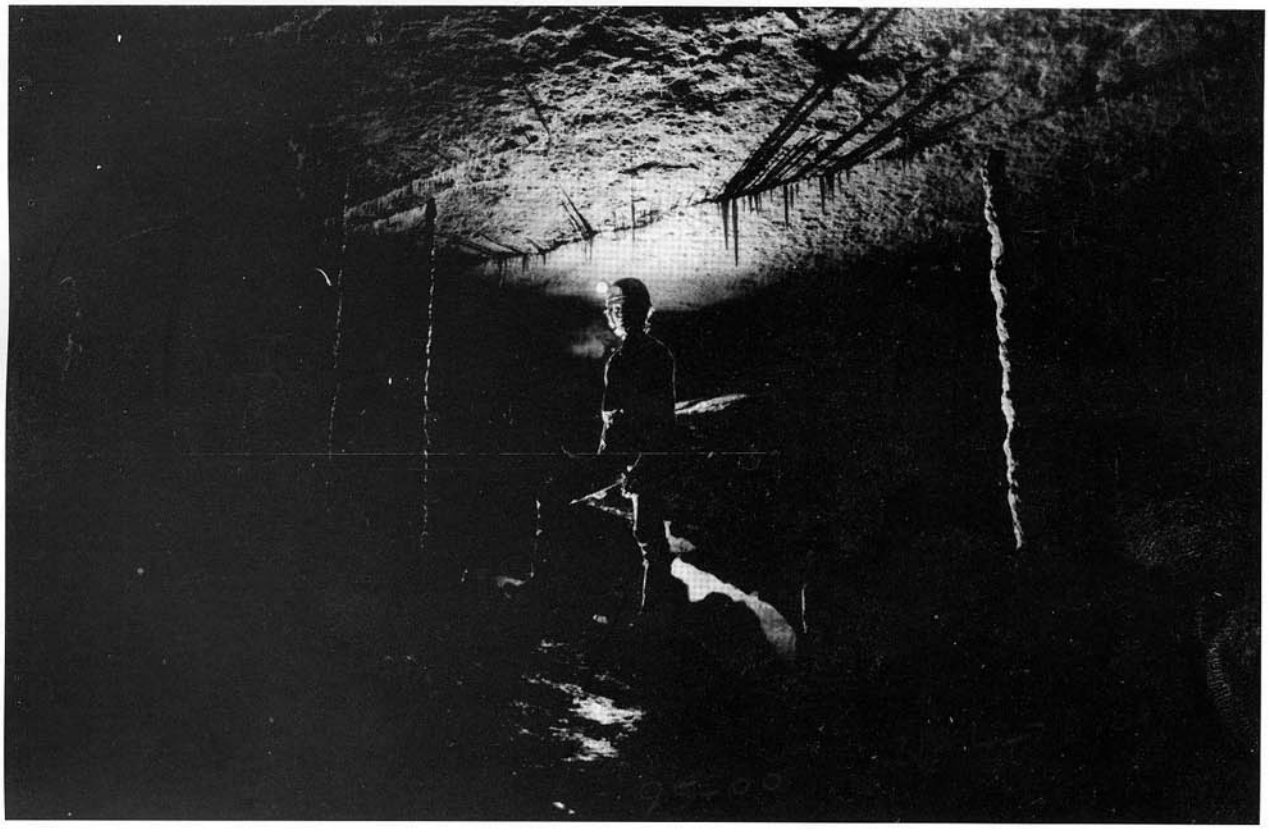

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

CLWB OGOFEYDD DEHEUDIR CYMRU

Newsletter

No. 110

1992

South Wales Caving Club

Clwb Ogofeydd Deheudir Cymru

Newsletter No. 110

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Editorial

by Tony Baker

This edition of the Newsletter been a long time in preparation. This isn't due to slackness on my part, however, but to material taking a long time to reach me. I even tried setting and publicising a deadline - the 31st of January - but a month after it had passed I had received only one side of A4. I'm now trying another approach, which means I've already asked various people for material for No.111. If you're planning to write something, PLEASE let me have it as soon as possible. I'm determined to cut the long lead times, to make each edition as up-to-date as possible, but I can only do this with your help. Also, if you are working on something let me know, so I can plan how No.111 will come together. Anyway, thanks to all the people who have contributed to this one, even if I did hassle you to hurry up.

I want the Newsletter to appear much more frequently; it's my intention to get at least two more out before the next AGM, and as I'm now able to work quite quickly with my computer I should be able to turn material around very fast - I just need to receive it.

You don't have to have discovered a new cave or been somewhere exotic to contribute to the Newsletter. I'll consider publishing anything that's vaguely relevant, and I'd particularly like one or two of our newer members to put pen to paper. Your work doesn't have to be serious in tone - the occasional light-hearted or irreverent piece makes the Newsletter a more entertaining read. Also despite the fact that many (most?) members hold strong views on something to do with the club, I've received no "Letters to the Editor" this time. If you've an opinion on anything - conservation, access, fixed aids, ethics, social events, the cost of subs or hut fees, the cottage or even the Newsletter itself, write it down and send it to me and I'll give your views a wider airing and generate some debate. (Likewise, no-one has come up with any "Equipment and Techniques" tips following Stuart France's good advice in Newsletter No.109.) Contributing couldn't be easier - I'll accept your work in any readable form (see "Notes for Contributors" on p.48).

As you will see as you read on, one picture credit occurs with monotonous regularity through this Newsletter - my own. I'm desperate to receive more pictures, and not necessarily caving ones. Adding photographs or diagrams to text makes the whole thing much livelier and more entertaining to read. To make it easier for you, I'm prepared to accept pics in any form; slides, prints or negatives (see "Notes for Contributors"). If you have any caving pics, I'd very much to use them in their own right, possibly on covers. The more pictures I receive, the fewer of mine you'll have to look at...

Now a word about cost. I seem to keep encountering the criticism that the Newsletter is "costing the club too much money". For the record, it now costs less than it did before I took the job on; this is because we no longer pay for typesetting or layouts - all of this is done on my computer, and we supply the printers with ready-to-run pages, on disk. All the necessary photographic work - for example converting slides to black-and-white prints - I do myself, eliminating another expense. An additional advantage has been secured because the print work is now done by a member, Kevin Davies. While I have insisted that Kevin treats the Newsletter strictly as a commercial job, he ensures that we take advantage of the best deals on things like paper. I also make strenuous efforts to keep costs like postage down, handing out as many copies as I can at the club to save posting them. Like every other club officer, the treasurer allocates me a budget for the year, and last year the editorial costs came in well under budget as we only produced one edition of the Newsletter. As I want to publish more frequently, costs this year will be higher, but I promise to do my utmost to keep them as low as possible.

With around 350 members scattered not just around Britain but all over the world, many of whom are involved with widely differing caving activities, plus the sort of headquarters that most others can only dream about, this club can consider itself among the best in the country. I think the Newsletter should reflect that position, especially since we exchange with so many other clubs and organisations worldwide, many of whom produce exceptionally professional publications. I just need you to provide the raw material. Anyway, I hope you enjoy reading Newsletter No.110, and as always I welcome your views on it. Give me a ring, or talk to me at the club. I can't promise I won't defend myself, but whatever your views I will take note of them!

Plus ca Change...

On the edge of the Smokezone, something stirred: not in the manner of Twisted Gnome or Greenjumper, more in the way of a slothful pmRiser. Greybeard idled his way through the latest Newsletter. In a grey world, even the shades of the cover photo sparkled. How long had the photographer and subject rested motionless for the water to settle? What was Ponytail doing in the rain with Hondarider coming up behind? Why had the Bee Gees no washing?

A pulse began to tick, a digital mung bean, a quickening of interest - reports of twitching in Zimmer frames. Had geriatrics actually travelled as far as Pant Mawr? What could have torn them away from the comfort of Ouija? Surely not the promise of "something unexplored"! He relaxed. All hypothetical. No serious danger of whirling rods, bucking twigs, temperature variations or sexist plant names causing physical effort here.

But wait! This could be serious - the land was in grave danger of electrocution. Could it be that the Boffins had returned, or was the land always formed from half-onions? Had the hits done permanent damage, or was it just a case of "Apres-Key"?

Again he relaxed, happy with the return to LARGE PRINT. This was something he could handle. Somebody had been exploring in the old manner - tight and dirty - the way it should be, as told over and over in "the Snug with real walls" around a blazing fire. At last things were coming into perspective: a cave was nothing more than a computer-generated nightmare and, around Gower, filled with bones as well.

Relaxation turned to euphoria. Castlemaine was working on Terminator II and soon only robots would have to enter the electronic image. But...! Puzzlement momentarily furrowed the relaxed brow - what would a robot do with a 50 hour Oldham, padded joints, percussion, German marching orders; or, even, a rather ineffective disguise?
The puzzlement passed and a smile formed. SciFi had attempted to prove yet again that there is an "f" in pratt, but Baseball Cap had redressed the balance by showing that you can remove the "p" and leave a ratt.
Suddenly, Greybeard stiffened; stricken with an overpowering sense of *deja vu*. It was many years since a coded message had been received from Anon! He read carefully, trying to decipher the code. He sensed a warning, a threat: but to whom? From what? It seemed that the Elders were the target, their usefulness in question. What use were the Scribes, the Archivists, the Stonemasons? Did they no longer fit in the overall scheme? What was to be their fate? Would the dwelling be allowed to crumble through lack of care?

Greybeard smiled and relaxed again. He realised that he had been here before. This was no threat - just the sound of children playing...

Anon Too.

Obituary: Ian Anderson

by Tony Baker

In April this year, Ian Anderson was tragically killed in a road accident. He was 25.

Ian started caving in 1982, through his involvement with the Scouts. He and Malcolm Herbert, along with other members of the Berkshire Buggers West (a division of Gloucester Speleological Society) were regular visitors to Bottom Cottage, at English Bicknor in the Forest of Dean, from where they would explore the caves and mines of the area. They progressed from visiting mines such as Old Ham and Westbury Brook to caves including Ban-y Gor and Otter Hole and were involved in digs at the Wet Sink (now Slaughter Stream Cave), Symonds Yat Swallet and other sites with Paul Taylor, Dave "Sparks" Parker and others.

I first met Ian in 1986, when he visited County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland on a trip which included Malcolm, Paul Taylor and various BBW members. Some members of the trip, however, were more interested in the Guinness than the caves, so Ian soon became part of the serious caving team, and we ticked off most of the classic caves in the area over a ten day visit. He loved caving in Ireland, and visited both Fermanagh and County Clare on several occasions, including a trip in 1990 with other SWCC members.

In 1987, he first became involved with SWCC, after Malcolm, Paul Taylor and myself had joined, and became addicted - he was soon a regular visitor to the club and a member of what was loosely termed "the Brat Pack". He soon learned SRT techniques, and in 1989 took part in an SWCC trip to Migovec mountain in Slovenia, which was organised by Roddy McLauchlan. He was a valuable member of the small team in what soon became a very serious undertaking, with long hard slogs up the mountain and SRT trips to -450m. Ian and I travelled down to Slovenia in his car, and our agreement to alternate the choice of tapes prompted many lively debates about music; he was a great fan of modern music, and had a large collection of records and tapes.

A year later, he and I went caving together in the USA (see report elsewhere in this Newsletter), and his friendly nature and easy-going disposition helped us to make many new friends among the American cavers. Here again, he proved his ability as a caver on many serious trips, including a fourteen hour epic in a cave with a pitch of almost six hundred feet.

Ian wasn't just an enthusiastic caver, however. As a Scout and Venture Scout, he was a keen canoeist. He was also an Assistant Cub Scout Leader with the 79th Norcot and Kentwood Scout Group in Reading, his home town, and in 1987 led a Venture Scout trip to Kandersteg in Switzerland. He attained the Queen's Scout Award, the highest award in the Scout Movement.

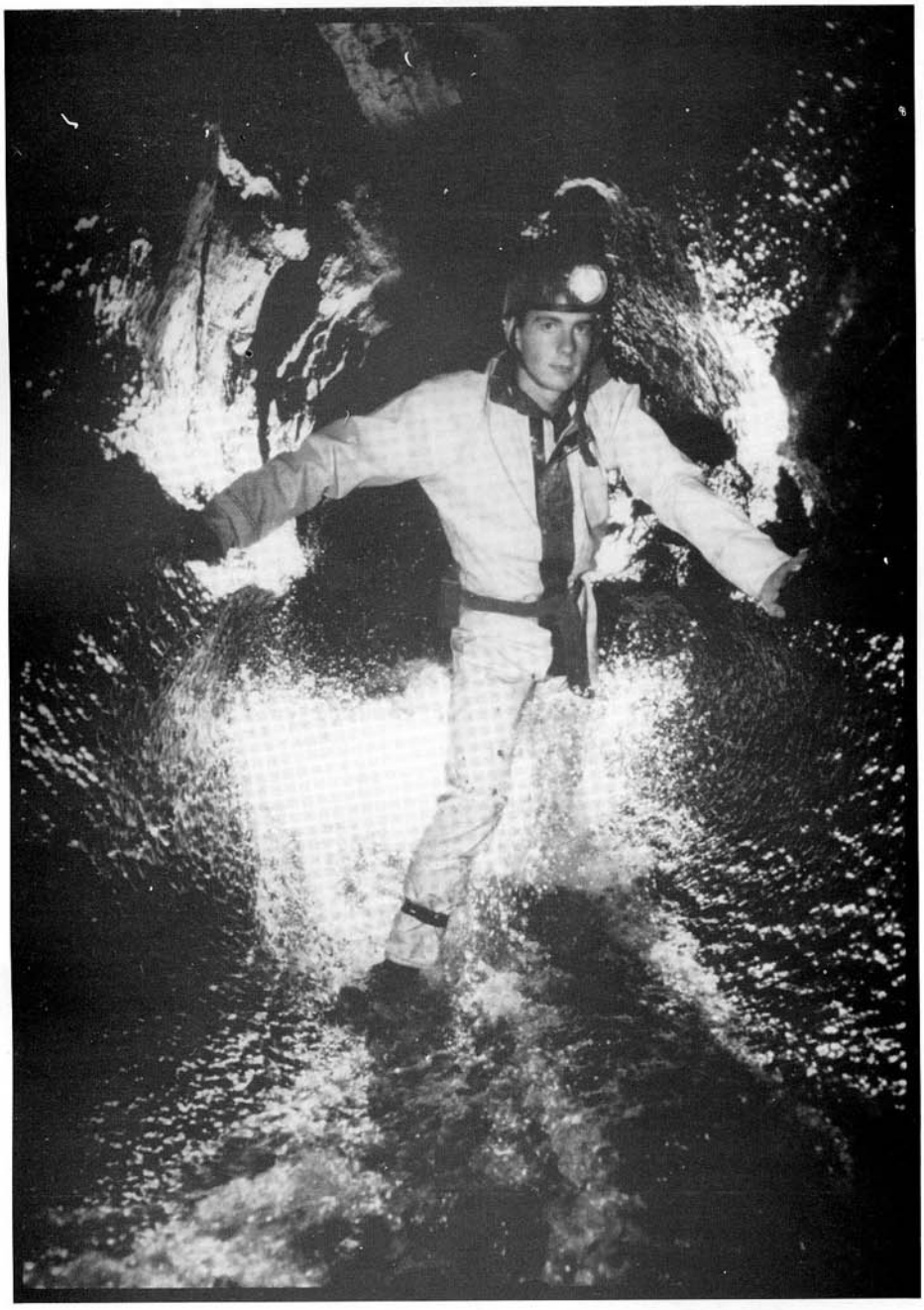
Professionally, too, he was held in high regard: he trained as an apprentice with the Southern Electricity Board and was named Apprentice of the Year. His reward for this was a week on a sail training ship, which he claimed to have enjoyed immensely despite suffering badly from sea-sickness. He later went on to work for Thorn Security, and then for a fire alarm company, fitting alarms in premises in the Thames Valley and elsewhere.

Along with other SWCC members he also became a keen climber, partnering among others Steve West, Steve Richardson and Malcolm on climbs on the Gower peninsula, in the Wye Valley and elsewhere. According to Malcolm, he soon acquired a reputation for "some really bold leads..." His love of climbing led him in 1991 to a trip to the Alps, again with other club members. This was his first taste of true Alpine mountaineering, yet he reached the top of several peaks including the Eiger and the Tour Ronde, and the photographs from the trip show his great enjoyment of the entire experience.

Despite his undoubted skill as a climber and caver, Ian's modest nature meant that he never boasted of his abilities or achievements, leaving others to seek the limelight for things he'd been involved with.

When I recently searched my picture files for entries for the SWCC photo competition, I was struck by how many of my caving pictures feature Ian; this is because he was always willing to help out with photo trips, digs or anything else where assistance was required. Yet at the same time, he was always ready to go on a caving trip for no other reason than to enjoy it.

In the last year, Ian's decision to buy a flat had meant that he had neither the time nor the money to attend the club as regularly as he would have liked, but on his last visit he did two



Ian Anderson in the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I streamway.

Photo: Tony Baker

good caving trips, admitted it was good to be back and resolved to find time for more visits.

Ian will be remembered for some things which caused amusement, such as turning up at Atlanta airport a day too early for his flight home, or fixing his crampons with keyrings which survived only a short distance up a glacier, but he was always ready to join in the laughs. His good humour ensured that he had many friends in the club, and he never had a harsh word for anyone. It is indicative of how well-liked he was that so many people took time off work to attend his funeral in Reading on the 14th of April, a service so well attended that there were nowhere near enough seats.

In accordance with a wish he had expressed while he was alive, Ian's ashes were scattered in the Sinc-y-Giedd area over the Easter weekend - Ian's parents have since visited the site - and a wake was held at the club the same evening. His caving and climbing gear was later auctioned, the proceeds going to rescue. In addition Ian's father, Peter, organised a weekend of microlight flying and a barbecue for club members in June, which was well attended.

Ian's death has taken a valuable member from the club, and I'm sure all members will join with me in extending our sympathies to his family and friends in Reading. Most of all, though, I feel that I've lost a great mate, and I'll always remember my caving adventures with Ian with great affection.

(Thanks to Malcolm Herbert for his help on this obituary.)

Recent Progress in Dan-yr-Ogof: The Far North Project

by Amman Valley Caving Club

Foreword

This project arose out of the work of the Grwp Ogofeydd Garimpeiros, which was an informal group formed to bring together those people working independently on the Black Mountain in a concerted effort to find new caves.

Once we had set up the Far North project, however, and received generous support from sponsors, those of us involved felt that it would be in our interest to become a more formal organisation.

Hence we formed the Amman Valley Caving Club (Clwb Ogofeydd Cwmamman) in January 1992.

The club is now properly constituted and will be affiliating to the NCA via the Cambrian Caving Council. We hope that this will confirm the credibility of our efforts within the Welsh caving scene.

The Far North Project

Undoubtedly the greatest potential for extending Dan-yr-Ogof lies to the west, and the fabled Giedd system. Water tracing experiments have shown that the cave extends in this direction to Sinc-y-Giedd and beyond, a distance of over four miles.

However, some potential still exists to the north, and hence the Far North was chosen. There was still some distance between the choke in the Left Hand series and the sink, and there were also some unclimbed avens in the Right Hand series. Furthermore, Brian Jopling of SWCC reported an unclimbed aven near the Starting Gate.

Logistically, the Far North is a long way into the cave and it was clear that a campsite would have to be established to facilitate any serious work.

The camp was established over the Easter weekend of 1991. This was a mammoth undertaking by a small group of cavers, who had spent the two previous weekends carrying equipment into the cave. we had not realised the scale of the task we had taken on, but the camp was set up by midday on the 31st March.

The campsite was the sand choke at the base of the North Aven climb; this allowed easy access to the Far North but is also well situated for going in and out of the cave.

On the 5th May Liam Kealy and Dudley Thorpe began bolting up a wall near what became known as Jopo's Aven. Two hours bolting saw them 25 feet up the wall, just below a ledge.

Another camp was mounted over the Spring Bank holiday and involved Liam Kealy, Dudley and Ben Thorpe, Liz Cowell and Pete Munn. The climb was completed by Liam and Dudley after another two hours bolting on Sunday May 26th. The pair walked into a high level inlet series which branched in three directions. One of these led to another large aven. After returning for the other members of the group, all the passages were explored. The aven, Reach for the Sky, was freeclimbed by Pete Munn while we stood around discussing how to bolt our way up it. This led to a chamber and a short section of stream passage which led to an altogether larger and higher aven, The Intimidator.

A passage leading south was explored to another set of avens, named after Dudley's son Ben who found them first. These two avens were climbed for 35 feet to a conclusion, and for 50 feet to an obvious continuation. They were left for a future camp.

The third passage which heads south-east was followed for a short distance to a choke with sand deposits. The extension was called the High and Mighty Series, due to the lofty nature of the avens.

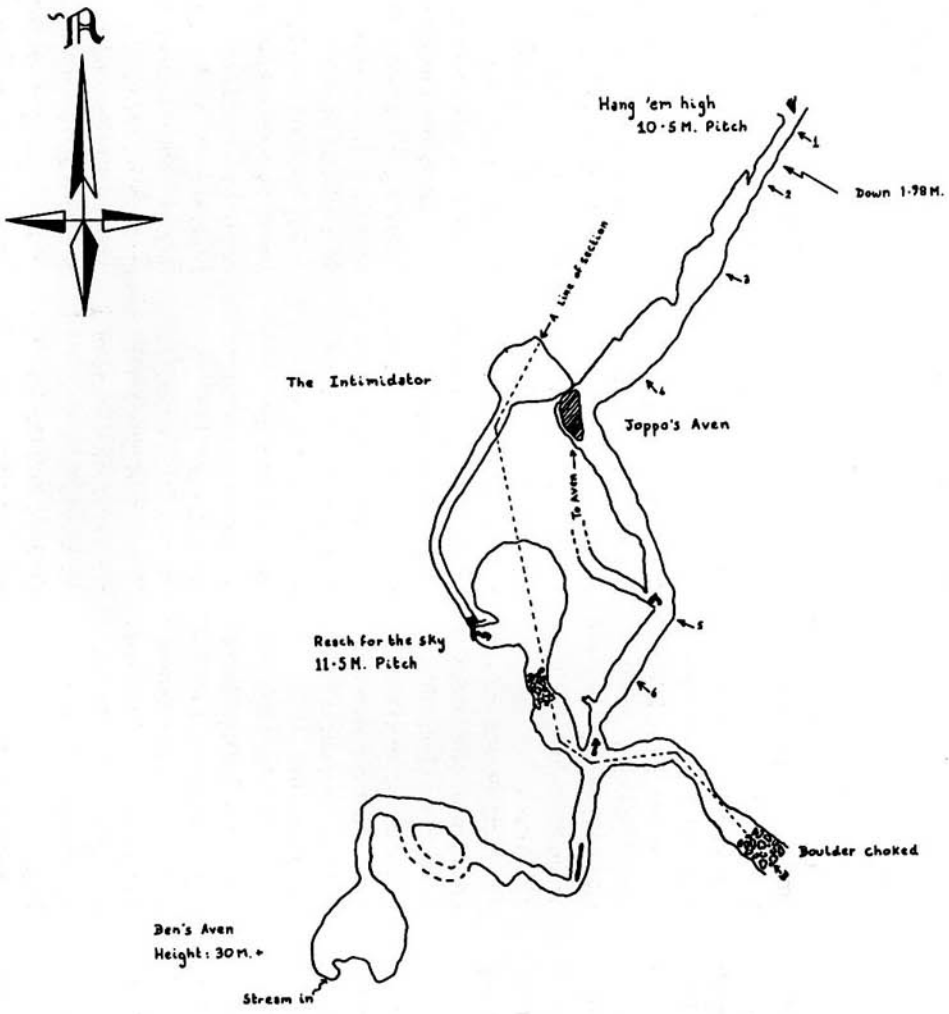
On June 29th Dudley, Ben and Pete Munn went to the Far North with a view to climbing the largest of Ben's Avens. At about 11 pm on the Saturday night, disaster befell the trio; while climbing the aven a rock struck Dudley, who was lifelining Pete, on the head and on his hip. His helmet saved his head, but his hip was in a bad way. Pete and Ben saw Dudley back to the camp where first aid was administered and he was treated for shock. Liam met them at the Rising on their way out on June 30th, and it is to Dudley's credit that he was able to get out under his own steam. However, his injury curtailed activity until early August when we started carrying in equipment for a longer camp over the August Bank Holiday.

