

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 34

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DECEMBER 1960

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I. CLUB NEWS.

RESCUE AT GLYN CORRWG.

Later on in this Newsletter members will be interested to read a full report of the recent episode at Glyn Corrwg when a Rescue Team from the South Wales Caving Club was able to recover a dog from a mine shaft in which it had been trapped for nearly a week.

As a result of this rescue, Bill Little, who volunteered to make the actual descent of the shaft, received considerable publicity which led to his being presented with a number of awards and gifts of money from organisations and individuals, which he immediately made over to the Club.

We are especially grateful to Dr. Dorothy Nichols who felt that the Club should benefit from the Rescue Team's action by her very generous gift of a yearly monetary

donation. The Committee has decided that a part of this presentation shall be set aside for the installation of a telephone at Headquarters which it is anticipated will be of very great value in the event of any future Rescue call-out.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Club:-

David Cons, Fernworthy, 12 The Chenies, Petts Wood, Kent.
Mrs. Mary Galpin, 6 Trinity Rise, Tillington, Stafford.
Mrs. M. Hartwel, 3 Hillview Rise, Redhill, Surrey.
David T. Jones, 159 Kings Road, Canton, Cardiff.
Yvonne D. Smith, 10 Darrick Wood Road, Orpington, Kent.
John Graffith Williams, Medical Students Club, Howard Place, Cardiff.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Ruth and Bill Toye, Mary and Laurie Galpin and Margaret and David Hunt on their marriages, and to Mary Nutt and John Hiron, on their engagement.

O.F.D. LEADERS.

The following members have been elected to the O.F.D. leaders list:-

Neil Jones, Bernard Woods and David Coombs.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

Mr. & Mrs. A. Ashwell, Stanyeld Road, Trevor Hill, Church Stretton, Salop.
R.H.C. Basham, The Caravan, Pyott's Hill, Basing, Nr. Basingstoke, Hamps.
B.M. Derbo, 52 Laburnam Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire.
M. Duerden, The Union, University, Leeds, 2.
L.A. Hawes, Cribarth, Court Moor Avenue, Fleet, Hants.
D. Hunt, 19 Daniel Street, Cadoxton, Barry, Glamorganshire.
S.C.L. Phillips, Heightington House, Bewdley, Worcestershire.
J.R. Riden, 31 Torrens Drive, Lakeside, Cardiff.
R. Smith, 59 Mersey Road, Sale, Cheshire.
Dr. D. Thompson, P.O. Box 172, Entebbe, Uganda.
J. Truman, 15 Ensign Close, Stanwell, Middlesex.
G. Warwick, 47, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29.
H.J. Williams, c/o Directorate Overseas Surveys, Kingston Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

The two following addresses have not previously appeared in the Newsletter:-

H. Gilinsky, 35 Beaconsfield Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12.
Mr. & Mrs. J. Hartwel, 3, Hillview Rise, Redhill, Surrey.

H.Q. NOTES

Saturday Evening Lectures.

Now that we are comfortably settled in at Penwyllt it has been suggested that a series of informal talks or lectures might be held on Saturday evenings in the large Common Room from 10.30 until midnight. Subjects and dates would be advertised beforehand in subsequent Newsletters. One possibility that has been put forward is a course in First Aid. Members who would be prepared to talk on subjects likely to be of interest to their fellow club members are asked to get in touch with the Hon. Sec.

Equipment.

Members are reminded that in order to keep the 'living' (southern) end of the H.Q. reasonably habitable it is essential that caving gear, particularly when it has just come out of a cave, be confined to the 'tackle' (northern) end.

Members making use of cupboards for holding personal kit are asked in their own as well as the Club's interest, not to use them for storing perishable goods, which include those chemical compounds that perish instantaneously at some cost to the surrounding scenery.

Work.

Unless we are all getting used to the internal appearance of the place, the lack of decoration in some rooms may have been noticed. It is intended to fix notes to the walls of these rooms with suggestions for treatment in the hope that once the first flush of caving has worn off members may be induced to return to their old pastime of 'building the new H.Q.'

