimate Glaciation of pre-70,000 years ago to possibly the immediately pre-Roman period. It can be seen that, with the exception of Ogof Pant-y-Llyn, all the caves listed are low-altitude coastal caves.

There are so many mysteries now arising from this brief investigation into two old collections of bones that a new and properly organised

excavation is essential. Meanwhile dumping of rubbish in the cave mouth should be prevented either by a grille or at least by a prohibition notice.

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# From Suicide Alley to No Man's Land...

## Passing the Time in Dan-yr-Ogof

by Nig Rogers

**What's in a name? Sometimes everything, sometimes nothing. Find a new passage and you have the right to call it whatever you want. Choose wisely and the name will fall into popular usage. Ideally, a name should reflect something of the character of the passage and the circumstances under which it is discovered. Some of the best names are the result of careful deliberation, some just come about by chance. Quite often, however, one does not have a choice; a name is born not made.**

*May 1990.*

*We meet in the car park after their trip. Caving gear lies strewn across the ground.*

*"How did it go then, boys? How much did you find?"*

*Embarrassed looks are exchanged, from Dai to Martin and back again.*

*"Are you going to tell him or should I?" says Dai.*

*"Come on, tell me! What did you find?" I'm getting impatient.*

*Martin finally speaks.*

*"We bottled it," he says, glumly.*

*"You what?"*

*"We didn't dig it!" Exasperation showing now.*

*"Why the hell not?" I can't understand this.*

*"'Cos it's too dangerous! There's no way I'm digging there. It's Suicide Alley, man."*

We had discovered the way into the extension after another fruitless trip to A2 Chamber. Simon Amatt had told me to check out a tube going off from the bottom of the Abyss that he and Nick Geh had been banging. The tube itself became rather tight so Martin Hicks was sent in whilst I retreated to an alcove on the left where the previous diggers had been stacking their spoil. Removing some of this revealed a passage which initially appeared to be trending back parallel with the tube. However, a short dig around a corner led into a wider bedding plane partially blocked by several flakes of rock. A draught could be felt and a stream could be heard somewhere ahead. Unfortunately, we had run out of time and had to leave. Isn't it amazing how much easier the journey out seems when you know you've got something worth returning to?

A week later and we were back: Dai Hopkins, Martin Hicks and myself. Moving one large flake aside enabled Martin to get a body length farther before being repulsed by a very tight section. Dai decided to have a go and, despite Martin's initial scepticism, he managed to get through without too much of a struggle. He shouted back that he had reached a second squeeze, much worse than the first. I relayed this cheerful news to Martin. After much thrutching, Dai was past this obstacle as well and he headed off to explore. For the next ten minutes all we could hear was the sound of crashing boulders receding into the distance. The performance was then repeated in reverse; sounds of falling rocks getting gradually closer. Dai reported that the passage carried on, walking-sized in places, but that it was very loose. It certainly sounded it!

Four hours desperate digging, Dai on one side of each squeeze with myself on the other, and I was able to get across the bedding plane. Replacing my helmet and lamp, all I wanted to do was to get moving after lying flat-out for so long. Following

Dai up an inclined rift, the floor moved. Some flakes on the right looked decidedly dodgy. Squeezing up past a rocking boulder, grim realisation began to slowly dawn, a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. Dai confirmed that the rest of the new section of passage was just as loose, if not worse, although it did get bigger. Terrific, I thought to myself, my enthusiasm rapidly draining away as my fatigue, both physical and mental, increased. Cramp finally struck in my left calf midway through a pile of wedged rocks, at a point where an awkward twisting move upwards is necessary. The weight in my stomach felt heavier than ever. This would be a good place to give up, to turn around and run away. But if I did that I probably wouldn't ever come back. I pushed up into larger passage. We soon reached a small climb where you didn't really want to touch anything. My incredulity grew that Dai had ventured so far on his own. Then, finally, we were there; the end, at least for now. In front was a large boulder pile, shattered walls either side. Above, in the roof, was the place the boulders had come from. Best not to look too closely. Rocks held together by a combination of mud and friction, striation marks showing evidence of recent movement. We could go home now. But first, a quick search for the way on. The stream flowed from a rift on the right, while a small hole on the left seemed likely to reach the same place. Rocks needed removing to pursue either option. Taller passage in

clean-washed limestone could be seen ahead. A good time to leave.

Martin had gone for a walk up to the Rising in order to keep warm. He naturally wanted to see what we had found but had to wait until the following week. When he saw it he wished he hadn't bothered! I decided to go elsewhere in the cave, the previous trip being too fresh in my mind. Martin and Dai did find another dig in the Abyss, higher up, also trending westwards. Returning with Gareth Jones, they merely succeeded in finding a route through to the bottom of Trenchways. So two trips had been wasted. The end of Suicide Alley held as much promise as ever. Someone had to go back.

The journey through the section of passage beyond the two squeezes seemed worse than before. No adrenaline rush to spur us on this time. A flake moved when I put my weight on it and the whole floor dropped several inches. You often seem to notice things in greater detail the second time you visit new passage; a definite disadvantage in this place. We reached the final chamber but I wasn't happy. These days I normally feel a strange contentment just being underground but on this occasion I would rather have been somewhere else. Attempts made to reach the rift containing the stream were quickly abandoned when the floor shifted. A few rocks were removed from the tube on the left and I examined it. My shoulders were too wide for the first bit and a jammed boulder in the floor created an even tighter

constriction a little way in. No chance! Dai decided to give it a go. Usually I encourage him in these situations but for once I was none too sure. Looking up at the ceiling of boulders for the umpteenth time, the feeling that we should not really be there became very strong. Retreating to the base of the climb so as to be out of the line of fire, I implored Dai to be careful.

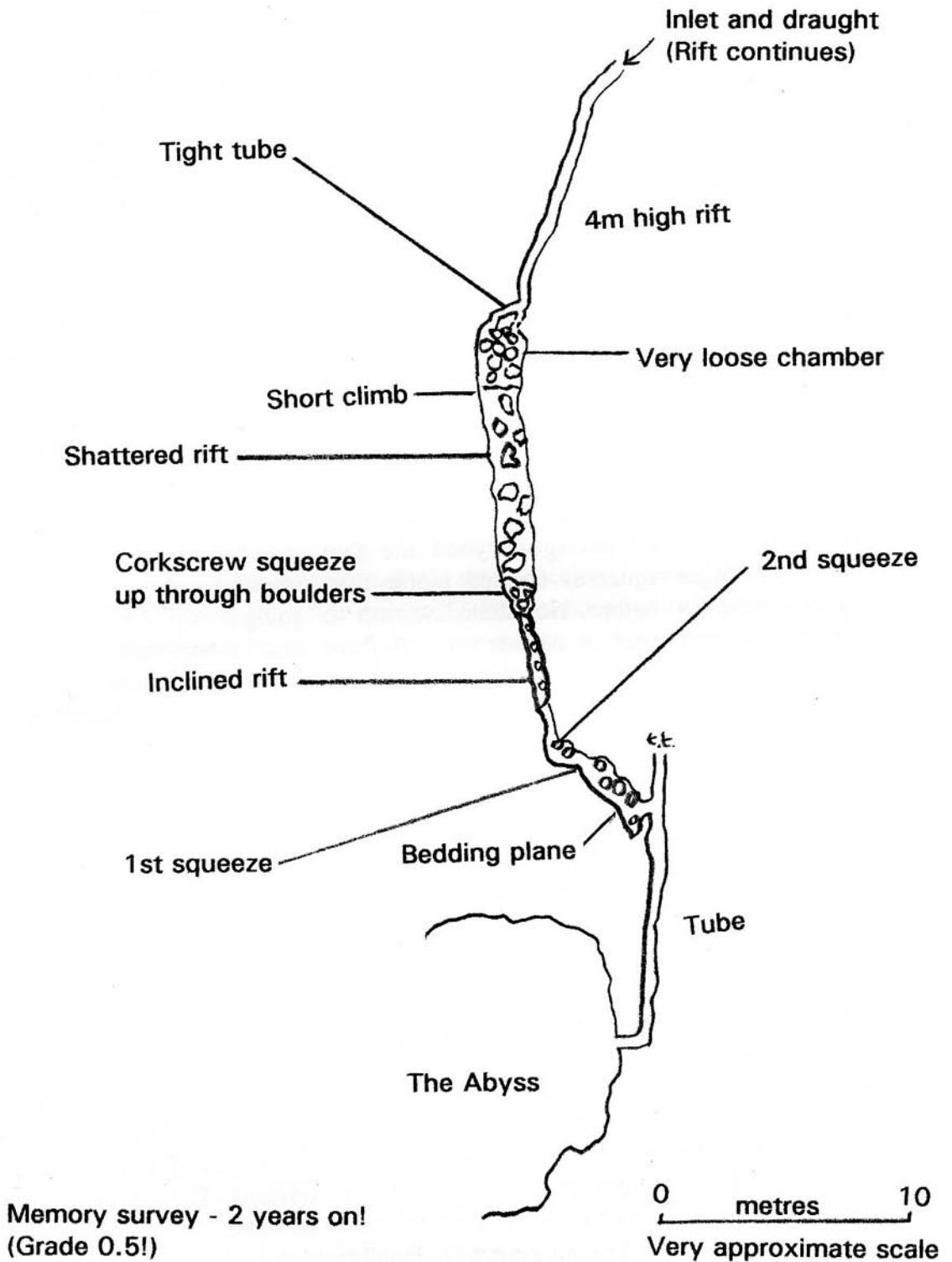
A telephone link back to the Abyss was more for psychological reassurance than anything else. Ambrose was on the other end and I called to let him know what was happening. As I was talking, Dai shouted to say that he was through the tube and could stand up. I began to pass this message on to Ambrose when it happened! A rumble, a shaking, things moving! Followed by a secondary roar that sounded as though it was never going to stop. Amazingly it did, much sooner than I felt it might. I knew it was safe where I was but I felt a pang of great fear for Dai. Yes, this was it; we'd finally pushed our luck too far! "Dai! Are you OK?" I shouted, expecting the worst.