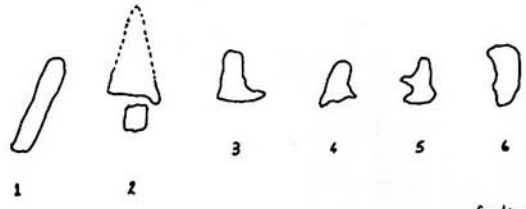
Five people entered the cave on Saturday August 24th; Liam Kealy, Kevin Mountford, Dudley Thorpe, Tony Reynolds and Malcolm Roberts. Liam and Dudley were to stay underground until the following Wednesday. The objectives were to survey the High and Mighty series, complete the climb started by Pete in June, and climb the Intimidator.

Disaster befell Tony Reynolds straight away on the Saturday night, when a ledge he was descending crumbled and he injured his hand and knee. On the Sunday he was restricted to

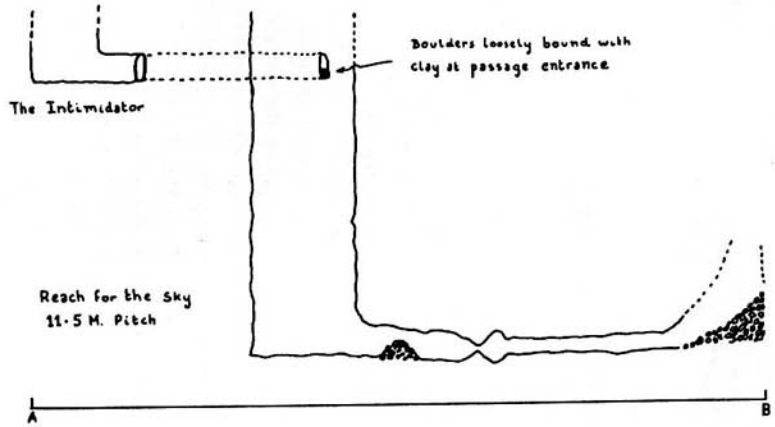
DAN-YR-OGOF
HIGH AND MIGHTY SERIES

SCALE 1:200 vertical as horizontal





Sections at numbered intervals



Total distance – vertical + horizontal: 125·75 M. (min)

Total horizontal distance: 84·25 M.

0 10

METRES

M.R. 8/91

camp and taking photographs with Liam, while the others completed the survey. On Monday Liam and Dudley saw Kevin, Malcolm and Tony back to the Rising, who then made their way out. We had, however, lost one and a half days climbing. By 6.00 pm on the Monday evening Liam and Dudley had climbed Ben's aven, which is 100 feet high. At the top a tube led off over loose boulders, and this was left for when the two climbers were more refreshed. The following day the aven was reascended and Dudley levitated his way over the boulder pile into a similarly loose chamber. A tight rift led upwards, which he couldn't squeeze into, and the aven was then derigged.

Following this the Reach for the Sky pitch was rerigged to keep the rope out of the water, and the High and Mighty Series was left for 1992.

The total passage length surveyed is 125m, which is not a lot compared to the amount of passage yet to be found in Dan-yr-Ogof. However, the comparative ease with which it was gained highlights the need for people to be working in the cave.

The area around Ben's Aven, and the other passage which branches to the south-east are heading towards the fault on which the Great Hall is formed. If we could reach this fault, who knows what might happen? We may find a passage which runs parallel to the Great North Road, and meets up with the water from the Giedd system; such are the ponderables of cave exploration.

Other Activities in Dan-yr-Ogof and its Catchment Area

The group has also been active elsewhere in the cave and on the surface. The high level passages above the Rising and the High Way have been investigated and provide leads for future work.

In the showcave a small tube leads off from Bypass Passage and heads towards the August Series; this emits a terrific draught and needs to be followed up.

On the surface, the group have been enlarging a slot on Cribarth which has an intermittent draught and lies above the presumed route taken by the water in the Giedd series. Recent dowsing experiments support this view. This, however, is a long job as the slot has been plumbed for 60 feet and is six to seven inches wide for most of its depth.

Equipment

At the camp, we cooked on Epigas Hi-Performance stoves. These are fuelled by removable self-sealing gas cartridges and proved to be excellent. They reduce to a small size, and four will fit into one Daren drum with loads of room to spare.

The camp was stocked with a variety of Beanfeasts and mashed potato, although people carried in extra delicacies on each of the camps. Beanfeasts, ready flavoured soya meals, were considered excellent; they were tasty and gave plenty of energy, particularly when combined with rice, pasta or mashed potato. We found that each of us would eat a whole Beanfeast after a day's caving. Another good meal was the Bird's Eye Crunch range of puddings which were quick and easy to prepare and provided a morale-boosting sweet. Cup-a-Soups and other such items were standard requirements for snacks. Ortlieb water carriers were a useful piece of kit; they fold away almost to nothing, but provide a tap and enough water for a group's requirements for a day. The Ortlieb waterproof tackle bags were also an effective way of transporting gear through the Lakes and the Green Canal.

Robert Bosch Ltd. gave us a cordless drill in order to aid our exploration. This was invaluable and enabled us to climb avens quickly. Coupled with a bolting platform, which Dudley made for us, we can now climb virtually anything in the cave with relative ease.

Future Objectives

A lot remains to be done at the Far North. Our first aim is to climb the Intimidator in High and Mighty Series. After that, our original objectives remain and we will soon mount further camps to climb the avens in the Right Hand Series. The Far North choke still presents possibilities although it is not an easy undertaking. However, a passage to the left of the choke leads into an area that warrants some serious investigation. Hence there is still much to be done and it is likely that we will continue working throughout 1992. If you feel that you would like to be involved, please contact Liam Kealy.

Postscript

Since August 1991 we have been unable to co-ordinate the gathering of a strong team of people with the weather; in fact it would seem that the weather is conspiring against us as every time we have people together it rains for a week, flooding the entrance series. Our sorties into the cave have been confined to clearing out rubbish from the cave, re-rigging the pitches and introducing new cavers to the easier parts of the cave, hence building up a strong team for when the weather is kinder.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their support in 1991:

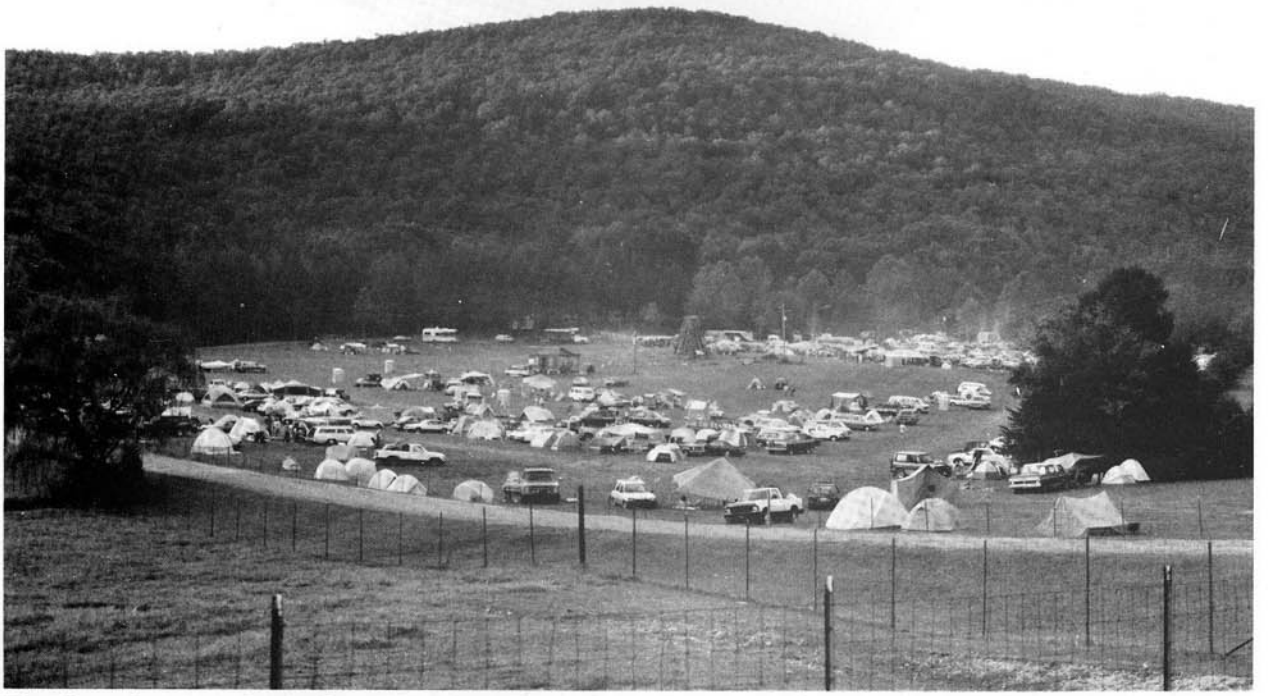
Caving Supplies, Lyon Equipment, Tufftex Leisure, Hitch'n'Hike, High Adventure, South Wales Caving Club, Robert Bosch Ltd., Bat Products, Brecon Beacons Mineral Waters, Brooke Bond Foods Ltd., Master Foods Ltd., Sub Zero Technology, Warmbac Wetsuits, Crickhowell Adventure Gear, Dan-yr-Ogof Showcaves, Silk Outdoor Sportswear.

The TAG Fall Cave-In

by Tony Baker

With the summer of 1990 fast approaching, I was still looking for a foreign trip. Talk at the club seemed only to be of trips to the Alps but I wanted to go caving, so I decided to organise something for myself. My younger brother had recently settled in Augusta, Georgia so with a base to start from the USA seemed a good idea; I consulted the NSS directory (a list of all the members and "grottoes", a copy of which is in the SWCC library), sent a couple of letters and found a cheap flight. Then one evening at home I received a 'phone call from Kathy Mackay, the Corresponding Secretary of the Dogwood City Grotto, in Atlanta, Georgia. Each year, the DCG organise a weekend event attended by cavers from all over the US, and fortunately the date I had chosen for my outward flight was just a few days before it began. This was clearly going to be a great introduction to American caving, and would provide the opportunity to meet with other cavers and arrange trips for the rest of my three week stay. Ian Anderson decided he'd like to join me, so after a few days at my brother's house we met up with Kathy at Atlanta airport and she drove us in her 1972 Chevrolet to the Cave-In venue, a campsite at Sequoyah Caverns in Alabama.

The TAG Fall Cave-In is so named as it takes place in the caving area commonly known as TAG, which lies around where Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia meet. Although the event itself is over a weekend, many cavers come for a week. We arrived on the preceding Tuesday, and there were already several tents scattered across the huge field. The Dogwood City Grotto had already been hard at work with preparations, including a bonfire that would have made Guy Fawkes weak at



The Cave-In campsite at Sequoyah Caverns, Valley Head, Alabama.

Caver transport, USA style.

All pics: Tony Baker

the knees - constructed the previous weekend with the aid of a crane.
The Cave-In is basically an excuse for a massive party, as you might expect (cavers in the USA being of pretty much the same mind as British ones). There are, however, also organised caving trips, an SRT race - organised by "Vertical Bill" Cuddington, who is credited with having been the originator of SRT techniques - a road run, stalls from cave equipment suppliers and others, and a whole host of activities to appeal to everyone.
Most people, though, organise their own caving trips in the run-up to the party on the Saturday evening. Ian and I soon made friends with a group of cavers from Murfeesboro, Tennessee, and arranged a caving trip for the following day. They call themselves the Phil Schwarz Caving Group, after having seen Sid Perou's "Realm of Darkness" film about Otter Hole which was shown on American TV - Phil Schwarz being a Forest of Dean caver whose appearance in the film with long hair and a tatty wetsuit appealed to them. They are fascinated by Otter Hole, even naming caves after places mentioned in the film such as the hamlet of Itton. When they found out that not only had Ian and I been into Otter, but that I'd been involved with the filming and knew many of the people concerned, a firm friendship was sealed which continues by letter to this day. You can read about the caving trips we did elsewhere in this Newsletter.

During the week, more and more cavers arrived and the party atmosphere increased. In the evening, loud bangs from firecrakers would disturb the peace and quiet, each followed by whoops and yells from all corners of the campsite. Sequoyah Caverns is a showcave, and lies within a "dry" county where alcohol is prohibited; yes, they do still exist in the deeply religious south-east. Hence beer supplies have to be obtained from across the county line, a trip best done by using the Interstate (motorway) rather than the local roads, as the police are wise to such comings and goings. The campsite owners, however, seem to turn a blind eye to the consumption of alcohol by cavers during the Cave-In, which is just as well really.

There was a fast-food stall on site, but most cavers breakfasted at the nearby truckstop (transport cafe). On our first visit, we needed Kathy to translate the menu, explaining what home fries and grits were and helping Ian out when the waitress asked him if he wanted his eggs done "over easy". The best thing about eating out in the States is that when you order coffee you get as much as you can drink, as the waitress patrols regularly with the pot, topping up empty cups. Tea addicts beware, though; the Americans drink theirs black with ice in it, although a few places serve "hot tea", which is the drink as we know and love it at Penwyllt.

By Saturday, over a thousand people were crammed onto the campsite, with all manner of tents and vehicles. As dusk fell, the air of anticipation grew and people gravitated towards the stage. Suddenly, a countdown began and the huge bonfire exploded in a sheet of flame, as *Fire* by the Crazy World of Arthur Brown blasted out from the sound system. The party was under way.
All the kids were given Cyalume sticks, which punctuated the darkness with an eerie green glow. Our attendance at the

Ian and I had to admit that when it came to building bonfires, the Dogwood City Grotto could teach SWCC a thing or two...

Cave-In was rewarded with small prizes, which we had to go up onstage to receive (to the chagrin, no doubt, of a Californian caver who had been telling everyone that he'd travelled further than anyone else to be there...).

The disco ran late into the night, and the firecrackers had reached a frequency of around one every thirty seconds, still accompanied by the whoops and yells. Ian and I spent an hour chatting to Ian Ellis, a British expat who runs a caving shop in Louisville, Kentucky and attends events like the Cave-In in his mobile shop, a converted school bus. My memory of most of the evening, though, is lost in an alcoholic haze. I do remember that Ian disappeared off in search of a sauna in the early hours, not to be seen again until next morning (yes, a portable sauna constructed from timber and polythene is provided; an idea here for future club parties, perhaps?).

Overnight there was something of a security scare when an outraged local resident turned up brandishing a gun, and the police had to be called to deal with him; an incident treated by the Cave-In staff as a minor nuisance.

Next morning the hot sun soon drove me out of my sleeping bag, while the still unconscious Ian remained for two more hours, oblivious to the oven-like temperatures inside the tent. By now, we had arranged to travel to Murfreesboro with the Phil Schwarz Caving Group for our next week's caving, so our stuff was loaded into their cars and we headed north.

The TAG Fall Cave-In is highly recommended as an intro to the US caving scene; everyone we met was incredibly helpful and we had several offers of future caving. It takes place around the middle of October each year, when the weather is still hot and sunny most of the time in the south-east. If anyone is planning a trip across the Atlantic and fancies caving in TAG, contact me and I'll give you the necessary addresses and 'phone numbers.

Caving in the USA

by Tony Baker

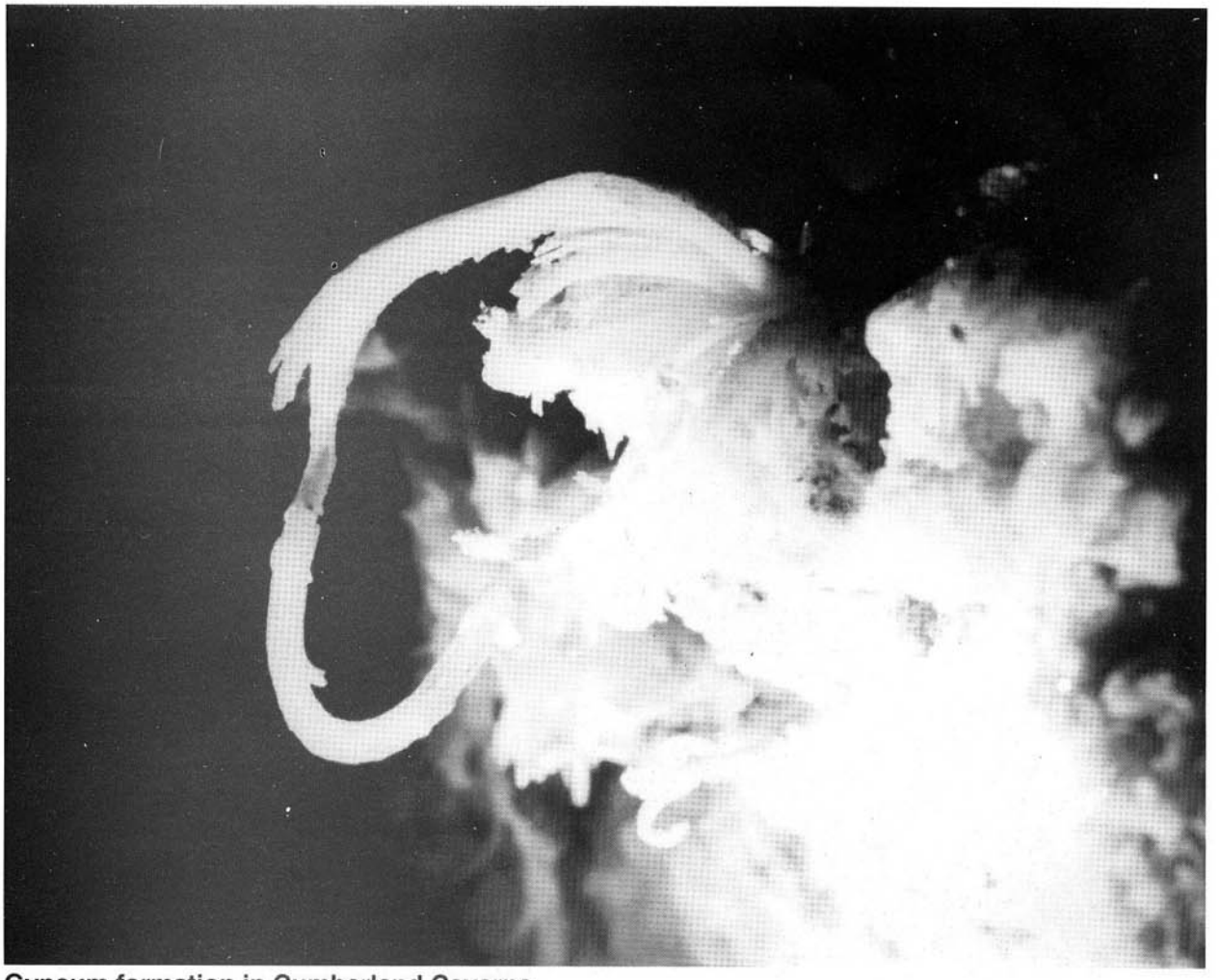
If you're reading this Newsletter from front to back rather than dipping into it at random, you'll already know that in 1990 Ian Anderson and I went on a caving holiday in the TAG area of the USA. I started writing the caving trips up as a straight diary piece, but it occurred to me that readers would probably find this rather tedious, so instead you've got a few photographs and my observations on how caving in America differs from over here.

Our first trip was to **Cemetery Pit**, adjacent to Interstate 59 - a major motorway - in Alabama. The parking place was on the opposite side of this road, so passing motorists were treated to the sight of five fully equipped cavers dashing across the lanes dodging the traffic; a bizarre start. The entrance to Cemetery Pit is an pitch of 153 feet (metric measures have not yet reached the USA), and we were rather disconcerted to see our American friends attaching their rope to rusty Petzl hangers which are permanent. We soon realised, however that if we were going to get any caving done, we would have to temporarily forget all we'd learnt at home; the Americans do it differently and you just have to fit in. They don't use re-belays, and are quite happy to leave rope hanging over a lip at the top of even the longest pitches. In their defence, their rope (mostly PMI) is pretty indestructible and the limestone shows more signs of wear than the rope; just takes a bit of getting used to...

