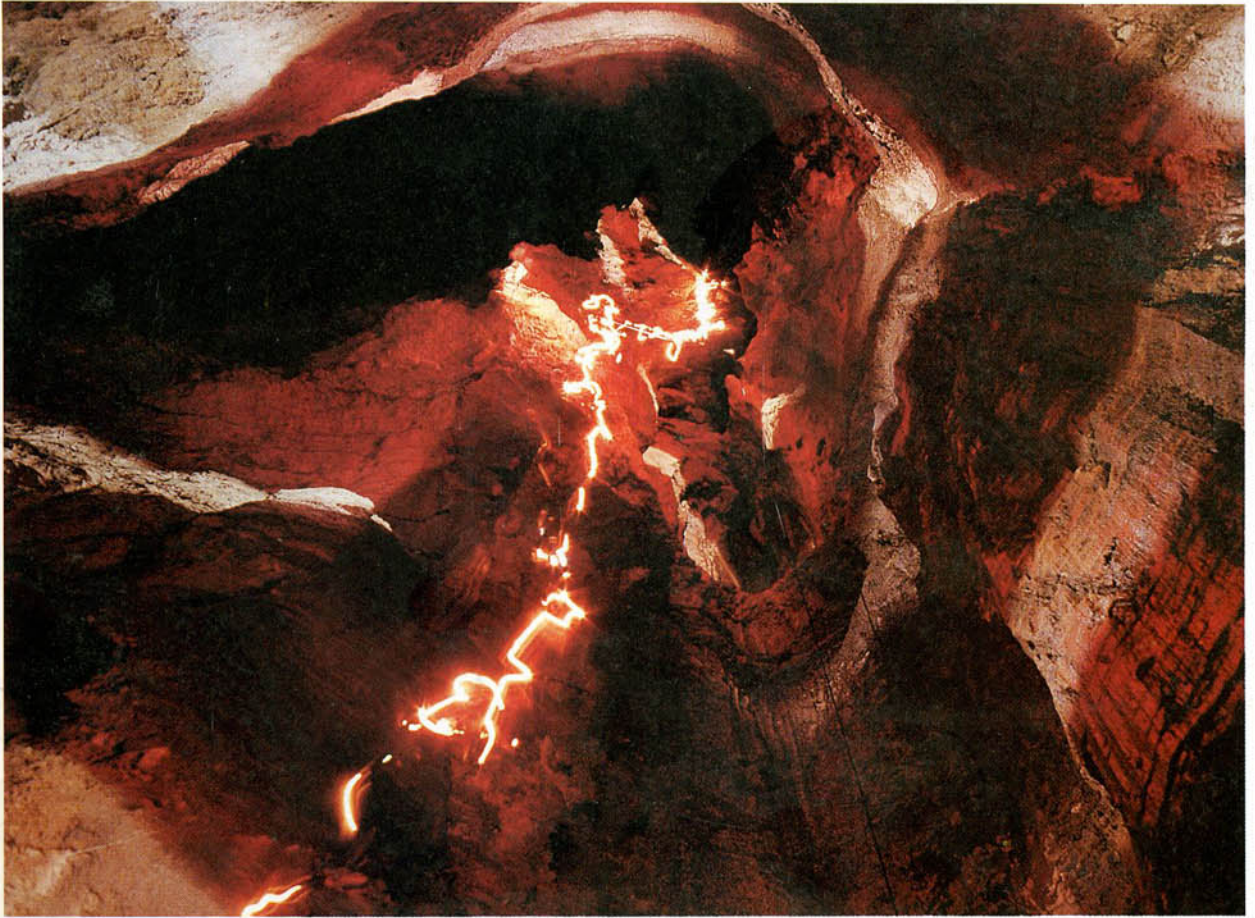


GOUFFRE BERGER SPECIAL EDITION



SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB
CLWB OGOFEYDD DEHEUDIR CYMRU

Newsletter

No. 113

1994



South Wales Caving Club

Clwb Ogofeydd Deheudir Cymru

Newsletter No. 113

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**Front Cover photo:
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Dave Dobson**

**Back Cover photo:
Hywel Davies on
Puit Aldo's,
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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*

As I sit, putting the final touches to this Newsletter, I can already hear some people sharpening their pencils, ready to criticise it. "Why", they are going to ask, "has he compiled a Newsletter almost exclusively about the Gouffre Berger?"

Well, I'll tell you. Firstly, last year's trip was the biggest, and most significant, club trip abroad for many years, and deserves to be written up for that reason alone. Secondly, like many other people who went last year, I read up on the cave beforehand, and the main sources of information were other clubs' publications (many of which are rather out-of-date now), and it should be a function of this Newsletter to add to that pool of knowledge, with articles based on our experiences. Much of what has been written for this Newsletter makes a valuable contribution to the published work on the cave; for example, there's more than one reappraisal of the need to camp in the cave, a much-improved map of the route to the entrance, a proper write-up of the Reseau Alex Pitcher, and the results of an experiment with using electric light to bottom a cave where carbide was considered essential.

Also, the fact remains that if it hadn't been for the Berger material, there wouldn't have been much else to publish at the moment; Newsletter No. 113 would have had to wait a while. And before you throw this

edition in the bin because you didn't go to the Berger and have no intention of doing so, you could try reading one or two of the articles; I think some of them are exceptionally entertaining reading, even if your caving ambitions don't extend beyond these shores.

The bottom line to all this is that if you don't like reading about foreign caves in the SWCC Newsletter, you could always go away and write something for the next edition...

Before leaving the subject of last year's trip, there's something else that needs saying. I've heard one or two people (who didn't go) expressing the view that the proportion of those who reached the bottom on our trip (around half of the 36 who took part) was, in some way, a poor "result". Well, folks, you've missed the point. The Gouffre Berger is a classic caving trip, and all of those who made the journey out to the Vercors went with the intention of enjoying themselves, not breaking records. Everyone who really wanted to get to the bottom did so, with the possible exception of one poor chap who developed a debilitating heavy cold on the way in on his bottoming trip.

Anyone who popped out from under the boulder at the bottom of Puit Aldo's into the Starless River couldn't help but be impressed, and to realise the thrill the original explorers must

have felt when they did so for the first time. It reminded us all of why we go caving, and that's just the first bit of the main cave.

There's a myth that needs debunking here, too. It's the one those same critics believe, which says that other clubs that go over from this country get nearly everyone to the bottom. They don't: I know because my stint on duty at the entrance coincided with a rainstorm, and there was nothing to do but sit in the tent and browse through the cave logbook. This book was started following the disappearance of Alex Pitcher, and records every single person in and out of the cave on every trip. (The rules state that you must use this system, as part of the problem with the search for Alex was that no-one knew for sure if he was in or out of the cave.) Anyway, the facts are that in the five years since the book was started, few British or other teams have achieved a better proportion of bottomers to non-bottomers than we did. This isn't really relevant, since they probably went out with the same intentions we did - to enjoy a classic cave - but needs pointing out to those who like to find fault.

Read the articles in this Newsletter, talk to those who went, and you'll soon realise that the reason our trip was a raging success was that everyone who went had a damn good time. End of story.

Castlemartin Caves: The Explorations of 1993

by Mel Davies

After a quiescent period of some years, plans for a concerted effort on the known caves, and more vigorous attempts to discover new ones, were laid in 1992. A visit to Castlemartin in February and again in August of that year enabled most of the recorded caves to be checked for damage with, fortunately, none being found. Further checking was completed in September with R A Kennedy, retired Pembrokeshire Museums Curator, while Lt. Colonel Michael Portman was shown around Ogof Gofan in November accompanied by Pembrokeshire National Park Ranger, Graeme Houston. The main bone caves have already been described (ref.1) while more detail was published in 1993, with some excellent photographs, in the Ministry of Defence Conservation Magazine *Sanctuary* (ref.2).

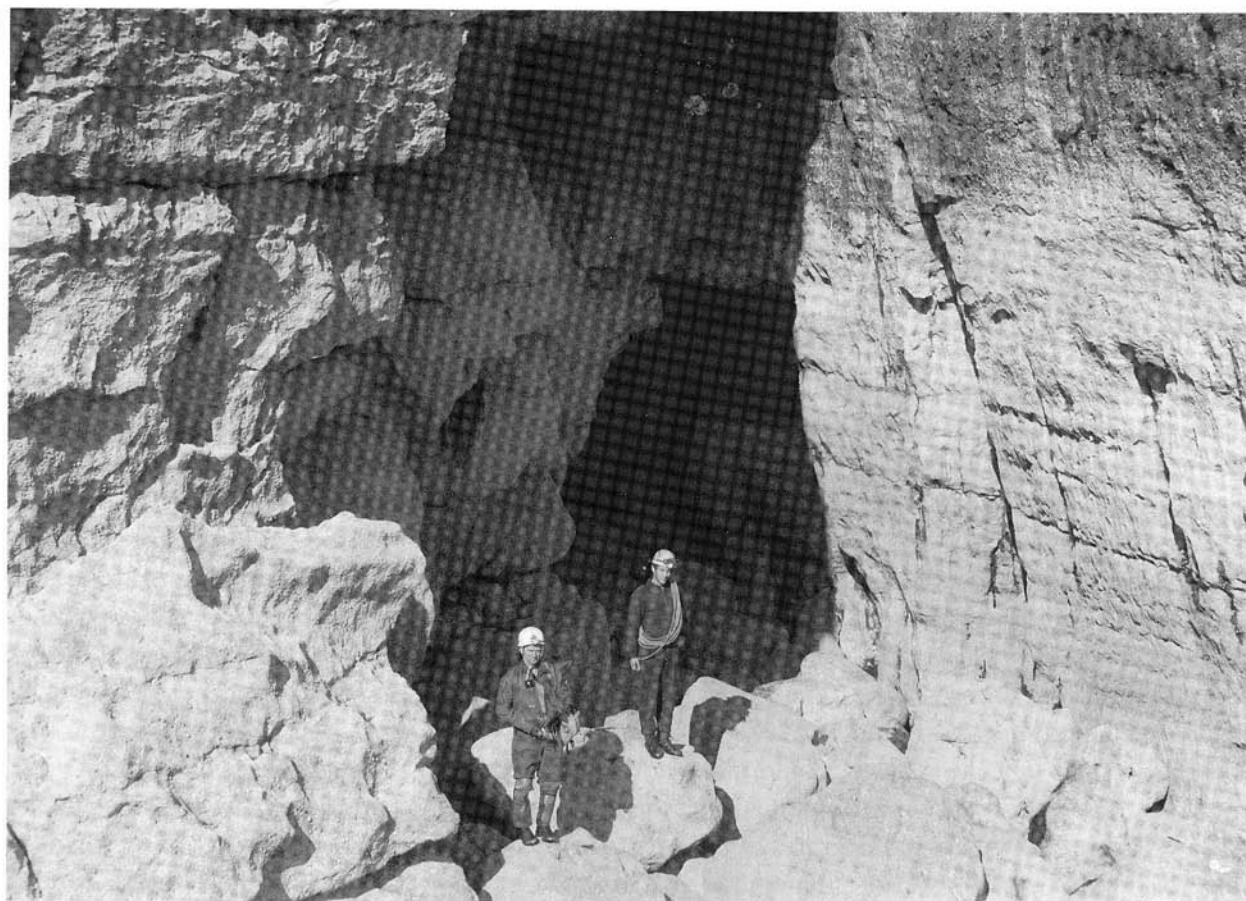
A start with the programme of identifying new caves was made in November 1992 by Cwmbran Caving Club when the cliff hole known only as "Cave 7" was reached at SR 9493 9376. This site is about 15m down the sheer cliff face where a massive lump of stalagmite adheres to the rock just above the entrance. Several photographs were taken of cavers entering, one published in *Sanctuary*, but the passage

proved to be small and blocked with limestone slabs. A gusty draught, strong enough to blow sand into the faces of the diggers, proved that there was a connection with a sea cave some 30m below. Coming now to 1993, the Cwmbran team excavated more boulders from Cave 7 during February but could make no real progress. It seemed that the best part of the cave, containing wall-stalagmite, had long been eroded away by the sea. A small new cave, Ogof Bran Cefn-ddu, only 5m long, was reached at high water mark at SR 9415 9396. It had a walking-height, square cross-section at first but was devoid of deposits. The February attempt to reach the cave on the west side of St Govan's Head at SR 9738 9272 was a failure due to the overhang above the cave. Below Pwll-y-Tarw which is a small pothole on the east side of Bullslaughter Bay at SR 9412 9404, there is a zone of solution holes, one of them 30cm high with a rock floor. It becomes lower but is seen to continue although it is not archaeological. The entrance, at SR 9411 9405, was reached by a scramble down a grassy slope from the wide shelter Lloches-y-Tarw, another potential archaeological cave.

On 4 June an opportunity arose to join the Ministry of Defence

Range Vessel in a traverse of the whole limestone coast (ref.3). Only from a boat can the full extent of the sea cliffs and their caves be appreciated, and 39 photographs were taken although one would wish that the boat had been sailed nearer the foot of the cliffs at times (ref.4). This series of photographs, in addition to a few taken from the Coastguard boat in 1971, will form a valuable archive which can be closely studied. So far use of a magnifying lens on the photos has revealed 81 caves. Some of these will be sea caves of no great length, but a few hold promise of being lengthy and with archaeological potential. Due to restrictions connected with the bird nesting period or Army use of the Range, exploration cannot be hurried, and research continuing for several years yet is anticipated.

Returning to St Govan's Head in August, G Stark of Cwmbran Caving Club managed to reach the large entrance on the west side, now placed accurately at SR 9739 9271, by roping down and pulling himself in with the aid of a throw-bag. It contained stalagmite and yellowish clay but the bone sample brought out was a modern juvenile sheep, so any archaeology is unproven. On the east side of St Govan's



The entrance of Ogof Morloi, with S. Yates and B. Naylor. All photos: Mel Davies

Head a large cave to be called Ogof Morloi was reached from a sea cave at SR 9747 9266. It contained a total of three seals and a lobster, but was almost entirely in the tidal zone so first thoughts were it could not be archaeological. However it had deposits of cemented aolianite - a relic of the commencement of the cold weather at the end of the Last Interglacial period perhaps 70,000 years ago. Ogof Morloi proved to be 300m long when explored again in October, and it also has a back door on the west side of St Govan's Head immediately below Starkey's cave at sea level. It contains one high point above High Water Mark where it would be possible to sit it out if trapped at high tide, but air pressure effects might render the wait

uncomfortable to say the least. Other passages had clay blockages, some calcited over, so the archaeology needs further investigation. Clearly rising sea levels during the Flandrian period have resulted in the invasion of an ancient solution cave, formed considerably more than 70,000 years ago.

West of observation hut "Mewsford 163" a cave was discovered at SR 9422 9387 near sea level, some 6m high with a clay roof. The magnificent pothole to the east of Saddle Head at SR 9601 9293 was finally descended by D Lewis and S Yates to reach a sea cave, which explains the enormous draught encountered by Lewis during his first attempt in 1992.

When viewed from the sea,

Saddle Head is seen to carry a line of four caves on its west side, halfway up the cliff at 20m OD, which is exactly the same altitude as Ogof Pen Cyfrwy some 100m further north in the same cliff at SR 9586 9287 (ref.1). The caves are easily reached by scrambling out to the actual Saddle and traversing northwards just above HWM on the west side. The longest cave of the series is only 5m long, but all have remnants of stalagmite floors inside. One has a free-standing stalagmite boss photographed in September (ref.4), another has a thick deposit of red clay and pebbles, also photographed, which could be archaeological. The way in which these caves and others up to 2km away like Ogof Garreg Hir (ref.1) are all situated at the



The hollow in the stalagmite floor of Ogof Gofan where the 4000-year-old pottery was found.

same altitude of 20-25m above today's sea level, despite wide differences in lithology, proves that they were formed during a period of very different sea level either:

- a) at a much higher sea level when all the caves were full of fresh, phreatic (slow-moving) water, with the exurgences not far distant, or
- b) with a sea level at 20m OD and a wetter climate, so that the caves were active, vadose systems issuing streams graded to that particular sea level.

Only careful, comparative examination of all the caves, their contents, and the solutional imprints on their walls will explain their origin. Without doubt any such investigation will reveal a bonus of further

archaeological remains, and many caves are still to be reached using the photographs taken in June 1993.

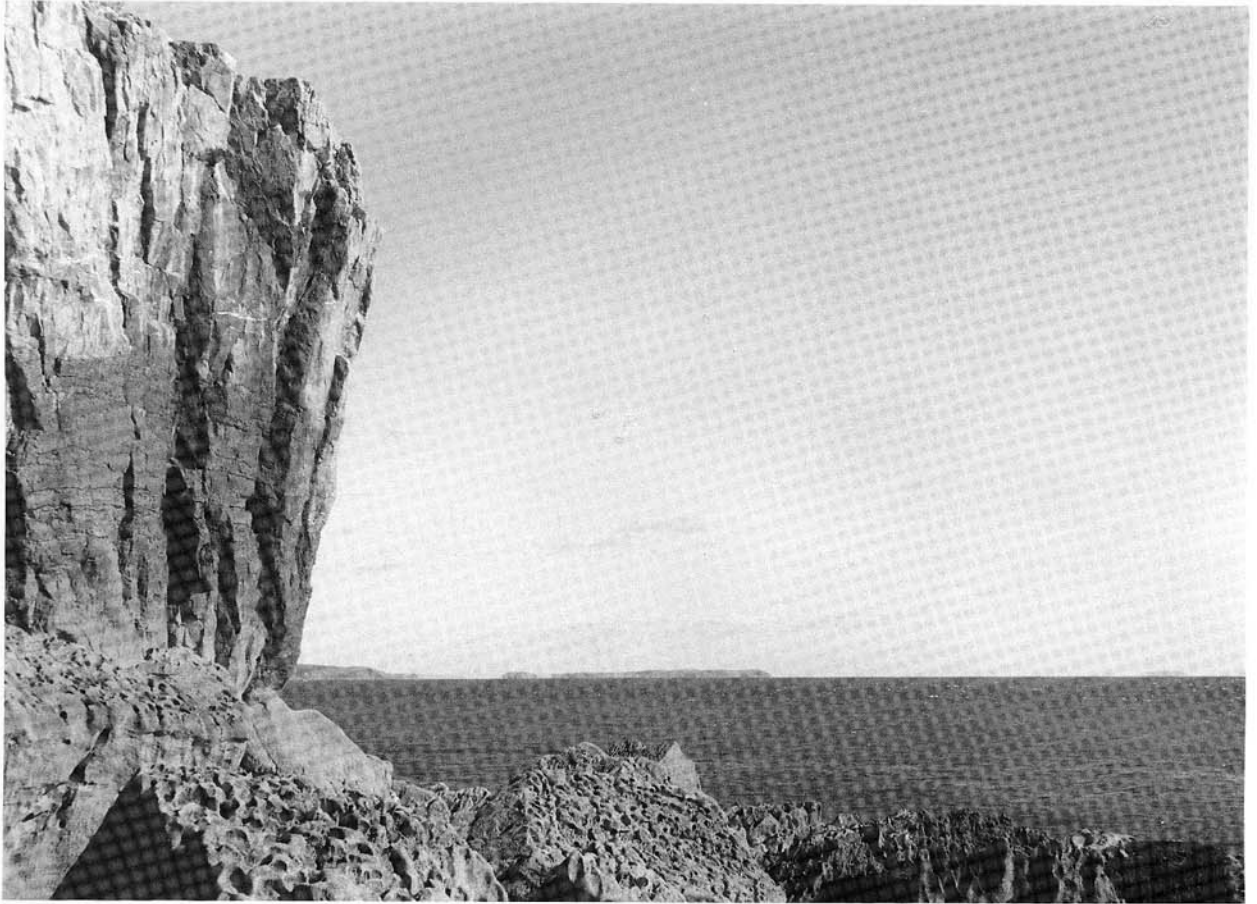
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2. Davies, M., 1993, "The Bone Caves of the Castlemartin Range", *Sanctuary* 22, 23-5, Ministry of Defence.
3. Davies, M., 1993, "Castlemartin Coast Boat Traverse", *Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Newsletter* 66; *South Wales Caving Club Newsletter* 112, 17-9.
4. Davies, M., 1993, "Castlemartin Caves - Cave Location by Camera", *Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Newsletter* 67.