To my great relief he answered. "Yes, I think so."

"Can you get out?" I asked, thinking I might have to dig open the tube.

"Yes, I think so," Dai replied. I ventured warily up into the chamber to check all was well there, but nothing had moved - or at least if it had it wasn't obvious. The collapse had occurred on the far side of the tube and had been caused by Dai leaning on a pile of loose rocks balanced precariously on a ledge.

# SUICIDE ALLEY, DAN-YR-OGOF



**"Although rather shaken mentally, Dai had avoided even the slightest physical injury. Maybe he does have a guardian angel after all!"**

It had sounded much worse than it actually was. Although rather shaken mentally, Dai had avoided even the slightest physical injury. Maybe he does have a guardian angel after all!

He decided to see what lay ahead and carried on as far as a nasty corner at stream level, an easier way on being apparent higher in the rift. The passage was relatively solid, up to 4 metres high, with jammed boulders in the roof. The good draught, indicating a way on into the mountain, was ever-present. However, discretion was the order of the day and he decided to leave it for another time.

Despite the promise of this open lead it was to be over a year before anyone returned. The previous trip had left deep mental scars. Dai had been in with Jeff Bain but they had managed to persuade each other that recent movement had occurred in the area between the two bedding plane squeezes and had aborted. Dai was quite literally having nightmares about the place and I had decided that it was someone else's turn to back him up when he eventually did decide to return. Martin Hicks was sticking to his guns, not

wanting to know and no one else could be found. The problem was solved when Clive Gardener phoned me to say that he had a friend who was desperate for a trip into Dan-Yr-Ogof. Manna from heaven!

Dai was in a morbid mood from the start.

"Who's this other guy who's coming?" he asked when we met at Penwyllt.

"He's a Chelsea member, Steve Tooms."

"Tombs!? Oh, great! Who else is coming - Harry Headstone?" "T-O-O-M-S, not T-O-M-B-S," I pointed out.

In spite of the joking I could sense Dai's inner discomfort. He didn't really want to be going there and it showed.

Tony Baker and I were headed for Dali's Delight and we accompanied the other two as far as the Abyss. Steve was a decent bloke and I felt somewhat guilty about sending him off with Dai but we had described the nature of the passage in great detail and he seemed quite happy. Once again I made my ritual plea for Dai to be careful as we said our goodbyes. Several hours later, after a somewhat unpleasant look around high-

level Dali's, Tony and I were relieved to find Dai and Steve waiting for us. Dai was much chirpier than he had been earlier and my initial reaction was that he had broken through into something decent.

"What happened, then?" I asked, impatient for news.

Dai grinned and laughed.

"You'll never believe this," he said.

"Try me," I replied.

"I bottled it!"

"You what?!"

I tried to act surprised.

"I bottled it. You know that squeeze in the tube? Well, I didn't like the look of it."

"So what are you going to do?"

He laughed again.

"I'm going to blow it up! The charge is all laid and ready to go. We were just waiting for you and Tony to get back."

That explained why he was so cheerful. I had my doubts but if it was getting to the point that he was too scared to go back to somewhere he'd already been then something needed to be done. At least it might have the effect of stabilising the place - then again it might cause it to collapse. It was too late to have second thoughts and in either



case it was better to do something rather than leave it like it was. We fired the charge and left the cave.

And now, as I write this, almost two years have passed. And guess what? Yes, that's right - we haven't been back to see what's happened. Steve Tooms hasn't contacted me either, despite assurances in the pub afterwards that he would keep in touch. Wonder why? We keep talking about it and the potential there is certainly too good to forget about completely. Isn't it funny how other projects just keep getting in the way?

#### August 1991.

*Summer passing in a blurred haze of azure sky, emerald grass and tennis court grey. Serenity broken by a yellow ball in flight. Shirt off, heat on my back, feeling fit and alive. Time flowing slowly by.*

*Picture a montage of blonde hair, blue eyes, flashing white teeth. Lynne. Sounds of laughter. Conversation turns to the new bit of passage in Dan-Yr-Ogof. She suggests a name. At first I'm not too sure but she attempts to convince me.*

*"Yes, it's a good name. It fits what you've found. You don't know who's been there before you, it's in between two bits of known cave and you haven't any idea where it's going. No Man's Land. Yes, it's a name which will stick."*

*As usual, she is right.*

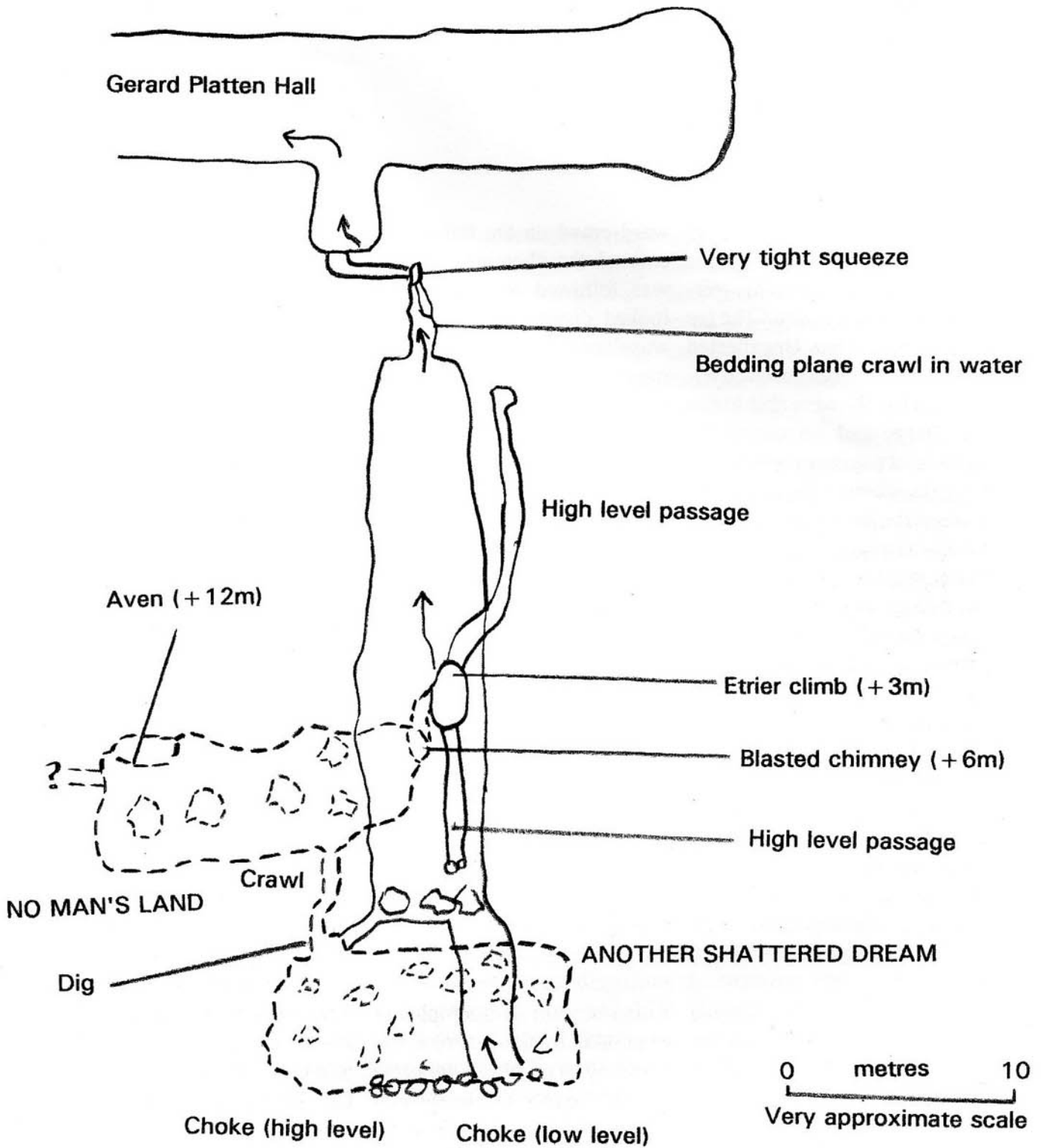
This was another dig found almost purely by chance. A hot day in July and we were on our way to Hangar North. Follow-

ing my directions, Dai went to get the crowbar hidden at the start of the upstream inlet in G.P.Hall. He returned to report that he couldn't find it but that the tube above the inlet was taking a hell of a draught. I wasn't really listening but commented that the draught must be coming out of the tube as the fan was turned on and that was the way it had been draughting in the Long Crawl. No, he was certain the draught was going into the tube. I went to find the bar and decided to check just in case Dai was correct. He was! This was most peculiar! I had been through this tube into the short section of passage beyond with a girl from Swansea University about a year previously. After an extremely technical downward squeeze, a tight wet crawl leads into a larger passage, similar in character to G.P.Hall itself, ending in a boulder choke. We had dug a bedding before the choke, getting into a short continuation with no real prospects. The noticeable draught had been going the same way as the draught in the Long Crawl, hence we had assumed it was in some way connected. Of course this was before the fan was installed. On the latest evidence, it appeared that the draught was making its way out of the cave via a different route, in all probability to a completely separate entrance. Interesting! A survey in an old logbook by Gareth "the gob" Davies showed a high level passage before the choke, so Jeff Bain and I returned the following week to investigate this. We placed a peg and attached an etrier to ease the climb up. The two

passages shown on the old survey did not go very far but neither took the draught. This was found to disappear up an impossibly tight (at least for me!) chimney off to one side at the top of the climb. Jeff should have been able to get up it but he reckoned he couldn't so we were forced to leave it.