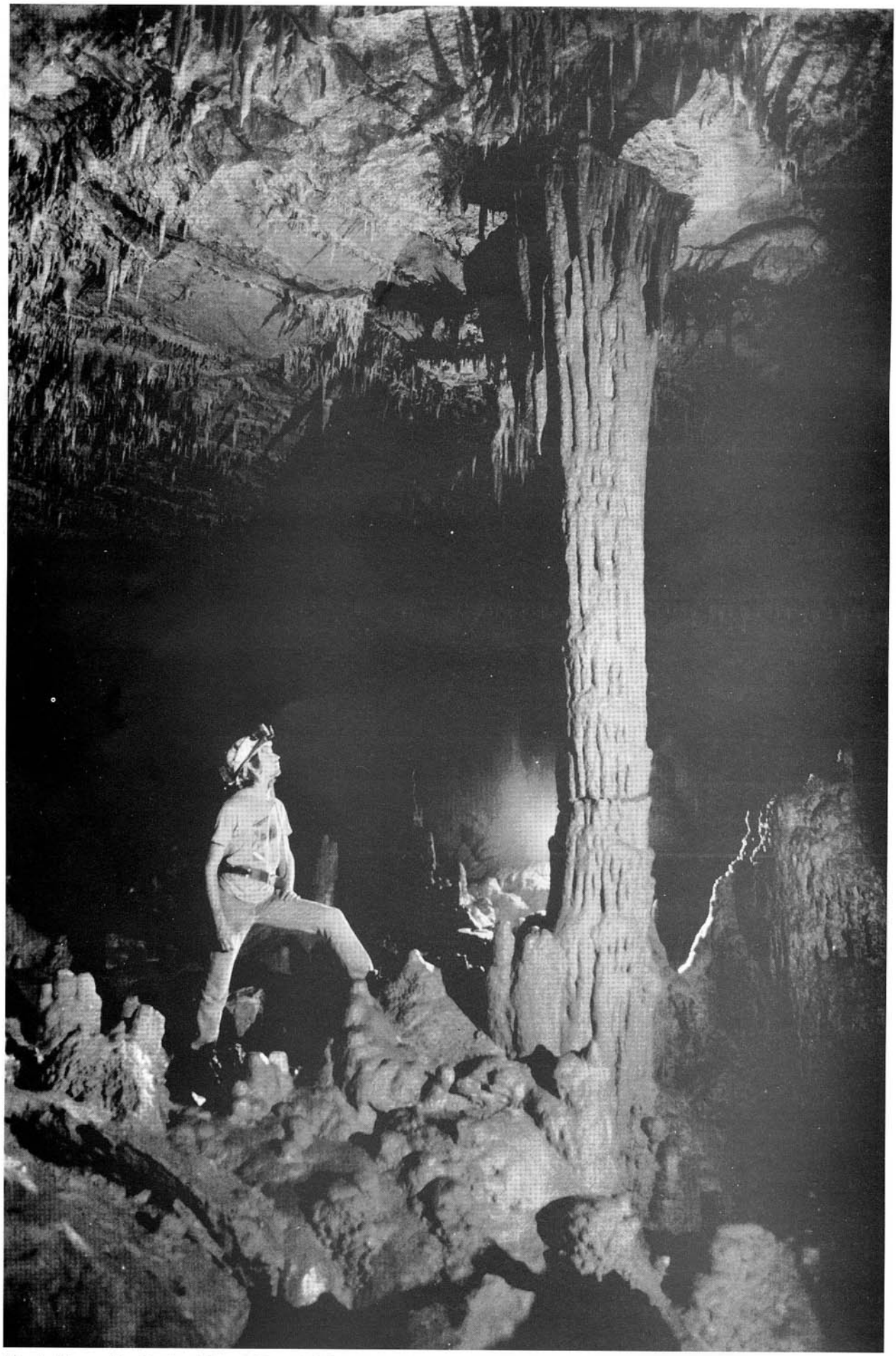
To fully appreciate the drastic differences in technique, you first have to realise that ropewalking techniques have been almost universally adopted across the Atlantic, and certainly in TAG. This is because they have a great many freehanging pitches, often hundreds of feet deep with no need for re-belays, and ropewalking is certainly less tiring on pitches of this nature. When you also consider that many caves have pitches only at the entrances, avoiding the need to carry the bulky ropewalking gear far when underground, and

Tommy Biddix in Herring Cave, Tennessee. **All pics: Tony Baker**

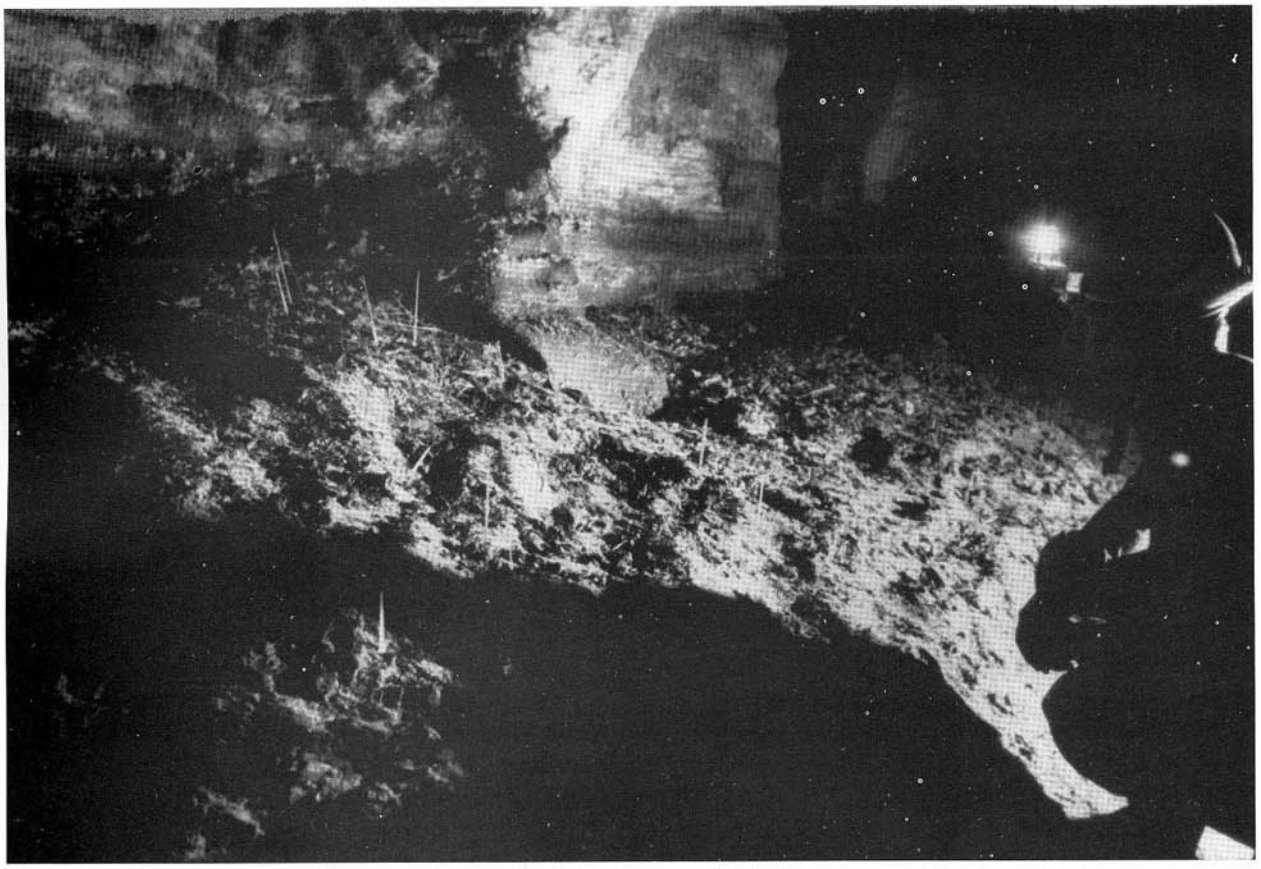
Changing for Thunder Hole, our first trip.



Gypsum formation in Cumberland Caverns.



Mark Moore in Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave.



Ian Anderson with gypsum needles in Cumberland Caverns.

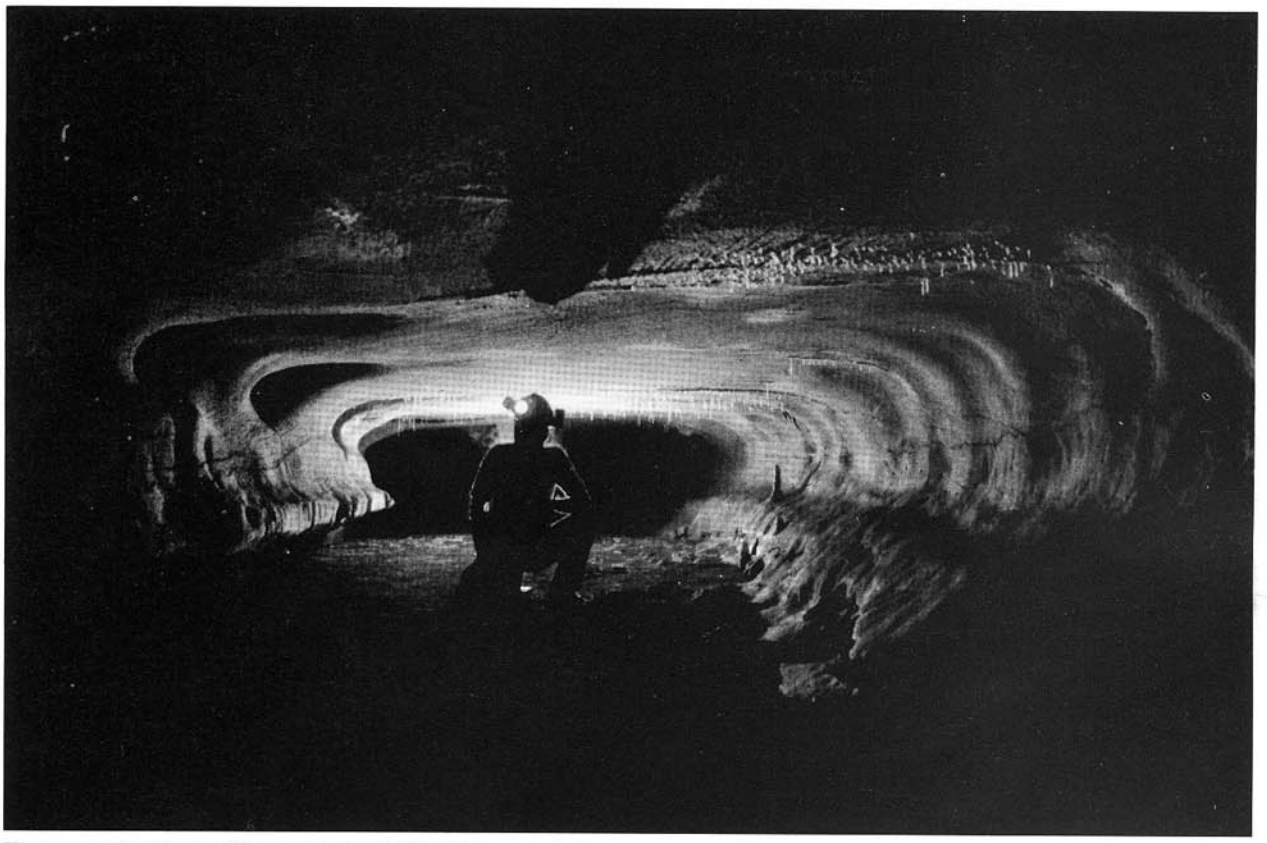
that the deep shafts of Mexico are within striking distance for cavers in the South-eastern states, you begin to understand their preference for ropewalking. Hence the rope they use has been developed to fit in with this style of caving. Everywhere we went, our "frog system" attracted curious glances, even downright incredulity when we visited sites with long pitches.

Anyway, we survived Cemetery Pit's entrance shaft, and set off to explore the rest of the cave; this in itself would be considered unusual by many TAG cavers, who cave only to "drop the pits" i.e. do the pitches, and don't bother with the rest of the cave. Cemetery was worth doing, though; there's over thirteen thousand feet of it altogether, and we saw a lot of it, ending on a landing with a view over a massive chamber, into which two waterfalls cascade from holes in the wall.

Another new experience was signing the register: bolted to the wall in the main chamber was a plastic tube containing a register, which seems to double as a caver survey by the National Speleological Society. You sign your name, grotto (club), number of trips per year and so on. Under the "Comments" section, Ian and I added "South Wales Caving Club On Tour 1990". The best thing, though, about caving in this part of the world is the warm caves. Most of the natives wear jeans and a T-shirt, while Ian and I were always comfortable just in Alpinex suits.

Apart from **Bigmouth Cave**, which was within the campsite at Sequoyah Caverns, our next trip was **Ellison's Cave**, an epic of such proportions that it warrants an article all to itself; you'll be able to read this in Newsletter no. 111.

Next up was **Thunder Hole**, a drive of an hour or so from the TAG campsite. As well as Ian and I there were five of our new friends from the Tennessee Central Basin Grotto. Reaching the cave entrance involved a stiff walk up a hill from the road, and it was at this point that we were warned of some of the other hazards of US caving. Firstly, there is poison ivy, which looks just like ordinary ivy until you touch it, when your reaction to it will vary from minor skin irritation like that from a stinging nettle to a major allergic reaction which can be life- threatening if your body really takes to it in the wrong way. Next are the snakes. Rattlesnakes and other nasty such creatures just happen to think that a sun-warmed crevice in limestone pavement is a sort of snake paradise, and don't take kindly to cavers. Other local snakes include copperheads, and cottonmouths - of whom canoeists are particularly fond. This (highly poisonous) character likes trees which overhang rivers, but being of a lazy disposition tends to hitch a lift by dropping onto anything which passes below...



Tommy Biddix in Yellowjacket Pit, Tennessee.

Yet there are still further hazards awaiting the unsuspecting caver. Marijuana, although illegal, is a popular crop in the South-east, and cavers stumbling around looking for their caves are prone to stumbling across closely guarded fields of the stuff. Cave entrances make good spots for keeping moonshine stills, a hangover from the Prohibition era, and just as closely guarded as the marijuana. And if the redneck farmers don't shoot you, a passing hunter just might; hunting is very popular, loosely controlled and you might not look much like a stag but could easily be mistaken for one if you move at the wrong moment. All of this makes walking up to Top Entrance on a wet Sunday sound rather attractive, doesn't it?

Thunder Hole turned out to be like a classic Yorkshire cave: a surface shaft leading to a succession of sporting pitches, although there wasn't as much water as the others were expecting. The survey showed a squeeze after the first pitch called Exhalation Squeeze, and we were rather disappointed to discover that it was clearly not going to allow anyone over five stone to pass. A wrong turn was to blame though, and Exhalation Squeeze itself wasn't anything like as bad. Once more, Ian and I didn't much like the rigging, especially the rub-points at the top of each pitch, but we tried not to look too closely. By the bottom of the fourth pitch there was plenty of water, making the trip a lot more sporting. The others, keen not to be late out for the party in the evening, set off out but Ian and I wanted to see more, so we headed off along the streamway towards the fifth pitch. We turned back after half an hour, but a later look at the survey showed that we'd virtually reached the top of the fifth pitch.

En route from the TAG Cave-In to Murfreesboro, we stopped off for a visit to **Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave**. This beautifully decorated short cave was discovered during the construction of a major road, and since the entrance is just a couple of yards from the roadside it's gated to deny non-cavers access. Most local caving clubs, sorry grottoes, hold a key. We spent an hour exploring the single large chamber and photographing the formations.

Next up was **Herring Cave**, close to where we stayed as guests of our friends in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This is a largish river cave, heavily populated by bats (three varieties are found in the caves here; Grey, Indiana and Pipistrelle). A low wet section at the end led to a final large chamber, sorry, dome. The most remarkable thing about this cave was how anyone ever manages to find it; although only fifteen minutes from the road, the route seemed to consist only of dense undergrowth with no semblance of a path.

The same evening, Mark Moore took Ian and I to **Snail Shells Cave,** twenty minutes from the town. A superb river cave, if slightly spoiled by the litter left by previous visitors near the entrance. The purpose of the trip

was to check up on a reported sighting of a rare type of salamander in the appropriately named Salamander Avenue. A thorough search revealed no trace of the beast, although we did see one or two of the more common types. American caves abound in wildlife; on other trips we saw cave crickets, the aforementioned bats, crayfish, and one occasion, a rat! A circular tour of the cave involved a swim at one point, concluding another fine trip. Flood debris, including some large logs a long way in, proved that this was not a place to be in wet weather, and there were also some spectacular formations in Venetian Avenue.

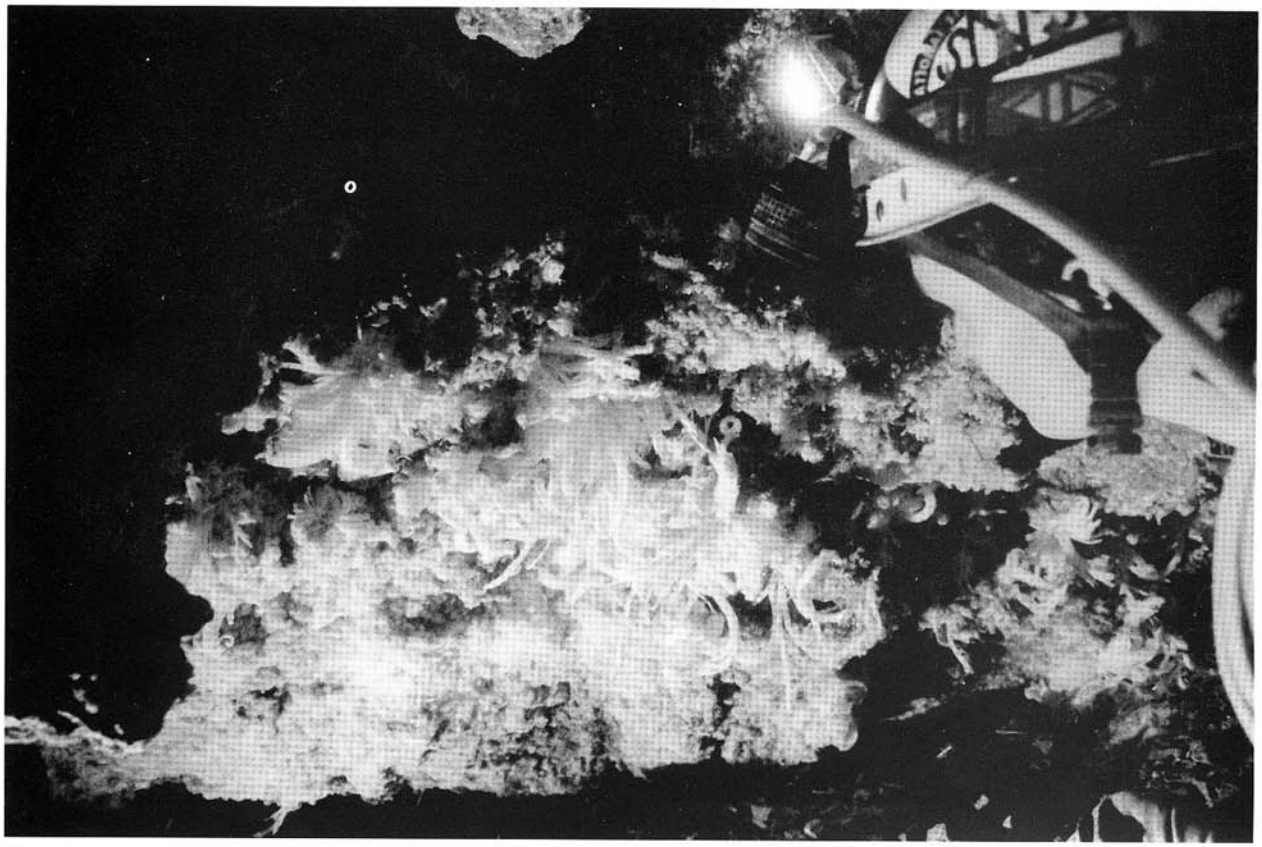
Our next trip was with Jeff Parnell, to **Bob Williams Cave** (no relation). On the way there, Jeff stopped off to show us **Black Cat Cave**, a small cave beside a main road which had an entrance chamber with a concrete floor; this dates from the Prohibition era, when the cave was used as a secret nightclub. Apparently the venture was never rumbled, despite its proximity to the main road. Bob Williams Cave was a twenty mile drive from Murfreesboro, located in a secluded valley. Landowner Preston Saddler was nowhere to be found, so we left a note to tell him we'd gone to the cave and set off. Inside the entrance, Jeff showed us pick axe marks dating from the Civil War, when the cave was used as a source of the saltpetre used for making gunpowder; such marks are common in caves in this part of the world. The purpose of this trip was to push some leads in a recently discovered area of the cave, and to survey it. Ian and I were only the 6th and 7th people to visit this part of the cave, which had been found a couple of months earlier simply by pushing a low wet section only fifteen minutes from the entrance. This demonstrates how relatively unexplored many of the caves in Tennessee are; if only finding new cave in South Wales was as easy...

At the far end of the extension I forced my way along a low wet bedding plane which unfortunately became too tight to continue, and we also climbed a number of small avens, all of which closed down. Exit from one or two of these involved some rather tricky manoeuvres, or simply jumping down and hoping! We then set about the survey, completing almost two thousand feet in a relatively short time thanks to some long straight passage.

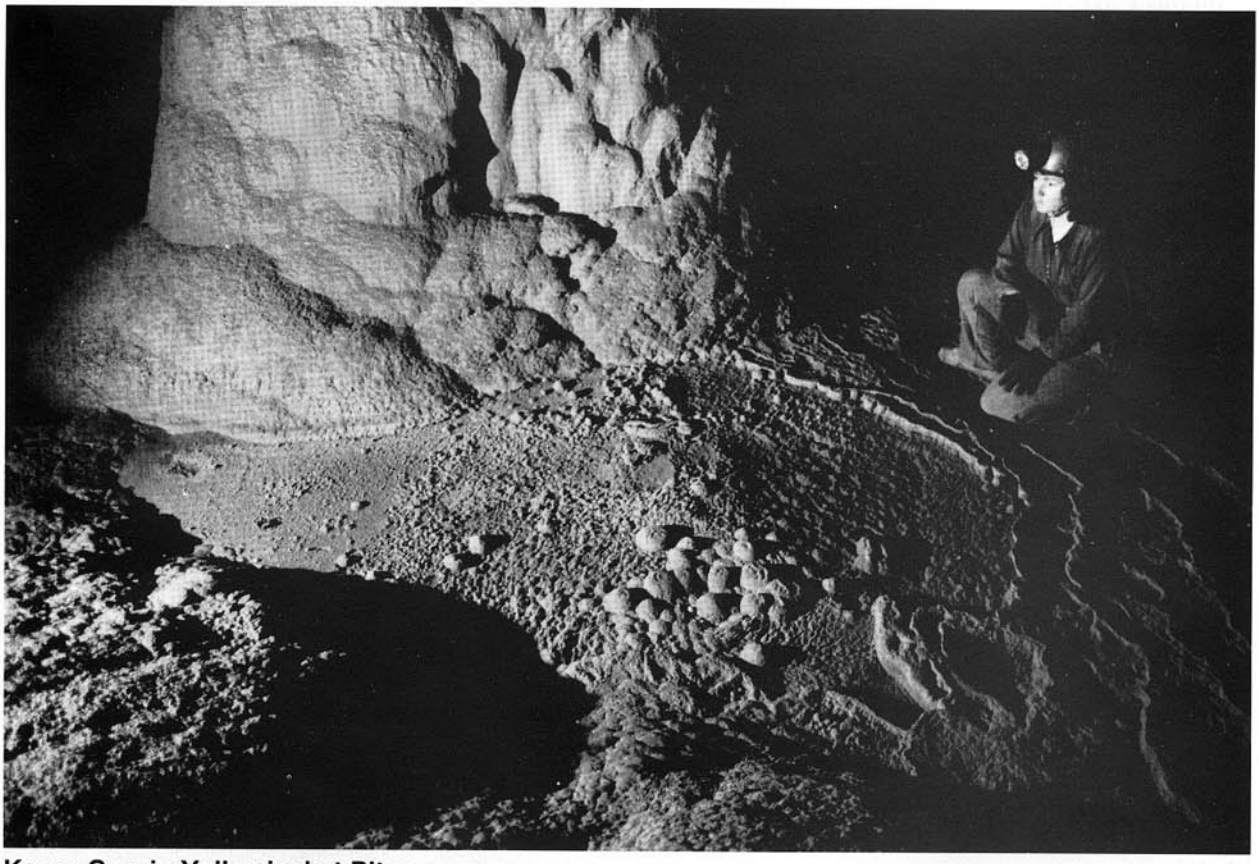
Afterwards Jeff showed us Saddler's Pit, a 100 foot shaft (sorry, pit) on the other side of the valley. Shafts like this abound in this area, and prospecting (ridgewalking as they call it) regularly turns up new discoveries. Tennessee already has around five thousand caves within the state, and the potential for yet more is incredible.

Another day, another caving companion. Don Lance took us to Cumberland Caverns, a show cave at McMinnville. Don's knowledge of the cave is

Gerry in Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave



Don Lance with gypsum formations in Cumberland Caverns.



Karen Carr in Yellowjacket Pit.