Castlemartin Caves Visit, 16th October 1993.

The sea caves in this area of South Pembrokeshire can only be reached at low spring tides, and these must coincide with periods when the Army Firing Range is not in use. This trip was well advertised, but I was the only SWCC member to turn up. Fortunately I had anticipated a poor response, so invited along Gower caver Bill Naylor, and Red Rose member and Sergeant Instructor Syd Yates. Both are good climbers, which is essential on the 50m cliffs facing the Atlantic Ocean.

We started by exploring the wide cave on a fault at SR9750 9299 as the tide was falling. It ran in about 30m to a pebble



View of the Castlemartin cliffs.

choke and the side passages all closed down. Sea caves are normally high and narrow but the width of this one - over 10m - suggests a pre-glacial hole partly filled with post-glacial debris with a blanket of pebbles on top. In the cliff above was a phreatic tunnel only 1.5m high and less in width. I had noted this the previous month and this time had a hammer to remove the boulder blockage in the entrance. This accomplished, I found stratified sand immediately behind but, disappointingly, the sand was not at all archaeological.

The tide was still dropping as we descended to Ogof Morloi, a new cave found to go for 300m in August. Bill and Syd disappeared with a warning from

me that 90 minutes was all the time they had. Two seals came out of the cave and another was seen inside. The lads reported daylight where the cave emerges on the other side of St Govan's Head, and they also just avoided stepping on a lobster lurking in a dark pool. The network of passages starting at SR9747 9266 rises above high tide in one place where there is clean sand in walking height passage, and there are surprisingly some stalactites to be seen. Most of the passages are narrow and coated with a film of old stal, so it is clear that the system was formed before the sea reached its present height. Further evidence for this lay in the interglacial, cemented, stratified sand surviving at the back of the entrance chamber which I

managed to photograph. It appears that while most of the high, obvious sea caves are quite young, they can lead to much older systems formed before the last peak of the ice age and related to a different sea level.

To round off the day we visited Ogof Gofan at SR9582 9303, where I took photographs of the find-site of the Neolithic pottery located by me in September 1968. I am now convinced that the pottery had migrated from the entrance chamber to the find-site either by being flung or by wave action, for a further excavation failed to reveal extra fragments of pot. The rest of it could be concealed in the undisturbed deposits tucked in an alcove in the entrance chamber. While I was

investigating the 4,000-year old mystery of the missing pot, the lads crawled on to the final chambers of Ogof Gofan and were vastly impressed by the 5m column and the stalagmite row of three - 3m, 3m and 2m high. So densely packed are the stals in this cave that one must be careful not to brush against them in passing, or, in reaching out for a handhold, put a muddy paw on creamy crystals glistening in the lamplight. Some small, loose bones that Syd dutifully brought out I identified as a bird that had taken refuge in the warm darkness of the cave, only to turn the wrong way in aiming for the exit. Although cold but sunny up on top, the overnight frost had not yet driven any Greater Horseshoe bats into the cave. These have been seen in the past, as well as the smaller Lesser Horseshoes.

An hour of daylight remained when we emerged, just enough to take a look at Ogof Bran Goesgoch where rabbits threw up human bones with their frolicking in 1977. We erected a fence across the entrance some time later and, with the Army keeping an eye on it, the cave is safe enough until the next generation of archaeologists get round to excavating it. The Commandant of the Range, Lt. Colonel Portman was shown the cave in November 1992. Details of all these caves, except the very new ones, can be found in the book *Limestones and Caves of Wales*, edited by Trevor Ford and published by Cambridge University Press.

There can be few caving areas in Wales where one can explore

a sporting cave, admire fantastic stalagmites, get scared to death descending to an entrance by rope, puzzle over what the ancients actually did in these caves, and then wearily trudge back to the cars while a crimson sun sets slowly but spectacularly into an azure sea. Yes, we had a great trip - you should have been there!

The Caves of Castlemartin Range West, 14 November 1993.

Team: R Atkins, M Davies, D Lewis, B Savidge, R Scammells, I Tolman, K West and S Yates (guest).

With permission obtained, we all arrived at the Castlemartin Army Camp soon after 0930 and reported in. This would be an early start travelling from Cwmbran, but Syd Yates had fixed up accommodation in Pembroke Dock just six miles away, and very comfortable it was. Forms were completed and we trooped to the briefing room where Lt. Col. Portman had kindly spared five minutes to tell us about the conservation interest within Range West. He then had to dash off to the Armistice Day Parade, after handing over to Captain Ferguson. The briefing continued with instruction on where it was safe to go, and what not to touch on the Range. Anything blue seemed safe but there was so much hardware strewn about, much of it in the contorted shape you would expect of something propelled out of the barrel of an enormous tank, that we took care to avoid

anything metallic. Fossils were not to be collected and we were asked to report anything resembling the tail fin of a mortar sticking out of the ground. After this, dangling over the cliff on a rope just above pounding Atlantic waves seemed the safest thing to do. Not that all of us did that either, in the end.

The first hole to aim for, spotted by me from the Army Range Vessel in June, was an un-named cave at SR 9121 9466 which we called, hopefully, Cave 93 expecting it to be our "Cave of the Year". Now here a secret is to be revealed. The team was not told that Cwmbran had made two attempts on this cave in the past - if they had known, the difficulties might have put them off.

The actual story is as follows: Way back in history when Cwmbran Caving Club was young, on 8th March 1970 in fact, I walked these cliffs following up a story told me by Sergeant Smith, one of the Range Officers. He said that while fishing near the cliff he had noticed a large cave entrance, big enough to stand in, which no one had ever explored. It did indeed look good and John Parker came down to attempt it on 13th September 1970. Conditions were too difficult and we tried again on 14th November 1970, which was 23 years ago to the day. Jeff Phillips was there and he brought down a Yorkshire potholer who was an expert on ladders. As it turned out only Parker descended and he reported a clay fill, but wasn't sure if a way existed between clay and ceiling. Even Parker was not prepared to swing about



The decorated main passage in Ogof Gofan.

on the ladder and jump into the cave. Enough of history; what happened with the improved techniques of 1993?

The first job was to locate the actual entrance so that rope could be put over at the exact spot. My idea was to follow an easy climb nearby, get down to sea level taking advantage of the low tide, and point out the hole to those waiting on the top. Things got a bit disorganised; an easy route down for viewing could not at first be found, and we had been warned not to hammer stakes or anything else into the ground as a belay. Then a coincidence occurred which was a gift from heaven. Two climbers appeared, the only climbers we saw all day, and they came up to see what on earth we were up to.

One of them said he had actually been inside the cave while climbing up from the low-tide bench below. It was apparently something of a resting place on the route. But did the cave open out? The climber said no, but of course we didn't believe him - he was only a climber. Then he pointed out two steel stakes at exactly the right position, at the edge of the 50m high, overhanging cliff. Within minutes Syd Yates, who was only a guest for heaven's sake, organised belays and disappeared purposefully over the edge. We couldn't see him of course, but by walking away for about 200m on to a promontory we could look back and see Syd's antics. And they were memorable. Poor Syd was

dangling about 30m down, or 20m up, above a deep pool on the low-tide bench, (and by now the tide was fast coming in). Hurriedly I took photographs, thinking Syd would prussik back up - but no, he was swinging to and fro, building up momentum until he could kick against the cliff face. This he did several times, adjusting his height each time, but it seemed impossible to just land on the entrance ledge. Eventually Syd found some protrusion just left of the entrance and hung on, destroying momentum, with the live rope snaking and pulling away below him. A neat bit of traversing and he was in. Unfortunately, within five minutes he was out - there was no way on; Parker and our climbing friend were right.

Meanwhile I had been quizzing the aforesaid climber, and found that he was a caver as well. He knew Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, in fact had been to the end of OFD III although how he had managed that without being a member of a caving club I knew I'd have to check with the Permit Secretary later. So we could probably have saved Syd a lot of trouble. Not that Syd was worried - he'd had the time of his life, showing up Cwmbran CC, and actually enjoying spidering on 30m of rope. Also, he had remembered to bring me a sample of clay from the cave. I had to determine whether this was a very old system, blocked with Triassic deposits in which case there was no hope of open passage, or was it a Pleistocene cave with diggable clay and possibly ancient bones? Carefully opening the bag of very solid, red clay I established that it was genuine cave clay, probably laid down well inside a lengthy system, beyond reach of any possible animal access, stratified, so precipitating from calm waters, and containing silty nodules of green, ferrous particles. No trace of bones, not even bird bones, but definitely diggable in a search for a cave

extension. But who was prepared for the hair-raising rope descent? Definitely a cave for the future, the far distant future after another 23 years of technique improvement.

The day was not yet over and one group examined the cliffs further west, eventually reaching a sea cave with a shaft leading from it up to daylight. This was at SR 9102 9491 and had been descended by John Parker on 27th September 1969, and probably others at a later date. Our team confirmed that there was no way on inland. Going further west, Dave Lewis and Syd descended into the narrow, sea-washed gully at SR 9034 9525, and explored two sea caves with the tide now rushing in. Both caves closed down, and the water was already too high to allow access round the corner for other caves.

We had skimmed over about a mile of sea cliffs, and there was another mile available towards Linney Head which we did not reach. We had gained access to about five sea caves, including one I reached on my own at SR 9123 9460, and "Cave 93". All this was only a small proportion of what I had spotted with my photography of last

June, so there is scope for many more, and better, discoveries.

Looking back at the end of 1993 I find that Cwmbran Caving Club has devoted much time to Castlemartin over the last 15 months, so more prospecting will have to be done before another team is taken down there. Trips were also organised for the South Wales Caving Club, but I was the only member to take advantage of the arrangements. In the meantime we are very grateful to the Army authorities for allowing us access permission. In December I prepared an "Annual Report" on what we have accomplished, which included a list of the fauna seen as well as a summary of the cave descriptions, and copies will be made available for the Commandant of the Castlemartin Range and conservation bodies. Only by close co-operation with the organisations involved can we ensure access for cave exploration in the future.

The Expedition Leader's Dos and Don'ts For Organising a Trip to the Gouffre Berger

by Gary Vaughan

Before you go...

1. Do ask for lots of help. It's quite a big task and I found that there are several little jobs like Treasurer, First Aid, Communications and Tackle which were best dealt with by the right man for the job. If you can get hold of these people, grab them with both hands, feet, ears and teeth.

2. Do enlist the services of a shit-hot translator. If you're writing to the Mayor, the campsite or just arranging some gear, do it in deeply grovelling French.

3. Do have training meets. At first I thought these would help to get people fit and back into the swing of SRT. In reality the biggest advantage was in getting to know your expedition members and in building a team spirit.

4. Don't expect British caves to be of any use in building up your team's level of physical fitness. If you want to get fit for the Berger put on a pack of 20 kilos and walk up the biggest hill you can find every night, for a month before you go.

5. Do have a bank account or similar specifically for the expedition. Things just get more and more complicated as time goes on. There's no need to start with a complicated situation.

6. Do book places on a local campsite. There is nowhere for a proper wash at La Moliere. Conditions are spartan. One night on a campsite with showers and wash basins and a toilet can work wonders on your morale.

7. Do take up as many different religions as possible. Buddhism, Greek Orthodox, Muslim, as many as possible. If you get it right just think of the weather you'll be able to "arrange".

8. Do purchase all of your carbide in France. We purchased from George Marbach at EXPE, Pont en Royans, at a price of just over £1.00 per kilo. The absolute cheapest you'll find it in the UK is about £ 3.00 per kilo.

9. Don't include in your trip a sightseeing tour of Reims town centre at three in the morning!

At La Moliere...

10. Don't underestimate the

importance of large frame tents. We had excellent conditions and three ginormous tents and still it was a squash on some of the cooler evenings.

11. Don't underestimate the importance of trestle tables and chairs. We had three large trestle tables and two benches supplanted by the odd camping chair here and there, and we still came close to blows over who could sit on what.

12. Do have some means of communication with your team. People like to know what's going on. If they don't they feel left out and lose interest. We used a large white board with water-based marker pens, as well as evening meetings, to try to keep the ball rolling.

13. Do have adequate means of sterilisation. I'd heard all sorts of horror stories about Berger this and Berger that. Our secret weapon was iodine. One litre of the stuff. At a usage rate of five pipette drops to the litre we could have sterilised the whole damn cave! Instead we settled for sterilising all water brought in from the trough, whether it was for drinking, washing up or just throwing over people. We

also had a super strong solution in a hand wash bucket.

14. Do have adequate provision for water storage. We were using 10 to 15 gallons a day easily and that was just for cooking.

15. Do get daily weather forecasts. The information centre in Autrans seems to have got pretty used to strange caving types coming in and asking what the weather is going to do for the next two or three days.

16. Do try to buy as many provisions as you can from the Continent in Sassanage. The price of beer, food and other goodies on the plateau is much higher.

17. Don't try to buy your provisions from the Continent in Sassanage on a Sunday 'cos it'll be shut!

18. Don't drop a crate of beer all over the floor of the Continent in Sassanage. You'll only draw even more attention to yourselves and get British cavers an even worse reputation.

19. Do try to have some sort of mass catering even if it's only for a smallish number of people. Ours was run on a "book it in advance" system and catered for a maximum of 15 half-starved cavers. The advantage

of this is that the keen "A-team" types can keep pushing to the end of the day and know that a meal will be waiting for them back at La Moliere.

From La Moliere to the entrance...

20. Don't bother referring to the old Crewe Caving Club sketch plan of the route to the entrance 'cos it's ****!

21. Do refer to the new SWCC survey of the route to the entrance (see pages 24-25). It could save some of your expedition members hours of fun in the woods, but on the down side, the exercise and the view from La Sure would probably be good for them.

22. Do try to establish communications from La Moliere to the entrance. Our comms were excellently provided by a Mr Clipstone of 41 Taunton Way, Stanmore, Middlesex. Standard CB radios with well set-up aerials gave good reception each way at most times of the day. Worst reception was between 17.00 and 21.00 hrs when the whole of France seems to take to the air!

23. Don't underestimate the importance of No. 22 (above).

24. Don't underestimate the

number and the size of batteries required for No. 22 (above). We just about scraped through with some 12v dry sealed lead acids, although at one point somebody's car was raided for its battery.

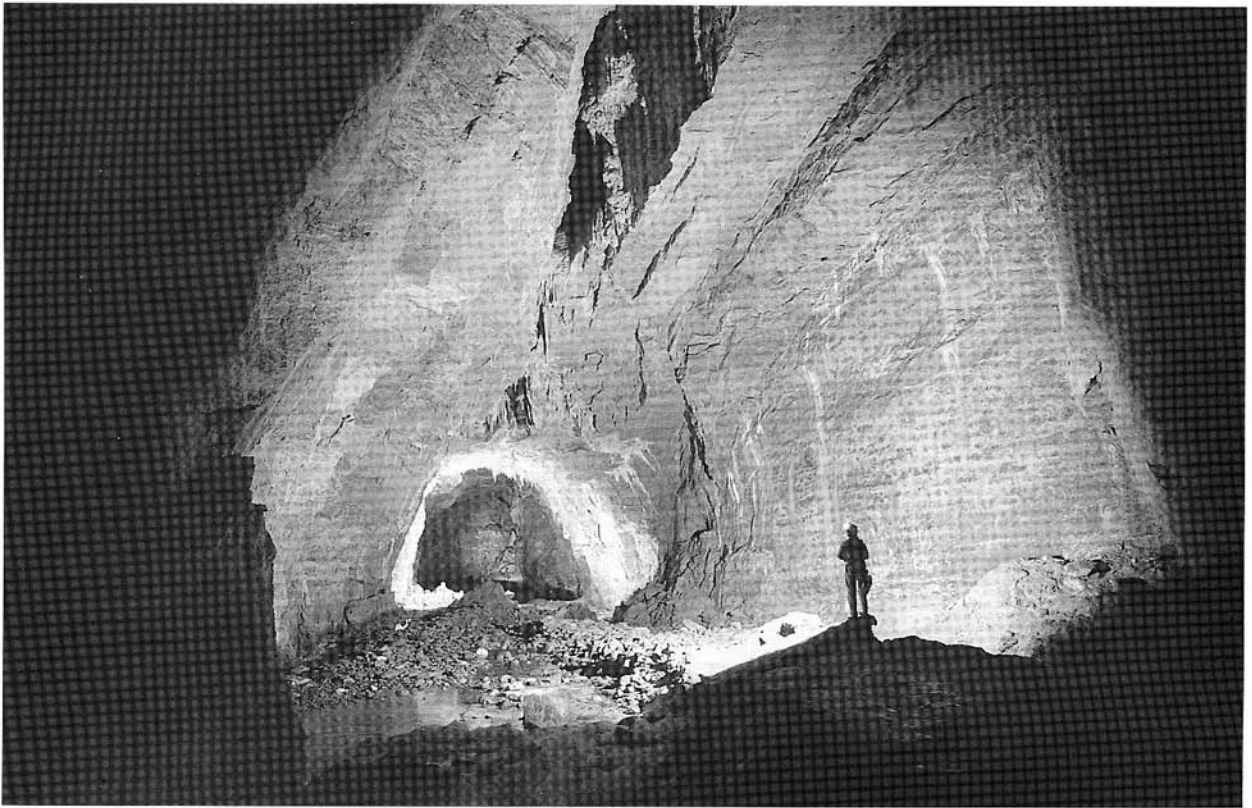
25. Don't send anyone by the name of Hywel Davies to change the batteries at the entrance.

26. Do keep a log book at the control tent at La Moliere. This proved invaluable for keeping a track on who or what was where or wasn't where as the case may be.

27. Do take some kind of reflective markings to temporarily mark the route to and from the entrance. This is particularly useful at night although quite a few people found them very helpful during the daytime.

From the entrance to the bottom...

28. Do try to establish communications between the entrance and Camp One. Again Mr Clipstone of 41 Stanmore Road, etc. did a very good job here. The underground telephones were of a single wire "France Phone" type, but using twin wire to minimise the effect of wire breakage. Again the largest problem was with the



Ian Middleton, Alison Payne and Hywel Davies in Starless River Passage, Gouffre Berger.
Photo: Tony Baker

batteries but when working well it was possible to relay a message from La Moliere directly to Camp One.

29. Do have an entrance tent manned 24 hrs a day. Besides being one of the Mayor's stipulations, it does mean that SRT kits, oversuits and all sorts of caving rubbish need never be lugged back to La Moliere once they've been carried over.

30. Do practice holding your breath. About 1 min 30 secs is what's needed to clear the wooden platform at the top of Ruiz and get sufficiently down the Holiday Slides before you can breathe safely again. If I was going to rig this cave again I would do some serious gardening at the top of Ruiz before putting the rope down.

31. Do double rig Cairn,

Garby's, Gontard's and Aldo's. There are plenty of existing bolts in this part of the cave. It can be done so that the two ropes only interfere at the pitch head and the potential time saving over time taken to place them makes the operation well worth it.

32. Don't rig the Alex Pitcher route unless you really want to see it. It's not really any faster than the main route. The walls are very loose in places, it needs some serious bolting work and the whole thing is covered in a nice sticky mud. By the time you're down it, you and your ropes will be too.

33. Do make provision for a latrine at Camp One. There's no excuse for not having one and increasing the amount of pollution that already exists in the cave, and besides there's always the added attraction of a

potential projection show on the wall of the chamber!

34. Don't bother with a ladder on Little General unless you're prepared to set up a proper lifeline. It can actually be rigged quite well if you try hard. The biggest problem is that it lands you directly in a water channel.