ACCIDENTS.

There have been recently one or two minor accidents in O.F.D. which have only reached the ears of the Cave Rescue Organiser and Tackle Manager by a round about way.

In the same way that the police pinpoint 'black spots' by means of accident reports, the C.R.O. can put his finger on localities in O.F.D. and other caves which could be a source of serious trouble and take action to remedy it. If nothing is said to him then he has nothing to work on. So, please - major or minor, let the C.R.O. and/or the Hon. Sec. know about it. Any accident in O.F.D. requiring hospital treatment should also be reported to John Barrows.

AGEN ALLWEDD.

Following the notice published in Newsletter No.33 an indemnity chit to cover visits to this cave is enclosed. Members intending to make a trip in Agen Allwedd (which they are reminded, is now gated) should complete the form and return it to the Hon. Sec. for forwarding to the South Wales Regional Officer of the Nature Conservancy in Swansea.

WELSH REGIONAL POSTAGE STAMPS.

We have pleasure in publishing the following letter from
Dr. Dorothy Nichols.

The Hon. Secretary,
South Wales Caving Club.

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

Thank you very much for your kind letter. I am always glad to help worthwhile activities.

I wonder if any of your members actually living in Wales would care to do something for me?

I run a kind of stamp club for the children in my practice, and if I am not too busy I undertake to send each child (or young adult) a packet of foreign or colonial stamps every Saturday.

I do not know if you know this but a year ago Wales together with Scotland and Northern Ireland began to issue their own regional stamps. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland issued three values 3d, 6d, and 1/3d each. The Isles of Jersey and Guernsey all issued 3d. stamps only.

If any of your members would like to tear off the piece of envelope on which is stuck a Welsh stamp and after collecting a dozen or two, if they would put them in an envelope and post them off to me I should be very grateful. Of course specimens of the 6d. and 1/3d. stamps off parcels would be doubly appreciated.

If ever I am down your way I will certainly call and see you all.

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Nichols.

Members who are able to assist are asked to send stamps to the Hon. Secretary who will then forward them to Dr. Nichols.

2. THE DOG.

During the morning of Saturday 3rd. September, Clive Jones received a message through the Constabulary at Glyn Neath, asking him to contact a Mr. Russell of Matlock in connection with a rescue. From the information given it was not possible to understand what rescue etc., was required, but a phone call to the police and Mr. Russell soon cleared the situation.

It appeared that Mr. Russell had volunteered aid, to help in the rescue of a trapped dog in a Glyn Corrwg mine shaft. As the South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation was nearer it was suggested that we might like to help instead.

R.S.P.C.A. Inspector Booth in charge of the rescue was contacted and accepted our offer of help. He was told that a party of rescuers, with breathing apparatus if required, would arrive in approximately half an hour. We were informed that the shaft was 700 ft. deep, but probably filled with rubbish to within 170 ft. of the surface, and that a test for gas was going to be made.

A team of fourteen, including three of the ladies, was soon mustered and a convoy of five cars left for Glyn Corrwg. We lost contact with three of these for part of the way but had joined up again before reaching the site.

Whilst the team was changing I tried to contact Inspector Booth to try and discover what action was actually being taken. I was successful in the first of these aims but not in the second. Later the depth was sounded and again given to be about 170 ft. but no test for gas was made. It was suggested to those in charge that our team should put a ladder down the side of the shaft in order to investigate the position. This suggestion was refused as we were informed that the sides of the shaft were bound to be in a dangerous condition. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to cut a hole in the concrete covering to the shaft to allow us to put a ladder down there.

A hole was cut remarkably quickly and our ladder was rigged. It was found to reach the bottom (100 ft.) After rigging the pitch permission to descend even for an inspector was forbidden. No argument seemed to give results and we felt very much like walking away in disgust. It was suggested that we could go down after the shaft had been inspected by a N.C.B official on a winch, which was expected but hadn't yet arrived. More arguments took place about the danger of using winches, however we finally won the day and permission was granted to attempt the rescue. At this point I was given to understand that no one was really sure if the dog really was down the shaft but that some children had thought they had heard barking down there.