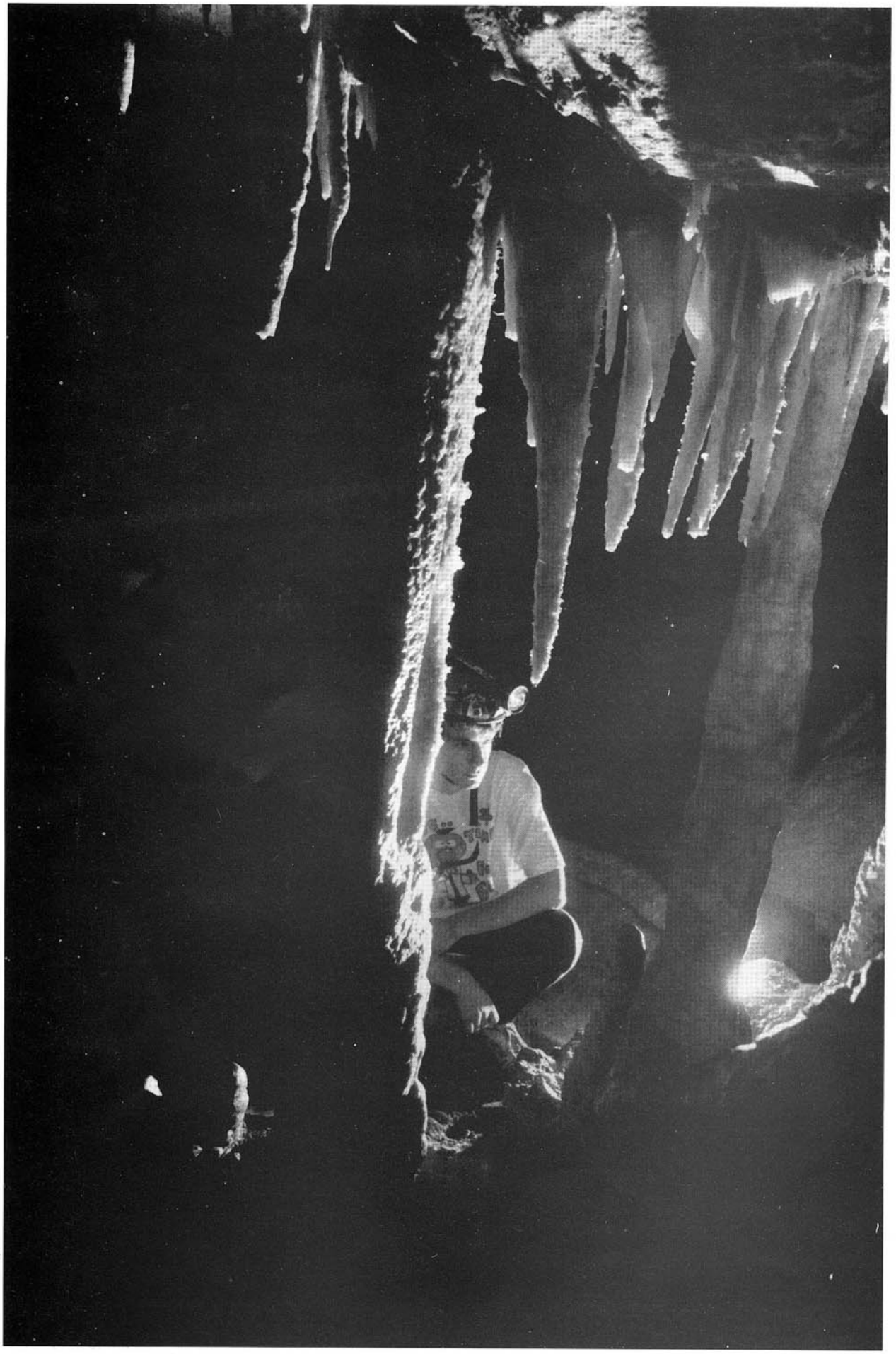
Tommy Biddix in the entrance of Yellowjacket Pit.

superb, as he used to work as a guide in the showcave which forms the first part of the system. Two of Don's mates, Johnny and Buddy, joined us, and after a quick chat with the showcave owner in his log cabin, we entered the vast showcave. Our trip took place in the evening, so we were alone in the cave. Cumberland Caverns is one of the largest cave systems in the USA, with a total of 27 miles of passage. It too had been used for saltpetre mining, and as a hiding place for moonshine equipment; in fact, much of the system was explored by the local Revenue Inspector as he combed the area for illicit stills. A massive chamber now houses a snack bar complete with tables, chairs and a huge decorative chandelier from a hotel in New York (held in the roof by a four inch expansion bolt).

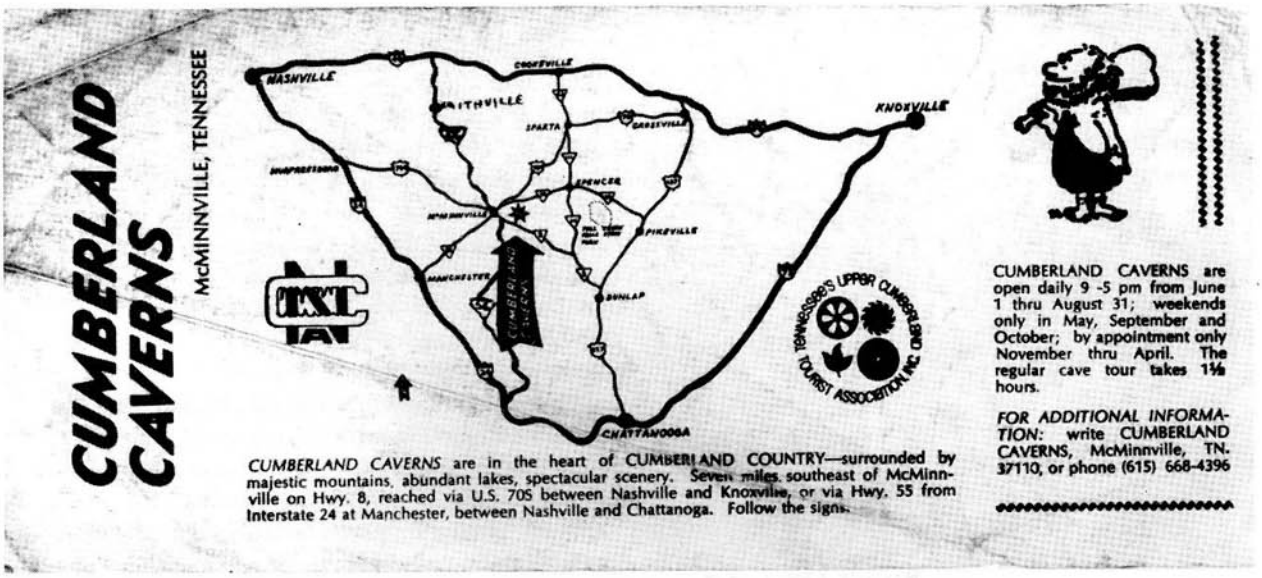
Into the section of the cave not seen by the tourists, there was gypsum everywhere - flowers, needles, and crystals. It was too much to take in all at once, and became more impressive the further into the cave we went. All of this section of the cave was found on one 26-hour trip by a local group in the 1950's. Finally Don showed us the Crystal Palace, a section of passage dripping with gypsum in every conceivable form. I took as many pictures as time would allow, before we set off out, stopping at the snack bar for a Coke. Don then ran the sound and light sequence which forms part of the guided tour - coloured lights and orchestral music with a commentary about the Creation. Typically over-the-top but enjoyable nonetheless.

Next day it was the turn of Jody Landrum to take us caving. Jody finished his night shift at the local Nissan factory, then met us for breakfast before driving us the fifty or so miles to **Camps Gulf Cave**. A massive entrance arch led past more evidence of saltpetre excavation to a huge boulder choke, the way through which was marked with orange spray paint arrows. This led up into the First Room, probably the biggest chamber I'd ever been in. As I tried to tell Jody about the Time machine in Daren Cilau, he explained that this was actually the smallest of the three chambers, sorry rooms, in the cave. The largest, the third, has over seven and a half acres of floor space.

Our carbide lights were useless in the vastness of these chambers, and even Jody's electric with a spot beam wasn't much better; we simply couldn't see any walls. Progress through the cave involved scrambling up and over breakdown, and finding the right route was a problem even for Jody, despite the fact that he'd recently been involved in surveying the cave. Past the Third Room, we entered a mud floored passage, 60 feet wide and 20 feet high, decorated by



Ian Anderson in Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave.



large mud covered stalactites and helictites. Occasionally we had to skirt round wide gloomy pools, until we came to one which Jody said wasn't worth traversing round as the passage didn't go much further.

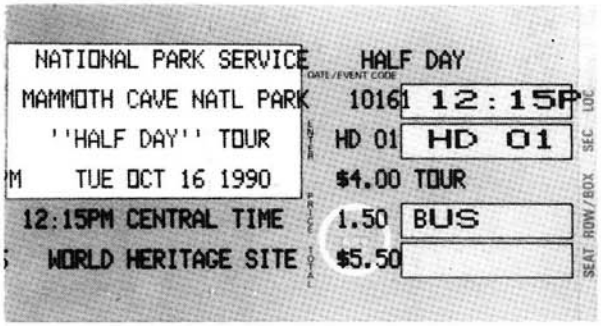
Ian had only two weeks off work, so next day he flew home while I went with Mark Moore to **Spout Springs Cave**, close to Murfreesboro. We squeezed through the low wet entrance, at which point Mark asked:
"Do you have rats in British caves?"
"No, why?"
"I just saw one up ahead..."
I tried to put thoughts of Weill's Disease out of my mind as we progressed along the low streamway. The end of the cave was a muddy boulder choke, and we spent some time trying to push it, to no avail. The rat made a re-appearance on our way out, but soon vanished when Mark lobbed a rock at it.

My next trip was to **Yellowjacket Pit**, with various members of the grotto. (Yellowjacket is a local colloquialism for wasp.) Here the reliance on SRT was amply demonstrated by the fact that everyone dragged rucksacks full of ropewalking gear up the hill, all for a 28 foot entrance pitch. My suggestion that a ladder might be more suitable for trips like this was met with curious glances - they simply don't use them. The cave was superb, however; extremely well decorated, with some fine sections of phreatic stream passage. The usual gear hassles held up my attempts at photography, but I persevered until it all worked.

I couldn't visit the south-eastern states without visiting the World's Longest Cave, could I? I hired a car and made the three hour drive up to Kentucky. The Mammoth Cave National Park encompasses all of the land above the Mammoth/ Flint Ridge system, and has been designated a World Heritage Site. It is very carefully controlled, and this care has paid off: it is an exceptionally beautiful area of woodland, and the famed fall colours were much in evidence.

So-called "wild caving" is available, but only by prior arrangement and at weekends. I was there midweek, so chose the longest tour available, the half-day through trip. I'd recommend it to anyone visiting the area; the guides are superb, and you learn a lot about this fascinating cave system. The tour lasted for four hours, and included a stop for lunch at another underground snack bar. As I've mentioned elsewhere in this article, the Americans have a history of using their caves, and Mammoth Cave is no exception. There is evidence that the local native American Indian population travelled a long way into the cave, at great risk, to collect gypsum for purposes which remain unclear. Saltpetre was mined here, too, and the cave was even the site of a hospital for tuberculosis patients, an experiment which failed dismally when all the patients were unable to cope with living underground. There are excellent books available, which document the history of this magnificent cave. Mammoth Cave and Flint Ridge were connected in 1972, making it easily the world's longest system at 144.4 miles, and it is still growing, as the Cave Research Foundation continue to explore ever-more remote areas of the cave.

There are lots of other showcaves in the area, but I decided that after Mammoth Cave anything else would be an anticlimax. I did, however, pay a visit to the entrance of Sand Cave, where a memorial to Floyd Collins marks the last place on the surface that he ever saw. Mammoth was, therefore, the last cave of my three-week trip, as on my last weekend I'd been invited to join other members of the Tennessee Central Basin Grotto on a trip to



Whitesides Mountain in North Carolina, an escapade you can read about in the next Newsletter.

The availability of cheap transatlantic flights makes caving in the USA a real possibility for anyone. Everyone we met was so incredibly helpful, and went out of their way to ensure that Ian and I enjoyed a memorable holiday. The caving was superb, but the USA is highly recommended even if you don't want to cave: it really is an amazing country. I'd like to finish by thanking all the members of the Dogwood City and Tennessee Central Basin Grottoes who made us so welcome, but in particular the following;
Kathy Mackay, Jim Youmans, Danny and Jeanne Wall, Bobby and Tommy Biddix, Karen Carr, Mark Moore, Jeff Parnell, Don Lance, Jody Landrum, Gerry, Tab, Clint Adams, Smoky Caldwell, Russ Born, Kathy Wallace, Billie Hall, Ed, Mike, Mike and the others from Ohio, as well as my brother Terry and his wife Cheryl for putting up with us for a few days at the start of our holiday.
Footnote: Newsletter exchanges have now been set up with both of the aforementioned grottoes, so you can read both *Georgia Underground* and *TCB Passages* in the SWCC library to keep up to date with developments in the caving scene of the south-eastern USA.

How To Do It

My flight cost me £359, which as the only major expense of a three week holiday isn't bad.
However, that was in 1990, and increased competition on transatlantic routes means that you can now go for much less. My parents regularly visit my brother, and have bought flights for as little as £200. 'Phone around the bucket shops for the best price (see the ads in the Sunday Times and elsewhere) and avoid travelling in the peak season.
Other expenses? Well, it all depends on how you want to arrange your trip. Car hire is relatively cheap, and we found it was better to 'phone around while out there rather than arrange hire from over here, although you can sometimes get good fly/ drive deals. We only hired cars on two occasions, each for a couple of days, but we were lucky that everyone arranged to transport us around the country; Karen Carr even took Ian back to Atlanta airport, a 300 mile round trip. Public transport is nowhere near as convenient as it is in the UK - everyone has cars.
Petrol is ludicrously cheap, as it's not taxed; I seem to remember paying around 65p a gallon.
Fierce competition between the rival national motel chains keeps accommodation prices low, too - a perfectly good room costs around £10-15 a night, and this price remains the same regardless of how many people share it. I only used motels when I travelled up to Kentucky, as we were offered accommodation everywhere else we went. Fast food is available absolutely everywhere, at any hour, and for low prices. There are lots of national restaurant chains which offer exceptional value.
We benefitted from a favourable exchange rate of around $1.95 to the pound, but the rate isn't a great deal less now. All in all, living expenses in the US are low.
As for arranging caving, the National Speleological Society's Directory lists all the grottoes and the individual members, so it's a ready made supply of contacts. It is issued annually, and there is a copy in the SWCC library.
If anyone is planning a trip to the USA, feel free to contact me for any more help or information.

For my trip up to Mammoth Cave, I 'phoned a car hire firm and booked a "small car". When I got there,all the small cars had gone, so they gave me this instead.

A Rescue Team for Mid-Wales

by Huw Thomas

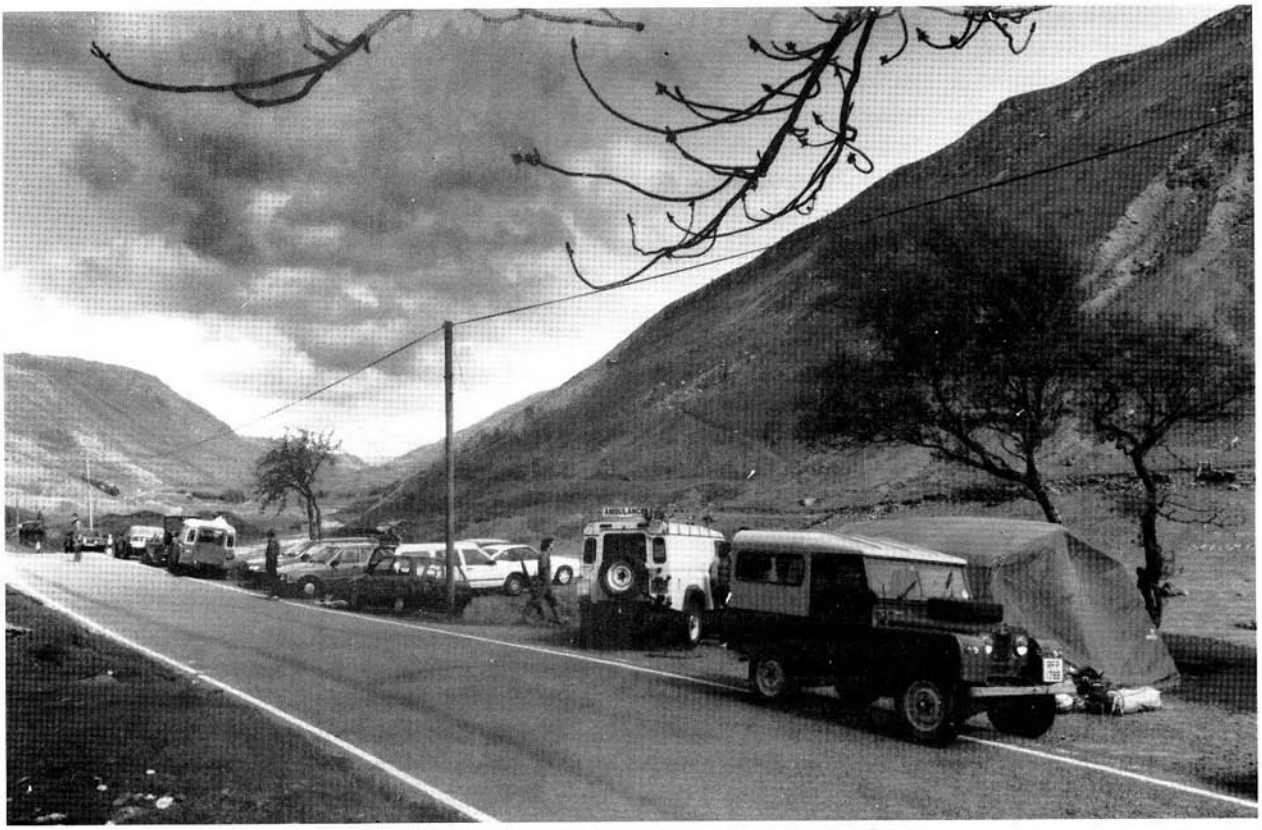
History

The idea to set up a mine rescue system for the Mid-Wales area has been around since the early seventies. Many clubs in the area did set up their own internal rescue cover, for example the old North Cardigan Mining Club (NCMC) (1966 - 1982) and the Aberystwyth Caving Club. The NCMC system did evolve into formal liaison with the police (1970) and a callout system involving local members of NCMC, South Cardigan Mining Club (SCMC) plus Aberystwyth CC and other mining personnel was tentatively established. However, no thorough foundations were laid down and with no formal backing from established CRO's the system eventually faded out as some of those people moved on. Some further moves towards rescue cover were made by the SCMC during the late seventies, but lack of personnel made any real organisation difficult.

During 1980 Alan Nutt (from Gwent CRT), along with the above mentioned clubs, began further attempts towards initiating a Mid-Wales rescue team, but after about 12 months the enthusiasm died mainly because the NCMC and SCMC had virtually dissolved and the members of the Aberystwyth CC had graduated and left the area. Aberystwyth CC continued its self rescue system throughout the 80's, as did the new North Cardigan Mining Group (NCMG) from its inception in 1987. Fortunately incidents have been rare and usually of a minor nature.

So from the late 80's to Dec 1990 a situation existed where two informal self rescue teams existed to serve their members in the first instance and through personal contact and communication to make available a moderate pool of manpower (including various "independent" mining enthusiasts) and equipment to respond to any minor incidents in the area.

The present initiative for the establishment of a mine rescue team came from the WBCRT, when one of its members brought the question of the current level of response to an SWCRO Executive meeting in December 1990. From this meeting both Brian Jopling and Bob Hall were asked to



Site of the summer camp at Cwm Ystwyth. **All pics: Tony Baker**

Brian Jopling (right) explains how the Ogofone works.

investigate the situation, to do some research and contact people acquainted with mining in Mid-Wales. The objective in mind was to set up a summer camp as a forum of discussion, with the aim of establishing a rescue service for the region.

From the outset, it was decided that since most of the mining area in Mid-Wales lay to the west of the A470 road (i.e. the geographical boundary between West Brecon and Gwent rescue teams), that the WBCRT would tackle the problem. As an interim measure, four SWCC members living in the area were appointed as wardens to set up a skeleton cover whilst research was carried out and contacts established. Many individuals were contacted by Bob Hall; Rob Jones, J Rowland, P Ward, M Moore, J Lister, H Forbes, G Horsley and many more, some of whom represented clubs active in the area (please forgive me if I forgot to mention you).

At SWCRO level, contacts were made with Dyfed-Powys police to inform them of the plans and interim callout arrangements, and contact was made with North Wales CRO to check on regional boundaries and to keep them in the picture. Ideas were also circulated for the establishment of a "forward base" of basic rescue equipment to be located somewhere in Mid-Wales and an inventory of present equipment held in the area was now in progress.

As a result of the research undertaken and the contributions from the aforementioned persons, a final circular was published, detailing the arrangements for a weekend meet in the Aberystwyth area. This took place on the 18th and 19th of May 1991.

The Summer Camp
The objectives of this get-together were as follows:

1. To allow members of the various organisations involved, together with interested individuals, to meet and to become better acquainted.
2. To allow persons not familiar with mines in Mid-Wales to gain some first hand experience of the area.
3. To provide an opportunity for individuals to learn more about mining, mine rescue problems, the rescue organisation and related matters.
4. To provide a forum for discussion as to the best way forward,and in particular to consider the issues include in the agenda for formal discussion.

Intended Participants
These included members of mining and caving clubs active in Mid-Wales, members of the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team, members of the Midlands Rescue Team and Shropshire Mining and Caving Club, representatives of North Wales CRO and any individual cavers/miners who have an interest in seeing rescue cover in Mid-Wales improved.

Diary of events
Friday 17th May
Meet in the Cooper's Arms, Aberystwyth from 21.00 to discuss the next day's activity etc..

Saturday 18th May
Meet Cwmystwyth at 10.00 Split up into small groups for various trips and look around area. Informal discussion during the day. WBCRT Land-Rover Ambulance attended and an opportunity to inspect and try out WBCRT tackle was created.

WBCRT tents were on site in anticipation of bad weather, and a field kitchen was set up with warm drinks and snacks available.
Return to Aberystwyth in evening. Meet in Cooper's Arms for further chat and social.

Sunday 19th May
Meet Cooper's Arms at 10.30.
10.40 Introduction remarks and welcome.
10.45 Rob Protheroe Jones : Some aspects of mine rescue.
11.05 Bob Hall : Technical solutions to mine rescue problems.
11.25 John Lister : Run-ins and collapses, a miners view.
11.45 Break
12.00 Bryan Smith : The Mid Wales Caving Club contribution.
12.20 Neal Rushton : Bad air and related problems.
12.40 Simon Hughes : The Devil's Viewpoint.
13.00 Break
13.45 Formal discussion session.

Agenda
1. What standing "action plan" should be adopted to determine how we respond to an incident?
2. How are callout lists to be maintained?
3. How is medical cover to be provided?
4. What are the tackle requirements and how are they to b e met?
5. How will we interact with NWCRO in the event of an incident in, say, Corris?
6. What are the training requirements and how are they to be met?
7. Any other matters relating to the provision of effective rescue cover in the disused mines of Dyfed and Powys.

Over the weekend, everything went pretty much according to plan. Saturday saw a pitch haul set up in Cwmystwyth mine, and the haul was done several times with different personnel to give everyone a chance to learn. West Brecon Team gear was displayed and demonstrated, and those not familiar with cave rescue techniques had plenty of opportunity to watch and ask questions, while those from WBCRT had a chance to assess the different problems posed by mines.

The meeting on Sunday proved to be a valuable discussion forum from everyone's point of view. Jem Rowlands chaired the session, which began with speakers who could contribute from their specialist fields.

Rob Jones, who was to have kicked off, elected not to speak as he felt that other speakers would probably cover most of the points he had intended to mention. He felt that the time saved would be more valuable for the discussion later.

Bob Hall then outlined some of the problems associated with mine rescue. He mentioned the poor quality of the rock, which leads to difficulty with finding good belays, as well as the potential for collapse. Loose rock on pitches creates a further hazard for casualties.
Belay problems are further exacerbated by the lack of good thread belays or jammed blocks, often present in caves, and the potential danger of using loose or rotten timbers. As alternatives he suggested Acrow props, old rails or good timber. Other, untested, ideas include modification of the anchor plate technique used on the Land Rover, or epoxy resin anchors currently becoming available.
As for the problem of loose and unstable rock on pitches, he suggested using a tripod arrangement similar to that used on surface shafts which keeps the casualty clear of the walls, or a "shear-legs" arrangement with guys and a backstay. As rope protection on pitch heads, Bob suggested lengths of alloy roller shutter, as used on a rescue in the Forest of Dean in the 1960's.
He then went on to outline a hypothetical callout situation, which illustrated clearly the need for good information and expertise to be made available rapidly in the case of a mine rescue.