35. Don't bother trying to pre-plan the rigging to the nth degree. It won't work. Just keep pushing gear into the cave hard and trust to good old dedicated teamwork.

and finally...

36. Don't let anyone from Australia change gas cylinders at the entrance tent at one o'clock in the morning using a carbide light for illumination.

To Camp, or Not to Camp?

by Tony Baker

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, Gary Vaughan describes the trip to the bottom of the Berger that he, Iain Miller and Chris Payne made in one hit. Bob Hall and I did ours rather differently, and I thought it might be valid to write it up and publish it alongside Gary's piece so that future Bergerees can consider the problem from both perspectives.

Like other people who went on the trip last summer, I had read reports of previous trips, and from these gleaned the impression that a reasonably fit caver such as myself, if competent at SRT, could bottom the cave and get back out in around 16-20 hours. Prior to this, my longest trip had clocked in at something over 15 hours, when Neil Weymouth and I went to the bitter end of Daren Cilau and back in 1987. However, I couldn't imagine from what I'd read that anything in the Berger was going to be as arduous as much of Daren is. Hence I concluded that, given good weather and the right companion(s), I could do it in one go. No carrying in sleeping bags, karrimats, extra clothes and so on, just a bag with plenty of food and the means to cook and make hot drinks, as well as

spare carbide and emergency lighting.

On the other hand, what was the point? We had the cave booked for ten whole days, why rush it? From what I saw on my first couple of trips into the cave, the place was so vast that a more leisurely approach would be the best way to fully appreciate it.

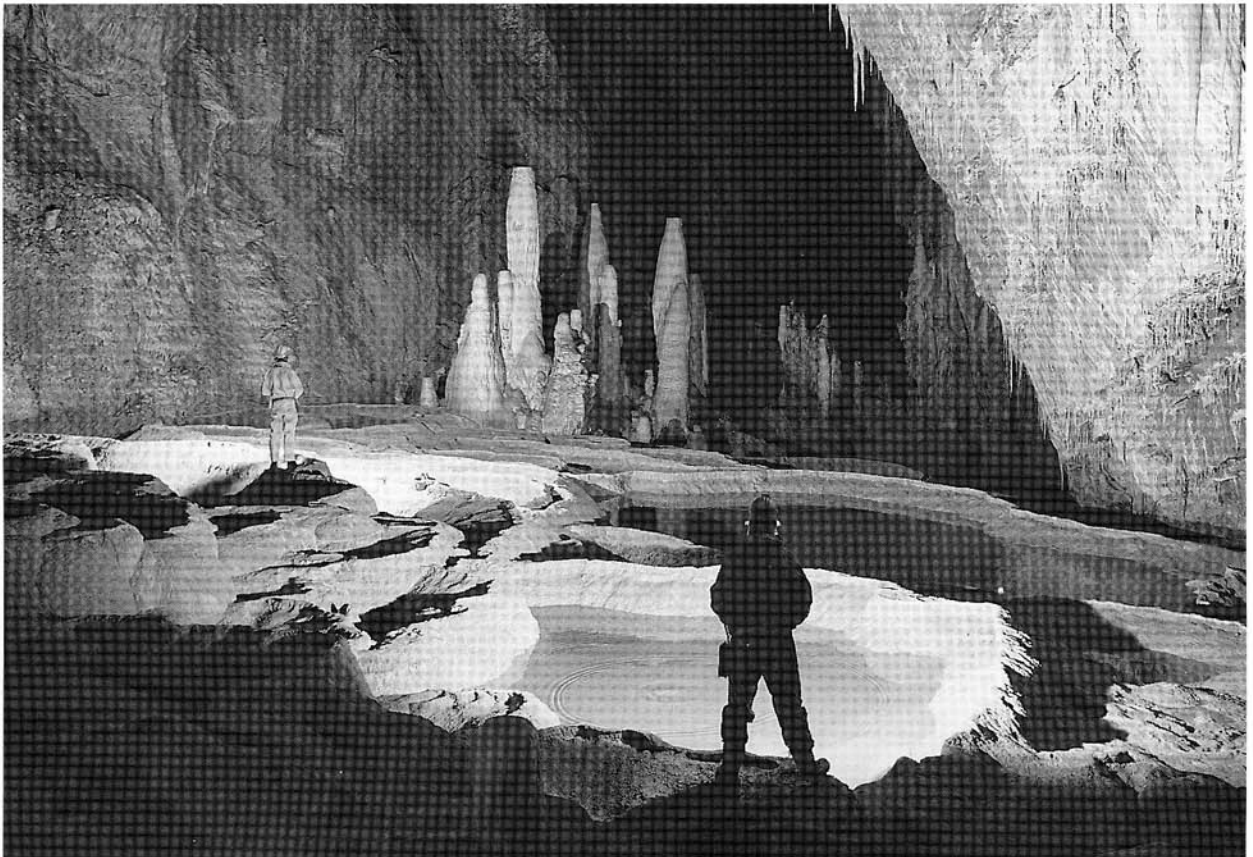
Also, I'd never actually camped underground before; here was an ideal opportunity to try it. The carry in to Camp One wasn't a problem, and if I was knackered on the way out I could leave a lot of stuff there and collect it on the photo trip that was being lined up. Bob Hall, Ian Middleton and I discussed the options on a trip to the Hall of Thirteen via the Alex Pitcher route, and Bob outlined his plan for bottoming the cave: camping on the way in.

It sounded good; enter the cave in the early evening after a good meal, stroll to Camp One, make a hot drink and crash out, to awake in the morning refreshed and raring to go. Blitz the bottom, then all the way out, stopping at the camp for a hot meal. There was always the option of staying for another kip if we really needed it. The three

of us would have made a good team together, but the schedule of entrance and control tent duties meant that Ian couldn't come at the time that Bob and I would have to go. As I'd travelled out to France with Hywel Davies (and I like caving with him), I felt obliged to include him in my plans, but as it turned out he wanted to camp on the way out rather than on the way in, so he arranged a bottoming trip with like-minded individuals, which left Bob and I as a team of two and this suited us fine.

Actually, the Berger is ideally suited to caving in twos. Most of the successful bottoming or nearly-bottoming trips were done this way (Ian Middleton and Brian Clipstone, Dave and Andy Dobson, Mike Coburn and Bob Saunders to name but a few). There's little waiting on pitches, and on those that are double-rigged progress in or out is very quick. You have the feeling of independence and personal challenge at the same time as the security of having someone else around.

On the way in, Bob's homemade lighting system threatened to foul up our carefully-laid plans (see his article elsewhere in this



Bob Hall and Hywel Davies in the Hall of Thirteen. Photo: Tony Baker.

Newsletter) but once he'd sorted that out the only hold-up was one of our own making: we'd decided to go in and out via the Alex Pitcher route simply because we thought it would be a "first". The series of short, awkward pitches with glutinous gritty clay on the walls isn't suited to cavers carrying two tackle bags, and we had to finish rigging the route - across an exposed traverse and down the last pitch - before rejoining the main route at the top of Aldo's. At this point we saw Gary and his team on their way out from the bottom.

On our arrival at Camp One, we elected to sleep a short distance back up the passage from the usual kipping site, as Hywel, Paul Quill and Alison Payne

were due back from the bottom and we didn't want to be woken by their arrival in the small hours. Additionally, Dudley Thorpe, Bob Radcliffe and Brian Bowell were just getting into their bags, having aborted their plan to head in as far as Camp Two before stopping. Our alternative campsite was equally flat and dry, but had the disadvantage of being within earshot of a drip.

The biggest problem I found with sleeping underground was getting my mind to "switch off" after a couple of hours' caving. Normally at this stage of a trip I'm going well, firing on all cylinders, not stopping and trying to sleep. The problem was exacerbated by the excited anticipation of what lay in store

tomorrow. To begin with, I couldn't sleep at all, but as the night wore on I dozed fitfully. I woke when the voices of Hywel's team drifted up the passage as they arrived back from their trip, but didn't rummage around to look at my watch, just tried to get back to some sort of restful sleep. I woke up again feeling cold, and discovered that my Karrimat had wriggled out from between my sleeping bag and the plastic survival bag I'd spread out on the ground. I woke up again and answered a call from my bladder, and then finally decided I'd had enough when I woke up yet again, for no apparent reason. Feel for the torch, then find the watch: 5.30 am. Realising that I wasn't going to get any sort of useful sleep, I felt like getting

up and getting going, but the light snoring emanating from the direction of Bob told me that he was sleeping well and probably wouldn't take kindly to being roused so early when the plan had been to get a good night's kip. I dozed again as best I could, and when I eventually groped for the torch again it was ten o'clock.

"Bob! It's ten o'clock" I called, and crawled out of my sleeping bag feeling like death warmed up. By the time we'd made a drink and some food, packed our stuff and had a brief chat with Hywel, Paul and Alison it was after eleven, and all the supposed advantages of doing the trip this way had been lost. We'd have been better off staying at La Moliere, starting early and travelling light. In fact, we'd probably have been at this point much earlier, even allowing for the rigging on the Pitcher route. Plus I'd have had a proper night's sleep. The fact that Bob - a habitual early riser - hadn't woken before ten meant that he probably hadn't slept well either - not the best of starts for a trip like this.

Fortunately the lack of sleep didn't affect my trip at all, largely because the Berger is such a magnificent cave. The route from Camp One to The Bottom comes up with a bit of everything; massive passage, quiet canals, formations, streamway, big wet pitches. The feeling of remoteness in the

lower sections adds an extra "buzz" to the whole thing, and with all this to enjoy I didn't have time to feel tired. We had plenty of food, and I took a brew kit as far as the bottom of Hurricane (the last pitch), not just because it's good to have a hot drink on a trip like this, but also because if the cave floods suddenly you can get stuck here. A plastic pot full of Fruit Pastilles provided occasional treats between pitches, and at the point where we turned back (as close to the sump as you can get without wading in neck-deep water) we celebrated our success with Christmas cake.

We arrived back at Camp One in the evening, having passed several other parties on their way to the bottom. We spent an hour or so here, having a hot meal and drinks, and then plodded out via the Alex Pitcher route, by this time feeling the effects of a long trip and cursing at the awkward bits. It was a great feeling to scramble out of the entrance after midnight feeling "We did it!", although I had another hour's plodding to do to get back to La Moliere; Bob stayed at the entrance as he was due on duty there at 6am.

So, with the benefit of hindsight, my conclusions. If I was doing the trip again, I'd go for the "one hit" approach. I think most fit, active cavers would have no problem doing the trip this way; the problems are psychological rather than

physical. You need to carry less stuff, and if you're not going to sleep properly there's not much point in camping. This view, I found in a recent conversation on the matter at Penwyllt, is one shared by several other people who chose to camp.

Camping underground and me didn't really get on, but this was largely because of the way we chose to do it. My advice would be that if you're planning to camp underground in somewhere like the Berger, practice it first in this country to get used to it. Camp when you most need the rest, i.e. on the way out after a long day's caving rather than before you really get going. Camp One isn't really that far into the cave anyway; once you're back that far you might as well plod on out unless you're really suffering.

It is important that the expedition makes some provision for enforced stops at Camp One in case of a sudden change in the weather, which can make Aldo's impassable. It should also be remembered that coming out from the bottom is a hell of a long way, is harder than going in 'cos it's uphill all the way (and prussiking requires more effort than abseiling), and to someone who has stretched their limits a bit far an overnight stop and a hot meal could make all the difference to the state in which they leave the cave. Our expedition had sleeping bags, stoves and food left in situ at Camp One for eventualities like these.

The Gouffre Berger Awayday Return

by Gary Vaughan

You know, you hear all of these stories before you go, 60 hour trips, days sat on small ledges above torrential rivers, special requirements for SRT kits. One person says you need a wetsuit, the next says not. Hopefully the following account of a trip carried out by Iain Miller, Chris Payne and myself will give anyone who hasn't been to the Berger a bit more idea of what to expect. If you are one of the people who decided to do it by camping, this may be of interest.

The only definite plan I had in my head about doing the Berger was that I would have no definite plan. I hadn't decided to camp, I hadn't decided not to camp. I'd brought a wetsuit over from England but I didn't know whether I was going to use it. The biggest barrier I've found in foreign caves, in my very limited experience, is the sheer scale of the damn things. It's probably the same sensation as when somebody from Mendip comes to South Wales for the first time (sorry Joel). You spend all of your time nipping around in passages that feel comfortable and familiar and then suddenly you're faced with a whole new ball game. Huge galleries that you can spend an hour in,

wandering around in circles.

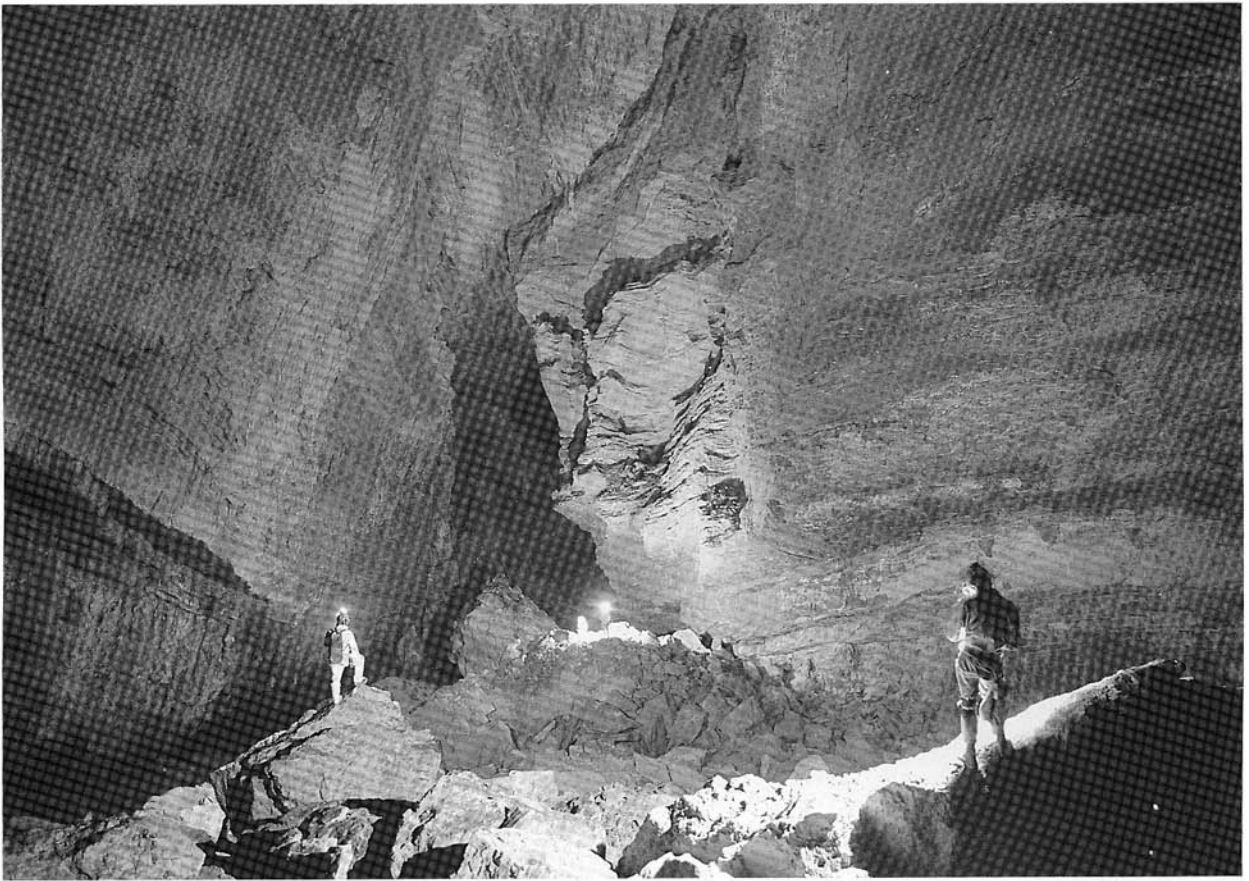
The first problem for me is one of familiarisation. I try to get as many trips into the cave as possible in an attempt to "feel at home" and learn the entrance series, anything that will give me a psychological boost for the big trip. If I can push a little further into the cave each time then so much the better.

In the Berger I had managed two trips into the cave before our merry band were required to do our bit. The first as far as Little General and the second to the top of Aldo's. "Ah" I hear you say "but Aldo's is not a little further in from Little General, it's a little further out". Quite correct. At the time we were on a mission from God to double-rig the entrance series. I would have liked a trip to, say, as far as the canals for my second trip but had to be content with what I could get. At least I felt confident after my two trips that everything from Aldo's out was a doddle.

Clothing-wise, my first two trips had been very comfy in Alpinex and Troll PVC oversuit. Given the fact that the water levels in the cave were at an all-time low, I was happy to give the bottom a really good go in dry gear and do my very best cat

impersonation at each and every sign of water. With hindsight, if we hadn't been rigging/frigging I would strongly consider using the wet suit for a 'splash splash wheeee' trip. The lower part of the cave would be very exhilarating if you were able to have a blatant disregard of getting wet.

On the dry kit side though, there's a load of fun to be had using rope and finger nails to the nth degree. The water thunders down alongside as you use all your caving expertise to avoid a complete soaking in a large dark plunge pool. Ace! There is also the fact that the return from the bottom is bloody steep. It's very physical in dry kit, it would be even more so in a wet suit. A load of crap (sorry ladies) is talked about this and that to do with SRT kits in the Berger. If you do a lot of SRT and/or you know that your technique is good, you will have no problem in the Berger. All you need is a standard rig; two jammers, lockable descender, cows' tails etc. You need nothing additional. If you are going to cave in a small group like two or three persons, and you want to be a little safer on the self-rescue side then carry a spare jammer and pulley in your kit



View from the top of the Great Rubble Heap, looking down towards Camp One.
Photo: Tony Baker, with assistance from Hywel Davies, Alison Payne and Ian Middleton.

bag.

The largest dilemma then becomes one of “Do I camp or do I go for it?” Do you need to be a super star to do the lot in one go? I don’t believe so. Read on...

The alarm clock was set for 5.30 am so as to allow for quick cup of tea and a snatched brekky before the off at 6.00 am. I’m a great believer in caving on last night’s din-dins. The three of us had all been down to Autrans for a mega blow-out of pizza, salad and chips, a huge “carbo-stack” in readiness for the big day. Caving gear had already been packed, primed and ready the previous night, it was simply a case of get up, have a brew and a dump, and go for it. (not necessarily in that order you

understand).