Everyone more or less, volunteered to go down the shaft, but the obvious choice was Bill Little because of his slight weight in case of an unforeseen incident requiring his hasty withdrawal on a life line.

All surplus personnel were cleared from the site and the team was given a free hand. Bill made a rapid descent and landed on a floating platform of

garbage. I believe that a tight lifeline just made the difference in keeping him on the surface for part of the time. All instructions given from below were heard quite clearly at the surface making control quite simple.

The dog was located and those on the surface were informed that it was still alive. A request was made for a bag and one was lowered, but this was found to be too small and the request for a larger one could not be fulfilled. No one seemed to have thought of what to rescue the dog in. A small tarpaulin was produced and a bag constructed from it. Somehow the dog was persuaded into it and made a slow ascent, the life lines, ladder etc., snagging each other as invariably happens when the belays are in close proximity to each other.

The press had by this time regained access to the shaft head and had to be cleared by the Police when a photographer in his eagerness to obtain a photograph of the dog reaching the surface pushed a belayer's support out of the way. A great roar from the crowd heralded the arrival of the dog and for a moment all thought of Bill down the shaft was forgotten until a request was made for silence. The crowd must be congratulated on its co-operation whenever silence was required.

Bill regained the surface and had the press to contend with whilst all the tackle was gathered. A local inhabitant supplied Bill with a bath and the team with cups of tea. We all then returned to the H.Q. after a successful day which had, I hope, provided us with some good publicity. The actual rescue had taken approximately thirty-five minutes, travel and arguments, five hours!

G.L. Clissold.

3. THE SEARCH FOR O.F.D. II

The search for O.F.D. II, which has been going on ever since the South Wales Caving Club came into being, has now entered a new phase. On the one hand there is the school of thought which favours getting there by way of stream passage or its extension, from the known part of the cave: on the other hand there is the party that is intent on breaking in from outside at a point higher up the system. Curiously enough both parties seem to be made up of largely the same people, battling away first on one side and then on the other. Still, they seem to be getting results!

The following notes are concerned with the 'stream passage or bust' attempt. I hope someone else will write up 'through fire and flood'.

(i) STREAM PASSAGE O.F.D.

The key to this was the discovery of Boulder Series back in 1957. (see S.W.C.C. Newsletter No.23.) This was thought at the time to be an off-shoot of the main Stream Passage but it is becoming more and more evident that we are still in the main artery of the cave, and that the main stream rising is emerging from a byway.

The clear and spacious sumps - 'Pot' and 'Dip', and later 'Hush', found in Boulder Series, were just begging to be dived, and in the Summer of 1958 Oliver Wells and John Buxton made the first attempt by entering at Pot Sump and making a reconnaissance in the direction of Dip Sump. Conditions were reported to be clear, and at a point somewhere beneath Dip Sump Oliver entered what was apparently a large submerged chamber with big passages leading off. He also reported a branch passage coming into the side of Pot Sump, and remarked that the system appeared to be "a diving site rivalling Wookey Hole", which is the Cave Diving Group's favourite training ground in Somerset. His prophecy was remarkably accurate.

A year later, following a course of training sparked off by this visit, Brian de Graaf established the useful link between Hush Sump and Pot Sump, which saved much of the long drag through the Boulders. (see S.W.C.C. Newsletter No. 29.) An attempt to follow this up with Brian Walton in Easter 1960 was cut short by a collapse of boulders in Hush Passage, but after this had been sorted out Charles Owen George and Brian de Graaf began a series of dives which is still continuing with excellent prospects of breaking through into a large dry system, above the artificial water table found in this part of the cave.

After each dip, notes were made while the details were still fresh in mind, and apart from the omission of one or two embarrassingly wrong conclusions these are reproduced in the form of a 'Diver's Diary'.

September 5th 1960.