Bob next tackled the issue of suitable stretchers for mine rescue. Cave rescue stretchers may not be ideal for the different circumstances found in a mine. Adits usually involve long walks with inadequate space at the sides, where carrying poles might be useful. Ultimate size reduction was not essential, but it was important that the stretcher offered good protection from falling debris. The ideal would probably be a hybrid of cave and mountain rescue stretchers.

Some discussion points were then raised, centred mainly on the problems associated with searches in mines. In particular it was pointed out that a collapse in mine may not change the look of the area in which it happened, as mines are often riddled with former collapses.

John Lister then went on to discuss collapses and run-ins, an area in which he has specialist knowledge, having worked in the mining industry for many years. He started by outlining the two causes of collapse; Firstly, there is the collapse around a cavity which has been caused by the creation of that cavity. This is unlikely to be a problem in old mines as most have stabilised, although subsequent weathering is a possible cause. Secondly, there is the collapse brought about by the failure of support, such as timbers rotting, shutes giving way or digging activity at the toe of a pile.

After a collapse, flow can occur, and wet rock or sand can flow a long way. A small failure can release a lot of material.
Digging through a collapse requires cover, but before beginning such a serious undertaking all alternatives should be considered. Digging is a slow process, requires experienced

personnel, a lot of timber, and a lot of manpower. Progress could be as slow as 1-2 metres a day, even with 24 hour shift working. Safety of rescuers must be a prime consideration.

John went on to outline the other requirements; different types of timber, bow saws, wedges, and experts capable of doing the job. Ventilation may be necessary in situations with poor air. Someone mentioned British Coal's rescue teams, but John said that this was not relevant as they would not work in old mines. Use of their equipment was a possibility, though. He concluded by saying that after a rescue involving digging, the tunnel created should be collapsed, to prevent a recurrence.

Bryan Smith was next to speak, and he set out to introduce the Mid-Wales Caving Club. He felt that as the club was only formed four years ago, they were very much the "new kids on the block" at this meeting. Although the club was ill-equipped to provide facilities for a major rescue, they were able to provide a "fast response" team prior to the arrival of others, as most of their members live in the area. They had held some small-scale practices, and had received some first aid training. MWCC was fast becoming known in the area, so it was possible they would be called first to any incident and could then involve other teams. They were developing a database of mines in the area, which had listed three hundred sites so far and included grid references, date of last working and so on. He concluded by saying that MWCC were eager to be involved and help with the provision of a rescue service in the area.

Neal Rushton of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club was next to speak. He is a mineral surveyor by profession, and is a partner in a mining consultancy. He discussed the problem of bad air. In Mid-Wales, explosive gases such as methane are unlikely to be a problem, but if a callout involved a coal mine the team should retreat as this was outside of our domain. He said that in rescue situations, the environment must be monitored to prevent further casualties; hard physical work doubles the consumption of oxygen and this contributes the state of the air. Initial signs of oxygen defiency may go unnoticed. As the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere decreases, performance decreases rapidly - a lamp goes out at around 17%, while unconsciousness leading rapidly to death occurs at 6%; normal level is 21%. Neal showed a diagram indicating the likely places where oxygen defiency may occur in a mine, and this highlighted the need for constant monitoring. Blind passages are the most likely danger spots.

He then went on to talk about the various detectors available. Sample tubes were considered useless, since they only show the oxygen percentage at the time the sample was taken. A flame safety lamp is better, but hot to carry. An approximate cost of £50 made them affordable but there are various problems. An oxygen defiency meter was really the only answer; they are effective from 1% to 100% concentrations, with alarms set at various levels. At around £500 they are expensive, especially when you consider that regular calibration is necessary, but they are robust and worthwhile compared to the cost of a human life. In mines, three toxic gases are likely: carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide. All three give the same warning signs, including headaches, but no rescue team should go underground in a mine without environmental monitoring. Bob Hall also pointed out that as oxygen rises, the oxygen deficiency meter should always be carried with the casualty rather than in a top pocket. Oxygen equipment would be available for rescue situations, and is sometimes used anyway for casualties with breathing difficulties. Brian Jopling mentioned that in Yorkshire, the CRO have formed a specialist team who are receiving training in the use of breathing apparatus.

Simon Hughes then took up "The Devil's Viewpoint". He is an experienced mine explorer, with 25 years involvement and an extensive knowledge of mines in the area. He spoke of the problems of liaison with the police, who will often call the fire brigade, who are inadequately equipped to deal with underground incidents. The police must be made aware of the existence of a rescue service, and contacts maintained.

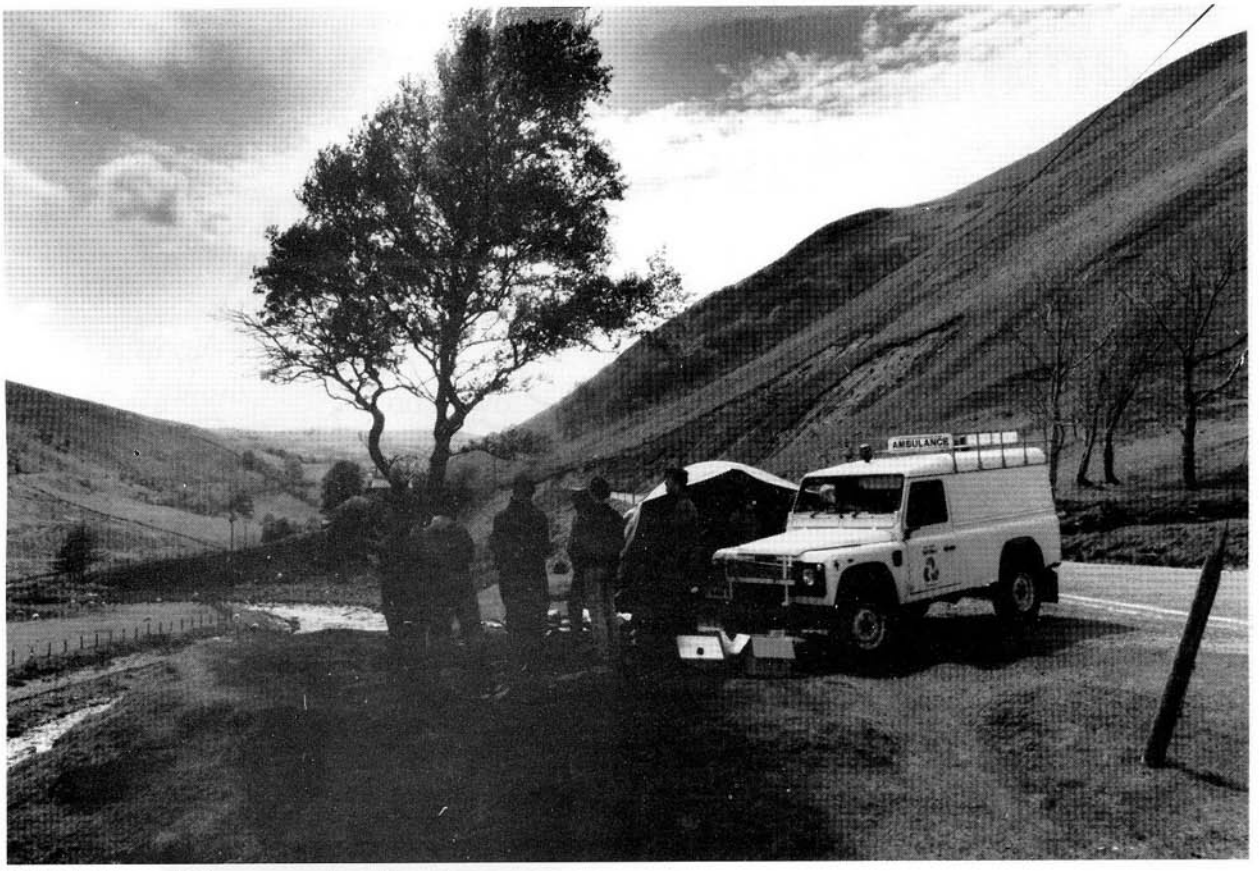
There were many potential problems in the Mid-Wales area, with hundreds of unrecorded trial and satellite mines. There was also the possibility of incidents occuring at surface sites such as gorges, to which the team could be called. It was important to keep accurate records of collapses and other changes in frequently visited mines. Clearly some sites were more liable to produce callouts than others, with Cwmystwyth the most likely, but large scale maps and a register were proposed to make accurate information available.

Discussion

A discussion then followed, to give everyone the chance to contribute. Bob Hall started by asking if there was sufficient interest in the Mid-Wales area to form a team. It was agreed that there was, but that this had been tried in the past and had been poorly co-ordinated. Bob suggested three options:

1. A totally autonomous Mid-Wales CRO
2. A Mid-Wales team within SWCRO
3. A Mid-Wales sub-group within WBCRT.

The first and second options were probably not practical, due to the lack of available manpower. Option 3 was the most likely, with the intention to build on this and achieve more independence. Brian Jopling commented that British Cave Rescue



WBCRT Land Rover was in attendance.

Council membership and recognition was essential for any team, due to the need for insurance and access to the police at a high level. Stuart France added that the stucture of SWCRO could easily be changed to accommodate a Mid-Wales team.

Bob Hall said that a good local callout list should be started and maintained, and training meets organised both locally and based at Penwyllt. John Lister added that while several SWCC members who lived near the area had been proposed as wardens, he felt it would be better if local people, with good local knowledge, took on this role. Bryan Smith said that appointing wardens would start a snowball effect, which would lead to a team forming naturally. Bob Hall added that the creation of local wardens would solve the problem of the callout list, as they could start and maintain a list.

Next came the problem of providing medical cover. A local ambulance driver, and two local doctors, had been approached and were interested. Other caving doctors were not far away. As the nearest mountain rescue centres were some way away, an alternative source of items such as strong analgesics would have to be found.

Housing equipment was the next item to be dealt with. It was agreed to ask Peter Harvey if he would provide a base for some equipment at Llwernog. Others offered shed space at their home in the area. As to the equipment needed, telephones, first aid kits and a stretcher were identified as primary requirements.
Next, the possible involvement of the NWCRO was mentioned. Back-up cover could be provided by their members, and a shared callout list was another possibility. A joint practice, at a venue such as Corris, could be arranged, and future training sessions with the NWCRO added in future. Training needs had to be identified, and it was suggested that those interested could attend WBCRT practices.

The meeting concluded with the appointment of four wardens for the Mid-Wales area; Peter Ward, Simon Hughes, Jem Rowlands and Hazel Forbes. The need to establish a database was restated, and the forthcoming inaugural WBCRT AGM was mentioned as another opportunity to further discuss the issues.

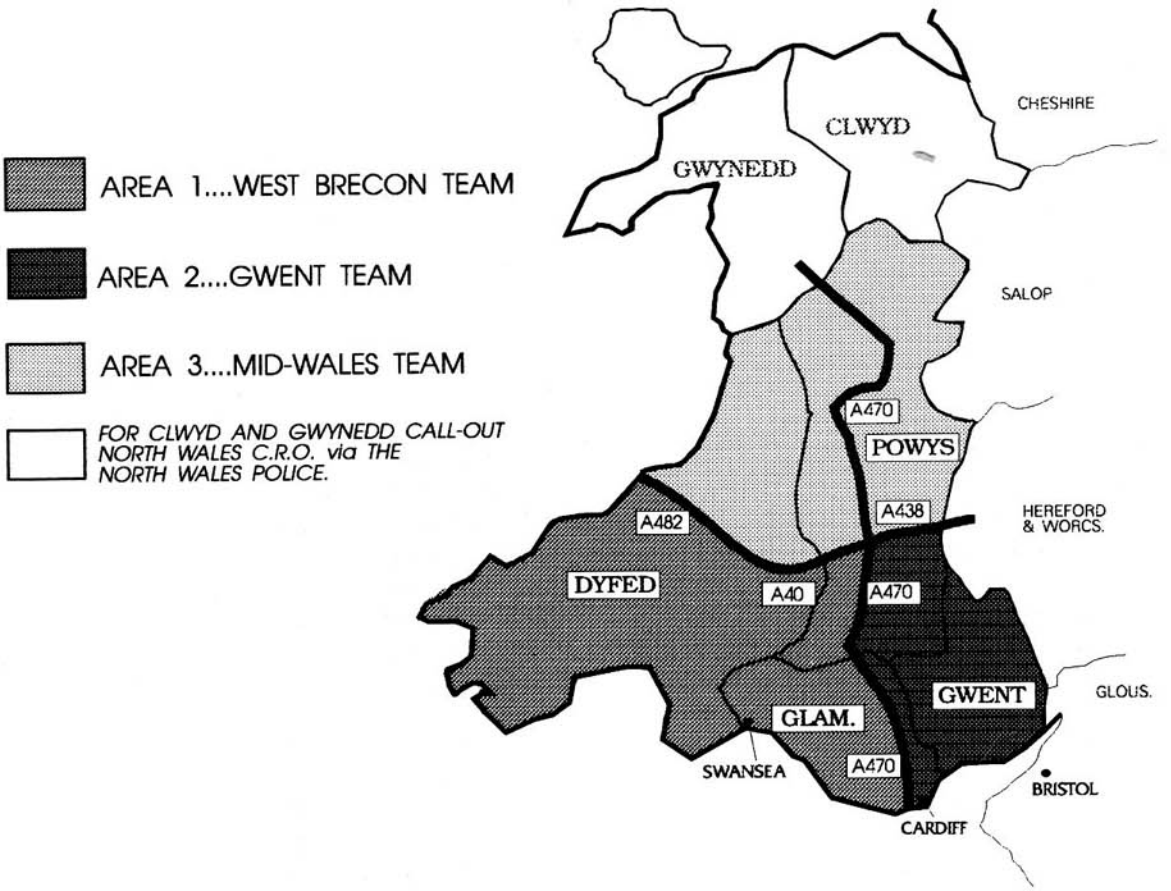
Aftermath
Due to the successful weekend, various Mid-Wales personnel were given the impetus to choose their own wardens and begin the steps towards constructing a callout system.

Given the success of the WBCRT AGM, the elected Executive of thenewly constituted West Brecon Team appointed and endorsed the four new wardens for the Mid-Wales area, and Peter Ward and Bryan Smith were elected onto the Executive. Due to the wording of the new constitution it was not possible for the other Mid-Wales wardens to sit on the Executive, but they were informally invited.

The regional boundaries of

SOUTH WALES CAVE RESCUE ORGANISATION

CALL-OUT AREAS



the callout map for the SWCRO area was redrawn and the Mid-Wales team was defined.

During the rest of 1991, various workshops and practices were held to acquaint Mid-Wales wardens and personnel with West Brecon equipment and techniques. The wardens are now constructing their own callout lists and laying down the structure of the team with the police and other authorities.

Other rescue teams were contacted; NWCRO, Midlands and Shropshire and a dialogue was established towards the aim of providing an effective rescue service for the area.

On the equipment side, the initial idea of a forward base was agreed and various WBCRT members drew up a Mid-Wales Grant Proposal which sought a sum of £18,000 to equip the team.

Some firms were targetted, but the main thrust will take place from August 1992 when it will be WBCRT's turn to apply for the Sports Council Grant.

As for the future, it is obvious that the roots have been well laid down, and given time and success with funding then things should develop nicely since the right people to do the job are in place. The WBCRT constitution has now been altered to allow Mid-Wales wardens on the Executive. The police are now acquainted with the new structure and we can now provide an effective cover for the area, with substantial back-up in equipment and manpower from other teams.

Finally, I guess that many people who go mining in Mid -Wales must feel a lot happier now than they did 18 months ago and our thanks must go to the people mentioned in this report, the people who attended the summer camp and to any others that I forgot to mention.

(Huw Thomas is SWCC Rescue Officer and a WBCRT Warden.)

Report on the summer camp weekend by Tony Baker.

The Origin of Modern Humans

by Melvyn Davies

The Origin of Modern Humans, and the Impact of Science-Based Dating.

Back in February a two-day conference was organised by the Royal Society in London; it cost the earth but I smashed open my money box and went along. The agenda mentioned caves several times and it turns out that most of the evidence for our origins comes from caves.

After Dr. N.J. Shackleton had set the scene with his oxygen isotope stratigraphy based on deep sea cores, Professor Schwarcz from Canada described how his uranium-series dating of modern (as opposed to archaic) human remains from the caves of Kebara and Qafzeh in Israel had shown that our line goes back more than 100 000 years. So what, you may say. Well, that archaic specimen Neanderthal Man was around as late as 40 000 years ago, so they were contemporaries. Professor Aitken of Oxford then talked about dating burnt flint, and Dr. Joanna Mountain discussed the use of nuclear DNA polymorphism. If you are still with me, you can see the problem; did the two species of humankind mix, fight, or interbreed? And are we the result?

Other speakers then took up the story; Professor Deacon from South Africa has studied isolated modern human populations like the Bushmen, and has theories about how they arrived at their part of the dark continent. He has excavated in Border Cave and Klasies River Cave, and his slides were excellent. Dr. Hublin of Paris then described his work in Morocco where mining had revealed some human bones. His skulls could not be considered "African Neanderthals" although they looked a bit primitive to me, but they were older than the classical Neanderthals of Europe. Although "modern" they dated from the periods 90-125 ka or 105-190 ka (thousands of years ago). Professor Bar-Josef of Harvard, USA followed with a sparkling address referring to the caves of Skuhl, Qafzeh, Tabun, Shanidar and Zuttiyeh in Western Asia. The analysis was complicated and he showed clear slides of hearths with coloured ashes in the caves which reminded me of my own excavations in Kendrick's Cave on the Great Orme. Dr. Stringer, whom I assisted in the Bacon Hole excavations in Gower, then spoke followed by Dr. Mellars of Cambridge, Dr. Brown of Australia, and Dr. Smith, USA. I cannot give all the details here, but the problem was unresolved - why was there an overlap between archaic and modern man lasting thousands of years? Are we descended from Neanderthals, or did these successful but ungainly people form a branch of their own from basic Homo Heidelbergensis?

Strangely enough, no-one mentioned Pontnewydd Cave where an archaic fossil was found not long ago. Perhaps we should dig a lot more in Clwyd and Gower caves. After seeing the worldwide spread of humans (and Neanderthal Man *was* human), I'm sure they are there. Don't forget, if you find bones, tell *me* first!

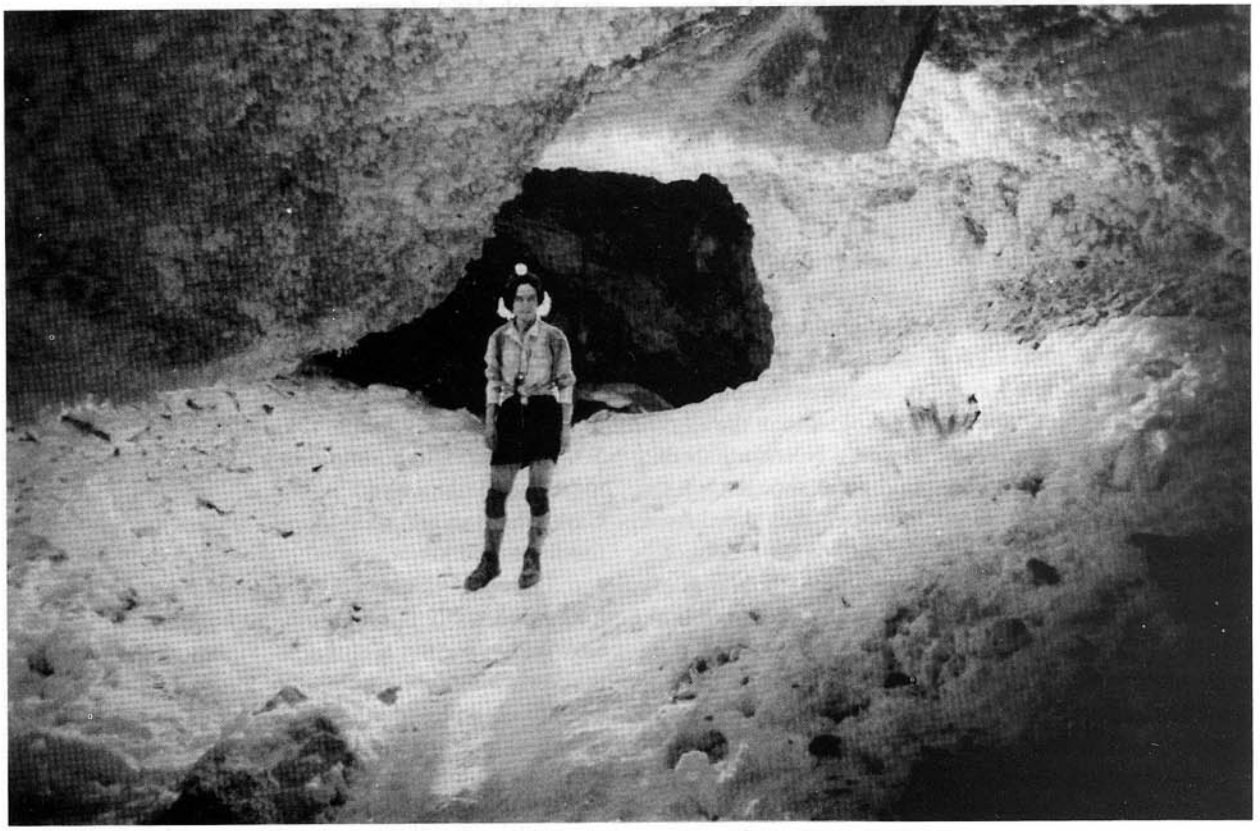
A Trip to Lechuguilla

by Mike Coburn

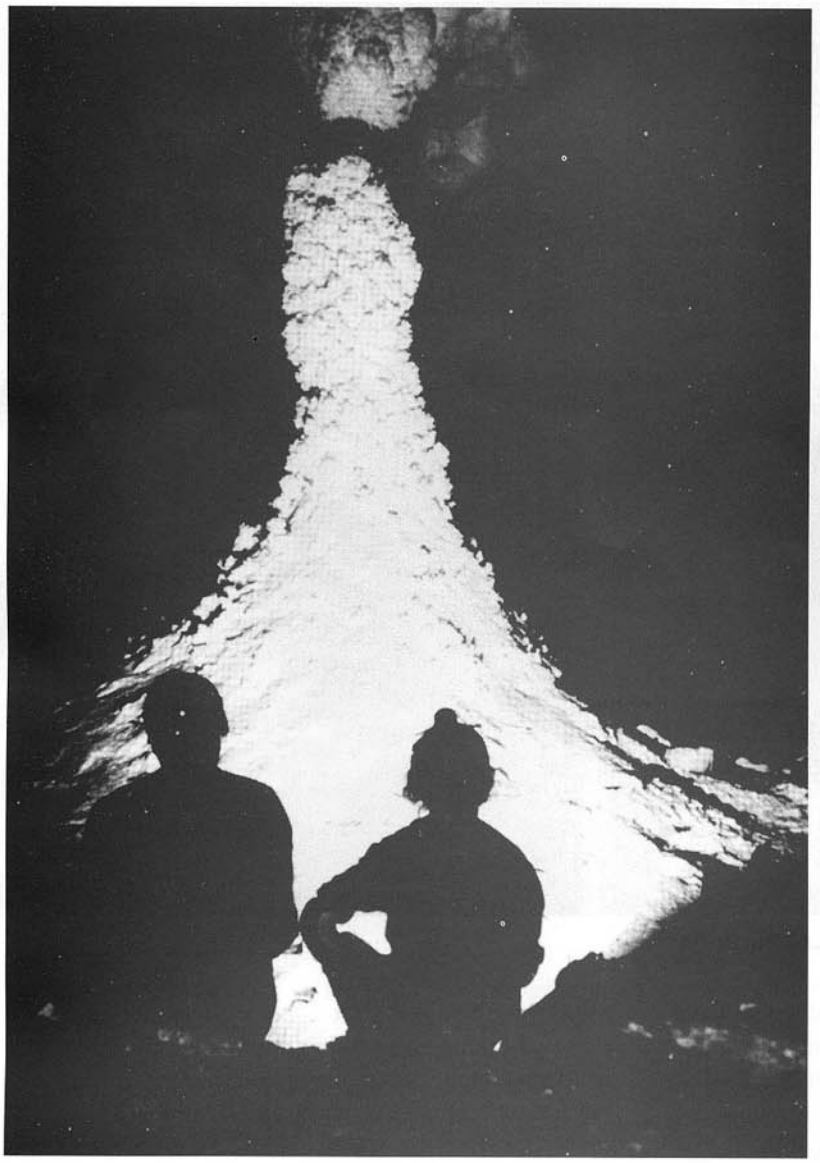
Last northern summer ('91) a kiwi friend and I visited Penwyllt, and after caving and a little tramping and diving we headed out to New Mexico where we had scored a trip into Lechuguilla. After a quick trip to the non-tourist parts of Carlsbad Caverns, to acclimatise us to caving in shirt sleeves and to do a basic bug-bagging for beginners course, we drove the few miles to Lechuguilla.