The destination of the draught remained a mystery so I persuaded Dai to come and have a look at the chimney a few weeks later. He thrutched his way up, noting that it had been banged in the past. Enlarging a small hole at the top, he emerged into a sizeable chamber. He couldn't really tell if anyone had been there before him, although there were no footprints or anything obvious. Disregarding my parting words ("Don't forget - rescue is impossible!"), Dai found an aven and proceeded to climb it. After getting up six metres or so and scaring himself when he thought he was going to be unable to reverse a bold step across onto a calcited block, he was fortunately able to get down. Upon returning to the chimney, it was clear that the only way I was going to get up it was to enlarge it at its base. I had already begun drilling shotholes from beneath and Dai decided that he could best help by coming down headfirst and drilling from above. There then followed two of the most miserable hours of our caving lives. The draught was freezing and water was dribbling down the walls. Apart from making us wet and cold, this had the added effect of washing bits of bang out of the shotholes as we were trying to put it in. Dai was so

# NO MAN'S LAND, DAN-YR-OGOF



High level passage (dotted line)  
superimposed on low level (solid line)

**"Not too many minutes later, I was wishing I was elsewhere as I launched out on an etrier over ten metres of nothingness..."**

cheesed off that I had to regale him with two Mike Hopkins stories in order to keep his spirits up (the stories were "The Ice Cubes" and "The Unexpected Discovery" if I recall correctly!). Eventually, we were able to fire the charge and get out to the warmth of a summer's evening. Five days later I found myself alone at the foot of the chimney. It hadn't been planned that way, but of the three people who had entered the cave with me, two had gone out after crossing the lakes, leaving Dave and I to carry two tackle bags each through the Crawl. He had been unable to pass the squeeze so I had no option other than to carry on by myself. The miserable time Dai and I had endured had been worth it; a scene of utter devastation greeted me. Blocks of limestone littered the floor beneath the chimney and it wasn't even tight anymore. I was able to get up relatively easily and retraced Dai's footsteps in the upper chamber. One look at the aven he had been partway up convinced me that the climbing gear in the tackle bags would be needed to reach the top of it. This would have to wait until I had some support. The draught went along an awk-

ward crawl on the left as one entered the chamber and this was followed to a choke. It looked diggable, but again it wasn't really the sort of place to mess about in on your own. Feeling pleased that we wouldn't have to bang the chimney again, I returned to Dave who was waiting patiently in G.P.Hall. Enthusiasm was growing and it was a mere three days before we were back. Huw White had an epic on the technical downward squeeze (as have several people since) but Dai eventually talked him through it. We reached the aven and I kitted up to lead with Dai belaying. A couple of dubious bolts in calcite gave me the confidence to make the move onto the calcited block and another delicate move up on a mixture of mud and fragmented rock led to a large sloping ledge. Dai followed and had trouble making the first move even with a lifeline - how he had managed to reverse it on his own I will never know. The obvious way on petered out into a series of tight solution tubes and it was only after some time looking around that it became clear that the aven itself continued upwards. Unfortunately, getting into this continuation would in-

volve a very exposed step into space. I had already had enough excitement for one day so this was left for another time. We abseiled down and turned our attention to the choke that was taking the draught. Dai got around a nasty corner into the heart of the choke but it was clear that the corner would have to go if we were to be able to dig properly. A charge was laid and we made our exit.

A fortnight later no less than six people were making their way into the new extension. I knew it was too good to be true and things predictably began to fall apart. Jeff was unable to get Stuart France's radiolocation equipment through the Long Crawl so he was left behind with a hammer to make it bigger. Malcolm Herbert's survey team mutinied at the foot of the etrier climb, although Dai Bancroft earned the doubtful distinction of being the largest person to pass the technical squeeze. He even managed to get back out although this looked long odds against for some considerable time! Paul Tarrant and I did succeed in getting to where we intended and before long we found ourselves surrounded by a tangled mass of climbing gear

**"The last couple of bangs had made the black holes bigger by bringing down a lot of loose stuff but they had also made the place fairly unstable. Why do our digs always end up like this?"**

at the top of the aven. Not too many minutes later I was wishing I was elsewhere as I launched out on an etrier over ten metres of nothingness. The aerobatics proved to be a waste of time when the continuation upwards became too tight after a body length or so. As we abandoned the aven Jeff appeared, minus the radiolocation equipment which was still in the Crawl. We went to inspect the choke. The previous bang had done the trick and the corner was gone. You could see big black spaces between large perched flakes and the draught was hammering up there. Laying the charge took absolutely ages and our mood when we got back to G.P.Hall did not improve when we experienced a misfire. Jeff was volunteered to go back to check the wire and he found that it was broken at the etrier. Running repairs were swiftly executed and it was three very relieved cavers who made their way out after the bang went off at the second time of asking. Jeff returned with Mark Withers a month later but it was to be a further two months before I visited the dig again. The last couple of bangs had made the black holes bigger by bringing

down a lot of loose stuff but they had also made the place fairly unstable. Why do our digs always end up like this? As I lay flat out beneath boulders having just dodged yet another falling rock I couldn't help laughing out loud. Why do we do it? One look up at the promising hole above gave me the answer I required. However, I had scared myself too many times for one day and it was decided that some form of shoring was required if we were to progress in relative safety. Five of us found ourselves carrying an assorted collection of scaffold poles, metal bars and timbers across the lakes the day after Boxing Day. Of course the water levels were high and this meant that we managed to lose about 20% of what we started with. Anthony Roberts soon found that swimming with a 2 metre length of scaffolding is reasonably easy so long as you aren't too fussy about keeping your head above water! The shoring was duly installed, some digging was done and Tony Baker was given the honour of attempting to make the long awaited breakthrough into what appeared to be a calcified chamber above. Partway up the loose

boulder slope he wimped out, the mega collapse which Dai later precipitated proving this to be a wise decision. We decided to let the choke stabilise itself for a while. Paul Tarrant agreed, being quite happy to take our word for what it looked like at the sharp end. A certain cave called Carno helped delay our return, but after we got locked out of there for finding too much passage we had no option but to try to finish off No Man's Land once and for all. Our next trip was on the 13th of April - not a wise choice of date! - and was spectacularly unsuccessful. I was still suffering from a two-day old hangover, Dai had been having more nightmares about collapsing boulder chokes and Paul Tarrant again insisted on giving moral support from the rear. Not the strongest of teams! More collapses ensued and it didn't take much for us to convince ourselves that another charge was needed. We decided to place a small one this time. Exiting via the Showcave at 3.30 p.m. after a three hour trip made a pleasant change but it didn't help ease the feeling of abject failure we felt. Upon my return from holiday in

**"The argument ended with Jeff getting out of the chamber as quick as he could, and me deciding that maybe it was best to leave the boulder where it was after all..."**

France, it was obvious that we had to get back soon if we were to prevent a reoccurrence of the Suicide Alley situation; i.e. everyone involved being too frightened to go there! Mark Withers was keen to see how the dig was progressing so he accompanied Dai, Jeff and myself. My own expectations were not particularly high and I was pleasantly surprised when I discovered that the last charge had done precisely what had been intended. Clearing the spoil revealed the way up to be virtually open, although the slope itself was still dangerously loose. A little more work helped rectify this and I thought long and hard before retreating to give Dai the chance to play hero. Once he was back in front his fears deserted him and he was swiftly up through the choke into the unknown. Unfortunately, the unknown became the known all too soon! His euphoria at entering a nicely decorated chamber, 8 metres long by 3 metres wide, swiftly dissipated when he realised there

was no apparent way on. After joining him, I was able to confirm that the only obvious route appeared to be yet another choke that rose steeply upwards and looked worse than the one we had just taken months to dig our way through. Before long four cavers were sat in the new chamber with nowhere to go other than back the way they had come. We didn't have the heart to start messing about laying fresh bang wire through the choke and in any case further digging would have to be carefully considered as any spoil was likely to block the way out of the chamber. In fact, Jeff became incredibly loquacious when I threatened to move one large boulder, much to the amusement of Mark and Dai who had never heard him say so much on their previous half dozen caving trips with him. The argument ended with Jeff getting out of the chamber as quick as he could and me deciding that maybe it was best to leave the boulder where it was after all.