A strong party pushed up Stream Passage under above-average water conditions on Sunday 4th and at 1.27 p.m. the two divers left base, following previously discovered submerged passages through Pot Sump until they reached unexplored territory directly below Dip Sump, at the 'Parting of the Ways'. Bearing in mind the prevailing dip of the strata, the left hand passage was taken in the hope of finding air spaces similar to those already known in Boulder Series, and after traversing a meandering passage which fell at one point to 25 ft. depth, the roar of water overhead proclaimed a cascade which on surfacing proved to be falling from the roof of a high aven apparently similar in character to, but higher than, Pot Sump. Climbing out was made difficult by the fact that its vertical sides fell directly into 8 ft. of water. The first diver was half out when the lid of his aflo fell open and all the works dropped on to the diver beneath, but he had seen enough to be convinced that dry passages opened from the top of the aven. After having sat on the bottom and re-assembled the scattered fragments, diver No.2 found he had developed a slight high pressure leak from his reducer bypass spindle and as time was getting on a return to base was made, 55 minutes after setting out.

The Waterways throughout are large rounded passages of massive limestone with a light sandy shingle bottom which does not rise to obscure visibility. Visibility on this occasion was restricted to about 10 ft. by the peatiness of the flood water.

September 18th 1960.

1.35 p.m. The exploration continued with the divers setting off to see what lay in the passages they had not been into on the previous occasion. Following the wire they were soon back in Shower Aven where the presence of high level dry passages was confirmed. Here a fresh wire was tied to the belay point and they set off down the continuation of the underwater passage which ran at right angles to the aven. The passage went quite straight and at a steady downward slope of about 15° . A small cross rift with an air space was investigated after which the divers carried on down. The depth steadily increased until just as they thought it was sure to pass below the limit for oxygen breathing, at 30 ft. exactly a cliff-like wall loomed up ahead. Looking up, it could be seen that this was the bottom of an elliptical pot hole, vertical and unclimbable for a bottom-walking diver. Here the customary brick was left to anchor the line.

The next target was the right hand passage at the 'Parting of the Ways' under Dip Sump. However on the way back, possibly due to the drop in level of the water from the previous time, the tell-tale bubbling of another tiny waterfall was heard overhead round the corner at the home end of Shower Aven, and on climbing up a matter of ten feet a muddy chamber was discovered where for the first time the divers could sit comfortably out of the water and remove their masks for a chat.

In homage to the shoals of nyphargus (and there must be literally thousands of them in the Waterways), this was christened 'Nyphargus Niche'. Here a window looked back on to the water surface extending into Shower Aven, and a dry rift ran back over the top of the submerged passage towards the Aven: also a second 'dry' passage ran back at a high level from Nyphargus Niche at right angles over the water. This was unattainable owing to the greasy layer of mud which covered the walls.

Having warmed up the divers slid back down into the main passage en route for Dip Sump. The unexplored branch passage turned out in effect to be a continuation of Dip Sump and the divers emerged on the far side of the duck at the far end of the Sump into what is evidently the main drain of this part of the system, believed to have been entered on a previous occasion by John Bevan. a small culvert-like passage in a calcite vein with very rough walls full of snags for the equipment, and very similar to the submerged portion of Main Stream rising. It was noted that this passage carried on downward at about 15° until it 'sumped' again after about 50 ft. The outflow of this passage from Dip Sump is like the lip of a basin filled with water: the mass of water in the Sump is so great that it is almost static but it flows over the lip with some force. Blasting away the lip would lower the level right through the Waterways, but not enough to provide an air space through the deeper sections.

On the way back the small air space at the back of Pot Sump was re-entered but found to go nowhere. The divers returned to base at almost exactly 3 p.m.

October 8th 1960.

Set out from Hush Sump swimming with fins to discover what lay at the top of the 30 ft. pot at the limit of our present exploration: some difficulty was experienced with weighting at first which was not helped by the unusual murkiness of the water due probably to a rising flood. The two divers got out of touch with one another at the terminal brick which held the end of the guide wire, but No.2, who had determined to sit on the brick for the time being and wait for No.1 to find him, was plunged into inky blackness by a shower of mud from above which heralded No.1's descent, on to the head of No.2. (No.1 said later that he thought he'd been grabbed by a giant nyphargus when he felt No.2. clutching his legs).