Our party, consisting of Sue and myself and two American cavers -Cal and Dick - were going to the western borehole region for three days and we had a list of chores to do and a pack of scientific equipment to carry. This cave is a major shock to anyone brought up on Welsh and New Zealand caves. Imagine if you can a cave that is warm, dry, roomy and user-friendly. Throw in the fact that it is amazingly beautiful, and a chap could easily be spoiled for the roughy-toughy caves of the real world. Luckily, perhaps, there are a few snags. First of these was the amount of water that has to be carried into the caves, plus the fact that all wastes have to be carried out. The second snag was having to wear a gas mask through the first parts of the cave, to reduce exposure to histoplasmosis spores. It all added, however, to the exotic nature of the venture, and I have an abiding memory of Sue rotating on the entrance rope looking like Darth Vader. Soon enough we cached the masks and started serious caving. The cave temperature is 68 F which is great until any exertion is called for, when the cave thermostat goes haywire.

The rigging also looked a tad agricultural to our eyes, but on closer examination the ropes were so stiff that a few rub points seemed to have little effect on them. At the 160 foot boulder fall pitch Cal's pack sling broke and his personal gear crashed to the bottom. This split open his packets of raisins and kitty litter, but after a little sorting both were still usable. It also split one of his water bottles, which drew the comment that the mishap could have been worse on the way out, when the water bottle would have been in use as a urine bottle. As we went deeper the cave became more unbelievable; at Glacier



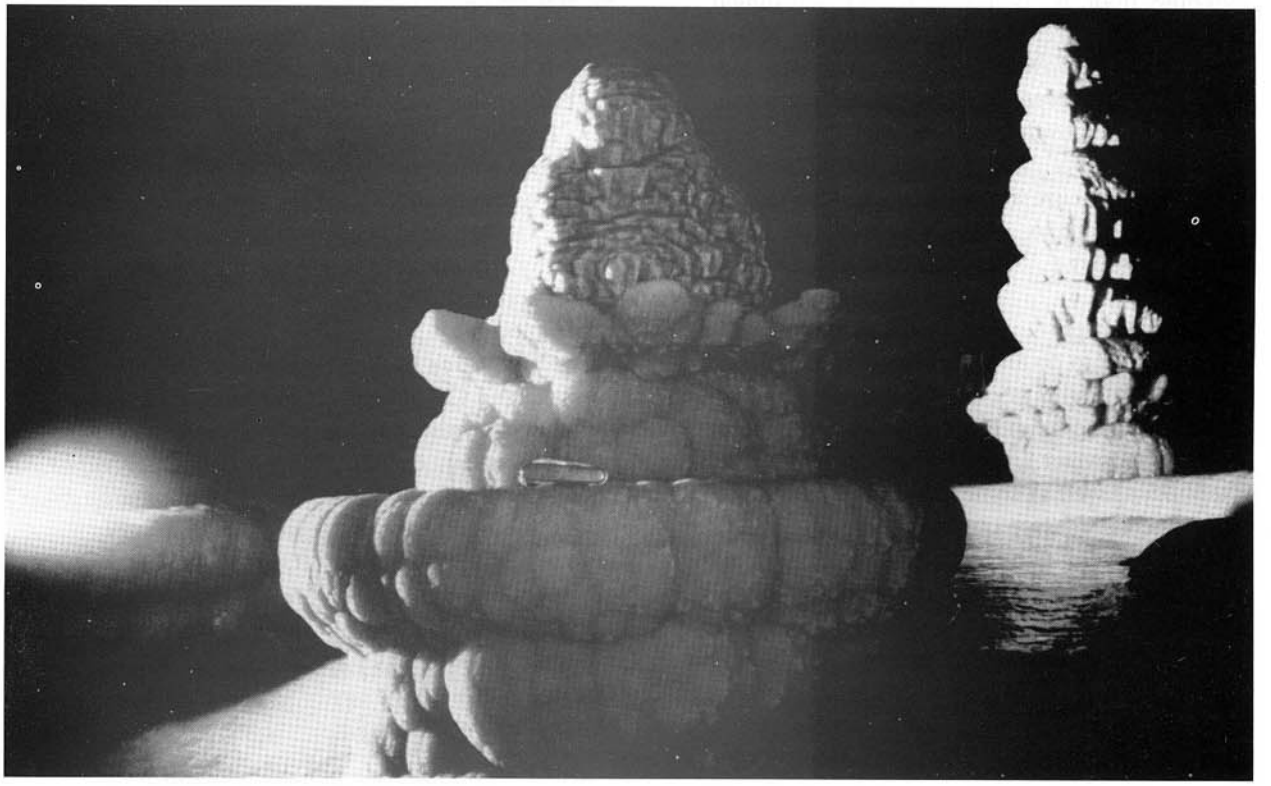
Sue near Manifest Destiny, surrounded by gypsum crystals.

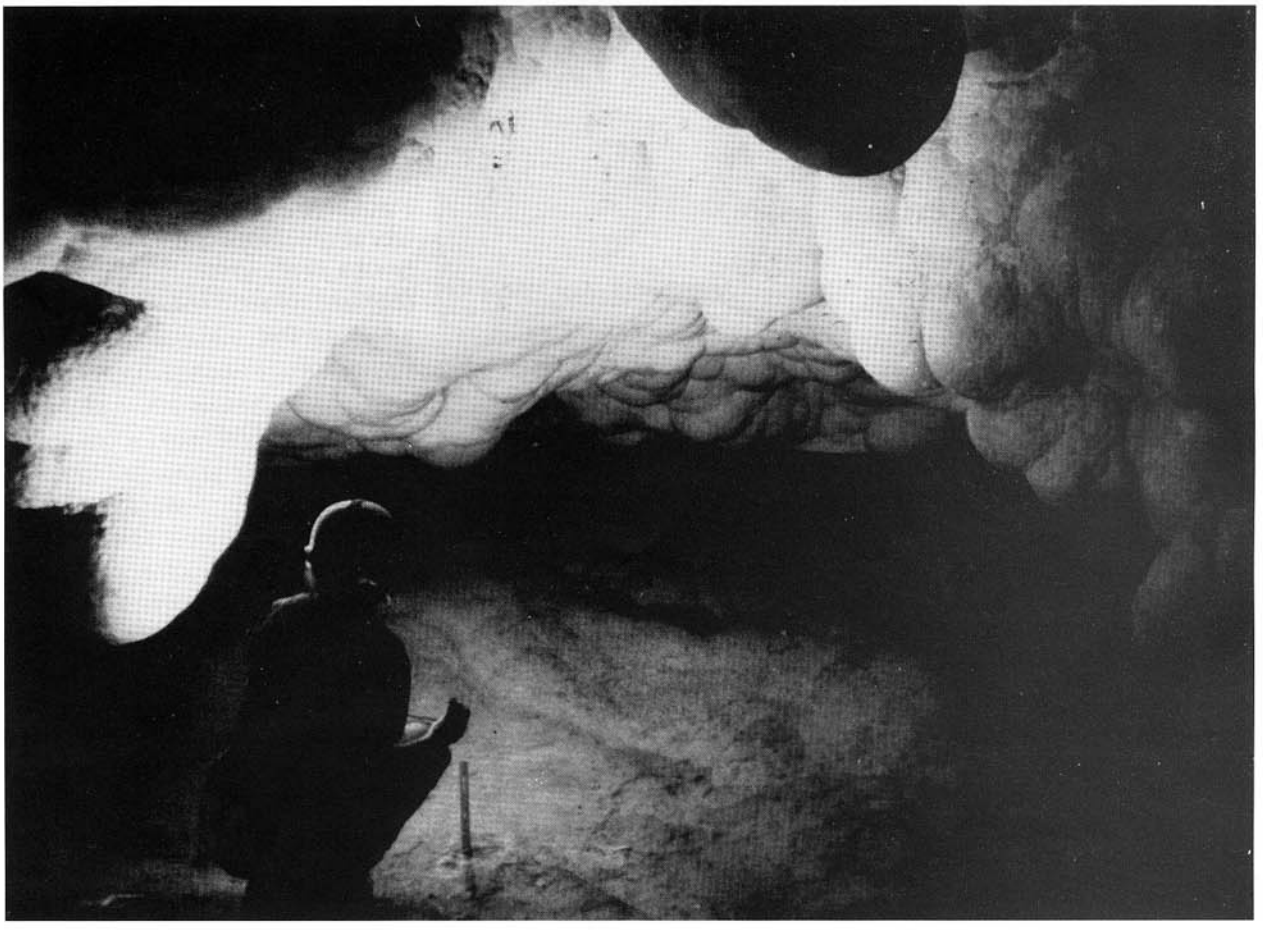


Left: Sue and Cal at the Leaning Tower of Lechuguilla.

Below: In the Oasis Pool, Western Borehole. Note the Swiss Army knife (centre), placed for scale on the formation.

Photos by Mike Coburn.





Lake Passage, our water hole in Lechuguilla

Bay there is Massive Gypsum, with huge gypsum 'bergs seeming to rise out of the floor. Down in the western borehole, floor, walls and roof alike are covered in thick gypsum "snow". The stuff even squeaks underfoot like powder snow, and trails throughout the cave are marked with tape to minimise damage.

We stopped at pre-arranged sites to do all the usual scientific things; temperature and humidity readings and water sampling, as well as some more unusual ones. Sometimes we had to collect samples of the brown stuff which overlays the white in parts of the cave. In any other cave this would be called "mud" and would have been washed in from outside, but in Lechuguilla it is apparently formed by bacterial and fungal action on the rock itself. This fascinating substance is called "corrosion residue" by the scientists and "gorilla shit" by the cavers. Between stations we had plenty of time for sightseeing and photography. We saw the sub-aqueous helictites, the crystal chandeliers, the oasis pool, and more unusual and beautiful sights than you could poke a stick at.

After two days and nights underground we started back and immediately someone turned up the thermostat, probably Cal's Lechugorilla who seemed to get the blame for most things. Nothing untoward happened on the way out until climbing into the culvert below the entrance pitch we noticed a message on a piece of tape. It read; "Beware of the rattlesnake in entrance pit". Dick had earlier enlivened a meal break by telling us about an occasion when he'd been bitten by a rattler, and it hadn't sounded like a fun experience at all. I nervously passed back the message and Cal agreed that they sometimes fell down the entrance shaft. "It makes them as mad as hell, too" added Dick unnecessarily. At the top of the culvert was another warning, and suddenly aware of my bare legs I shuffled across the pit holding my caving pack out in front and panting into my Darth Vader mask. I never did see the rattler, but there is no doubt which of us would have been the more frightened had we met, and it wouldn't have been the snake. That's the first time I've ever felt safer on an SRT rope than off it. Outside, it was 3.00 am in the desert, and the end of a memorable caving trip.

Editor's footnote:
For more information about the cave, and loads of superb photographs, see the Lechuguilla book and the National Geographic magazine, April 1991, which are both in the club library.

Doing the Dirty Work

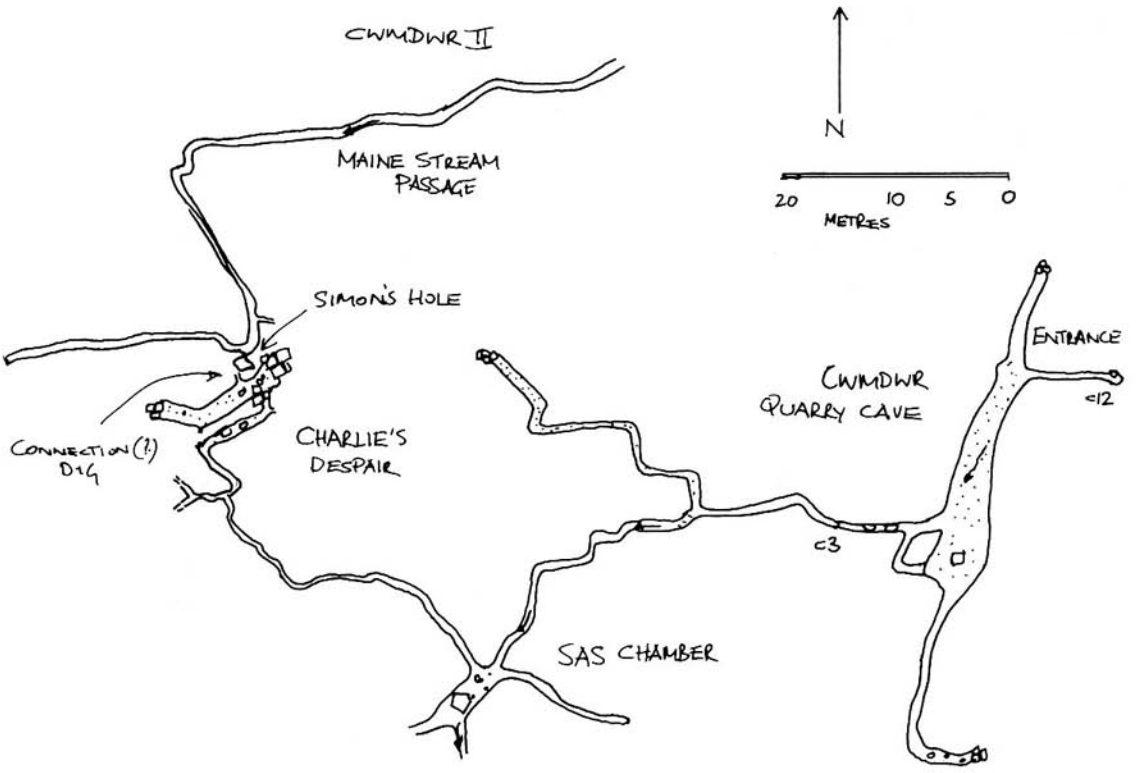
by Malcolm Herbert

Surveying in Cwm Dwr and Ogof Ffynnon Ddu

Introduction.
This article will hopefully provide some background to the surveying work that has been undertaken in certain parts of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. While the work was originally started as part of my research work into the use of computers in cave surveying [Herbert 1991] it has grown into a lot more than that and hopefully will accurately map a significant part of the OFD system.
The cave passages surveyed are of three distinct types -
1. New, unsurveyed passages - such as the Anniversary Aven series.
2. Incorrectly, or believed to be incorrectly, surveyed passage (circa 1969).
3. Passage that needs to be re-surveyed to connect survey series of the other two categories.

Survey Methods.
The main impetus for this survey work has been to provide three dimension data in a digital format, and to this end a specific method was adopted to achieve the best results. The surveying was carried out within guidelines set out by the BCRA [Ellis 1976], and generally to a level of Grade 5C. Also to help with centre line accuracy survey legs were not over 10m and they were kept as near to the horizontal as possible. When surveying steeply sloping passage - not uncommon in OFD - it is best to step survey, recording verticals and horizontals as the passage drops. As the clinometer reading can introduce the largest errors it is best to reduce them by staying close to 0 or 90 degrees as possible. There are other considerations which can improve the quality of the computer output, including the position of junction stations. These are discussed in detail in [Heller 1983].
The parties were ideally three people, one person using the compass and clinometer, one person with the tape, measuring centre line and passage dimensions and one person recording. It is apparent that the recorder must have some artistic flair as this will enable some accurate recording of cross sections. The centre line data is processed by a computer program, OgofMap [Herbert 1991], that is run on the mainframe at the Polytechnic of Wales. The data is read in from a text file where the data is stored in raw format, ie compass, clino and tape for the centre line and left, right, up and down for the passage detail, and processed into three dimensional NGR coordinates for each station.
With the centre line various loops in the survey are processed by the program, which alters the stations in the loop depending on the closure error, before then changing the co-ordinates of all the stations which are dependent on the loop stations. This subject of cave survey loops has received a fair amount of press [Kelly and Warren 1988] and this method is one based on least squares, where the closure error is distributed around the loop according to the length of the centre line leg in the loop. This is not perfect and hopefully in the near future some way of allowing for the accuracy of each survey leg can be built in. A survey leg of high accuracy , ie in Cwmdwr Jama, should not be adjusted as part of a loop closure, while a leg in the Entrance Series might be fairly short, but inaccurate. As is common in surveying some sections of the cave survey will have to be deemed as 'fixed', while the remainder is processed.

Surveying Programs.
The SWCC has currently three different survey programs processing the data; SMAPS, Surveyor88 and OgofMap. While I have used all three programs there has been no evaluation carried out and this could be seen as being vital before much more work is carried out in storing digital data from Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. An OFD Survey Working Party could be set up to enable the club to manage and store the data in future years as this is too complicated to be undertaken quickly or by an individual. Stuart France has made a start in setting up a data standard enabling all these different programs to handle data developed and processed on another system. This



Cwm Dwr II

work is vital as it could mean wasted effort and a lot of rekeying.
Considering there are three survey programs at SWCC and at least three others in use in South Wales there is plenty of scope for disaster. Stuart and myself have already had some discussions about our inpit formats and I am working on a convertor to enable my data to be used by the SMAPS system and vice versa. To enable easy use of survey data it is vital that the information held is in the "raw" format, i.e. compass, clino and tape. This is the age of Information Technology and it could be hoped that we will not have a repeat of the 1969 survey situation, where we will be resurveying again in 2012. It is hoped that the surveyors in South Wales Caving Club will play an important part in setting up these standards at all levels. There could, in the near future, be some developments with the BCRA Electronics group starting discussions about setting up national standards for cave surveying data for computer use.

Surveying Work Carried Out.
All the surveying work has been carried in the Cwm Dwr area of the OFD system. Some of this survey work has been already published [Herbert and Langford 1991] but is included in this report as some additional work has been carried out since.
The various survey areas can be divided into the 3 categories already mentioned;
1. New Passage - Upper Piccadilly, Tapioca, Aniversary Aven, Cwmdwr II, Cwmdwr Jama side passages, Charlies Despair, Cwmdwr III.
2. Incorrectly surveyed passages - Nether Rawl
3. Linking sections - Smithy to Piccadilly, Cwmdwr Crawl.
All this survey work has not been carried out by us alone and I gratefully acknowledge the sources of the data in Surveying Trips section below.

Surveying Trips.
Trips carried out by us with various helpers.

20.10.90 **Upper Piccadilly** Malcolm Herbert, Andy Freem, Pete Francis

31.12.90 **Nether Rawl, Chert Passage** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Jenny Peat

16.02.91 **Chert Passage, Aniverary Aven** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Sue Mabbett

02.03.91 **Smithy, Piccadilly, Heol Eira** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Pete Francis

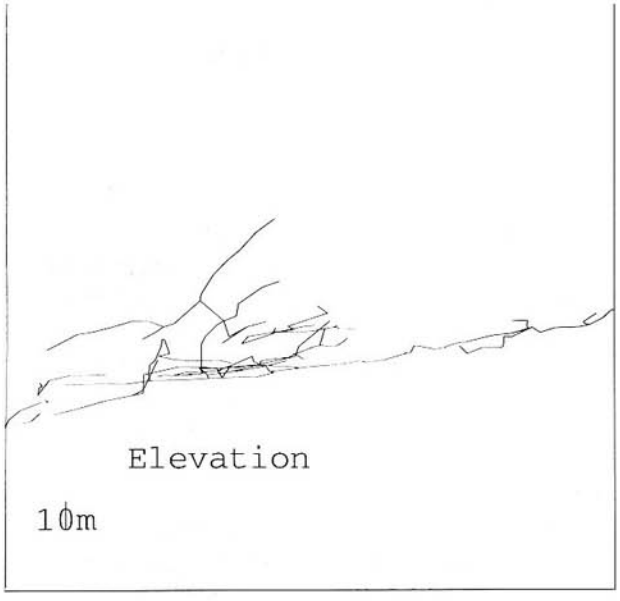
02.03.91 **Anniversary Aven** Ian Anderson, Steve West, Matt Ward

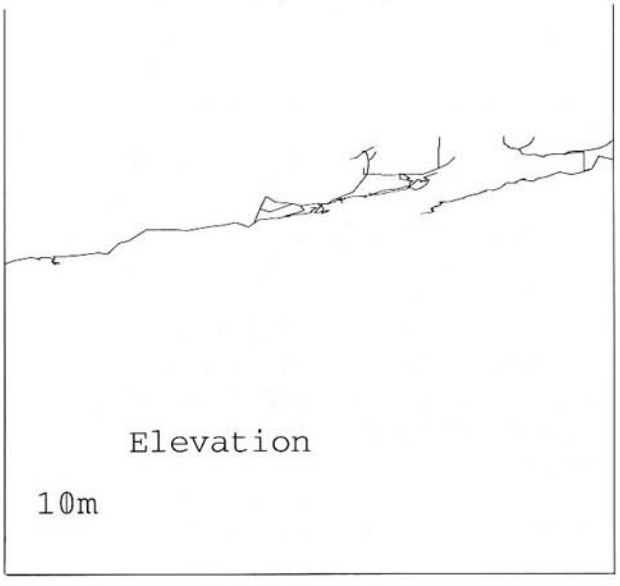
03.03.91 **Cwmdwr II (1938 Series)** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Ian Anderson

20.04.91 **Cwmdwr II (1991 Series)** Malcolm Herbert, Iain Miller, Steve West, Matt Ward

10.08.91 **Cwmdwr Entrance Series** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford.

11.08.91 **Cwmdwr Entrance Series**





Plan and elevations of Cwm Dwr and Cwm Dwr II.
Centre lines only, looking west.

Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Alex Robson

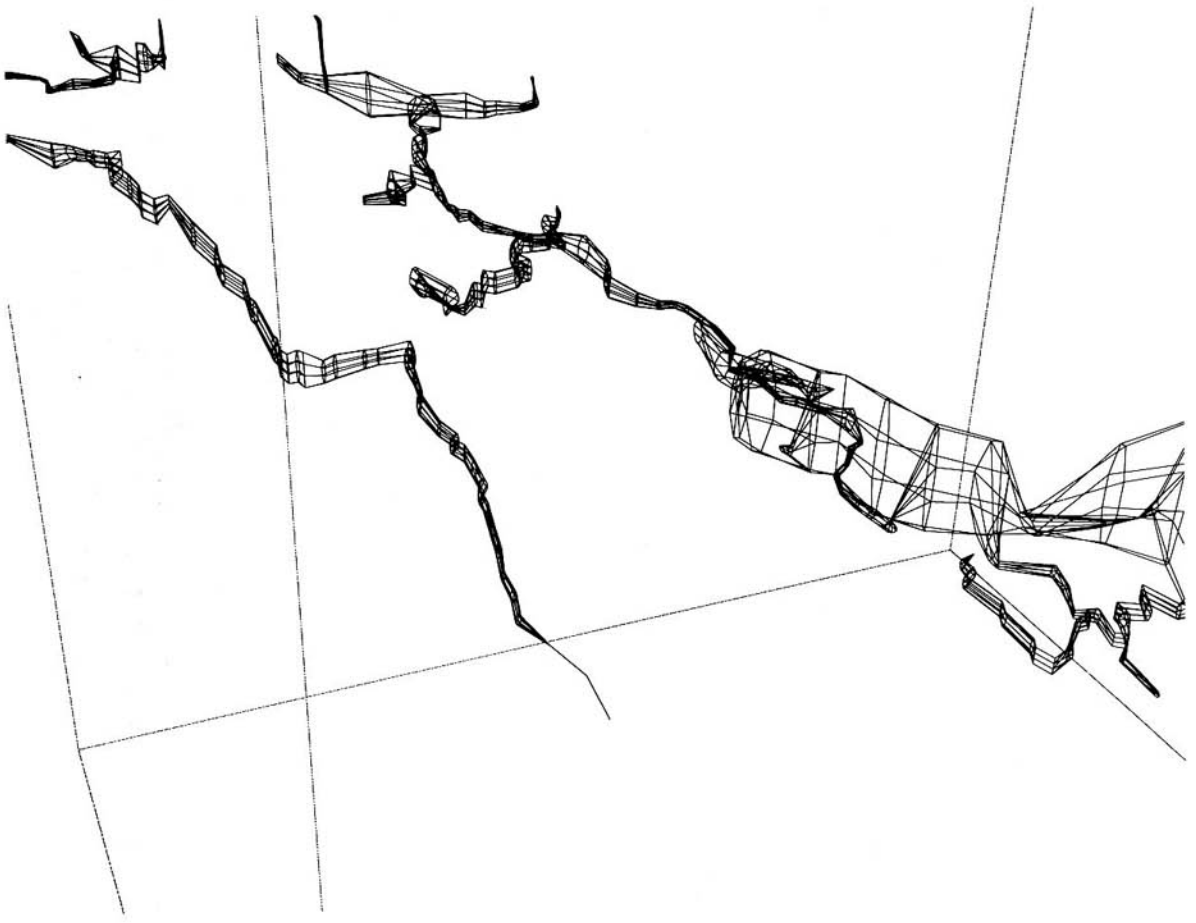
01.09.91 **Cwmdwr Jama Choke** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Alex Robson

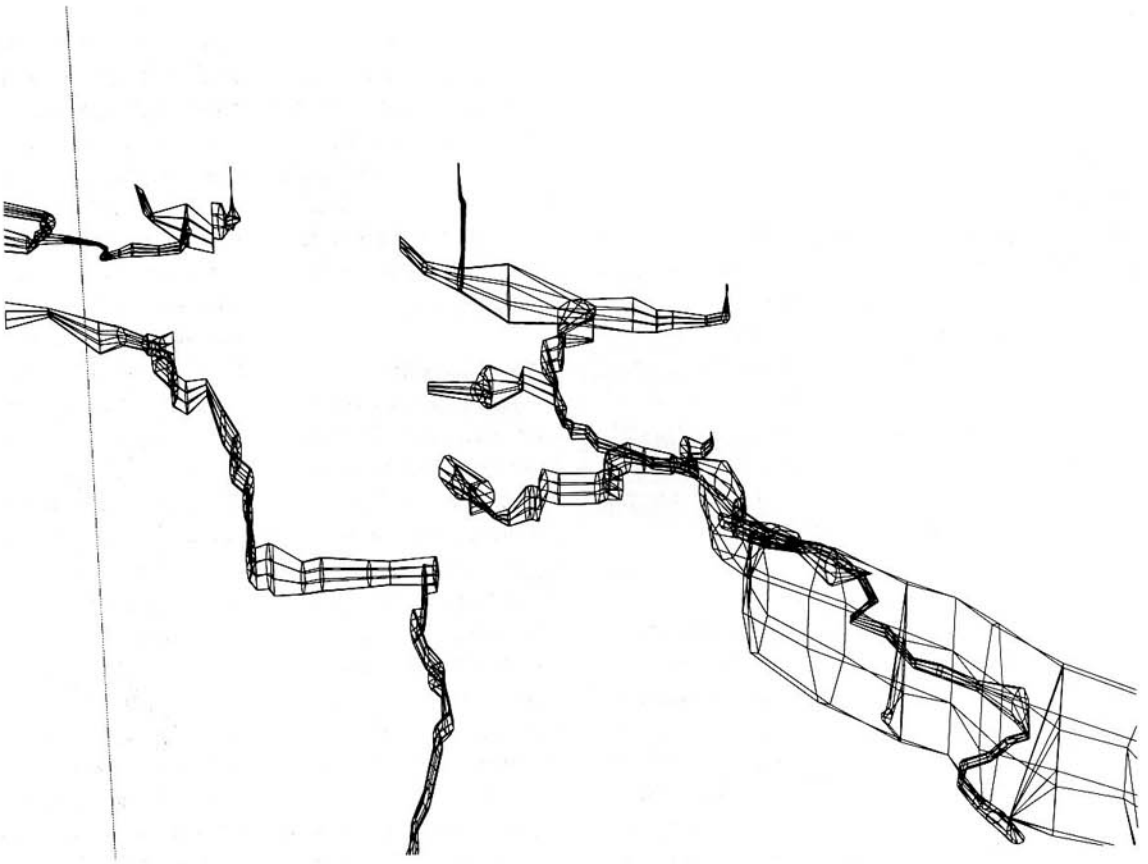
20.10.91 **Cwmdwr Jama to Boulder Choke** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Pete Dobson, Dai Bancroft.

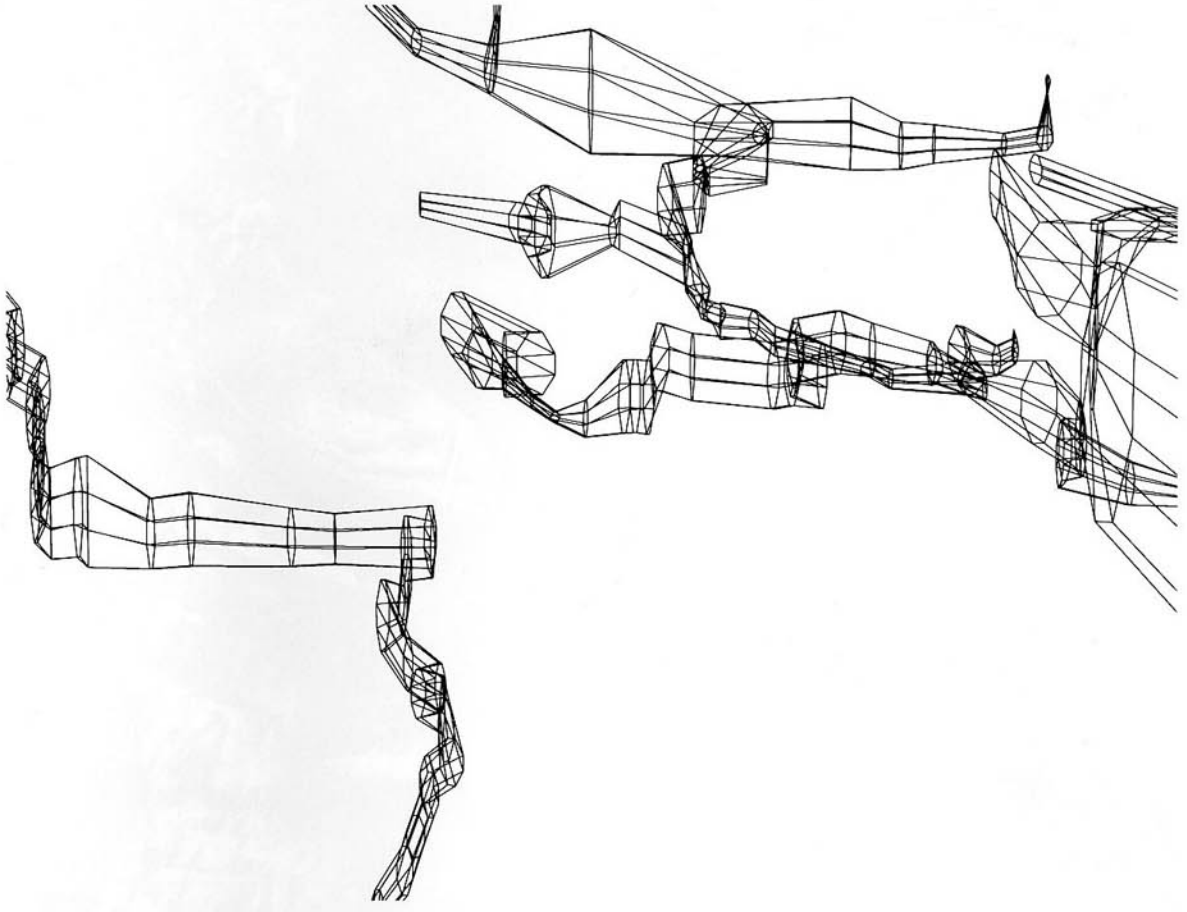
01.03.92 **Cwmdwr Boulder Choke** Malcolm Herbert, Helen Langford, Dai Bancroft.

The rest of the survey data was generously given to us by others to be included with this survey. Many thanks to Martin Laverty for the data for the Tapioca Area which was surveyed in 1989 and Bob and Jenny Peat for the Charlie's Despair data (which we surveyed without knowledge of this earlier work, but used their data anyway) carried out in November 1984, and the very accurate survey of Cwmdwr Quarry (September 1984), plus the cave in the North East corner (October 1984). This was then thought to be Cwmdwr 2, incorrectly, so it has been listed here as Cwmdwr 3.

Survey Areas.
Charlie's Despair.
This passage has been open since SAS chamber was found in 1960, but had never been surveyed (most probably due to the nature of the passage) until 1984. This was done by Bob and Jenny Peat with Ivan Wolton. SAS chamber is where the water turns left from the Main Route and goes down towards the







Above and opposite page: Three views zooming in on the Charlies Despair/ Cwm Dwr II connection.

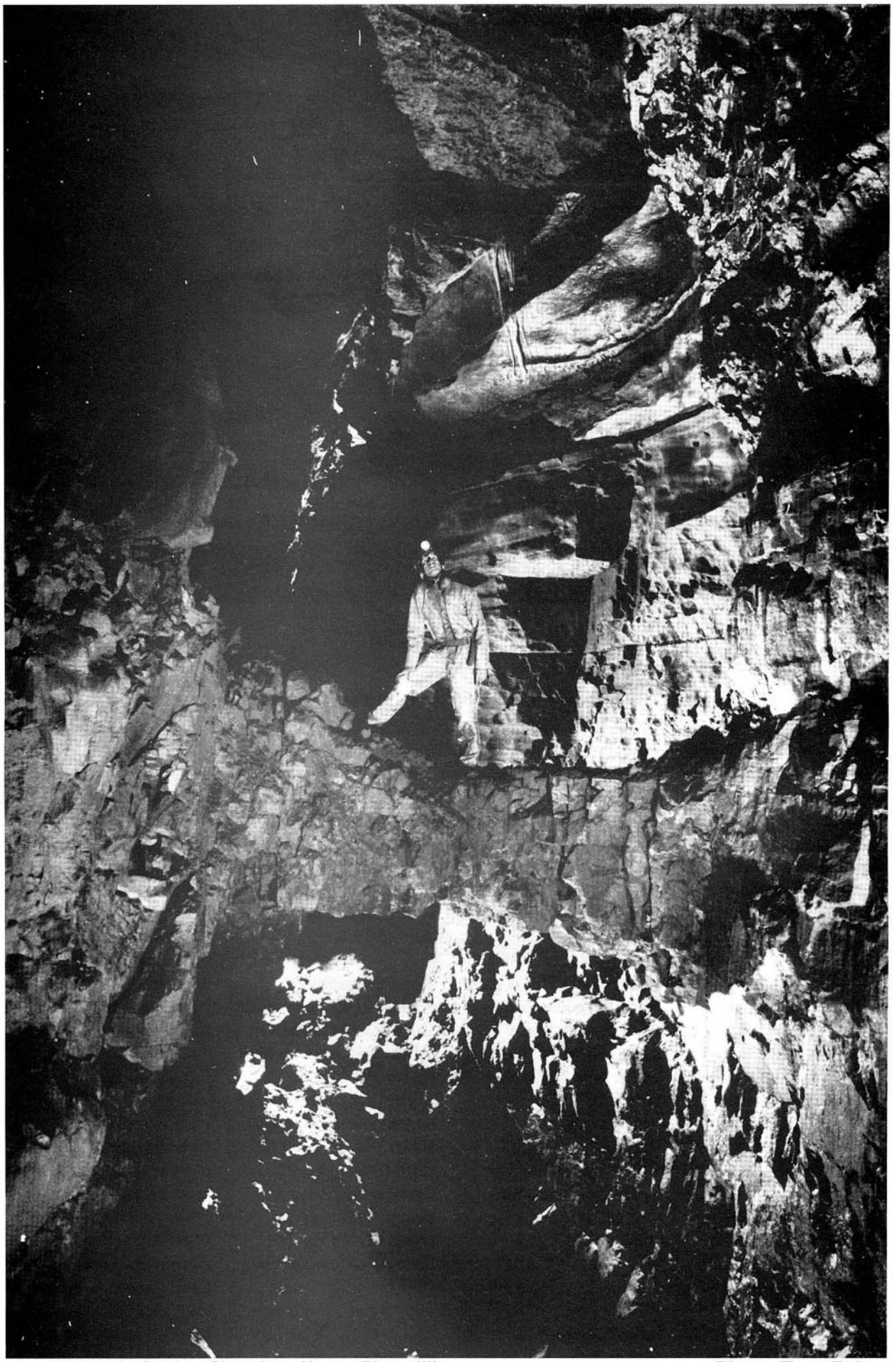
Drain. The strenous keyhole passage leads after an awkward upward rift to a 'chamber'. Left at floor level leads to a small chamber and a sandy passage with digging potential. Right from the chamber leads to a small sump (small refers to the size of a toilet cistern), but at floor level left is a passage which leads up through boulders to a chamber where the Cwm Dwr 2 connection dig is taking place.

Cwmdwr Jama Side Passages.
Before the climb down by the Upstream Choke there is a hole at floor level on the right. This leads to a junction, which on the right follows a small passage which ends in a sand choke (almost back in the Jama), but straight ahead reaches another junction. While to the left the passage goes back into the Jama below the climb down, to the right it leads to Bruce's Dig which pops up through boulders to chamber that at least has a solid ceiling. This is most likely the continuation of the Upstream Choke and water can be heard clearly on the right hand side of the chamber.

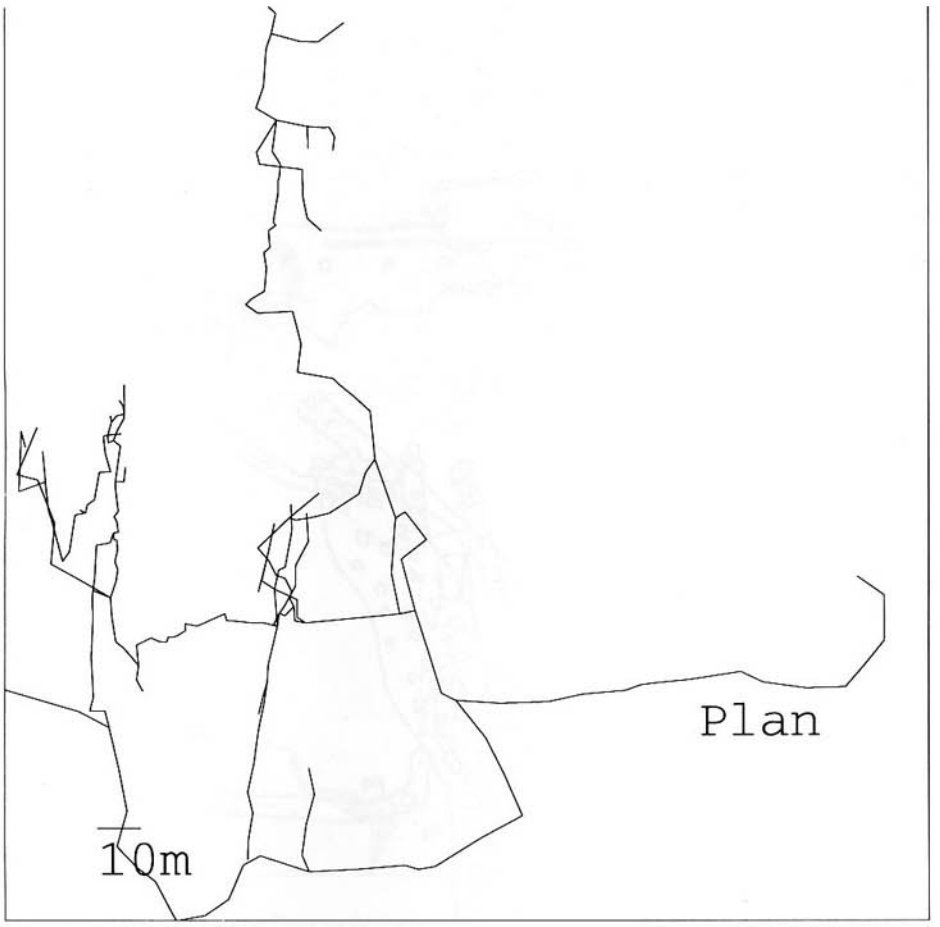
Tapioca.
Due to the missing log books and some poor writing I am not too sure of detail, but I think Tapioca was discovered in 1971 by Mike Ware (please tell me if I'm wrong). Surveyed, I believe, by Martin Laverty, Martin Hicks, Nig Rogers and Liz Millet in 1987. The way into Tapioca is from the top end of Nether Rawl via an awkward small climb, a crawl and a stal squeeze. There is also some missing high level passage which is not on this survey.

Upper Piccadilly.
A Martin Farr discovery, also circa 1971. The 9m ladder pitch leads up from Nether Rawl and is currently permanently rigged. This is NOT a fixed aid and has been in place since 1988 when it replaced the previous electron ladder which broke. Myself and Dai Bancroft have used it in 1992 but check before using it and the ring bolt is a bit wobbly. A passage leads up to a junction where a 8m pitch down leads to a passage with a choke at either end. Up to the right is a small climb which leads to another choke. To the left is a traverse (place your hands in the mud for a hold), which leads to Bridge Chamber (previously on the front cover of the Newsletter).Straight ahead the large passage leads to an 18m drop into Piccadilly. The second ladder pitch (about 5m) leads to a steeply ascending passage with lots of loose boulders and another large choke.

Chert Passage and Aniversary Aven.
Chert Passage is accessed via a small passage leading off from behind the bottom of the Upper Piccadilly



Ivan Wolton in Bridge Chamber, Upper Piccadilly. **Photo: Tony Baker**



Plan of Nether Rawl/ Piccadilly area (right hand limb). Produced as a guide when entering data into the Ogof Map program.

ladder pitch. A wet squeeze goes into a narrow passage which leads to a small muddy chamber with a stream sinking. This stream I believe is the one that appears over the Piccadilly waterfall. To the right is Chert Passage, on the 1969 survey but unnamed, which gets large before ending in a boulder choke. On the right of Chert Passage is the Aniversary Aven series which is entered via a crawl at the top of a mud bank. After an awkward small passage and climb up to a larger passage the Aven is reached. A small passage from the bottom of the Aven ends quickly. There is no rope on the Aven and is free climbable for the bold. A sling is in place for possbile abseil descent. At the top there is a series of small passages leading off and with a small chamber with some water. From the top of the Aven you can traverse across the Aven to reach a passage on the far side. This emerges via a tricky 2m climb back over the top of Chert Passage, where there are a couple of leads that both end in chokes. In Chert Passage, opposite the entrance to Aniversary Aven is climb past a chockstone to get to a squeeze up. This then enters a large passage which ends with a 10m pitch into Heol Eira. There is a ring bolt in place.

Conclusions.

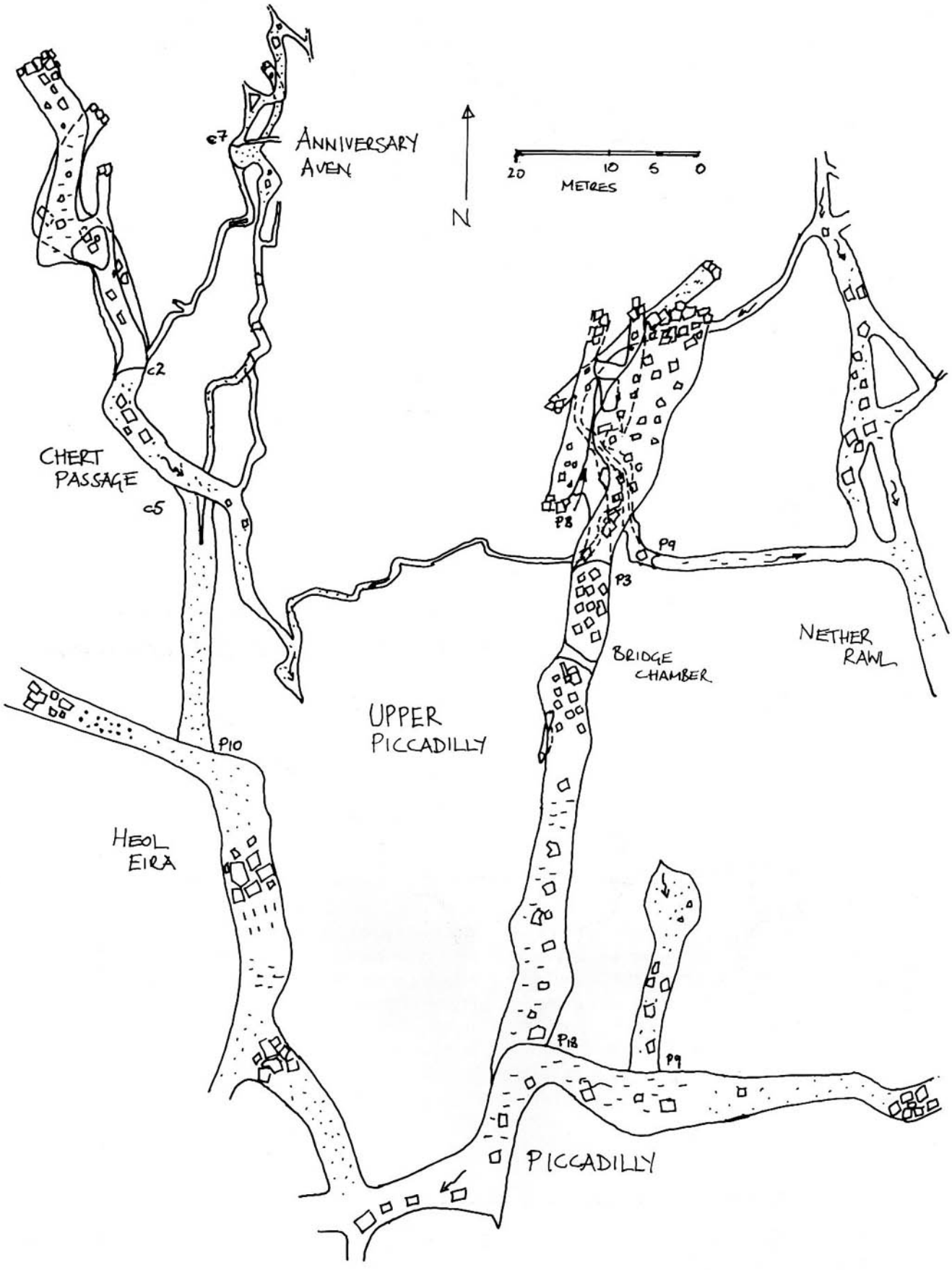
The survey work that has been carried out has not only highlighted the need for the continuation of the mapping of the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu system, it has also highlighted the problems that are to be encountered to maintain this information for use in years to come.