And that was that. All we had to show for our efforts was one chamber; quite a pretty chamber, mind, with more formations than there were in several kilometres down Carno. Maybe we'll go back one day, maybe we won't. We had some laughs, we had some scares, we had some thrills; and isn't that what caving's all about?

June 1992.

*Driving up the hill back to Penwyllt, Jeff breaks the heavy silence.*

*"What are you going to call the new chamber, Nig?"*

*I hesitate and ponder for a moment. Then, unbidden, it comes to me.*

*"How about Another Shattered Dream?" I suggest.*

*He doesn't disagree.*

**So, when all is said and done, what is in a name? Sometimes everything.**

# Edward Llwyd - An Early Welsh Cave Explorer

by Mel Davies

Many cavers in Wales have been nurtured, myself among them, on the idea that cave exploration in the Principality started with the activities of Thomas Jenkins in Llygad Llŵchwr Cave in 1841 (ref.1). I was therefore surprised to find a reference in the Welsh journal "Y Naturiaethwr" (ref.2) that Edward Llwyd, FRS, had been to this cave 144 years earlier, and had also visited other caves. My curiosity was aroused so I followed up the reference with a visit to Aberystwyth to borrow from the National Library of Wales a massive volume of 576 pages subtitled "Life and Letters of Edward Llwyd" (ref.3), and this article is the result.

I have abstracted all cave references from the volume which incidentally has a superficial index, but must point out that there will be other reports by Llwyd which I cannot include as his fieldwork, publications and correspondence were very extensive. Also anyone delving into Llwyd's work must be able to read Welsh and understand something of fossil palaeontology, both requirements which I can satisfy. To be absolutely thorough a

knowledge of Latin is required as many manuscripts are in that language and here I admit to being quite lost. I have employed modern Welsh spelling, for example "Llwyd" instead of "Lhwyd", except where quoting from his writings.

Before describing Llwyd's explorations some biographical notes are necessary to explain why he undertook cave visits in the first place. Llwyd was born in North Wales in 1660 and entered Jesus College, Oxford when he was 22 years of age. In some poverty he studied chemistry, botany, geology, anatomy and philology, residing there for five years and becoming an assistant at the Ashmolean Museum soon after it opened in 1683. He travelled in England and all over Wales while carrying out detailed field surveys, as well as Scotland, Ireland and, briefly, Brittany. He identified botanical and geological specimens, corresponded with other experts and built up massive museum collections. He succeeded to Head Keeper in 1690-1 when improved finances enabled him to travel more widely, but was still in debt at his death. This

occurred at the Ashmolean in June 1709.

Llwyd completed two tours during his lifetime, the first between April and October 1696, and the second, or great tour, between May 1697 and March 1700, and it is not always clear precisely when he visited some of the caves to be mentioned. That such visits were not by chance can be deduced from the design that he produced in 1695 for his great work "Archaeologia Britannica" which included the statement:

*The Caves, Mines, and Quarries must be pry'd into, as well as the outward Surface of the Earth.*

During the first tour Llwyd visited Bangor to botanize on Snowdon and had reached Swansea three months later, returning to Oxford by October 1696 having visited "eight or nine counties" (in Wales). No details are given (ref.3) but evidently Llwyd consulted manuscripts at Bangor, an important cathedral city, and at Hengwrt. His *modus operandi* was to take with him up to three

assistants who were also under his tuition, and hire a guide for wild places like Snowdon, so he could safely have entered some caves during this tour.

More information becomes available from the second tour and here I have listed his itinerary where it includes, or comes near, cave country. Starting in May 1697, Llwyd had visited areas near Newport, Cardiff, Abergavenny, Pontypool and the Forest of Dean by August. By the middle of that month he was in Carmarthen, and in Llandeilo on December 20th 1697, so it must have been about this time that he visited Llygad Llwhwr cave. It is recorded that he was

*travelling with his three companions (with knapsacks on their shoulders), on foot, for the better searches for samples, viewing, and taking draughts of everything remarkable, and for that reason prying into every hole and corner.*

Their comprehensive recording included the identification of site by name, size, nearest village, Karn, Kaer, Kromlech (*sic*), crosses, rocks, springs, diving rivers, caves, mines, minerals and many more historical or natural features. Evidently active swallow holes

were to be noted as well as obvious caves, and our interest centres on the following (ref.3, page 383):

*Such marine fossils have been observ'd on ye sides or walls within our limestone caves; & are even some times found sticking to the roofs of them, for I have gather'd the Cuthbert Beads or Entrochi, which are vertebrae of sea starrs, from ye roof of a cave calld Lhygad lhwhwr near Kerrig Kennen Castle in the County of Caermarthen: and on the sides (as well as bottom) of a noted cave calld Porth Gogo at Ystrad Velhte in Brecknockshire, I have observd sevrall remains of cockles half worn by the swift current of the River Melhte which runs through this cave and polishes its limestone... To this may be added that such limestone caves are for ye most part wainscoted (as it were) with a stony crust of stalagmites wch is of no very old date.*

In this fascinating description it is clear that Llwyd visited both Llygad Llwhwr and Porth-yr-

Ogof caves, and elsewhere states that stalagmite grows

*owing to the continued dropping or distillation of the caves...*

Here the term "distillation" can be taken to mean "evaporation" and even perhaps "crystallisation" as Llwyd must have been conversant with this process from his chemical studies. The "Entrochi" that he mentions are apparently crinoid fossils and the "cockles" could be *Seminula* fossils. What we cannot deduce is how far Llwyd and his companions penetrated into the caves, but it is clear that much was known over a century before Jenkins (ref.1) and his friends carted his coracle into Llygad Llwhwr cave. Another aspect of cave recording is revealed in a letter that Llwyd wrote on January 21 1699 describing

*in what manner the Bats are lodged in the caves during winter. The caves in this country...are always (I speak of the inland caves), in limestone, and in such places only are all our subterraneous brooks, which in Wales are no great rarity. In these caves the bats choose the driest apartments, where, planting their*

*talons to the roof, they cover their bodies with their wings, and so, hanging perpendicularly in great numbers (but so as they touch not each other) they sleep for some months.*

Here Llwyd demonstrates knowledge of caves with active streamways, their relative frequency in Wales, how sea caves need not be in limestone, and much of the ecology of bats. He has not observed sufficiently to discover that Greater Horseshoe bats are sometimes seen huddled together in groups of a dozen or so. It is also clear from his letters generally that, as a slave of his time, he has not been able to discard completely the "Deluge" biblical story when it came to explaining the variety and distribution of fossils. Llwyd was resident on Caldey Island, Pembrokeshire, during February and March 1698, but he makes no mention of cave antiquities there. As a fairly regular correspondent with the famous archaeologist John Aubrey (died 1697) - 34 letters survive between them - he must have been aware that ancient remains were to be found in caves, so it is very possible that nothing had been found in Caldey caves until they were opened by the extensive and destructive quarrying of later years.

Caves are fleetingly mentioned during Llwyd's English visits. In a letter to the noted scientist Dr Martin Lister he states that a visit is planned with two Danish gentlemen to Ochie Hole in the Mendip Hills, and in a further letter dated April 28 1691 Llwyd reports

*We went into Woki hole by Wells.*

However Llwyd made no comment on the visit and there is nothing about Stonehenge which they also visited during a 9-day tour. It is possible, of course, that he had already described these sites to Lister in one of the other 87 letters between them which have also survived. The variations in the spelling of Wookey Hole is interesting and there is yet another version in a letter dated March 8, 1694 to Richard Mostyn

*I have observ'd in several mountainous (sic) places, small brooks issue violently out of ye ground; and always judg'd them subterraneous currents, having seen them such at Wkie Hole and Ogof Lhan y Mynych & some other caves.*

Here Llwyd seems to understand

the mechanism of a cave resurgence, but the mention of Ogof Llan-y-Mynech is puzzling. The Ogof is actually a Roman copper mine with later extensions, but it is not a resurgence and the only known resurgence in that area is the Oerog Spring near Trevor, some 12 miles away at SJ 227433.

At Edward Llwyd's death his papers were disposed of in various ways some even being sold to meet his debts (ref.3, page 554). It is most unlikely that they will contain epic accounts of cave exploration so further laborious searches would not be justified. Cavers today will rest content in the knowledge that three hundred years ago curious people were sufficiently intrigued by caves to enter and explore them, and leave an account of what they observed for the enlightenment of later generations.

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# Tortuosity Aven

by *Liam Kealy*

Tortuosity Aven is located at the first bend upstream on the Great North Road in Dan-yr-Ogof. It was first noted by David Judson in 1967 (SWCC Newsletter no.59), who reported exploring the washed-out calcite vein immediately prior to the Birthday Passage pitch. A well-decorated passage led for 600 feet to emerge into the side of a large aven. Below was a drop of about 20 feet to a large sandy ledge, and below that he could hear the stream. Above, the passage appeared to continue about 25 feet higher. Judson called the passage Tortuosity Passage, and surmised that it may represent the original phreatic course of the Waun Fignen Felen stream. A later note in the logbook by Martin Farr reports that he climbed down to the large sandy ledge. Fired by the fact that no-one else had attempted to climb to the higher passage mentioned by Judson, and that at the very least I may find a continuation of Birthday/Tortuosity Passage, I included the aven as part of the Far North project on which I had embarked in 1991 (SWCC Newsletter no.110). Hence February 22nd 1992 saw myself and other Amman Valley CC members Kevin O'Connor and Jon Drury on our way to the Great North Road, with the intention of rigging the first part of the aven in preparation for a later climb. I made my way

along Tortuosity Passage with an SRT rope and bolting gear, while the others rigged the Birthday Passage pitch and went to our campsite to collect some climbing gear. I found the passage to be very well decorated with superb helictites, and on the way collected a Troll sewn sling, clearly lost by previous explorers. At the end of the passage, I had to climb down in the rift for about 20 feet to emerge in the aven. As reported by Judson, the passage continued on the other side, about 25 feet higher and across a mainly blank wall.