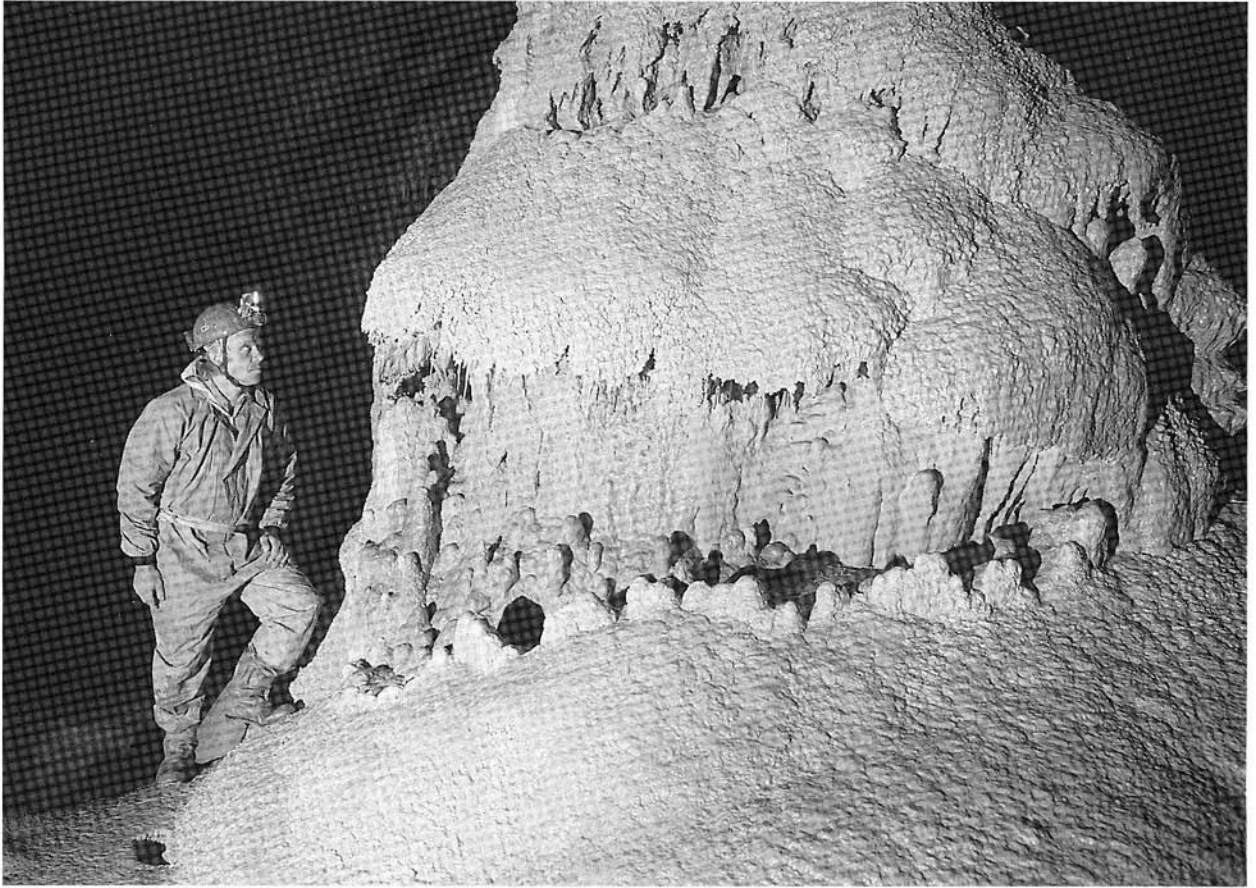
6.10 am, Oh God, we’re ten minutes late already. Chris and myself set off for the entrance. Iain seemed hellbent on acting like some kind of “Berger Backstop” (Hey, no one comes past me till they’ve been to the bottom!). It was a super morning, we ambled over to the entrance and agreed on team tactics.

No. 1: No rushing or racing.
No. 2: No waiting to re-group at each pitch, as long as a verbal check was made top to bottom, whoever was leading could get on with it.

We arrived at the entrance at 7.00 am, back on schedule again. Dudley Thorpe told me I looked like shit. Cheers Dudley! Chris was busy doing things out of order. I was in fact feeling quite

nervous. The task in front of us seemed quite daunting and what I really needed was a distraction. I got kitted up and my distraction arrived, Iain looking like he was out for a quick trip around Top Entrance (I’ll tell you who’s hard). In the face of his overwhelming confidence I just had to get on with it.

7.15 am: entered the cave and set off for Garby’s to provide an additional rope sling (ahem) at the pitch head, and then off to Aldo’s for our first comms check to the surface. We arrived at the bottom of Aldo’s at 7.35 am, and called up Dudley. He was still alive and well and very clear. Iain was apparently on his way in with a spare handset, there were still no comms to Camp One. Chris and myself pushed on to Camp One. Just



Paul Quill with a formation beyond the Hall of Thirteen. Photo: Tony Baker

the two of us was proving to be a very time-efficient system. New territory for me below Little General. We had a little system on the boulder pile. The trick was to leave a gap of about twenty yards or so. This usually proved to be enough so that when the leader lost the path, which he invariably did, the person bringing up the rear was still on the path and could hopefully detect what had gone wrong. By the time the person who had been leading has managed to scramble back over the boulders the roles were usually reversed, and so it went on.

We arrived at Camp One at 7.55 am, and promptly woke all the occupants by making a cup of coffee and trying to reach Dudley on the surface. We settled down

for a chat as to who had rigged what, where and when and exactly how many times Joel had fallen in the water (sorry Joel).

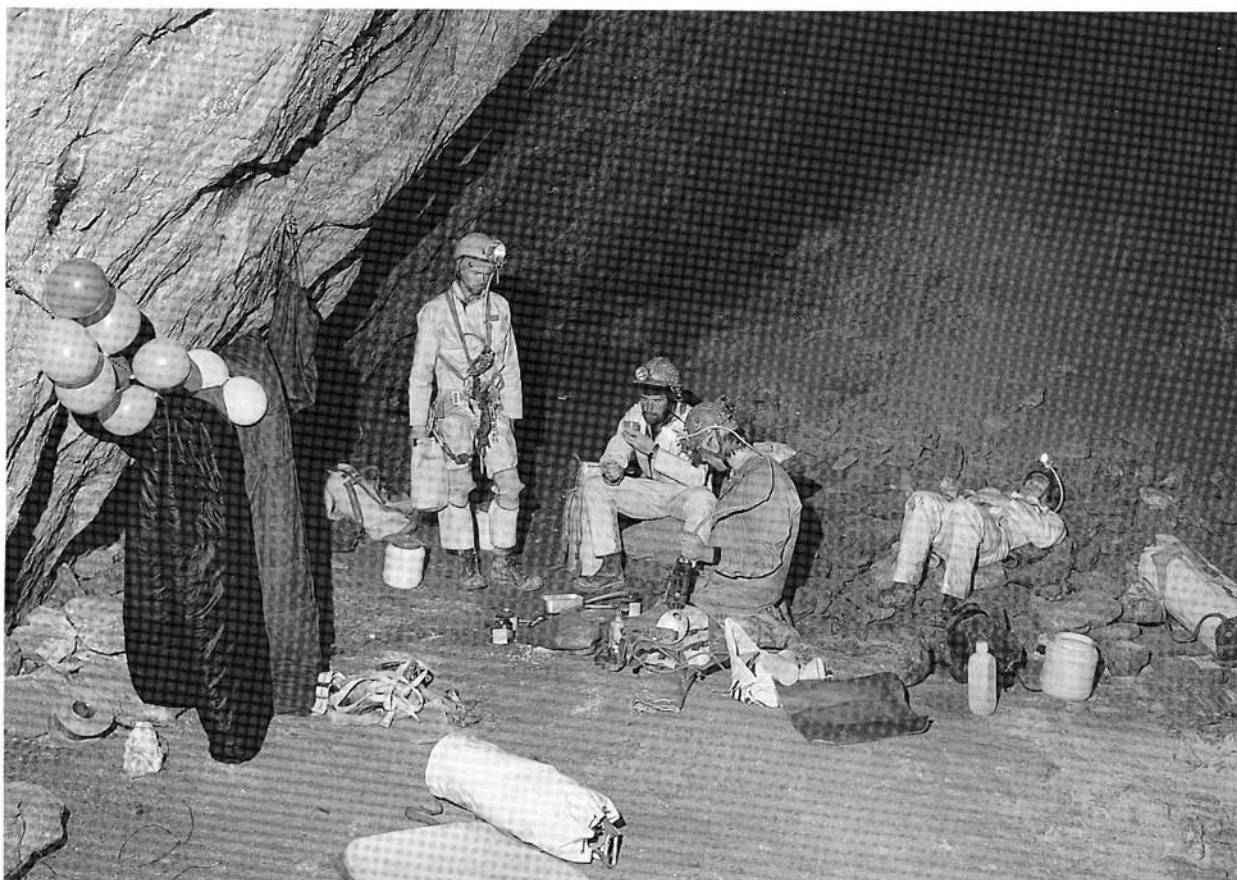
Time was ticking away. There were no comms to the surface, Iain hadn't arrived and it was 8.35 am. We decided that either a) he was having trouble with the telephone line, b) he was still on the surface having a fag or c) he'd gone back to La Moliere. We decided that a) was the most likely (we found out later that c) was more correct) and decided to push on.

Navigation was very straightforward with very few choices of direction. I found it most comfortable to cave in the large dry sections with my Troll suit un-done to the waist. The rigging was becoming more

interesting. We would occasionally come across bits of dead rope (or what looked like rope) wedged in cracks or under boulders or high up on a stal! Gulp!

The canals were a complete laugh. We managed to traverse the whole thing dry just for the fun of it although most of it would have been easily waded. Things started to get a little tougher after the canals. Quite a few of the traverse lines required tensioning to avoid D.G.S. (Damp Groin Syndrome), and our pace slowed as we paid attention to those tiny details which make life so much more comfortable.

By 11.30 am we were past Topographer's Cascade and into the Grand Canyon. I was still on a huge high, slightly



Camp One. Photo: Tony Baker

apprehensive but amazed at just how easy it was all proving to be. We slowly descended this huge chamber down a piece of line which was now more mud than rope. It was incredibly slippery and incredibly steep. I had this strange feeling we were being followed... (cue music from the Twilight Zone) ...I looked around and there was Iain, just arriving at the top of the slope, the first time we'd seen him underground (I'll tell you who's hard).

We re-grouped at the bottom of the chamber and pressed on towards Reseaux Mat, Singe and of course The Grand Cascade. This is one of those really big wet pitches that you don't want to piss about on. Unfortunately today, Grand Cascade was a big wet pitch

with a big wet rub point, right at the top. I prussiked back up and had a look for a bolt. Nothing, Zilch, Rien, A big double zero an the available spit score. I continued back up to the top. Iain was just arriving.

Now Iain's sum total of Berger Bottoming Gear was a bolting kit (oops sorry, I almost forgot the packet of fags) and as such he was duly elected by a simple majority of two for and one against to go down and place the required bolt. Having done the business it was a slightly damper but none the less enthusiastic Iain who led off towards the Baignoire and, of course, Little Monkey. We knew in advance from the previous rigging crew that Little Monkey was something of a battlefield. They had thought about it long and

hard and come up with a bit of a blank. Iain was there first and made a bit of a reconnaissance. He returned to the top of the pitch to offer me advice and the bolting kit. Shit! I was unimpressed but decided to play along for a while. The nub of the problem was that the bottom of the rope was tied off for some reason way down below. We could generate enough slack to put in a deviation but not enough for a re-belay. The only place a deviation would be effective was on the far side of the passage but that was a good eight feet away and overhanging. Twenty or so painful bolt blows later, I knew that if getting to the bottom depended on getting this bolt in, we were sunk.

I returned to the top of the pitch to make another impartial

appraisal of the situation. Iain (I'll tell you who's hard) was still keen to give it a go. In all fairness he stuck at it for a good twenty minutes before he gave it up as a bad job. Then, in a blinding flash of brilliance he swung across to a large flake. Two, or maybe three, blows from his mighty hammer and the rock cracked into submission. He was through. What a hero! We were off again, some of us a little faster than we would have liked. In an instant, Iain's Petzl decided that it was fed up in life with being a "Stop" and decided to go for it. He shot downwards at an exciting pace only to stop caught in the "Vee" of the rope between the main belay and the deviation he had just placed.

With renewed confidence in the new deviation we set off again. The bottom of Little Monkey is a very exciting place. It had already turned out to be a very wet place for some of the previous party (sorry Joel) and it required a very tricky move to manoeuvre one's bottom over to the far side of this nasty black deep pool before one disconnected one's descender from the rope. "Phew, that was close" I thought to myself as I finished the pitch and set off down the passage towards Hurricane. I was still marvelling at how well I'd done just to negotiate the last bit dry when both my feet slipped from under

me. I was being treated to one of those high adrenalin fairground type water rides, only this one ended in a 48 metre pitch.

AAAAAARRGGHHH!!!!

After what seemed like an age, my long cow's tail did the business on the next belay and the only things to disappear over the edge, only inches from my feet were such words as "bother" and "whoops". Iain was oblivious to my little "on court drama", his arse was dangling over the largest hole in the cave off of a single 8mm spit, and he was making sure he was getting it right. Chris who was following was also unaware. He'd decided to try and find out how deep the pool was.

I was feeling like clipping into everything and the kitchen sink. I had to be content with two cows' tails...and a static cord...and a descender...and a spare krab I had on my sit harness! Paranoid? Who me?

Hurricane didn't turn out to be too bad after all. Yet another rub point below the rebelay necessitated the tying off of the rope across the floor of the chamber. We re-grouped away from the thundering shower bath. I wondered what it would be like with water going down it! Iain looked as pissed off as I can ever remember seeing him. "Strange reaction in our moment of triumph" I thought to myself. "What's up then?" I enquired with all the tact and diplomacy

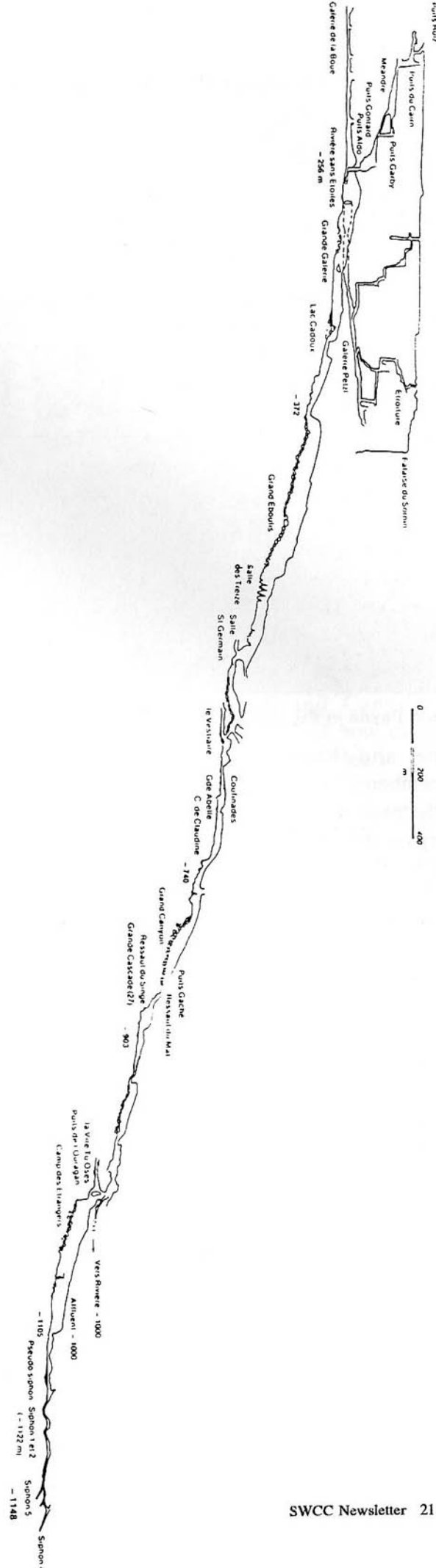
that I've become famous for over the years. "I've lost my ciggies" "Thats torn it" I thought.

We clambered down and down over huge water-rounded boulders until we reached a nasty looking wet rift. It looked like a dead cert for early bath night. We checked the time, it was exactly 3.00pm. "Game over lads." The other two agreed with surprising speed and we unanimously decided to beat a hasty retreat to Camp One.

Iain had the most motivation at that point in time, and led off on the holy quest (is there life without smoke?). It was quite true to say that we didn't see him for spray! Chris and myself decided to just plod out in a steady fashion, you know, the odd beef sandwich here, cup of hot chocolate there. The trip out is just a long uphill slog. We encountered signs of intelligent life in the Grand Canyon. Paul Quill was there as well with Hywel Davies and Alison Payne. They were all going well so I did my usual "Oh, it's just around the corner" trick and we left them to the mercy of the cave. We found Iain just below the canals. He'd found his cigarettes (God knows how), and now he was sat there on a rock like something out of a Manikin advert. We were a threesome again. Nice.

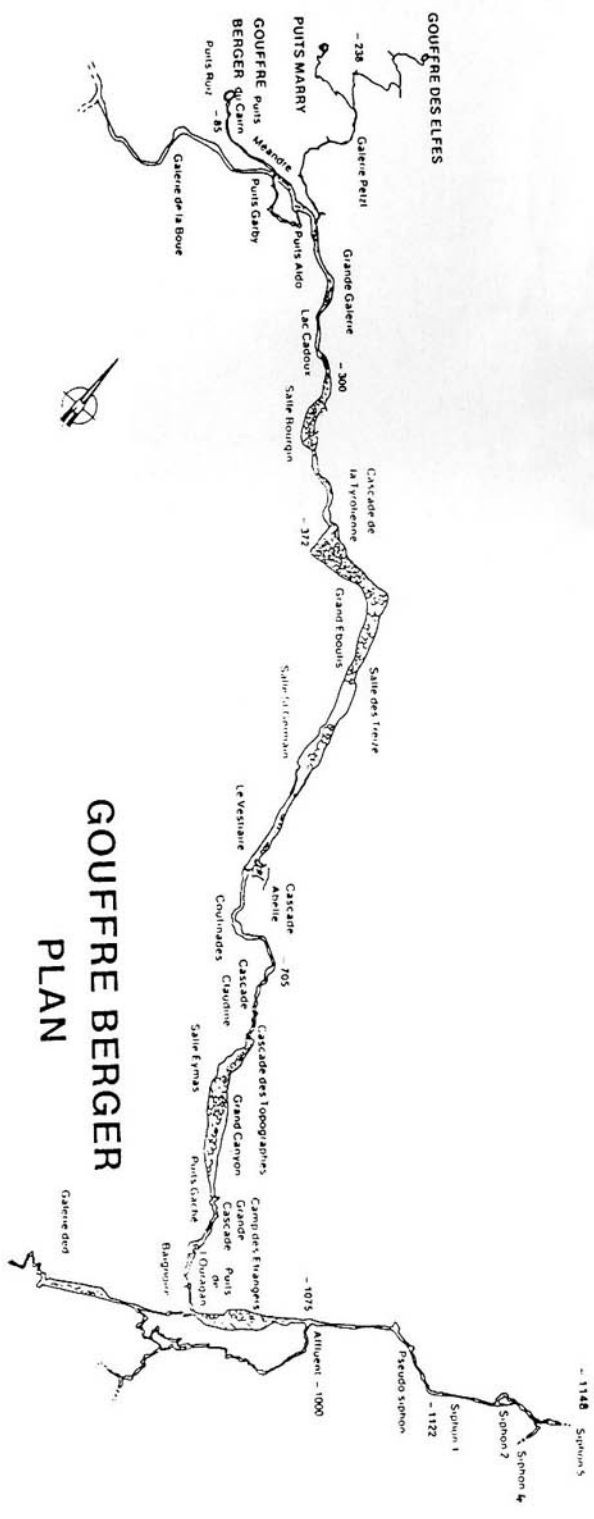
We arrived at Camp One at 7.15 pm. The Yorkshire lads had

Puits Puy
GOUFFRE BERGER
 Puits MARRY
 GOUFFRE DES ELFES



GOUFFRE BERGER

GOUFFRE DES ELFES



GOUFFRE BERGER PLAN



Alison Payne in the Hall of Thirteen. Photo: Tony Baker

gone and hadn't even remembered to leave dinner in the oven. Iain decided to carry on straight out (I'll tell you who's hard).

In all fairness, a bolting kit doesn't make for an appetising meal. For Master Payne and myself it was a different story. Beef risotto, tinned ham, half a pound of cheese and several mugs of hot chocolate later I was feeling like a proper piggy. Most of the trip back had been with my oversuit undone to the waist and I'd been steaming like a good'un! I lay back on one of the Karrimats while Chris fettled his lamp and promptly fell asleep. I awoke with a start as he returned. Chris was wavering. His better half was below us somewhere in the cave and he had half a mind to kip down in his bivvy gear

which, like myself, he had stored at Camp One. I was still in favour of plan "A", the surface or bust. He relented. It was 8.00pm and closing time was in four hours (the French are an hour ahead of us). We might not make the Copper but there was an alternative at the control tent. This was the worst bit of the lot. I felt like something out of the Foreign Legion. Chris looked like he'd seen the same movie. The worst part about the Meandres is that they're just that little bit too thrutchy to do without your oversuit on to protect your arms. Net result; if you want any semblance of an undersuit left when you get to the surface you keep your oversuit on and you sweat buckets. Don't believe people who tell you tales about big black holes and Goblins! "We can do it I tell you, I know we can do it" (sorry, overacting again). We were getting near now, we were

counting the prussiks in threes and fours but each one took us closer to the surface. 11.15 pm and we were out. Iain had surfaced about 25 minutes ahead of us and was walking back to control. Chris and myself had been underground for 16 hours, Iain for something just over 15 (I'll tell you who's hard).