There are some immediate suggestions that may help the SWCC gather and maintain the necessary information. The task of co-ordinating the data collection and storage could be allocated to a member(s) of the club (not necessarily committee), not just to draw up the survey. All the original survey data should be kept in a filing cabinet in the library and all future OFD survey data should be recorded in a standard format. The drawings alone do not help people who want to change or extend the survey and the establishment and publishing of NGRs of points in the cave should help this.

Not only could the club establish the true length of OFD, but also avoid any further resurvey in future years.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank all those people who helped with the survey work,

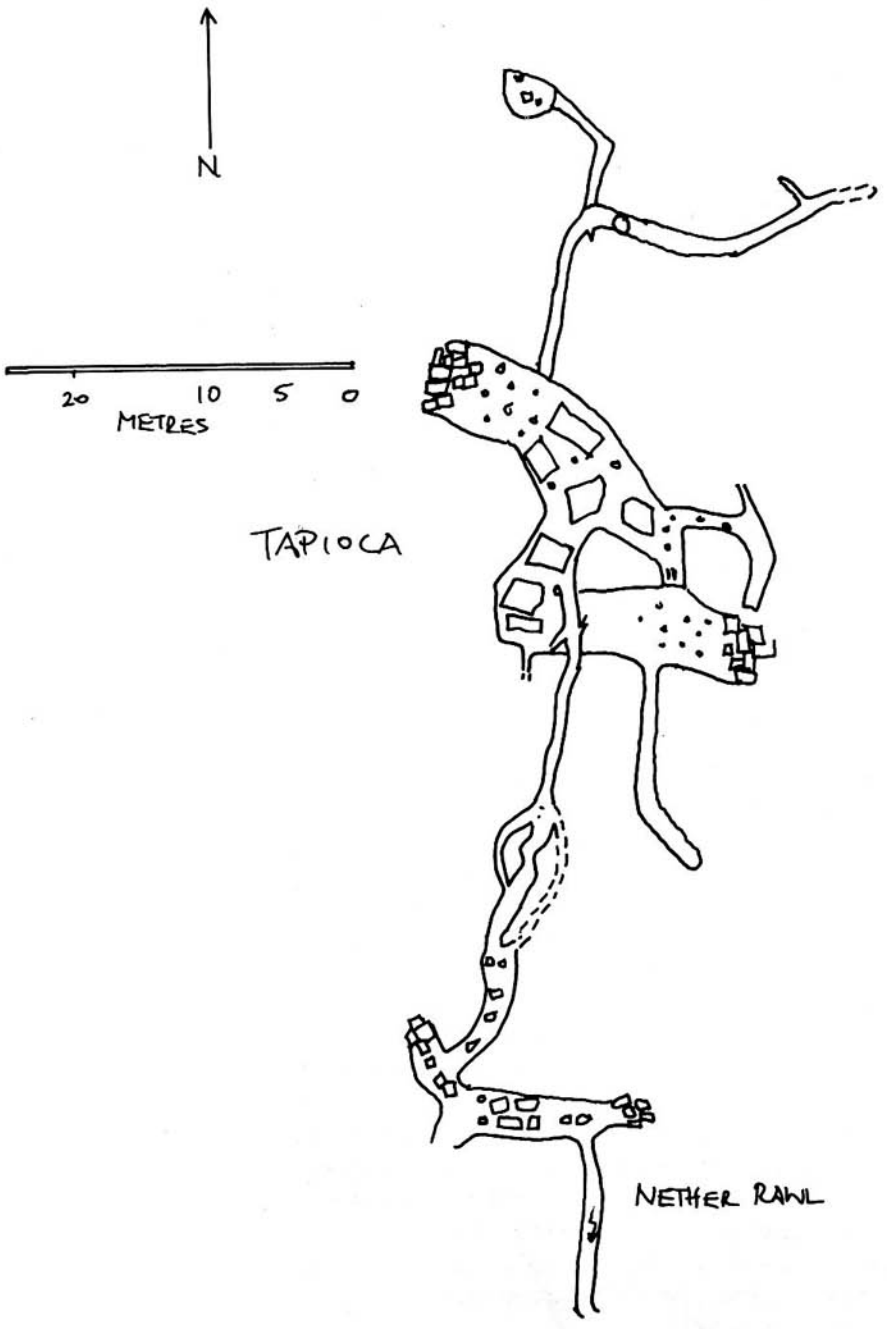


Upper Piccadilly

Cwm Dwr II plus Cwm Dwr entrance series and Jama. Looking North at about 60 degrees above the plane.

Looking straight down onto Cwm Dwr and Cwm Dwr II

Tapioca



hopefully there is some reward in having your name in print. Special thanks to Helen who has suffers more than most, and not just with the caving you may say, and to Dai, Pete, Matt, Steve and Alex who have achieved notoriety by coming on more than one trip.
As for Ian Anderson, not only did he make more than a couple of trips, but he also cleverly used a Joe Brown helmet whilst using the compass and clino. As Iain Miller will tell you, the metal in the rim causes some funny results when you are trying to draw up the survey. I will miss him.

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Apres Speleo

by Brian Bowell

The first in an occasional series of reports on places to seek refreshment after a hard time in the

Great Indoors.

After a day of vigorous exploration followed by a hot shower our thoughts turn to refreshing the inner person. On a recent break in the Glencoe area my companions and myself encountered an establishment set up for that purpose and we offer it to the readership as an alternative to the more usual post-speleo fare.

On our excursion to Glencoe we I followed up a walk along Aonach Eagach with a trip to "The Crannog" seafood restaurant, on the pier at Fort William. The pier houses a light and airy dining room with views along Lochs Eil and Linhe. The menu is almost exclusively seafood and fish, with one or two vegetarian options. There are daily specials. I was pleased that the menu offered no more than seven or eight options per course since I dislike the embarrassment of riches that some restaurants display but cannot actually match on the plate.

We were unanimous in our choice of a local Bouillabaise as a starter. Full of chunks of fish, mussels and prawns it was delightfully served with a large crouton, langoustine and mussel garnish. Seasonings were appropriate and the helpings generous. For our main course my companions ate a dish of langoustines with garlic butter, whilst I had halibut served in a herb crust. Again proportions were substantial with at least twenty of the delicious lobsterettes together with the required tongs and tweezers. The main course is accompanied with a mixed green salad and baby jacket potatoes.

Puddings catered for all types of tooth and included a board of Scottish cheeses. Two of us enjoyed a walnut tart that was crunchy and not overpoweringly sweet. The other diner sampled Crannachan, a sort of flummery containing soft fruit and oatmeal. Coffee was strong, the restaurant has a Gaggia machine, and came with mints. Our wine, chosen from a good international list, was a Hunter Valley Chardonnay, Brokenwood.

The bill for three was £70 and included entertainment from two offensive local people who had imbibed too much whilst watching a football match. Those members visiting this area of Scotland and wanting a special evening out should not miss The Crannog.

The Crannog, Town Pier, Fort William. 0397 705589.

101 Great Caving Trips

by Malcolm Herbert

An occasional series, to which members are asked to contribute their own reminiscences of particularly outstanding trips.The series kicks off with...

No.1 Barlands Quarry Pot

Back in the mists of time, as the dinosaurs at Dan-yr-Ogof say, a young member of South Wales Caving Club was conned into undertaking one of the worst caving trips of all time. Bob Radcliffe and Elsie Little are responsible for inflicting years of sleepless nights upon the poor innocent caver, namely me.

The plan was simply to radio-locate the end of Barlands Quarry Pot to help calculate the effects of quarrying proposals upon the water course in the area. A damp Sunday morning saw myself and Steve West getting changed opposite the quarry entrance, with the smiling surface party (Elsie, Bob, and Ann Bell) saying it would only take half an hour. With the words of the "Caves of South Wales" guide echoing in our heads ("WARNING - Severe Flooding") we descended the tight ladder pitch. With no obvious way on, we decided that the route must be via the tight squeeze in water below a rather nasty boulder. After a couple more similar boulders we found ourselves in a chamber about 15 feet high, avec flood debris a la ceiling.

"Do you think it's raining on the surface now?" asked Steve, as we found the next tight bit, a bedding plane flat out in water.

"How quickly does it flood?" I thought as we passed the first duck.

"There must be a fair amount of water in here when it does rain" said Steve, as he tried to work out if he was trying to pass a duck or a sump.

"Are they diesel or petrol fumes that are giving me a headache?" I asked as I watched Steve trying to force himself through the duck, with the polluted water building up behind his head.

After taking a couple more gobfuls of the remains of the Torrey Canyon's last shipment as I did my own impression of a coffer dam, Steve returned to the shore and we hastily decided that this must be the end of the cave. The radio-location gear was set up and transmission started. After a short while, our nerves shattered, it was repacked and a hasty, scraping exit was made. Back on the surface it was commented that the transmission was not long enough to locate the site, and the exercise had been a waste of time. It is sad that no-one else can share in this experience of tight squeezes, mud plastered walls and ceilings, copious amounts of flood debris and general panic because the cave has gone to that great karst region in the sky, or more likely, underneath a motorway.

Progress at Twyn Tal Ddraenen

by Tony Baker

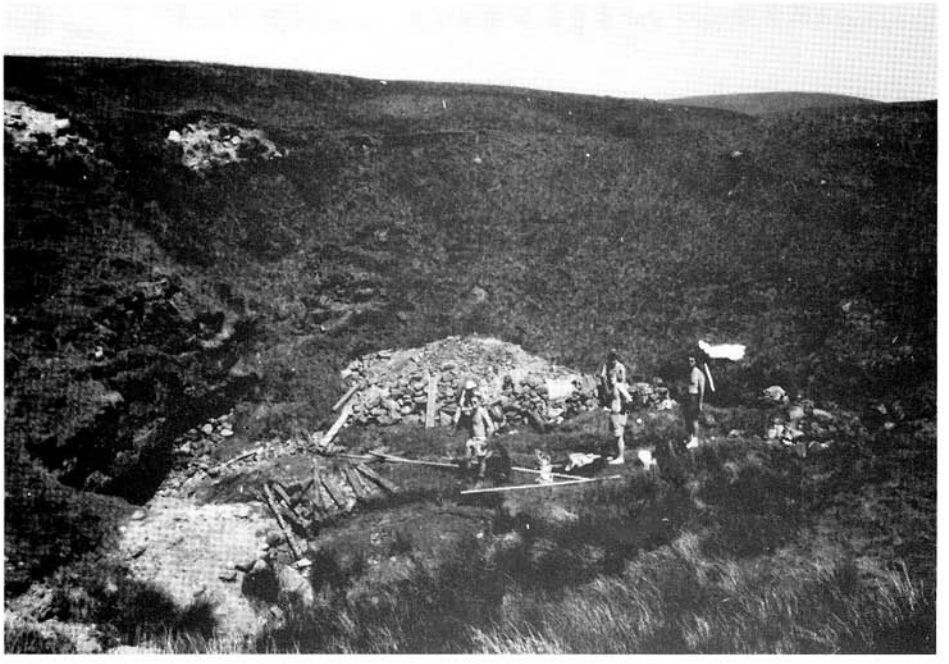
As many of you will know, in early spring this year work was restarted on the dig at the sink at Twyn Tal Ddraenen, on the Black Mountain north-west of Sinc-y-Giedd. This active stream sink has been dye tested to Dan-yr-Ogof, and is widely considered one of the best places to start looking for the missing miles.
(For more information, see Newsletter no.106, 1990, which was the special issue on the prospects in the Dan-yr-Ogof catchment.)

Following a short period of activity following the one-day Dan-yr-Ogof conference back in 1989, the dig had been left untouched, and several of us thought it was time to get to work again. The main reason why enthusiasm had waned was probably the fact that the sink is an hour and a half's walk from the DYO car park, but once the initial inertia had been overcome it wasn't too difficult to find a team most weekends, especially because the weather was kind during the spring.

When last attacked, the dig involved removing spoil from a small vertical tube, which was then dragged out to the surface. This year it soon became clear that this tube was going nowhere; water running down the wall formed a pool rather than running away, which meant we were digging slurry, and the whole project seemed vaguely unpromising. Hope returned, however, with a suggestion from Paul Taylor (making one of his rare visits over from the Forest of Dean digging scene) that we should try digging in the other corner of the small chamber. To start with, this involved removing sand and gravel and progress was quickly made; we soon gained access to the top of a rift with good solid walls, and Paul suggested that to avoid the boulders above we should concentrate on digging downwards.

The following weekends saw enthusiasm high and progress rapid; the rift went on down, soon reaching a depth of 5m. One or two large boulders created only minor holdups, and there was excitement when the top of the next section of rift could be seen clearly, tantalisingly close beyond a large boulder which rebuffed all efforts with a sledgehammer. During the

Ian Middleton at the entrance to the cave



Another sunny day at the shakehole, June 1992

Photos: Tony Baker

working week, Bob Hall and Paul Quill went up and dealt with this, as well as making the whole place a lot safer with some fine timbering work. Progress down the rift, however, was slowed by its narrow walls and a few trips were spent enlarging this. Stones pushed through a small slot dropped invitingly away, but digging forward wasn't really on due the quantities of boulders perched above.

On the 20th June, while the rest of us were up at Pant Ifan sunning ourselves and partying, Paul Quill turned up at the club ready for a trip to the dig. Unable to muster a team from the few who weren't in North Wales, he settled on a solo visit to see what he could do. After a superb effort of four and a half hours working alone, he could see a way on and, trying not to look at the loose stuff, pushed his way in through the boulders to gain around a hundred feet of passage. This included a large, boulder-strewn chamber in addition to the small grovelly bits, and Paul returned to the club in euphoric mood.

Next day, he returned with Clive Jones, Nig Rogers, Dai Hopkins and Mark Withers, and another hundred feet or so was gained by sending thin man Dai through a tight slot from where he was able to dig open a bypass for the others.

The following week, Nig and Mark Withers returned and entered another fifty feet with two possible ways on. One of these is an exceptionally clear, deep canal which can be traversed for around twenty feet to a rock pillar which blocks the way on. From here you can see to a corner, but the roof lowers and the lack of a draught at this point would seem to indicate the presence of a sump. The other possibility involves digging a partially mud filled slot between boulders. On the 4th July, Steve West, Ian Alderman, Pete Francis, Paul Quill and myself went in to attack this, and spent most of a four hour trip removing thick clay and rocks from the slot. Progress is slow, and although a space can be seen the other side, there's no promise of a way on. There is a draught, but it's only half of the main draught further back; where the rest goes is a mystery.

Back at the entrance, Paul Quill and Haydn Rees have done more sterling work on the timbering front, so access to the cave is at least possible in relative safety. Care is still recommended, however. The shakehole has now been extensively tidied, with the aerial ropeway which was used for dragging spoil to the heap removed, and the timber stowed underground.

Since we now have a cave rather than just a surface dig, it ought to have a name and the most sensible choice seems to be Ogof Twyn Tal Ddraenen, since everyone knows the sink and any other name is unlikely to stick. Enthusiasm for the project is predictably high at the moment, but the real test will come over the next few months, as the cave is tight, extremely muddy and arduous, despite its short length. As the weather deteriorates and the evenings close in, I suspect that diggers will be harder to find unless the recent rate of progress is maintained. Willing volunteers are welcome; give me a ring, or contact any of the regular team mentioned above. Thanks also to everyone who has helped out thus far.

There remains one mystery; during several visits in the recent hot weather, the draught was most definitely going in, but it now goes out. A (rather optimistic) connection with the Dan-yr-Ogof fan has been ruled out, as the fan would have been in use when the draught was inward. Any ideas?

The Calcite Saga

The story continues...

Once again we visit our sleepy community, where the men are men and the armchairs are full. Only the occasional pieces of unrest break the eternal course of the happy folk. The case of the Missing Chilli brought some ugliness to the usually festive season, but the intervention of Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple led to problem resolution. The Famous Five led by the cynical blonde have also been out in search of the missing propane cylinders, the result of wars between the clan MacAlpine and the Greens. What is happening in the camper van? And is Pat (of the sizeable head)'s hairdresser making some sort of statement?

But there is also a creeping worry, as one of the younger workers at the Temple of Galpin reaches an older age, for it is stated that even the youngest are now a score and ten. It is lucky that it is downhill to the inn of Paul and not Logan's Run.

Many outsiders are planning a pilgrimage to the holy place, to seek out the mighty Exploding Condom, so they too can learn of the ways of the Wales Buttock and Cleavage Reemergence Testers. They too might arrive in time to see the acquaintance of Oxford smile again. In turn, our fellow members of the community are planning a visit to the Land of Cresson in the year of the not married market.

A time to rejoice or a time to leave, depending on your convictions.

In near and far distant lands the members of the community have been spreading the gospel of goodwill to others of similar religions. For example the people of Gwent now know of the courage and skill of our people in discovering new places of worship. This is the start of the beginning, the new age is dawning as the disciples of Derf go forth into the world.

The swirling mists are parting, the crystal ball glowing strongly, and the old soothsayer predicts many things, of joyous occasions on beaches in the sun, of hot water after 5pm on a Sunday, that Cwmbran Caving Club will be rescued again and of great discoveries to come...

For this is the time of the sons of Blackpool.

Anon.

Notes for Contributors

by the Editor

Contributing to the Newsletter simply couldn't be easier. Here's how to do it.

Text can be in any form, typed or handwritten. If you're using a computer, I'd ideally like your material submitted on disk - either 3.5" or 5.25". Supply a paper copy as well if you can. If you're writing by hand, make it as legible as possible and write any proper names - especially Welsh ones - in capitals. Don't worry about mistakes, spelling or grammar, as I'll sort it all out, and send you back a copy to check before I publish if necessary. Supply a 'phone number so I can check anything I can't read.
I don't want to place restrictions on how or what you write, but remember that your first priorities should be to entertain your reader and maintain his or her interest.

Photographs are especially welcome. They don't have to be underground shots, I'm equally happy with surface pics or anything if it's relevant. Send me as many photographs as you have and leave the selection to me, as sometimes shots that look great in colour can suffer when converted to black-and-white, and I also like to have the option of adding an extra photo or two to make an article fit a set number of pages without loads of white space.
You can send slides, black-and-white or colour prints or negatives, but if you submit colour prints let me have the negatives as well, as I can reprint them straight onto b/w paper and this avoids the loss of quality which inevitably occurs when I copy them. I promise to take great care with all of your photos, and return them promptly after use. Don't send slides through the post in glass mounts, and don't write captions on the back of prints as the ink will come off over all the others. Supply the name of the photographer so that he/she gets a credit. Remember that I need photographs for both the front and back covers, and I also want some to use in their own right.

Diagrams and illustrations should be black-on-white, and originals always reproduce better than photocopies. Care and prompt return promised as with photographs. Maps and surveys enliven articles just as much as photographs; please send as many as you have.
If you include a scale, avoid expressing it in written form (for example, 1 inch = 50 feet) as if I need to enlarge or reduce your work to fit the page it becomes meaningless.

Finally, a reminder of the editorial address:

60 South Terrace,
Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6HU.
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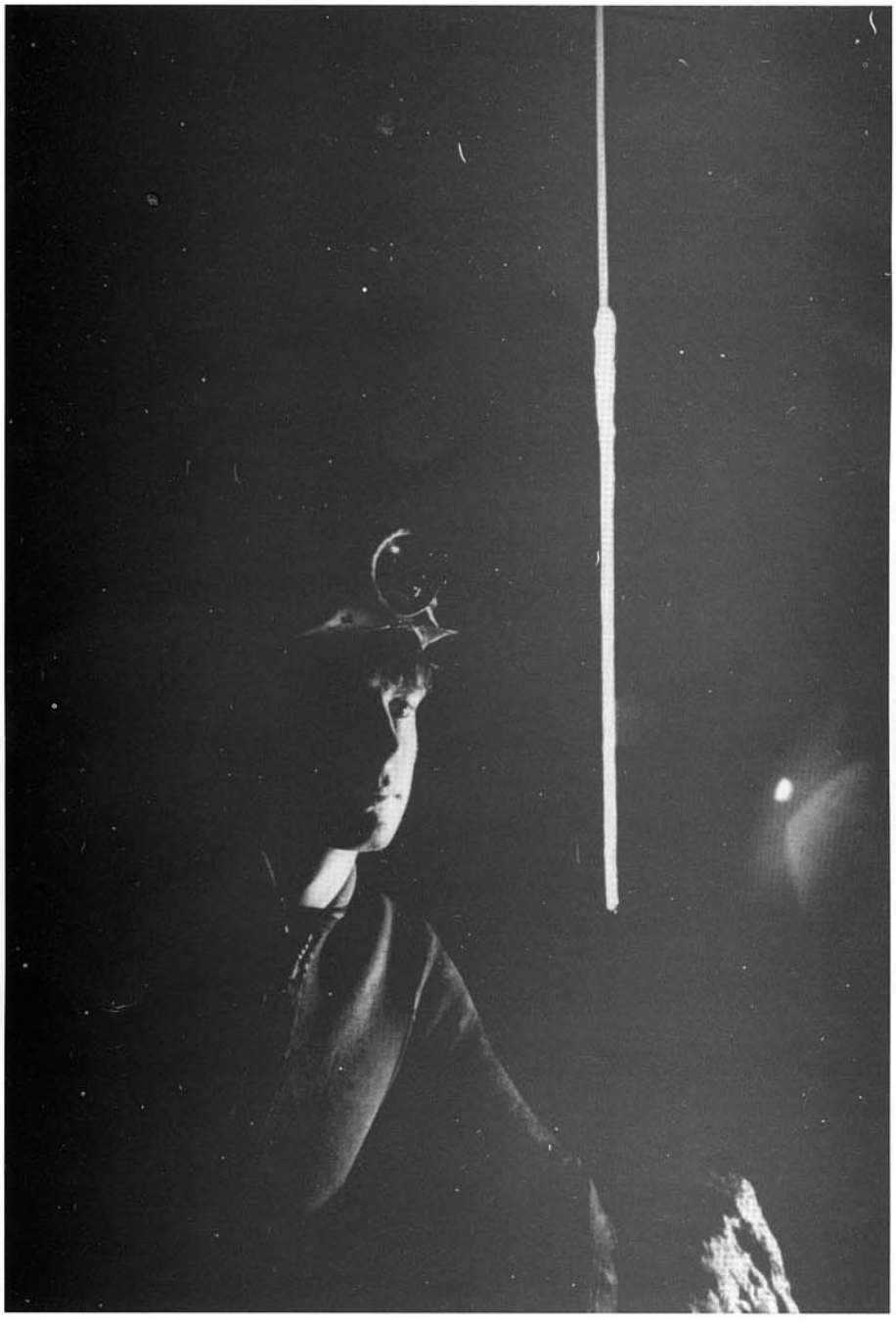
home: 081-390-0515
work: 081-943-5629

Notes:



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