At this point I rigged a rope down to the sandy ledge below, utilising the newly-found sling in the process. Below the ledge was the streamway. However, at the same level and across a gaping hole in the floor a large passage led off downstream. This was most unexpected, but access was not possible at that time as protection would be needed to cross the hole.

I returned along with Iain Miller in April. Iain and his "Friends" led the way over the hole into the large passage which was about 30 feet high and 5-6 feet wide. It led downstream for about 100 feet, where it emerged on a ledge overlooking the Great North Road. A short passage led off to the east but was completely filled with sand after a short distance. I suppose this was the result I had expected,

although I had hoped the passage may have been an ancient phreatic route which passed over the top of the Rising and into the Giedd series.

September saw me back with Amman Valley members Dudley Thorpe, Jon Drury and Peter Walker. Starting from where Tortuosity Passage enters the aven, I bolted out and upwards to the passage in the roof. After some trouble from our drill and a little creative free-climbing I was able to shinny up into a tight rift which closed down to a squeeze, beyond which could be seen a chamber enlarged on the calcite vein. Long straws and more helictites were visible in the chamber. However, the squeeze was too small for my large body and a return with a lump hammer would be needed to gain access (for me, anyway).

A return was eventually made on December 28th with Nick Jones, a Welshman who lives in Yorkshire. The top of the climb was quickly regained and the squeeze attacked with a hammer. All to no avail. Having taken off my SRT kit, I had another go at the squeeze and promptly got very stuck. Nick came up and rescued me, then lithely made his way up the squeeze and into the chamber. Although well decorated, there was no passable way on. And so ended another climbing project: onto the next one...

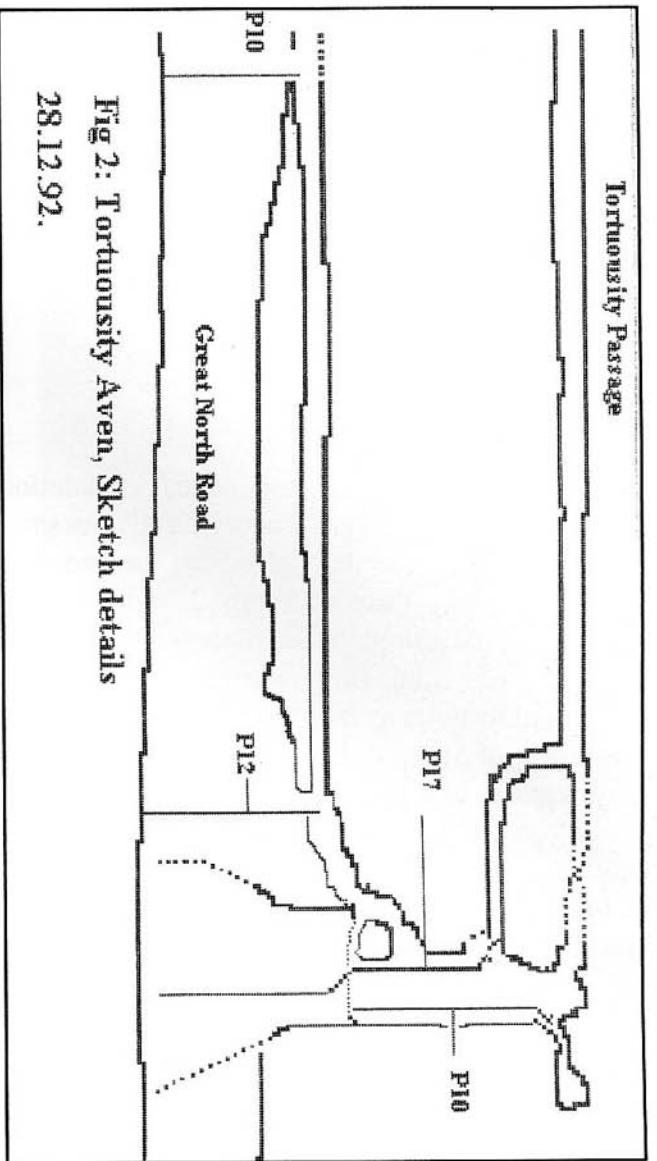


Fig 2: Tortuosity Aven, Sketch details  
28.12.92.

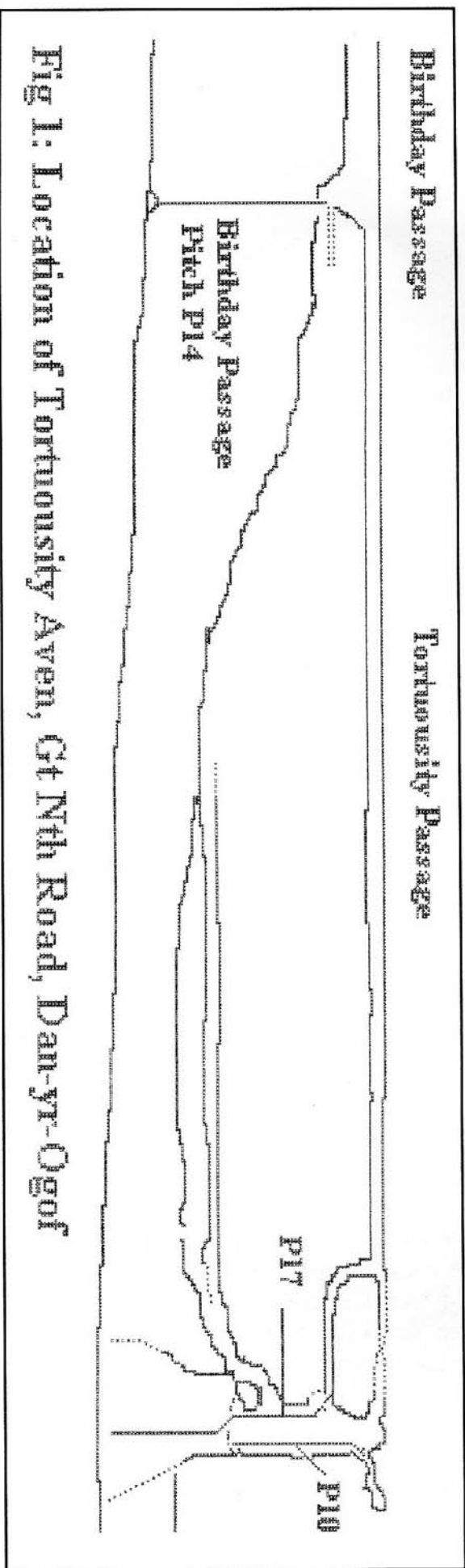


Fig 1: Location of Tortuosity Aven, Ct Nth Road, Dan-yr-Ogof

# Tunnel Cave Flood Rising

by Steve Thomas

After being opened up by digging in 1953, one of the last leads to be followed up was the Flood Rising in Davy Price's Hall. This was entered in drought conditions in 1954 and Bill Clarke managed to swim as far as the beginning of Sump 2. In 1956, with the aid of a pump, Sump 1 was eventually lowered sufficiently to allow a surveying team in, but Sump 2 was found to be too deep to be successfully lowered.

In 1964, Charles George entered the Flood Rising and with a base-fed rope tied to his ankle, passed the body-sized passage that descends into Sump 2. He then continued, without fins, until he eventually surfaced in dry cave. He explored a distance he estimated at 110m, until he came to a blockage.