Physically it had been the most demanding caving trip I had ever undertaken but the whole thing had gone so well, just like clockwork!

I could never put into words how good I felt standing outside the entrance knowing I'd just conquered one of the most prestigious cave systems in the world. If I ever get the chance to do it again I'll be there like a shot. If I don't get the chance to do it again I know its a trip that I'll never forget as long as I live.

Captain's Log: To the Bottom

by Gary Vaughan

Friday 13th August 1993

Log of trip to Gouffre Berger.
WARNING: PEOPLE OF A
NERVOUS DISPOSITION
SHOULD NOT READ THIS
LOG.

05.30 - Alarm clock call, La Moliere (Oh no, is that really the time?). Cup of tea, banana, dump.

06.15 - Leaving control for entrance, leisurely pace.

07.00 - Arrive entrance and kit up (I don't really feel up to this).

07.15 - Iain arrives at entrance. Chris and myself enter cave. (Let's boogie!)

07.35 - Arrive bottom of Aldo's to check comms. (Yep, 20 minutes, that's all it takes.)

07.55 - Arrive Camp One. Stop for a brew and a chat. (40 mins to Camp One and that's on a bad day!)

08.35 - Cheesed off waiting for Iain. Loads to do and no time

like the present to start.

09.30 - Arrive canals, water ridiculously low. (Hey, I really dig this rope, do you think if I asked nicely they'd knit me one too?)

10.30 - Arrive Cascade series. Multiple rope adjustments to avoid D.G.S.

11.30 - Arrive Topographer's. Singular rope adjustments to avoid frayed rope.

12.00 - Grand Canyon. (I've seen the light.....it's Iain Miller descending from the heavens.)

12.30 - Reseaux Mat, Singe et al. Sub-multiple rope adjustments to avoid D.G.S. and frayed rope.

13.00 - Arrive top of Grand Cascade. Pause button for new bolt and re-rig.

14.00 - Arrive top of Little Monkey. Pause button gets stuck in "on" position. Eventually passed with new deviation and underpants for Iain.

15.00 - Arrive -1000m inlet. Close enough for jazz. (Iain's lost his ciggies and is on a mission from God.)

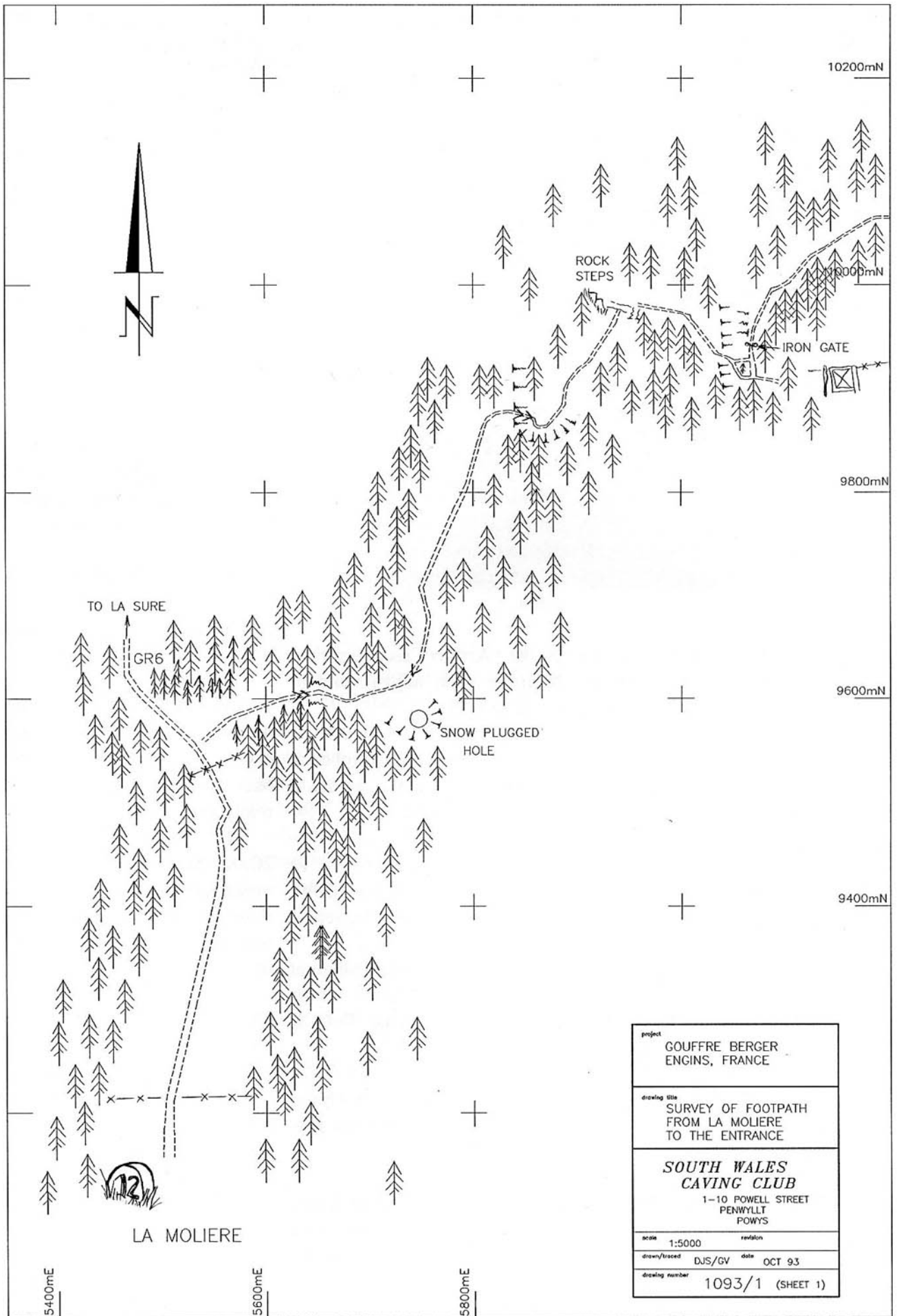
17.00 - Pass Hywel, Paul and Alison in Grand Canyon. (Blatantly lie about how close the bottom is - Tee Hee!)

19.15 - Arrive Camp One. (Yep, 4hrs 15 mins from the bottom, even I was impressed, let's go back and do it again just to really piss people off!)

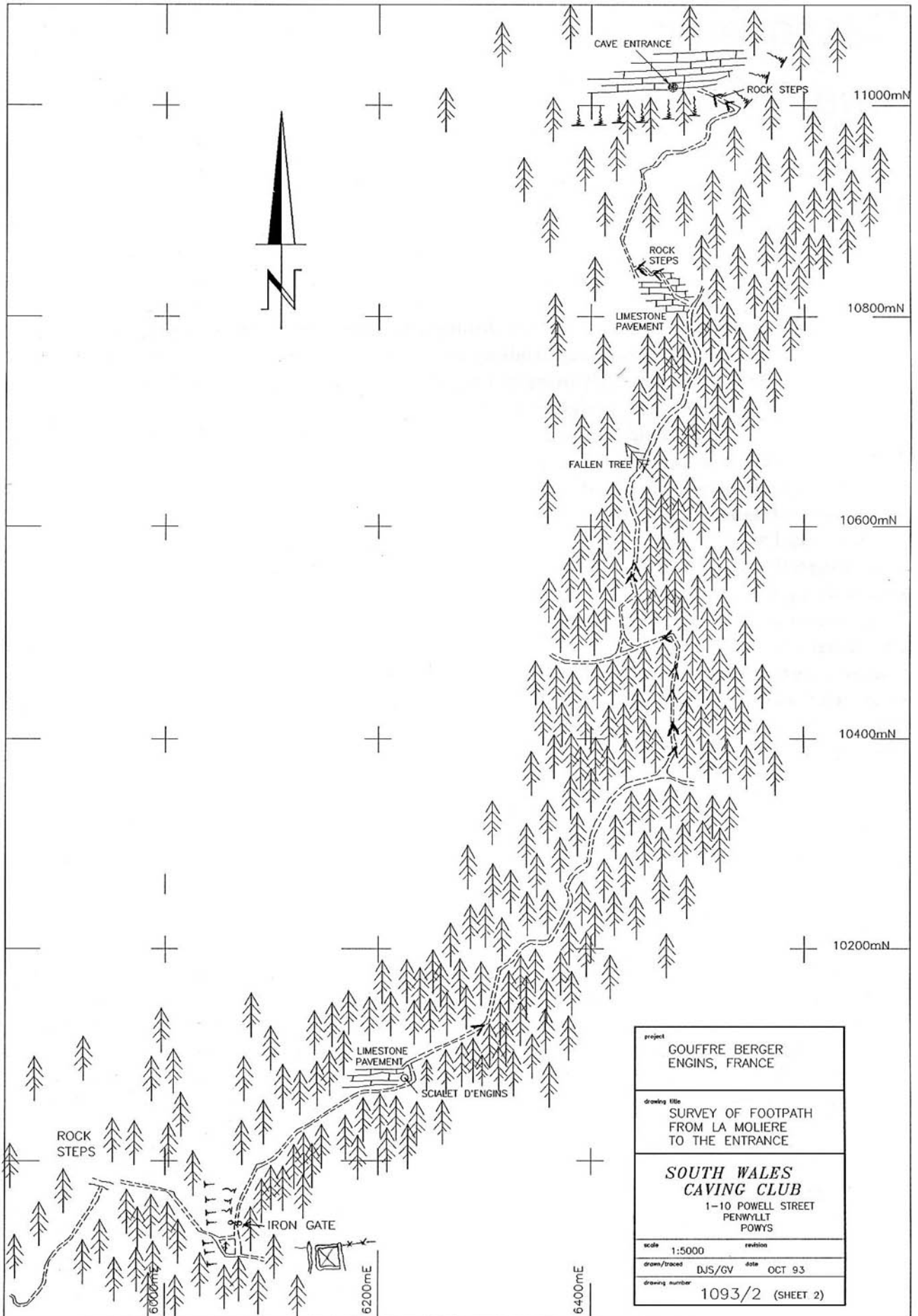
20.00 - Set off for surface after mega-scoff session. (Let's see if we can do it even faster going out than we did coming in...failed!)

23.15 - Arrive surface very hot and bothered. (Don't worry about water, where's the 'kin beer?)

00.05 - Arrive control tent. Beer in hand. Bliss!



project		GOUFFRE BERGER ENGINS, FRANCE	
drawing title		SURVEY OF FOOTPATH FROM LA MOLIÈRE TO THE ENTRANCE	
SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB		1-10 POWELL STREET PENWYLLT POWYS	
scale	1:5000	revision	
drawn/traced	DJS/GV	date	OCT 93
drawing number	1093/1 (SHEET 1)		



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drawing title	SURVEY OF FOOTPATH FROM LA MOLIERE TO THE ENTRANCE		
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1-10 POWELL STREET PENWYLLT POWYS			
scale	1:5000	revision	
drawn/traced	DJS/GV	date	OCT 93
drawing number	1093/2 (SHEET 2)		

Bottoming The Berger: The Wimps' Jolly

by Andy Dobson

The big day dawned but I felt anything but ready. I had done all the training and preparation, tackled devious deviations and tortuous traverses, even read "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway", yet still my motivation drained away. Mechanically I sorted gear and food, aware that I could have done it the night before, trying to get positive and in the mood. The usual last-minute panic stations came and went, interrupted by Dave gashing his hand on the carbide drum. As ever, we were hours later than intended, though fortunately this saved us the embarrassment of having to walk over to the entrance with Ian Middleton while the French walkers laughed at his ragged underpants. A meal of pasta lifted my spirits a little, but we seemed to have mountains of gear, what with all the bivvy stuff, and needed help to sherpa it to the cave. Just as well I didn't pack the teddy bear... Walking from La Moliere to the cave, I still had my heart in my mouth, being careful not to twist an ankle on the limestone pavement. It would have been easier to carry the bulk of the gear over in advance, or even ferry the bivvy gear to Camp One on an

earlier trip. Kitting up, I kept trying to talk up my motivation. My oversized Dragon tackle bag weighed a ton, but somehow everything squashed in.

Underground at last, nerves jangling; Pete joined us as far as Cairn Hall to give some moral support. Then I released some of my anxiety, cursing the Meanders as I struggled along the rift with my heavy tackle bag. The entrance series ticked by in now-familiar fashion, and at the Relay Pitches we met Alison, Paul and Hywel. They related the story of how hard their bottoming trip had been, while Hywel's deathly pallor did nothing to ease my own fears.

Clambering along the Grand Gallery and down the Great Rubble Heap, I kept trying to think positive, just keep going, see how far I could get, stop worrying, but my spirits were still on the floor. At Camp One, Dave made another pasta meal. I was all for pressing on, afraid that if I stopped I might give up, but the warm food gave a much-needed boost. With the bivvy gear dumped and only the essentials left in it, my bag seemed feather-light (not that Durex would be much help!). We took survival bags and space

blankets in case of emergency, a mini solid fuel stove and mess tin, plus lots of powdered soups, Puritabs and water, and enough spare carbide for the next seven weeks. While Dave took plenty of chocolate, I forgot my munchies and made do with soup for a psychological boost - a migraine at minus 1000m did not appeal. We took Enterosan tablets to quell our queasy stomachs and avoid polluting the cave further.

Below Balcony, we were in territory new to us and my enthusiasm started to grow. On the Cascades, we met Bob and Tony returning from the bottom. My mood lightened further, they looked like they had only done a Sunday afternoon round trip in OFD I and were in good heart; Tony dispensed the obligatory boiled sweets and we chatted easily. Through the lower sections of the cave, meeting people on their way back was to prove a great boost, underlining the importance of the psychological aspects. The canals provided the anticipated amazement at the state of the handlines. While much of this section proved easily traversible without the ropes, several corners and one pool seemed impossible without

trusting the spaghetti-like remnants. Perhaps future expeditions should include the more awkward sections on their rigging plan. With my mind now switched to infinity mode, we ambled on down the cave, marvelling at how it kept changing character, and at the beauty of so much of it.

A welcome brew of soup gave us a chance to rest and to recharge the carbide lamps. We had both made the mistake of buying Petzl Arianes; despite constant fettling, decoking and careful cleaning when changing the fuel, they gave an abysmal light. Apart from their use as a bum-warmer, I would not recommend them to anyone.

At the top of the Grand Canyon we met Soz and Mike Coburn, another lift to my spirits. Slithering down the canyon, I found it was better on the edge of the rubble rather than on the polished mud and caked, slippery handlines. Negotiating successive pitches, I wondered how far down we were, unsure of the geography of the lower sections. I had regularly scanned the walls for refuges in case of flood, but now the stream passage ran into a deep pool or sump. Realising this must be the Baignoire, we ferreted around for the by-pass; at last some

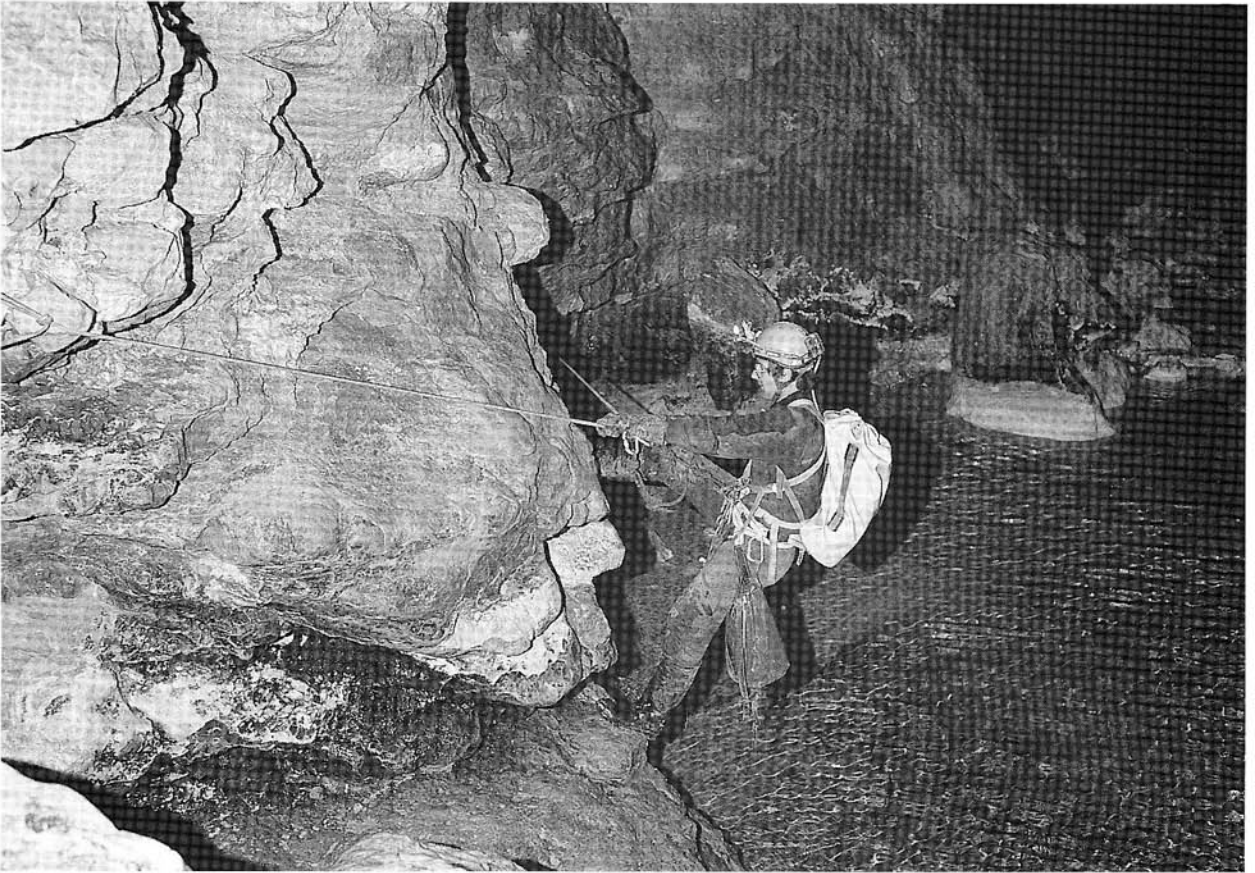
familiar caving, crawling through boulders.

Feeling good, we started on again and saw lights ahead, Brian Clipstone traversing off a pitch head and Ian Middleton by the wall, relaxing. Ian talked eagerly of the bottom section of the cave and of his underwater prussik, and told us this was Little Monkey.

So this was the crunch point for so many cavers. Somehow it didn't seem as intimidating as I'd expected; a tremendous roar of water and a yawning empty space, but a ledge with plenty of holds to traverse along on our knees. Perhaps the sheer remoteness of the site makes it so much harder. As I set off the excitement overrode any fears, the pitch proving far easier than anticipated, although the lads must have had telescopic arms to put that deviation in. Despite the ridicule we had taken for using racks, they came into their own on all the pitches with plunge pools at the bottom; with both hands free, I could haul in with the right while controlling the descent with my left.