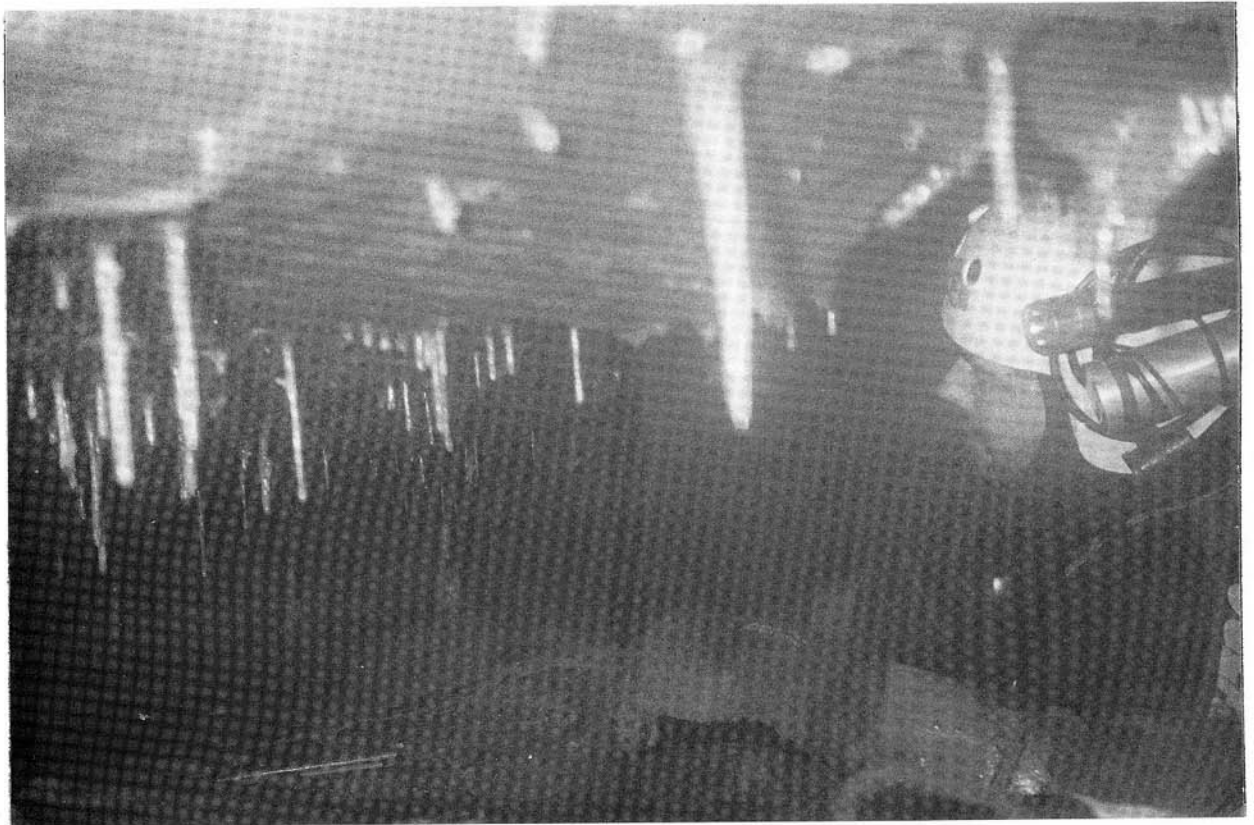
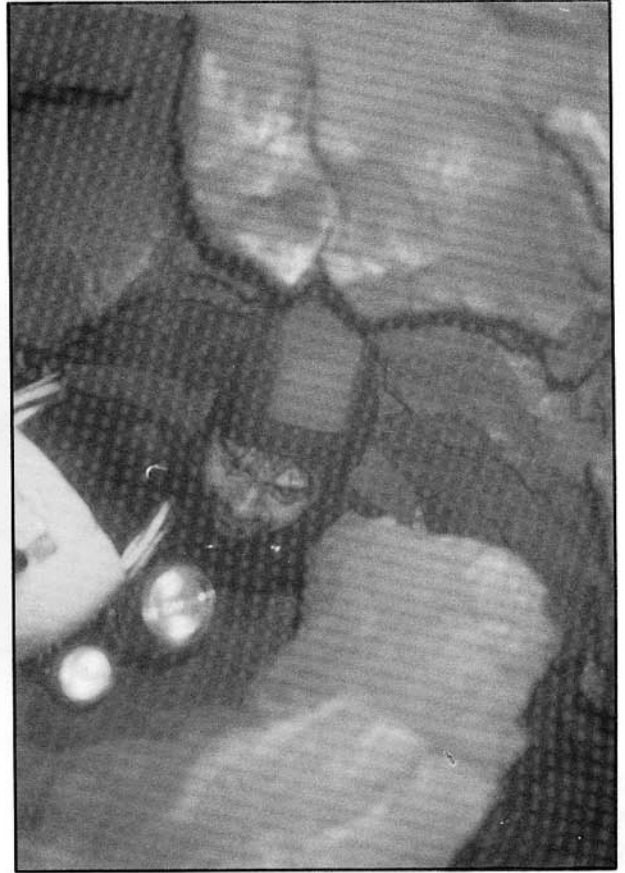
In 1972/3, Martin Farr and Roger Solari made five trips between them and passed the blockage, only to discover another after a short distance. Believing themselves to be in the vicinity of The Junction, they rated the prospects as poor. In 1988, Steve Ainley made six visits to the passages beyond Sump 2, but found the cave ended at a small sandy chamber. He entered a small side passage, which went vertical after 3m

and ended in solution tubes. There is an obvious small stream inlet 55m beyond the end of Sump 2, which Steve tried unsuccessfully to bang. He returned only to show me the "end" of the dry stuff in 1991. I made a solo trip in 1992 to have a look at the end of the cave, and after removing a few boulders, squeezed into a continuation. Time was pressing, so an exit was made but I managed to become tangled in the line on the way out of Sump 2. Sufficiently scared by this, I decided to re-line the sump before anything else was done, but due to the lack of anything to use as belays for the line, over a dozen large boulders had to be dragged in. The line was accurately tagged and a survey revealed that the sump to be 53m (175ft) long. The only accurate survey information up to this point was the 1956 survey of Sump 1 and the airbell up to Sump 2. All other information varied so much that Sump 2 was supposed to be either 34m (112ft) or 90m (297ft), with the same degree of vagueness applied to the passages beyond.

In late November 1992 I returned to the Sand Chamber accompanied by Neal Harman, and entered the squeeze that I

had cleared on my previous solo trip. Within 10m it became clear that this wasn't virgin territory, as a patch of mud on the wall had a clear sharkskin wetsuit imprint on it. It looked as though it had been made the day before, not twenty years ago by Farr or Solari. The passage became very awkward, apart from a small chamber with an aven in the roof. Beyond this was a tight tube through boulders and an ascent to a vertical squeeze. Neal removed his wetsuit top and got through, but encountered another blockage.

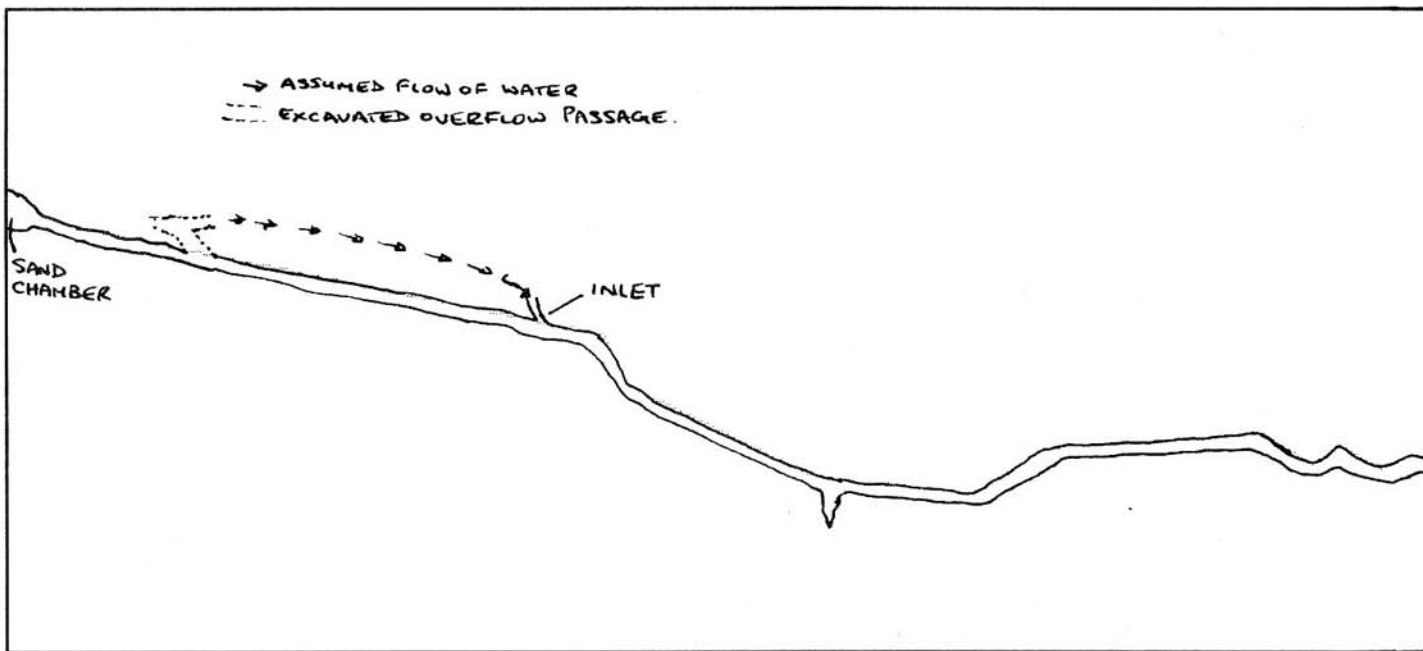
I returned twice in December with Dominic Hyland and enlarged the squeeze, then tried to remove the next blockage. We succeeded in making it passable but extremely unstable, so we rebuilt the choke leaving a hole in the middle. A permanent fixture of this choke is a large chisel sticking out of the right hand side, imitating Excalibur (and lacking the Royal blood, neither Dominic or myself were able to remove it). Beyond here, the passage didn't improve, much of it being filled with ancient silt banks until more rift passage was entered, filled to within half a metre of the roof with boulders. Squeezing over these revealed



Top left: "Excalibur" blockage before any work.