Then came Hurricane, a vast black void filled with dancing spray and the thundering of the waterfall; an alcove at the top and a lovely hang next to the wall. The finest pitch in the

cave. We fairly raced down the lower streamway, no way to avoid getting wet in the wide pools. A waterfall down a small pitch was by-passed by an oxbow full of broken containers and spent carbide, unfortunately an all too common sight. Back in the stream, we came to a wide arched pool and I waded in playing my electric back-up light along where the water met the rock. No airspace. It was 2 a.m. Sunday morning and we were soggy and elated - still, it was better than a water fight at Penwyllt. A few moments contemplation, then we each made some wishes and started back, thinking, "Only 1100m vertically up to go..." We paused to admire the 1000m inlet, and perform the ceremony of the firkling of the lamps. Hurricane and Little Monkey flew past as sheer exuberance buoyed us up. I made a conscious effort to keep it slow but sure, conserving my energy while trying to avoid total immersion. The succession of Gache pitches drained off any excess energy and by the time we had slithered up the Grand Canyon I was grateful to stop and brew up. The strain began to tell now. On Topographer's Pitch I tied myself in knots at the rebelay and took an age to sort it out,



Andy Dobson on the rope traverse beyond Lake Cadoux. Photo: Dave Dobson

tired brain and tired body struggling to co-ordinate. The long, slow haul seemed timeless, the thought of Camp One and sleep becoming more and more inviting, spurring me on. At Balcony, Sue and Martin's lights gave the impression of the sun rising. It was great to see other people again, especially knowing Camp One was only minutes away. I made it almost on my knees, absolutely shattered. As we arrived, Soz was making his breakfast, and kindly gave us his spare packets; soya mash and funny-coloured rehydrated potato never tasted so good.

We changed into dry underwear and lightweight undersuits, glad now at having lugged it all in, my woolly hat keeping my brain warm. We had learnt from our

practice bivvies how important it was to be warm, dry and comfortable; consequently we used kiddies' beach Li-Los inside a survival bag rather than Karrimats - far more comfortable and providing better insulation. Snuggled in my sleeping bag, I quickly fell asleep, oblivious to all the people coming and going. We had decided to get out of the cave that night, which meant we allowed ourselves just over four hours' sleep as it was nearly midday when we crashed out. This proved sufficient, and the memory remains of waking up to see the huge cathedral proportions of the cavern before my eyes re-adjusted.

Once awake, I was immediately aware of how cold it was. We burst into action like clockwork

toys, keeping moving to try and generate some warmth, packing the gear and making another pasta meal. The full tackle sacks meant putting the soggy - and now very cold - furry suit back on; I shivered in anticipation. However, the discomfort was momentary, as we immediately set off up the Rubble Heap, body heat warming the dampness.

The double rigging on the larger pitches of the entrance series proved a boon. We alternated on the Edelrid, whilst struggling in turn to get the alternative, heavier, rope to run. I tried to concentrate on technique, the tiredness making my actions sloppy. Garby's proved to be hardest of all; it seemed to go on for ever, and at the top I tied my bag up on the double-rigged



Progress up the Great Rubble Heap, photographed using a time exposure by Dave Dobson

traverse. Leaning against the wall, Dave said perhaps he would stop there; I suggested we carry on, a rift not being a good resting place. The Meanders were as tough as ever, knees and arms suffering from the awkward traversing with heavy bags. At last we were in Cairn Hall, only the home stretch ahead of us. We soloed from here, it was a good point to slow down, and we could avoid the danger from the dodgy rocks at either end of Ruiz.

When Dave was clear, I slowly started up, struggling hard now. I remembered the words on Jon's T-shirt; Chant For World Peace. It seemed a good idea, so I tried it, going on to say my own personal prayer for everyone and everything. It worked wonders, I was at the top without

noticing how long it took, the positive energy fairly racing through me. Moments later the fresh air and dark night greeted me, the ground between the limestone soggy from thunderstorms. Salted peanuts and water helped combat the huge loss of sweat over the trip, though I should have taken far more fluids on surfacing, not realising how dehydrated I was. The long walk back to the camp took ages, but it no longer mattered, the moist fresh air feeding the high of completing the trip. Back at La Moliere, the most welcome sight was Gary heating our dinner, despite the lateness of the hour; every expedition should contract Nevitt Catering. I crawled into the tent, to dream of endless pitches and deviations, but woke

looking forward to relaxing at the Cafe Des Sports.

Bottoming the Berger was one of the greatest experiences of my life; truly a cave that reaches the parts others do not. I shall treasure it forever.

Three Sheep and a Berger

by *Tony Knibbs*

A year ago, Denise and I were given the opportunity to join the Berger trip - an offer one can hardly refuse, even if we couldn't manage to be there for the whole time. Not really fit enough for a major bottoming epic, we chose a more limited objective - the Hall of Thirteen, which is about halfway to the bottom at a depth of 495m.

We were joined by another "youngster" Keith Ball - our average age was 51 - and set off from La Moliere at 11 am on Sunday morning, the 15th of August. Bright sunshine, and a temperature of 30C in the shade made us glad that the 4km walk to the entrance was mostly downhill through the trees.

At the bottom of the 15m entrance pitch, a narrow passage beyond an open steel door led to the head of Ruiz shaft, where some dodgy-looking timbers extended over the 30m pitch. This easy, free-hanging dry abseil in a shaft cut through delightful, cream-coloured limestone set the scene for the following 200m of descent. The steeply-sloping Holiday Slides followed immediately, giving a split 10m descent to the head of an impressive 30m shaft - Cairn Pitch, with a deviation 5m down. From the bottom of this, a gravelly floor brought us to the beginning of the Meanders, a deep sinuous rift involving

bridging or the use of some dubious-looking wooden stemples over the "bottomless" bits. 150m of this led to Garby's pitch; 38m with a deviation 10m down. Then there was another 100m of shuffling through the rest of the Meanders before Gontard's; 35m, followed by three consecutive drops of 10m, 3m and 6m to reach the top of Aldo's, a fine 40m free-hang.

A short section of passage led into the Grande Galerie at - 250m where the character of the cave changed abruptly.

Emerging from small passage into huge passage some 30m wide and 20m high, I could imagine the sheer amazement which must have gripped Jo Berger, Aldo Sillanoli, Jean Cadoux and their team members in 1953, as they pushed deeper into their new discovery. Since conditions were dry, the Starless River was simply a streamlet.

We followed the streambed a couple of hundred metres to where Lake Cadoux was temporarily absent, then continued over piles of breakdown beneath which the stream had vanished. Navigation became a question of spotting cairns and trying to keep to the obvious worn paths. Calcite formations were becoming more numerous by the time we reached Little General, a 10m descent with a tiny stream

entering halfway down, where Keith easily won the Men's 5m Free-Fall Event.

Continuing downstream, we followed handline traverses, first by-passing a cascade, then avoiding deep pools. The stream disappeared once more, and we found ourselves gaining a little height as we navigated between the immense blocks and boulder piles of the Great Rubble Heap, which seemed to stretch ahead to infinity. After maybe half an hour of this we stood at the top of a 30m slope overlooking Camp One. Several coloured balloons hung on the wall above the camp, sharply contrasting with the grim surroundings.

We stopped briefly to talk to the two cavers who had just emerged from their bags and were preparing to leave the cave. Just a few metres beyond Camp One we carefully picked our way across gour pools, mostly dried-out, to reach the Hall of Thirteen, where the stalagmite formations were much more impressive than any photo I had ever seen. We took a few photos of our own, and I reflected on the fact that the Berger and my caving career are both 40 years old in 1993. How time flies when you're having fun!

With almost 500m of ascent ahead of us, we took our time trudging back upslope and along to the foot of Aldo's, and dallied



**Tony sets off from the entrance for his "fourteen hour excursion".
Photo: Bob Hall**

somewhat on some of the pitches. We found the blue Edelrid Supersoft to be truly abysmal for ascending. Surprisingly, a fine spray of water was coming down Cairn and the Holiday Slides; it transpired that this resulted from a thunderstorm which had crossed the plateau in the late afternoon.

A brilliant starry sky greeted us at the entrance, and we duly reported our return to the occupant of the control tent. It was 2.30am and we all felt very tired after our 14-hour excursion, which we shall never forget; a fine trip indeed.

We made slow time on the walk

back: 200m downhill yesterday was now the same amount uphill, although it seemed more, and I was glad to see the tents at La Moliere. After a cup of coffee and a bowl of soup, Denise and I drove back down to our tent in Autrans, arriving at 5.30am; we rose late that Monday morning!

Like any worthwhile enterprise in caving, an expedition such as this required a considerable amount of hard work from a well-organised team of people to make it a success, and a success it certainly was. We extend our thanks to all those who made our visit possible by doing all the hard work.

As a footnote on equipment, let me say that my new plastic Alp carbide generator worked well; I was unaware of its presence on a shoulder sling and it provided six hours' light per fill. On the other hand, my Petzl Laser seems to be fitted with a splendid (4.0V, 0.5A halogen) bulb which gave maybe four hours' light on a new Duracell battery, but it died almost instantly when it finally passed out - not good halfway across a traverse, maybe.

Perhaps you were wondering what the Men's 5m Free-Fall event was? Well, it involves abseiling down a rope and going into free-fall mode at some point. The best descender for this is undoubtedly the Petzl Plummet (alias Stop) which opens at the touch of a lever... Yes, I know all about locking-off, but some people are optimistic enough to think that its Stop function (i.e. the only reason for buying it) should need no back-up when doing a simple thing such as passing a deviation. The incident referred to was discussed amongst several expedition members with strong rescue interests - the "Plummet" cachet apparently comes from Yorkshire, where the device has earned quite a reputation. This was the second time I have witnessed this type of accident, so it can't be that scarce. In short, unless you are into pitch rigging and your technique is flawless, think twice about buying a Stop, and certainly don't recommend it to a beginner. A simple two-bobbin Petzl or a rack would be much safer.

The Berger on Electric?

by *Bob Hall*

Despite having started caving as an impecunious schoolboy in the era of fibre hats and stinky lamps, I've never had much truck with carbide lamps. "Ummph!.. Victorian technology", would be my usual reaction. I was lucky. Back in 1965 the club was raising funds for its Balinka pit expedition by selling ex-NCB NiFe lamps at 25/- a time. (Cottage fees and beer were both 1/6d). My childhood savings just stretched to buying one of these lamps and I became one of many dedicated "NiFe men" for the next twenty years. (Members whose memories are long may detect a pun here but none is intended!) For the last ten years I've been using sealed 7Ah Nickel Cadmium batteries ("F cells") made up into 6V battery packs in my trusty old NiFe battery boxes. Used with a 0.4A halogen bulb about 17 hours of bright light is possible. When I signed up for the Berger I had to make a decision. Should I go to the expense of buying a carbide rig and then take the trouble to become familiar with it, or could I do the Berger on electric? The latter choice suited my pocket and my background experience but clearly I needed more than 17 hours duration. I had long

been aware that Zinc-Manganese cells had very much greater capacity than their rechargeable counterparts and also had a higher terminal voltage (1.5V rather than 1.2V). Thus in principle a light, compact lamp could be produced with an exceptionally long duration and modest running cost.

Received wisdom was all in favour of carbide for expedition caving and carbide logistics were built into the expedition plan. Everyone said how valuable the warm glow, waste heat and powerful general illumination was in the environment of a large cave. Fine, but since I've burnt myself on almost every carbide I've ever used and view the practice of playing "Silly Rope Tricks" with a flame thrower as more or less lunatic, I was all set to go my own way. After all I do know best in every other matter, don't I!

Before continuing the story it is necessary to deal with the technical features of the lamps that I finally used in the Berger.

Lamp Type 1

This is my normal caving lamp. Very similar to the FX5 in principle.

Cells used: 5 x Nickel Cadmium

"F" cells with solder tags. Nominal capacity 7Ah at 1.2 V. Bulb used: 0.4 A , 6 V Halogen. Head piece: Standard Oldham. Construction: Cells soldered in series and potted in black, rigid epoxy resin. Terminals 2BA studs connected to 4mm sockets externally. Sized to fit NiFe case.

Mass complete: 2.82 kg

Working duration: More than 15 hours.

Charging: From car battery via 600mA constant current unit.

Lamp Type 2

This is the type developed specifically for the Berger trip.

Cells used: 4 x Duracell "D" size. Nominal capacity 18Ah at 1.5V.

Bulb used: 0.4 A , 6 V Halogen

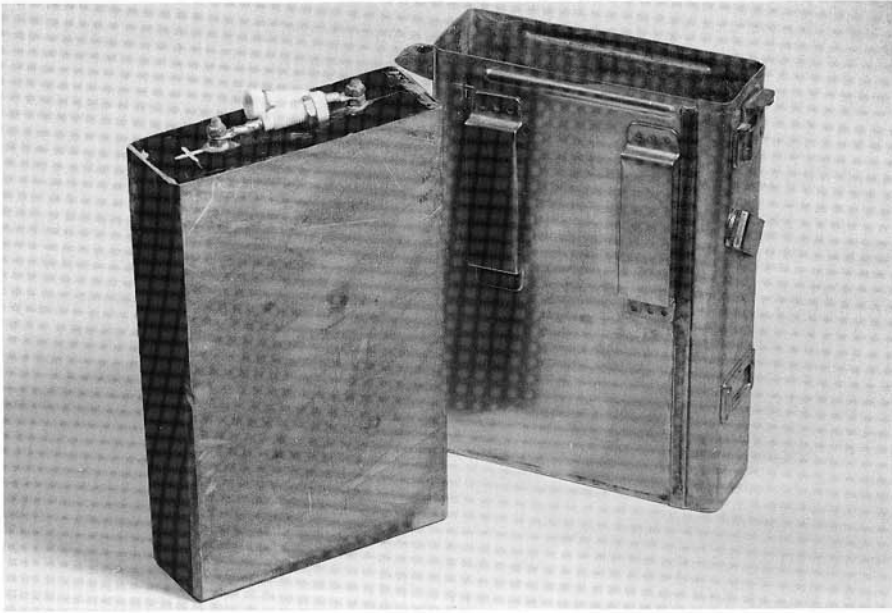
Headpiece: Standard Oldham.

Construction: Four cells stuck together using bathroom sealant. Wires soldered direct to the stainless end caps. (No solder tags.) Assembly wrapped in many layers of PVC insulating tape. Terminals 4mm sockets.

Mass complete: 1.62 kg

Working duration: Nominally in excess of 40 hours. This has never been tested!

Cost of 4 replacement cells: about £5.



**NiFe Cell case, and potted block of five "F cells".
Note 4mm sockets.
Photos: Bob Hall**



**NiFe-cell top with
Oldham headpiece.
Note 4mm plugs.**



**Duracells glued
together with sealant.**

An integral feature of my thinking was to make both types of battery pack interchangeable and to use identical cases, headpieces and bulbs so that Duracells could be carried as spares on trips with NiCad lighting, and so that one spare headpiece would serve for both. I was so confident of my plans (and feeling rather tight with cash) that I neglected to build a prototype to use in UK caves before setting off for France. I also left construction work rather late and ended up cobbling late at night, just hours before departure. My tightness continued once in France and my first three trips in the Berger were on NiCad lighting. This proved entirely satisfactory in the entrance series (down to Aldo's) and I rather appreciated its intense pencil beam in the big passages down to the Balcony. So far so good.

The next trip was the big one. The first test for my new lamp. Tony and I set off in the late afternoon and I was full of confidence as I led off down the entrance rope and then down Ruiz.

Bump.

Being rather more heavily laden than previously, my control on the rope was less than perfect and I bashed my battery box on the side of the shaft as I neared the bottom. Darkness. Rattle lamp. Darkness. Take top off battery box and wiggle terminals. Darkness. Shout at Tony. Clamber off bottom of pitch onto ledge by feel. Unpack spares by feel. Drop tackle sack down Holiday Slides by feel. Fiddle by feel. Light at last. Joined by Tony at last.

It was already clear that my wonder design was in trouble. Big trouble. I had three sets of cells with me. The first had failed. The second was working - just. It too seemed unduly sensitive to shocks - going off and coming on unpredictably. What was the problem? We continued into the cave and from time to time I would stop and curse and fidget with my lamp to restore light. A bit like the good old days of a clapped-out NiFe lamp. But I was in no mood for nostalgia: we had a rigging job to do and we both wanted to get an early night. As I descended the pitches of the Reseau Alex Pitcher the lamp played up some more and I sat down to check all the combinations of component that I had to find one that was reliable.

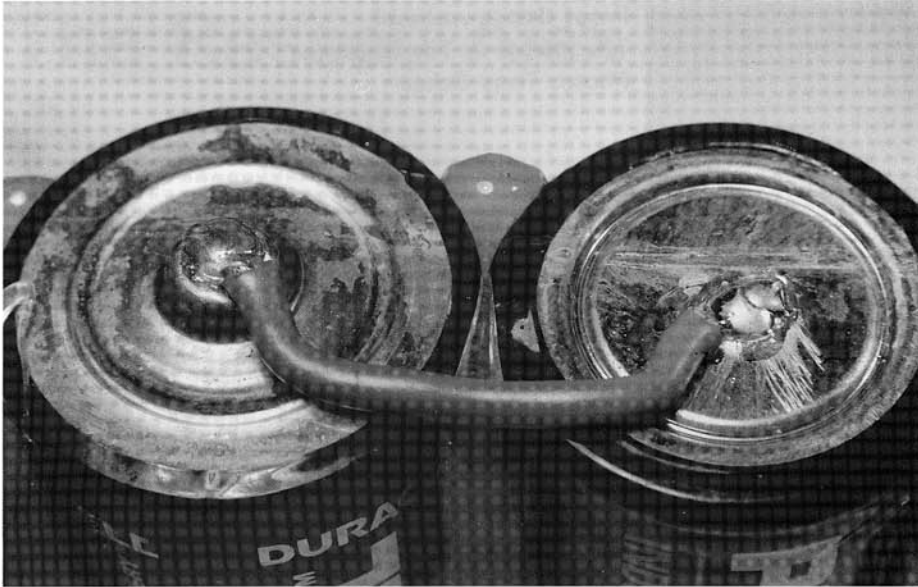
By this stage Tony was understandably impatient. "You know Bob, you are going to have to write that article. 'Cos if you don't, I will. And it'll be called *In Praise of Victorian Technology*." Smug git, I thought. Mercifully I found that my third battery pack worked well and showed no sign of sensitivity to shock.

Much relieved but still apprehensive about the problems further lamp trouble might bring, we set off again. From that point on my luck held. Tony and I had a good bottoming trip. My one lamp worked well and I saw all I wanted to see. I used the same set of batteries on a derigging trip as far as the Canals with Paul Quill, and for a tourist trip in the Grotte de Gournier as well. All in all, I had over thirty hours caving

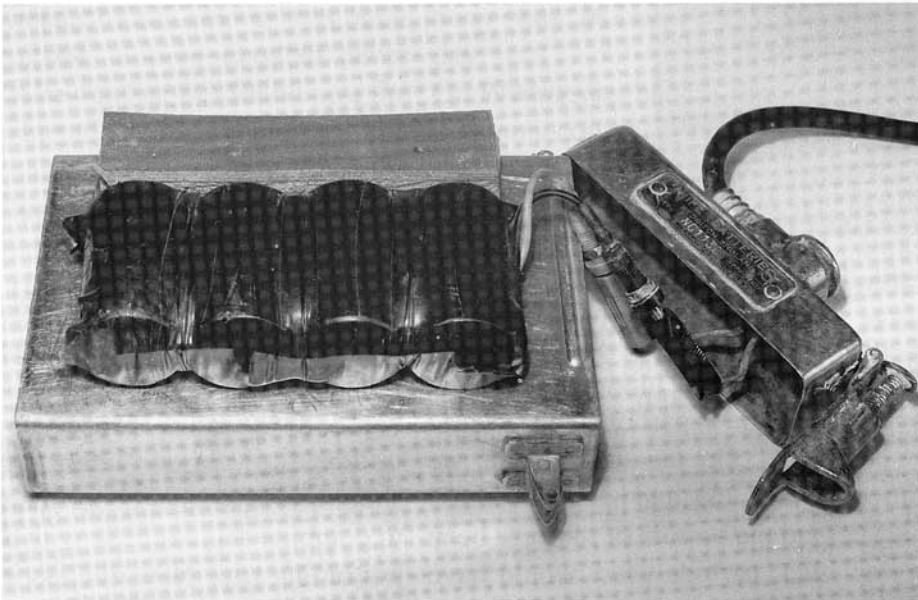
from just five pounds' worth of Duracells.

So what went wrong? As far as I can tell the quality of my soldering was good, mechanically strong and secure. I have used the technique of soldering direct to the end-caps of Duracells before for other purposes without any problem. Nevertheless I can only attribute my particular "bug" to this cause. It seems possible that the high temperature required to solder direct to the ends of a cell may cause some chemical effect, or physical bubble, or oxide layer that adversely affects the cell's performance. The fact that the fault seemed intermittent and that faulty cells would seemingly recover after a few minutes and then die again seems to support this hypothesis.

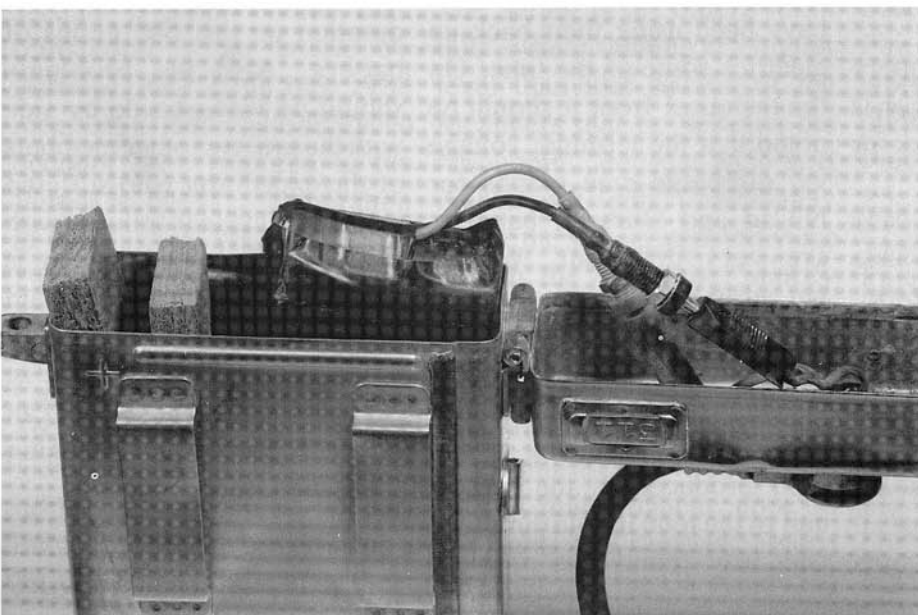
Would I use this type of lighting again? My answer is a qualified yes. I was generally very happy with the convenience and quality of light and have no wish to adopt carbide. Nevertheless I would need to be certain that the "bug" had been eliminated. In cost terms it is not realistic to use cells fitted with solder tags; they are five times more expensive than conventional cells. The alternative would be to use some form of compression contact using suitable spring-loaded terminals. If and when I have the opportunity or the need, I will develop a battery box along these lines. How do carbide and Duracell lamps compare in terms of weight, running costs and other factors? The following gives some comparative data:



Detail showing method of soldering connections to cells.



Duracells taped up with foam padding.



Assembled lamp.



Proof that it worked!
The author at The Bottom.
Photo: Tony Baker

Carbide

Mass of lamp inc. water and carbide: 1.1 kg approx. Further 1.5kg carbide needed for 40 hours total light.

Cost of carbide at expedition prices (1993) for 40 hours light: Approx £2-00. (Figures given by Gary Vaughan.)

Duracell

Mass of lamp with one battery pack to give 40 hrs+ duration is 1.62 kg. (Spare battery pack for security 0.6 kg extra.)

Cost of 4 Duracells at 10-pack price (1993), plus allowance for assembly materials: £6-00

In general terms, considerations of convenience, nature of light and so forth boil down to subjective issues of personal preference. I must admit that all my trips were with a carbide

user so I benefitted from their general light. It is possible that my opinion might be different had I been part of an all-electric team. On the other hand, we were lucky and had a dry week: had the bottom of the cave been wet, carbide users would have been having all the usual troubles with spray and wind, and would have been using their back-up electrics some of the time. On the technical front it should be noted that the terminal voltage vs. discharge-time graphs for NiCad and Duracell batteries are very different. Whilst NiCads continue to give a good light to the very last and then die totally in a matter of minutes, Duracells die slowly. This results in a distinct yellowing of the light produced in the second half of the total usable duration. One way round this problem

would be to change to a 4V bulb after about 20 hours. As far as reliability goes my problems were those of a prototype undergoing development. I should have known better than to combine this exercise with a bottoming trip! Nevertheless it worked.

I did a trip of over twenty hours' duration on just 600 grams of battery. Also my problems should be viewed side by side with those of two other members of the expedition who suffered major mechanical failures with their carbide generators. It is also worth noting that Oldham headpieces and NiFe battery boxes are approved for use in explosive atmospheres and can safely be used when changing Camping Gaz cylinders!

The Reseau Alex Pitcher

by **Bob Hall**

Summary

The Reseau Alex Pitcher is a fossil, dry series that bypasses the lower part of the Meanders and rejoins the main route at the head of Puit Aldo's. The body of the missing English caver Alex Pitcher was found near the start of the series, giving it the name. This article outlines the history of this series, describes its general nature and gives brief rigging information. The activities of SWCC teams in the series during the period 10 -20/8/93 is described.

The Discovery of the R.A.P.

The reader is referred to an article in Descent No. 78 (Ref. 1) for accounts of the "Alex Pitcher story". The following account is based on my own translation of an article by Barriere (Ref. 2). In June 1988 members of the Societe de Speleo Secours Isere returned to the Berger to continue exploration in the Vestiere area.

J L Rocourt had never budged from his view that Alex could only have disappeared between Cairn and -250m, and directed his exploration to a fossil meander glimpsed and visited in 1987. This lay some 20m outward from the Boudoir, up a 3m climb and is missed by most

people. On this visit the by-pass was discovered and the body of Alex found at the base of an 8m pitch. He had been crushed by a block that fell with him. His body was recovered the next day.

On Wednesday 22 June, during a training course for instructors, the exploration continued and a survey was done. Puit Rocourt (15m), P5m and Puit des Initiateurs (10m) were descended. This permitted voice contact with a party on Aldo's, but a lack of rope prevented further descent. On Sunday 26 June, the next two pitches were descended and the connection was made.

Description of the R.A.P.

The series is an older, fossil inlet system running at a higher level than that section of the Meanders that lie between the "Boudoir" and Puit Aldo's. It is entered at a point immediately before the second (rope) traverse line in the Meanders, shortly before the Boudoir. A 3m climb gives access to a winding rift with a sandy floor. After a distance of about 50m, a traversing ascent brings one to a brown, muddy calcite slope on the right. The slope is climbed for 20m and then a somewhat

awkward, bridging descent leads to the head of Puit Alex (8m). From this point the series consists of a sequence of linked pitches, some rather muddy, ultimately leading to the upper part of the rift that connects the Relay Pitches with Puit Aldo's. The general character of the series is not dissimilar to the upper parts of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, with reddish mud, moon milk, calcite and sand all present in equal measure. None of the pitches present any particular difficulty, although the sharp calcite encrustations damage cavers and the mud is not kind to rope. The pitches are as follows (but note that there is a discrepancy between this description and that given by Barriere):

Puit Alex: 8m : 15m rope, 2 bolts (Y-hang uses an in-situ piton.)

Puit Rocourt: 15m

P5: 5m: 70m rope, 9 bolts

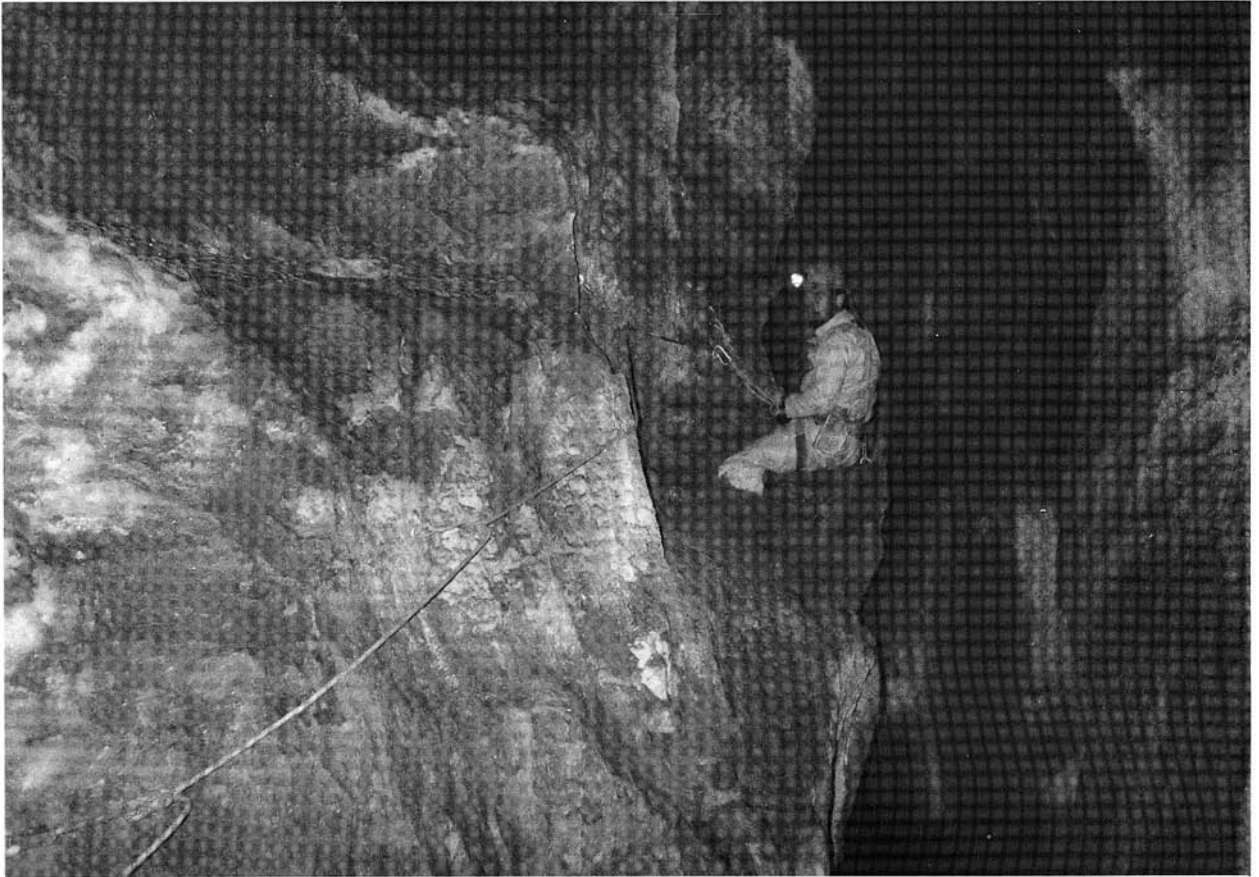
Connecting drops: 5m

Puit des Initiateurs: 10m

Puit Magique: 12m : 70m rope, 8 bolts

Puit de la Jonction: 25m

All the pitches follow closely, one upon the other, and other combinations of rope may readily be employed. Note also



Bob rigging the traverse at the top of Puit de la Jonction. Photo: Tony Baker

that the bolting was of “exploratory” standard rather than “trade route” standard, and additional or alternative bolts might be worth placing, particularly on Puit de la Jonction.

The SWCC in the R.A.P.

The route was visited by various members of the expedition. Their trips took place as follows.

10th August Brian Bowell, Bob Hall and Ian Middleton.

Brian, Ian and myself set off to find and rig the series. We had been somewhat misled by the French party who had been in the cave before us. But using the crudely translated information from Barriere’s article we were able to identify the start of the series after some futile clambering around in the

upper Meanders. The essential clue was to observe how the high roof of Cairn pitch persists in the upper Meanders but is lost where one ducks down towards the Boudoir. Following the high rift led us to our goal. We had been provided with pre-packaged rope, cut to suit the rigging plan given by Barriere. Using this kit we were soon able to rig the first three pitches and then found ourselves consuming rope on the “Connecting Drops” that Barriere neglects to mention. The result was the use of our last rope to rig Puit des Initiateurs, and to permit Ian to make a tentative descent of Puit Magique, but leaving us no rope for the final pitch. At this stage we made voice contact with a party on Aldo’s and came out pleased but a little disappointed not to have got

into “the Big Stuff”.

11th August. Tony Baker, Bob Hall, Ian Middleton.

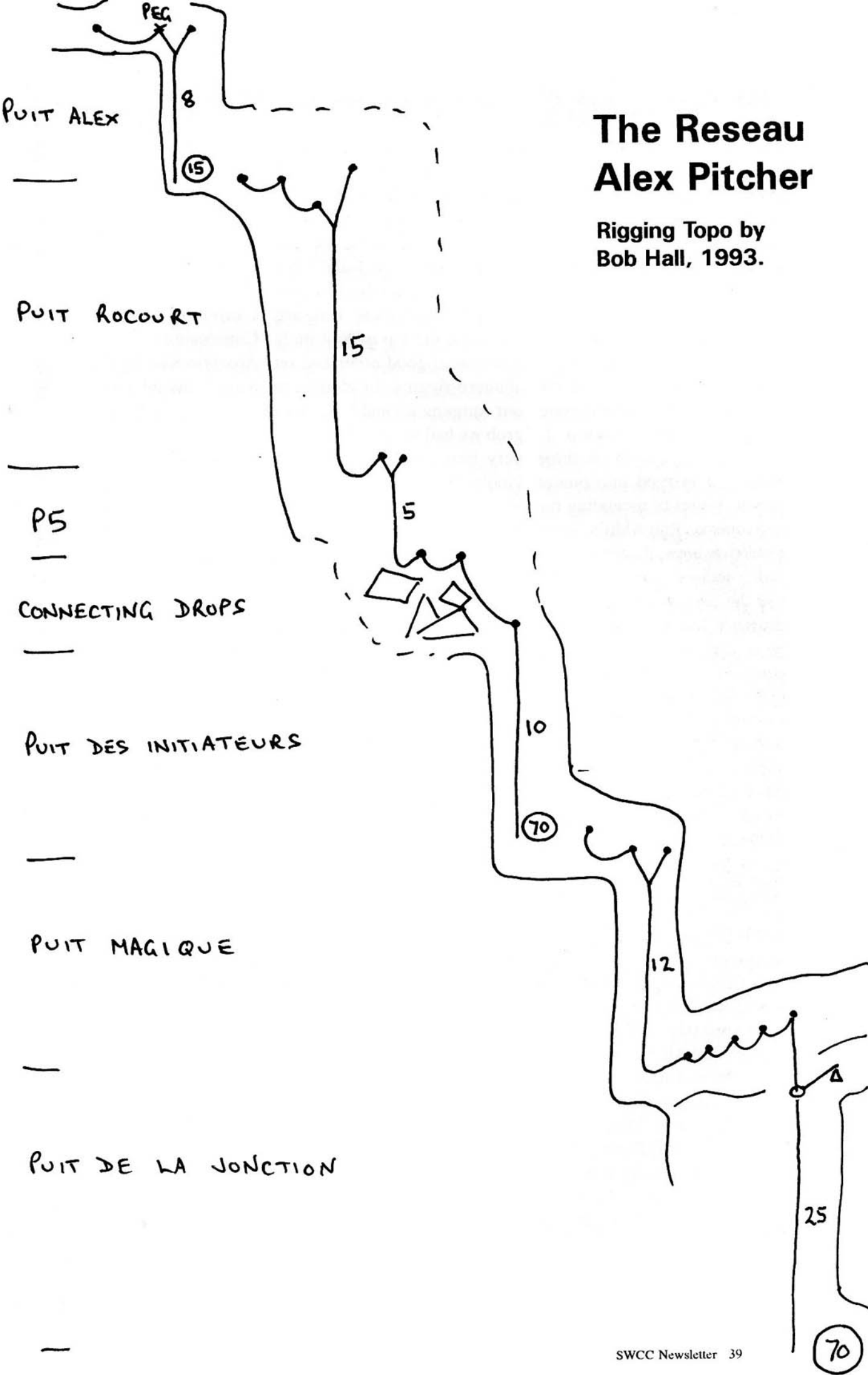
By now the expedition had run out of rope, as all the spare had been used for double-rigging the main entrance series pitches. Luckily I was able to scrounge a length of rope from Dudley Thorpe, and Ian and I were joined by Tony for a second bash at the series.

We soon reached Puit des Initiateurs where I re-rigged the pitch with Dudley’s rope, leaving the expedition rope free for the final two pitches. We all now descended Puit Magique that only Ian had bottomed on our first visit.

At the top of Puit de la Jonction the positioning of the bolts left us in a quandary - it was not at all obvious what rig the original

The Reseau Alex Pitcher

Rigging Topo by Bob Hall, 1993.



explorers had used. In the event, we ignored an ascending traverse line and hung the lower part of our rope from a rather inconvenient single bolt. This hang gave a sharp, loose and rather unsafe descent to the passage between the bottom of the Relay Pitches and Puit Aldo's.

Having got this far we had our first visit to "the Big Stuff", going wombling as far as the Balcony. Despite deliberate dawdling from Camp 1 outwards, we caught up three parties all merged into one at various stages of ascending the two ropes on Puit Aldo's. After a welcome brew, thanks to Tony, and a tedious wait we finally had the pitch to ourselves and started up the two ropes with the hope that the R.A.P. would come into its own and let us overtake. In the event, I was first up Aldo's, bombed on up into the R.A.P. and reached the surface in 90 minutes, having passed all seven members of the merged parties in the lower Meanders. Unfortunately I had, in my haste, inadvertently left the rope on Puit Magique snagged around a sharp spike just below the Y-hang. Ian then suffered the unnerving experience of having to ascend whilst watching the rope being remorselessly sawn through above him! He made it safely but then had to waste several minutes tying the damaged rope out of the system. These minutes made all the difference, and both Ian and Tony ended up only a few places further up the queue and were much later out than myself. Sorry chaps!

13th August. Tony Baker, Bob Hall.

This was to be Tony's and my bid for the bottom and we had agreed to make it what we believe to be a first - a bottoming trip, there and back, via the RAP. Despite my initial lamp problems described in an accompanying article, Tony and I reached the top of Puit de la Jonction in good order and set about re-rigging. In addition to our camping kit and bottoming grub we had struggled in with a very heavy 12 or 13mm rope kindly(?) lent to us by Jopo. It was hoped that this would be sufficient to rig the traverse line previously ignored and thereby give a safer hang on the pitch. Despite being rather muddy, the traverse was not as bad as appearances had suggested, but failed to deliver a significantly better hang. Nevertheless Tony and I were able to descend, bottom the bitch and return as planned.

15th August. Debbie Stephens, Gary Vaughan.

"Tourist trip to head of Balcony pitch... Generous helpings of mud spoiled what is potentially a nice varied and interesting route. "Not quite enough deviations on the last pitch but by the time I'd got clear I didn't care anymore..." (Gary : Private communication).

15th - 18th August. Various other parties visiting the series, mainly using it as an exit route.

19th August. Bob Hall, Ian Middleton.

Ian and myself paid our last respects to the series on a

derigging trip. We had volunteered to do this so that we could extract the tackle undisturbed, and could make notes of the rigging on the surface. This was accomplished without incident worthy of comment.

General Comment and Conclusion

Apart from being a "collector's piece", our interest in the series lay in its possible potential as a "relief route" if traffic was heavy in the lower Meanders. Because it consists of many short pitches, fewer hold-ups might be expected than could occur on Gontard's or Garby's.