Top right: 50m beyond Sand Chamber; very difficult to survey!

Above: One of the nicer bits of the tight stuff. All photos: Dominic Hyland.



more boulders, and a difficult digging site. It was decided to do no more here until a reasonable survey had been carried out to see just where we were.

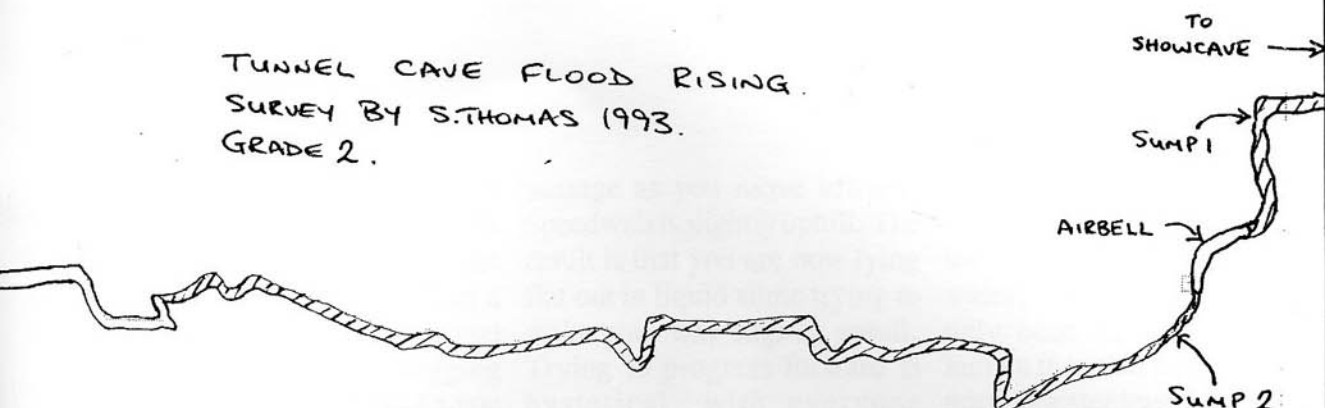
In January, Clive Westlake and Dave Buckley (Derbyshire CDG) came down to Wales wanting to dive the sumps in Tunnel Cave, so it was decided to send some SWCC and Amman Valley CC cavers up to Christmas Grotto to try and make an aural connection with the dry passages beyond Sump 2.

When we got to the cave, Ashford Price told us that the cave was flooding, but we decided to go and have a look anyway. The normally clear, inviting sump pool was brown and horrible, and flooding the footpath. The experienced voice of Clive said "Sod this", but if we could get through it would be good to find out where the water was coming from, so I decided to see if it looked any better from inside the sump. I failed to get more than two metres on the first attempt, due



Typical passage 30m beyond Sump 2.

TUNNEL CAVE FLOOD RISING.  
SURVEY BY S. THOMAS 1993.  
GRADE 2.



to the current at the small entrance, but thinking that the larger passage beyond the entrance might not be too bad, I jammed myself and clawed my way in. I was wrong! What followed was an absolutely horrifying dive, being unable to see anything or turn around, and being forced into every crevice by the current. Having an intimate knowledge of the sump was of no use and I had no idea where I was until I managed to turn round and was fired down the passage. I should have listened to Clive!

Two weeks later, we were back to find normal water levels and crystal visibility; Clive and Dave dived the sumps with grins on their faces, enjoying every minute. After de-kitting, we went to the Sand Chamber before the tight stuff. On the way out, we noticed that some boulders had moved in the floor, so a couple of hours' digging began. This revealed a well-worn passage with the sound of a stream ahead. A week later we were back with tools, and eventually cleared the passage

out. One final boulder remained, but was proving very stubborn. Dave and I both felt that we were too young to die, so it was left to Clive to pass the obstruction. This he did with his usual calm approach, and failed to let fifteen tons of boulders an inch from his head bother him. He squeezed into the streamway, but due to the dimensions he couldn't move his head very much to see, other than being able to report that it was blocked by more boulders; no go.

It seems likely that this is the water that enters the main passage from the small inlet, and the passage that we excavated is the flood overflow. In February, I dived solo to the dry passages, whilst Liam Kealy, Dudley Thorpe, Jon Drury and Hazel Forbes went to Christmas Grotto and the passage leading to it. We failed to make a confirmed aural connection, but Liam put dye into the main stream and I put a detector in the upstream end of Sump 2, and one into the small stream inlet passage.

I returned in April to retrieve

the detectors and surveyed the dry passages up to the Sand Chamber. The detector from the inlet proved positive, but the one in Sump 2 was negative; as there is more than one stream in Christmas Grotto further tests will have to be done, but it is a fair guess to say that all the water in the flood rising comes from there. There are holes in the floor of the approach passage that may possibly connect with the dry stuff beyond Sump 2. The place to concentrate on now seems to be Christmas Grotto, where there are a number of easy-looking digs. This means that it won't be necessary to dive the sumps; this is usually a good thing, but the diving here is so good that we'll be missing a treat!

*Special thanks to Ashford Price for continued access and support, and to Liam Kealy for his usual enthusiasm.*

# 101 Great Caving Trips

by Julian Carter

## No.3 Colostomy Crawl: A Derbyshire Classic!

It was there on the Newsletter, 30th/31st January, a Red Rose club meet caving in Derbyshire. Well I'd never had the fortune (or misfortune) of caving in Derbyshire, and the trip provided a good excuse to do some socialising. So the decision was made, the weekend was booked...

Friday night saw the gathering of the clan at Rick and Claire Scott's place in Chesterfield. The ancient ritual of drinking too much beer was duly carried out (what martyrs!), and the morning arrived with hangovers complete and the smell of various parts of dead animal being fried. Large amounts of both breakfast and tea thus consumed, the day's game plan was sorted. There were to be two groups going into Peak Cavern, one party to do the standard tourist trip, the other to go through to Speedwell via the trenches and Colostomy Crawl whilst assisting some TSG divers with their gear.

The group arrived complete at the TSG hut in Castleton. Our 30p was duly paid for the Peak

Cavern custodian, and indemnity forms signed that will allow the owners of the Speedwell complex to sue you for every penny you possess if you require rescuing. Paperwork completed, and the necessary umpteen keys to gain access to the cave gathered, the adventure began.

Now Peak Cavern entrance is large, very large, with the show cave entrance sheds looking pretty pathetic beneath it. Getting in requires about three keys and the silencing of an alarm system- all a bit serious for protecting a show cave complex which consists of space and a lot of mud. Now who said access to OFD was awkward? Now the only good bit about this show cave is the entrance, the rest is somewhat muddy. So save your entrance fee and just look at the entrance if you're doing the tourist thing. This then presents excellent value for money because the entrance is free!

The various groups involved in today's endeavours set off

towards the Treasury region of Peak. At this point the various ways split, with the Peak Cavern team heading their way, the divers gathering their bottles and entering the Treasury sump whilst those who remained were to enter the Trenches and Colostomy Crawl. This length of passage offers a "dry" connection between Peak and Speedwell, with the entrance to the recently discovered White River Series located about halfway along. Now it's interesting to note that at this point there were seven of the team remaining who were all part of the Red Rose, but none of us had done this part of the cave before. The members of the group who had been here before had all opted for the easier trip.

Anyway, the game plan was to make our way through to Speedwell and meet up with the two TSG divers at the other end. So, we set off through the old Fawltly Tower dig, past various arrays of home-made engineering projects, some of which require patenting!

Through yet another gate (which we reckoned was to keep people in and not out) and into the Trenches. Now this starts as a muddy hands and knees crawl with evidence of the digging effort put in all around. As you go along the passage deteriorates, gradually becoming a little lower and more awkward, a bit muddier, the odd extra squeeze bit and just when you think it can't really get much worse it does - especially when we reach Colostomy Crawl. Now before one goes any further it must be mentioned that one of the members of our team was a certain Neal Pacey. Now Neal's latest claim to fame (which demonstrates how capable a caver he is) was with the Quaking Pot incident, involving Nigel Jennings (maker of the Firefly cave slave), where Nigel became hypothermic at the start of the trip out of this grade 5 monster. What followed was 18hrs of coaxing by Neal and Pete Hall which eventually brought Nigel out. Thus our friend Neal was in his element, being a great fan of any form of caving which brought misery!

Now Colostomy Crawl is great - you're basically flat out in this passage coated in liquid slime which has the friction coefficient of Fairy Liquid. What then provides the final ingredients to this classic passage is that the

passage as you move towards Speedwell is slightly uphill. The result is that you are now lying flat out in liquid slime trying to make your way slightly uphill. Trying to progress forward is hysterical, with everyone attempting to gain purchase anyway they can. The best means of forward progression is by trying to jam your wellies in the sides of the passage where it narrows. It's then a case of trying to keep some forward momentum going, since if you stop you start going backwards! With a party of seven stuck in this tube, more than once a liquid-slime-covered welly was witnessed coming back towards you. Now if this passage was only about 10m long it would be highly entertaining, but since it's more than 100m long it can lose its amusement value quite rapidly, especially if you're dragging kit with you.

Finally the crawl is over and you then clamber down a series of metal ladders, all of which some poor sods had dragged through! You're then in the Speedwell streamway which is well worth visiting. On this occasion the water levels were around a metre higher than normal. The divers had found the streamway up from the Treasury Sump hideous, and had thus left their kit by the sump and had not continued with their intended plan, joining

us to do a tourist trip up to the main rising (which involved a lot of wading in chest deep water, where it should have only been knee deep.) If I'd known then that this was not the normal water level I don't think I'd have continued. Just shows ignorance is bliss.

The return trip via Colostomy makes the effort worth it! You lie on your back and get the momentum going. The main problem with this technique is that you can't see where you are going, thus when you encounter one of the slime-filled pots in the passage you go head first into it - splash! This is one trip you need to wash your hair after. The other problem is that you get dizzy as you follow the roof of the passage as it twist and turns. Needless to say the return trip is a lot quicker.

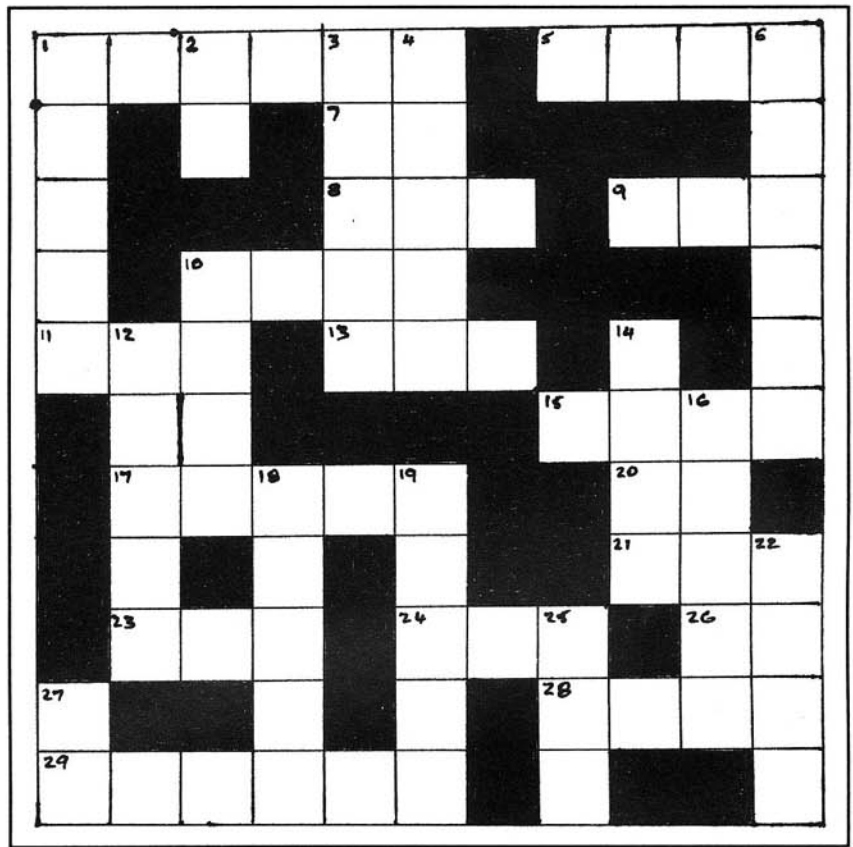
After the trip, it all seemed worthwhile on reflection. Fun was had by all. So if you manage to bypass the necessary access problems (i.e. know the right people) go for it, it's a very worthwhile trip. Next time we want to visit the White River series, since on our trip not even the discoverers were willing to use the fixed SRT ropes still in place!



# Caving Crossword

by Steve Thomas

Win an SWCC T-shirt!



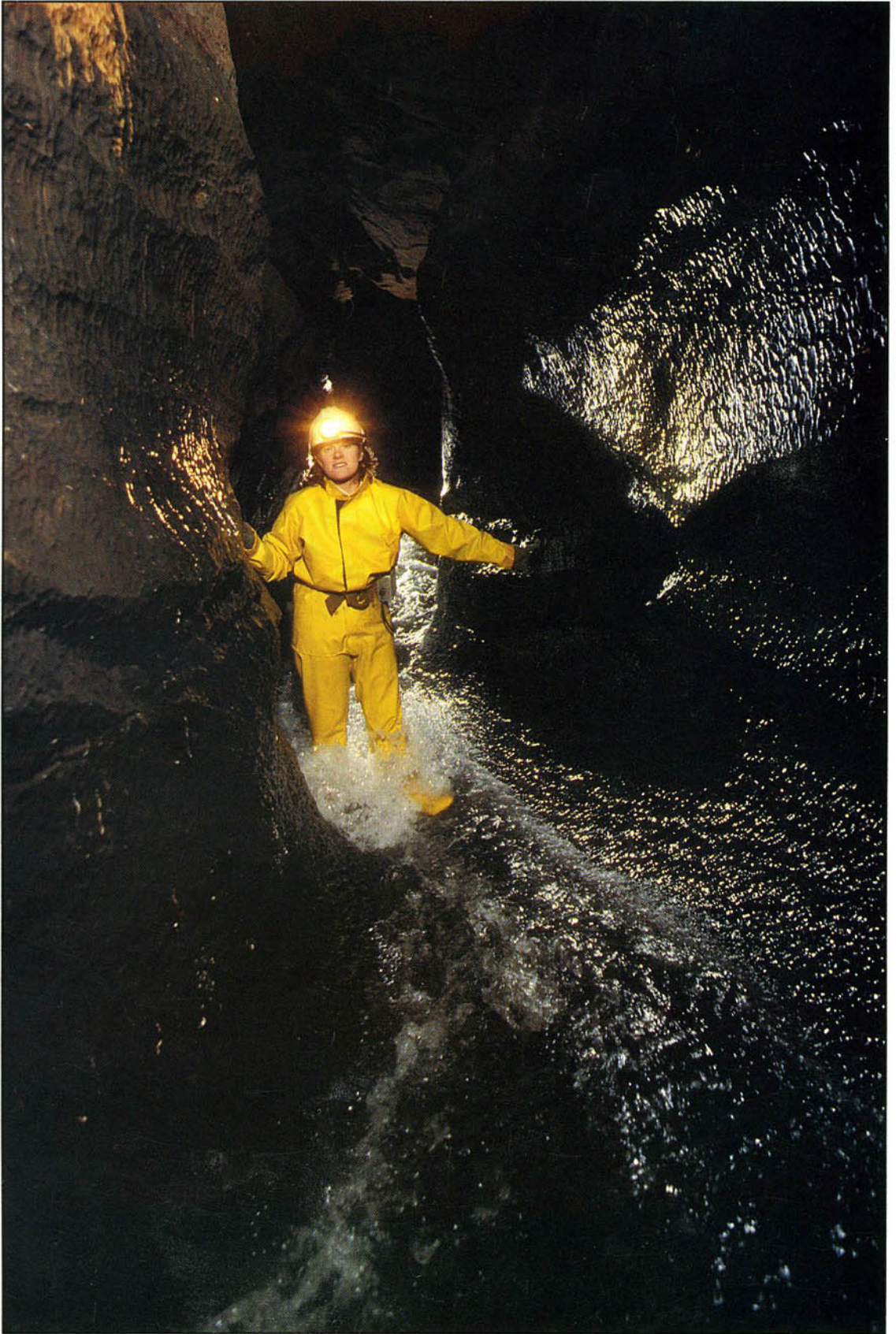
## ACROSS

- 1 Between top and bottom (6)
- 5 You might find a cave diver in the bottom of your engine (4)
- 7 Weary caver noise as the first pint slides down (2)
- 8 Neckwear for knots (3)
- 9 Why, see eye after Ogof (near Rhyd Sych) (1,2)
- 10 Audio visual en route to this roof passage (4)
- 11 Penwyllt cellars (3)
- 13 This man has a Burrington pot (3)
- 15 Affectionate name for the keyhole (4)
- 17 Furry aquatic animal found in the Wye (5)
- 20 Caving lights work well in this position (2)
- 21 Cave photographers dislike this body mist (3)
- 23 Three letters from Ashford Price (3)
- 24 Post caving juice (3)
- 26 Medical Officer (2)
- 28 This Mendip lamb has a look (4)
- 29 Standard look from a mouldy pig (6)

## DOWN

- 1 Bill Gascoine's dig had no vehicle (5)
- 2 The person you care about most when the roof caves in (2)
- 3 It makes caves (5)
- 4 Horned beast in Mendip rift (5)
- 6 The road to Daren? (6)
- 10 After 1 Down, a man-made entrance (4)
- 12 Not the best conditions for caving (5)
- 14 A Welsh cave (4)
- 16 Small old man in an O.F.D. passage (5)
- 18 A Gower cave found in your mouth (5)
- 19 "----- of Darkness", series of 1980's caving films (5)
- 22 Tex in his waterproofs (4)
- 25 A tight hole, not a tree, in the Clydach (3)
- 27 Is it your round? (2)

*First correct answer drawn from the Editor's postbag two months after the date this Newsletter goes out wins one of the stunning new SWCC T-shirts. Steve Thomas, his friends (?) and family are not allowed to enter, nor is the Editor 'cos I've got a set of the answers. Photocopy this page if you don't want to rip up this beautiful Newsletter. State T-shirt size required. Answers next time.*



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