In the event, it was not rigged in sufficient time to be of benefit to anyone but myself as a by-pass, and in any case the rather "provisional" nature of the rigging made it unsuitable for general use. For future expeditions my feeling is that it is unlikely to be worth trying to use the series as a relief route. My reasons are firstly that it would require further bolting to be safe and convenient and secondly, that the ropes used would probably suffer excessively because of the mud and sharp rock. It is, at present, more or less unspoiled and would be best left that way. If you've got spare rope then double rigs on the conventional pitches make more sense.

Ref. 1: John Eckersley, *Descent* No. 78 (Oct/Nov 1987), pages 18,19.

Ref. 2: J.P. Barriere, "Gouffre Berger Reseau Alex Pitcher", *Scialet* 17, 1988.

Apres Speleo Presents...

Nous Sommes Avec Debbie Stephens, or Les Speleo Anglais Manger Ici:

(A Guide to Good Eating When in the Vercors)

The Vercors is a limestone plateau in south-eastern France with an abundance of fine restaurants. Incidentally there are some caves, and it is one of these latter that S.W.C.C. felt compelled to visit in the summer of 1993. Personally I prefer the restaurants, but I suppose we must play these silly games. Other contributors will regale you with tales of derring-do and navigational cock-ups, but not me. I prefer to torment you with talk of the FOOD. This then is the scene: After a long day talking about how to rig the Alex Pitcher route we repair to Autrans for therapy - "Cinq pressions s'il vous plait", etc, etc. Then where to dine? The Kaliste fits the bill. A small, 35-seater with a terrace seating another dozen. Seated on the terrace, peruse the menu. Prix fix at 50, 75, 90 and the 135-franc "Berger Belly Buster". Savouring the evening air, the sound of crickets and the beer, we make our selections from the 90 Franc menu. Salade Kaliste, Entrecote Forestiere and Gratin Dauphinois. To go with it, a bottle of Cotes Du Rhone, delicious, dark and fruity (not you Joe, the wine). The talk turns to pitches, knots & Raven meals. Then the salad arrives. Oh, the salad. A hillock of greens, lardons, tuna, eggs, croutons, tomatoes and a magic dressing. This is the benchmark for salads. We munch away soaking up the dressing with

bread and grunting appreciatively. After an appropriate pause the steak arrives. This is a splendid little devil, grilled just right and in a sauce made from several species of wild mushroom, and the pan juices deglazed and reduced with wine. The mushrooms are chewy and tasty, reminiscent of porcini and quite unlike the pap that serves for mushrooms at home. This is all accompanied by Gratin Dauphinois, slices of potato cooked in chicken stock (tough luck Joe) and cream, a regional speciality and delicious. There is a splendid choice of places to eat in Autrans. The Swiss Chalet, The Hotel de la Post, Pizza, The Igloo, Le Pub and the Kaliste, and the Kaliste is the little gem. A typical bistro with good cooking using local, seasonal ingredients and a selection of prix fix menus at very reasonable prices. As the cost increases so does the number of courses and the variety of choices. The Kaliste supposedly serves some Corsican specialities. On another occasion a group of us visited the Hotel de la Poste, opposite the Kaliste and round the corner from the Casino superstore. A delicious vegetable soup, you get the whole tureen, followed by brisket of beef with carrots and gratin. A selection of local cheeses rounds off yet another fine dinner. My own opinion is that it's probably not possible to eat badly in Autrans.

Incidentally, if any one can explain how so many French restaurants provide such meals for barely the cost of the ingredients and still make a living, I would really like to know. I reckon there's a PhD thesis in the economics of provincial French eateries. Being an expedition we had to have an end of expedition dinner, so the last evening on which most people were still around saw 35 of us repair to the Kaliste. I think the owners were a little unsure about a booking for that many until they realised it was "Les Speleos Anglais". The meal was splendid with several of us opting for the B B B, a five course epic. The evening went splendidly, the wine and talk flowing. There were Berger Awards to all and sundry and presentations to people without whom etc.... There was an attempt at song but the owner balked at the Welsh National Anthem, or was it "A Frenchman Went to the Lavatory..."? As I said earlier, the region has a large number of fine hostelrys. Unfortunately no English language field guide to the eateries of the Vercors exists yet, but I'm willing to take on the commission. There are guides to the caves of the area, but these (and the caves) are best avoided. Remember, it's dark down there and the bread will have run out! Good Eating,
Keith A Scoffier.

Acknowledgements

by Gary Vaughan

Like all of these things, it really only works when enough people pull in the right direction. I feel singularly privileged to have been involved in a project like this, where the amount of assistance that was available all at stages was, to say the least, overwhelming. It goes without saying that I would like to thank everybody who turned up at the Berger for their participation and help in this event, but there are of course those whose names warrant special mention so please humour me for just a little longer.

Firstly I would like to say a very special thankyou to Debbie for all of her help in cooking the books, handling the campsite bookings, writing literally hundreds of receipts, putting up with phone calls at all hours of the night and day, sorting out all sorts of strange financial transfers with George Marbach and of course dealing with all the T-shirt sales, printing etc.

Secondly I would like to say thankyou to Iain Miller who spent countless hours washing, coiling, re-washing, re-coiling, cutting, marking, bagging and packing 10mm Edelrid Super

Static. I can only start to imagine the headache of cutting 1.1 km of rope into thirty usable lengths.

Gary Nevitt and Alison Hayward also deserve a special mention for action above and beyond the call of duty. With blatant disregard for personal safety and the potential possibility of a nervous breakdown they provided food to the masses at all hours of the night and day, so keeping the wheels of the expedition machine trundling steadily forward.

Brian Clipstone, of course, did his usual starring role with the communications. Is there no end to this man's talents?

Peter Dobson did an excellent job with the first aid, although thankfully there were very few people who were put into a position to appreciate this. Nevertheless this fact does not detract from the importance of the mission. Cheers Pete.

Rick Halliwell was the source of much useful information on the Berger including of course all of the information on the Alex Pitcher Route!! Ahem. Yes, right then, cheers Rick.

Dudley Thorpe, of course, of "DRAGON CAVING GEAR" (that'll be a fiver Dudley) did the expedition a superb deal on rope, hangers and tackle sacks ,not to mention all the personal advice he's offered people in doubt of which bobbet to buy with their new widget.

Elsie Little was a great help in translating loads of bits and pieces to get the expedition off the ground in the first place, and later on my secret translator Martin Hoff did sterling work on the final letters and orders. I thank you both.

Thanks to Tony Baker for doing his "watch the birdie" bit and all the poor souls (Bob Hall, Ian Middleton, Paul Quill, Alison Payne and Hywel Davies - Ed.) who got press ganged into helping to produce what turned out to be a superb set of photographs, thank you one and all.

Brian Bowell deserves a special mention for imparting upon me and the rest of us his knowledge of what to do, what not to do and the best place to go to see semi-naked birds! A special thank-you to Bobs

Radcliffe and Hall for their assistance in compiling a list of the necessary rescue gear required to safeguard against some of the more likely accidents that could have befallen us.

Mark Goulding of E.D.S.S. deserves a mention for providing enough iodine to sink a battleship or sterilise the Vercors, and Alison Payne a quick thank-you for mixing it up in her laboratory. (I'm sure I gave you more vodka than that!)

Chris Payne of course came up with all the bits and pieces for the boat as well as assisting Gary Nevitt in putting all the cookers and stoves together to run off one gas bottle. Thanks lads.

Joel Corrigan provided a super tent for use as the control tent which in the event was used as a dining tent, and of course Iain Miller very un-selfishly allowed us to use his Tilley lamp in the control tent. Absolutely marvellous chaps.

SWCC committee, of course, where would we be without them? (I'm dreaming again.) I must thank them for allowing us to use all those wonderful tents and water containers, frying pans, saucepans and utensils. We borrowed the dining room tables, of course, but they didn't have a lot of say about that. Ahem. They also gave me a very nice loan of £500 while I

was trying to get money out of everybody to pay for the insurance and of course they allowed us take all that wonderful red and blue 11mm rope and the Gold Flash tackle sacks that gave everybody so much fun. Members of the committee, please consider yourselves thanked.

The West Brecon Cave Rescue Team came to our assistance in a big way with things like large billies, and allowing us to take all of those nice rescue bits and pieces, especially the Thomas Leg Iron. It was all truly wonderful and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

George Marbach and Expe were most helpful in arranging the 140kg of carbide, especially in allowing us to collect it from his house out of shop hours.

Of course, I would like to thank the Mayor of Engins for his kind permission to visit the Gouffre Berger, and I would like to thank the Craven Pothole Club for putting up with us on all of those training meets.

I would like to thank the pretty girl at the campsite for putting up with such an unruly bunch of dirty, scruffy, lager louts for the fourteen days, and I'd like to assure her that next time we'll try to make sure that Messrs. Saunders and Coburn and Mme. Jones camp up the top with the rest of us!

Of course, no acknowledgement would be complete without thanking firstly Joel for donating his best camping stove to the great cause, secondly to Joel again for taking it all in good humour, but finally to Martin Scott and Susan Bonar for doing things with Joel's stove that deserve mention in a publication far funnier than this one. I can honestly say I've not laughed so hard in years.

If I've missed you off of this list please forgive me, it's tough at the top, or so they keep telling me. See you at the next one.

Gary Vaughan.

Footnote:

Of course, the one person who doesn't feature in the above acknowledgements is Gary himself. The Chairman writes...

"Gary is to be congratulated for the enormous effort employed in the overall organisation and safe execution of this venture. All who participated thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and on behalf of everyone, may I extend a warm 'Thank You'.

"Where to next, O Fearless One...?"

Bob Saunders.

Book Review:

Caves And Cave Life, **by Philip Chapman**

by Mel Davies

This is an excellent volume in the "New Naturalist" Series with 219 pages of readable text, 97 black and white photographs, line drawings and maps, some of the fascinating photos being from the collections of Trevor Shaw. The title and cover picture of densely-packed bats gives the wrong impression that the book will only describe the varied life forms to be found in caves. In fact the first half of the book, and probably the most attractive part to the average caver, covers the history of early cave exploration, defines what is meant by a "cave", describes how to classify cave life in its myriad forms, and explains cave habitats and why they are so "snug for the bug". This half ends with its longest chapter - an overview of the karst and caves of Britain and Ireland. All the major systems are covered with plans of the two most massive - the Three Counties System in the Pennines and the Mynydd Llangattwg system in south Wales. The plan of the caves of the Western Burren in Ireland (Fig.3.20) does not have a scale so comparison is difficult. Chapter 4 wades into Fauna and Flora starting with definitions including -philes and -bites (-

bytes come later !). Usefully, some are repeated later in the text, and for those who cannot recall any definitions there is a five-page Glossary at the end of the book. Some space is devoted to the green plants growing around cave entrances, the sort of list usually omitted from cave books. Invertebrates, birds, insects, bats and other mammals are then described, finally fish and fungi. Chapter 5 describes cave communities, and by this time the caving reader will be wondering why he has never seen even a tiny proportion of the animals listed. Chapter 6 delves into my own field of the Pleistocene and gives a most up-to-date summary including human occupation of caves. The last chapter entitled "the future of caves" should be perused most carefully by those cavers wishing to remove all cave gates and controls. Losses and damage recorded by NCA and BCRA are really quite alarming, but action now being taken by statutory bodies as well as cavers provide some comfort. Cave SSSIs and the legal protection provided are considered. The book ends with a selected bibliography and there is a comprehensive index. The type

of database (-bytes!) maintained by BCRA is described. The reviewer must look for errors and the only major one I found was the placing of Nanna's Cave in Gower instead of on Caldey Island. All the scientific mammal and plant names I am familiar with checked out. Many of the cave photographers of recent years have contributed excellent examples of their work - Deakin, Westlake, Gardener and Chris Howes. With the latter it is inevitable that Judith Calford should be the model, and she is there in five shots, and possibly in four more. No great harm in that.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and can recommend it both to the beginner who is curious about caves, and to the expert who wants a reference book. The price of the paperback version at £12.99 is very reasonable.

***Caves and Cave Life* was published in 1993 by Harper Collins, and there is a copy in the club library.**

101 Great Caving Trips

by *Tony Baker*

No.4 Agen Allwedd

For some reason, it has become something of a habit for myself and a few others to finish each year with a trip to the Far North in Dan-yr-Ogof on December 31st. In recent years we've been lucky with the weather, but a great deal of rain fell over the last few days of 1993, so an alternative had to be found.

By the time Bob Hall arrived at Penwyllt on the evening of the 30th, discussion was well under way, fuelled by several pints of beer. I can't remember who suggested Agen Allwedd, but it seemed a very good idea; we planned to do a Grand Circle, a good thrash which would still see us back in time for the New Year's Eve celebrations.

Bright and early on the Friday morning, Bob Hall, Gary Vaughan, Annie Peskett, Ian Middleton and myself set off for Llangattock. The car park which one is supposed to use when visiting the caves is notorious for the attentions of thieves, so I offered the use of my company car, from which everything of value was removed before we left Penwyllt.

We were changed and almost ready to leave the aforementioned car park when I noticed an FX2 lamp with a fundamental flaw, lying in the boot of my car.

"Whose FX2 is this?"

"It's mine" said Annie.

"Did you know the wing nut's missing?"

"Oh shit!" came the reply.

Now as it happened, the only thing of value that hadn't been taken out of the car before we left was the spare FX2 wing nut which lives in my glove box for just such an emergency. In such circumstances, a trivial item such as a wing nut has a value far and above that of mere money, and once it had been established that Annie would be providing beer, and early-morning tea, for all those present for many months to come, the wing nut was handed over and Annie's trip was saved.

The walk around the escarpment was a cold affair, with a piercing wind blowing straight at us, and we were glad to reach the point at which the path hugs the base of the north-facing cliff, providing a degree of shelter. Once at the entrance, all of the men present had just taken their ceremonial pee and we'd unlocked the gate when Annie realised her troubles weren't over yet. As she switched on her lamp, the bulb glowed with all the intensity of a shagged-out glow worm, for about a millisecond. And then died. There followed much frantic fiddling with the switch, and with the connection to the

battery, but all to no avail. Bob Hall was hunting around in the rather vain hope of finding a piece of wire with which to test the battery, when it occurred to somebody that the cave key was attached to its metal tag by a short piece of... wire! This was carefully shortened, and Bob tested the cell with his tongue. Nothing.

"It was fully charged, as well" complained Annie.

"When did you charge it?"

"A fortnight ago..."

Hmmmmmm.

It was just beginning to dawn on on Annie how rash she'd been to offer such a high reward for a wing nut which was now useless, when a knight in shining armour galloped over the horizon: Gary Vaughan.

"I don't mind caving without a lamp. Annie can have mine, and we'll see how far we get. We might not do the Grand Circle, but at least we'll all get a trip." I lent Gary my back-up light, a waterproof torch attached cave-diver style to the side of my helmet (which had batteries good for a few hours), and we were back in business. Now if a measly wing nut is worth all that beer and early-morning tea, how could one begin to put a price on an entire lamp? Negotiations were still under way as we set off into the cave.

To anyone who's ever caved with Gary, it will come as no surprise to learn that he caves just as fast without a lamp as he does when he has one. I led, with Gary snapping at my heels all the way, and twenty minutes after leaving the entrance we were in Baron's Chamber.

Whenever I'd done a Grand Circle in the past, we'd always gone in via Southern Stream Passage and out along the main streamway, but Gary had suggested that the other way round was better, and since it was becoming clear that Gary having no lamp wasn't going to prevent us doing the round trip, we piled on down the streamway.

"Actually, this is a great cave to do in weather like this" pronounced Gary, sagely, "because it never floods. The only bit which does sometimes sump is the low bit in the Second Boulder Choke, but that'll be OK today." We soon discovered that this was indeed the case, and by the time we reached North-West Junction (just over an hour from the entrance) we were going well.

Each of us was clad in the now common furry suit/oversuit combination, and the only slight reservation I'd had about this was when I recalled the ominously-named Deep Water, found at about the midway point of the trip and which my memory clearly saw as a swim.

"No problem" advised Gary, "you can traverse over it. There

is a bit you have to wade, but it's only a few metres long and only up to your chest." As we progressed down the streamway, though, I began to have my doubts; we were soon up to our chests, and finding it distinctly chilly.

"Are you sure this is right, Gary?" asked Ian, who was in front and virtually up to his neck in icy water.

"Yeah, this is it. There's a sharp left turn, wade across a deep pool and it gets shallower then."

Sure enough, there was a sharp left turn and a wade (on tip-toes) across a pool. Only problem was, it didn't get shallower; we were still up to our necks. Then, however, came another sharp left turn and another pool. This must be the one he meant, I thought. Trouble was, this one didn't get shallower either, it got deeper. Suddenly we were all swimming, gasping for breath and kicking hard in a desperate effort to get past this unforeseen obstacle. I was behind Ian Middleton, and I think I saw what his lamp picked out at the same instant he did; the roof meeting the water.

"It's a sump!" I gasped, "turn round!" At least that was what I was trying to say, what came out was a breathless rasp, but everyone soon got the message. Gary had tried to shout, too, but since he was carrying the torch I'd lent him between his teeth this was more of a problem for him.

We emerged from the deep section, shivering and breathing hard. I swim in my local pool several times a week, forty minutes at a time with no problem, but here a total of a minute's swimming, fully clothed and in cold water had reduced me to a gasping wreck. If you've never swum in a furry suit, take my advice: Don't.

There were a couple of positive aspects to this situation, however; at least we hadn't come in via the arduous slog along Southern Stream Passage, since we'd have had to go back that way, too. And we'd be back at SWCC in plenty of time for the do in the evening. We raced off back up the passage, desperate to warm up, and were out just over three hours after leaving the entrance.

Potential disaster was never far away from this trip, however. We arrived back at the car, and I reached inside my suit for the lanyard to which I'd attached my key. There it was, but with the key no longer attached. I had a horrible vision of it having popped off during the swim, nestling now under several metres of cold, dark water...

Fortunately this wasn't the case; it had lodged down inside my suit, much to the relief of five chilly cavers standing on the exposed car park. And so endeth 1993: Bring on 1994.

Gouffre Berger 1993 - Accounts

by Debbie Stephens

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>£</u>
Members' Subs	2907.00	Expedition Gear	2099.31
Insurance	1231.00	Insurance	1231.10
Food (Gary and Alison's Meals)	168.87	Communal Food	360.49
Campsite	255.99	Campsite	258.60
T-shirt Sales	356.35	T-Shirts	344.39
Gear Sales	963.66	Carbide	135.56
		Surveys, Maps etc.	38.70
		Administration	142.24
		First Aid Kits	44.87
		Refunds	1127.61
TOTAL	5882.87	TOTAL	5782.87

(N.B. £100.00 has been retained for emergencies).

Crossword Answers

Here are the answers to the Crossword from Newsletter No. 112. Winner of the T-shirt was Andrew Dobson. Thanks to everyone who took part, and to Steve Thomas who compiled the puzzle.

ACROSS: 1 - CwmDwr, 5 - Sump, 7 - Ah, 8 - Tie, 9 - Y Ci, 10 - Aven, 11 - OFD, 13 - Rod, 15 - Aggy, 17 - Otter, 20 - On, 21 - Fog, 23 - DY0, 24 - Ale, 26 - MO, 28 - Leer, 29 - Oldham.

DOWN: 1 - Carno, 2 - Me, 3 - Water, 4 - Rhino, 6 - Priory, 10 - Adit, 12 - Flood, 14 - Ogof, 16 - Gnome, 18 - Tooth, 19 - Realm, 22 - Gore, 25 - Elm, 27 - No.



Published by South Wales Caving Club, 1-10 Powell Street, Penwyllt, Pen-y-Cae, Swansea SA9 1GQ.
Printed by Neete Printing Ltd., The Coach House, Craig-y-Nos, Pen-y-Cae, Powys SA9 1GJ. 0639-730771
Editorial Address: 10 Wargrove Drive, Owlsmoor, Camberley, Surrey. 0344-778908