The party then wired on to the brick and made the (official) ascent, after a false start up a blind water filled solution tube 20 ft. down, into yet another vertical sided aven with no easy way out on to land. So were our hopes of at last setting into O.F.D. II dashed! The usual layer of slime, coupled with vertical fluting of the rock, made leaving the water a difficult matter but with much assistance from the other, one diver struggled out and was able to sit astride a narrow bridge of rock which on the far side plunged down into a second pot, also static. The only dry way out of the chamber seemed to be via a small and inaccessible double window high up in one wall.

Far more interesting to us, potentially, was a small hole at the bottom of 'Oxygen Pot' (thus named because its 30 ft. depth is the limit for safe use of oxygen). This hole - about the size of the grate in the small common room - had been overlooked on the previous visit, but proved to be the entry point of the main stream water. The depth was too great for oxygen, as we were already at our limit of 30 ft., and the passage on appeared to fall away. There was no means of knowing how deep we would have to descend before the floor rose again, and as the greater exertion of swimming as compared with bottom walking had meant a much higher rate of consumption of gas it was decided that it was time to return to base, which was regained 1 hr.10 mins. after leaving.

The easiest swimming technique seemed to be a side stroke, lying on the right side, right arm extended forward tracing the guide wire, left arm crooked holding the aflo against the stomach so that the left hand could simultaneously work the reducer bypass.

October 9th. 1960.

The original intention was to go straight down bottom-walking to the bottom of Oxygen Pot and investigate the main stream entry using large twin cylinders filled with oxygen giving $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 hrs., (determined by the CO₂ absorbent) endurance, but an incurable high pressure leak on one set made this unwise. Instead, it was decided to clear up as much detail as possible nearer home and the team set off for Nyphargus Niche with a scaffold pole each, to try to get

into the dry passage. The luscious mud soon turned this attempt into a real 'greasy pole' competition, in which the greasy pole won every time: that is until one diver lay on the two poles set side by side and allowed himself to be walked up. Away went No.1. into a long rabbit hole of a passage, christened Shrimp Series, which after some 200 ft. rising steadily up dip ended in a cross passage which contained several mud-choked branches and a small static sump through which an air space could be felt. Near this a vertical shaft was climbed for 50 ft. which ended in a number of small sharp edged solution tubes, still negotiable.

Proceeding then to Shower Aven, which on further exploration proved to be almost continuous with Nyphargus Niche, a further landing was made (after some effort) and it was found possible to swim all the way back and into Nyphargus Niche. An attempt was made to climb into the upper windows above the 'shower' but the walls higher up, not washed by floods, were found to be too greasy. However, a swim around the air space allowed a great deal of detail to be filled in. Only one diver was able to indulge in this fun as the other in the effort of clambering on to dry(?) land had burst the wire loops which carried the large cylinders on the hooks on the back of his set and was confined to his ledge waiting to be tied up with wire. Both divers resolved that in future such strenuous landings should be avoided in view of the risk of damage to the breathing apparatus.

Time was now getting on and it was felt that the base party would be getting worried, so a return was made, collecting the maypoles on the way, and base regained some $3\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. after setting out.

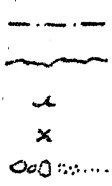
This weekend had proved to be most profitable. Whilst it was disappointing not to have got into that tantalising O.F.D. II, the objective of swimming up Oxygen Pot had been accomplished: the entry point of the main stream water determined: and much detail filled in of the dry passages in the system. The next target is clear: to bottom walk on oxy-nitrogen mixture (to allow a greater depth to be reached) and explore the main stream entry.

Once more may we thank our helpers. Like major mountain climbs, the two who go forward are at the top of a pyramid of effort on the part of a great number of people who can only sit and await results, sometimes in most uncomfortable conditions. We would like you to feel that you are all 'equal sharers' with us in what we achieve, and to say how much we appreciate the willing hands that push us in while we're still full of energy and haul us out again when we're exhausted!

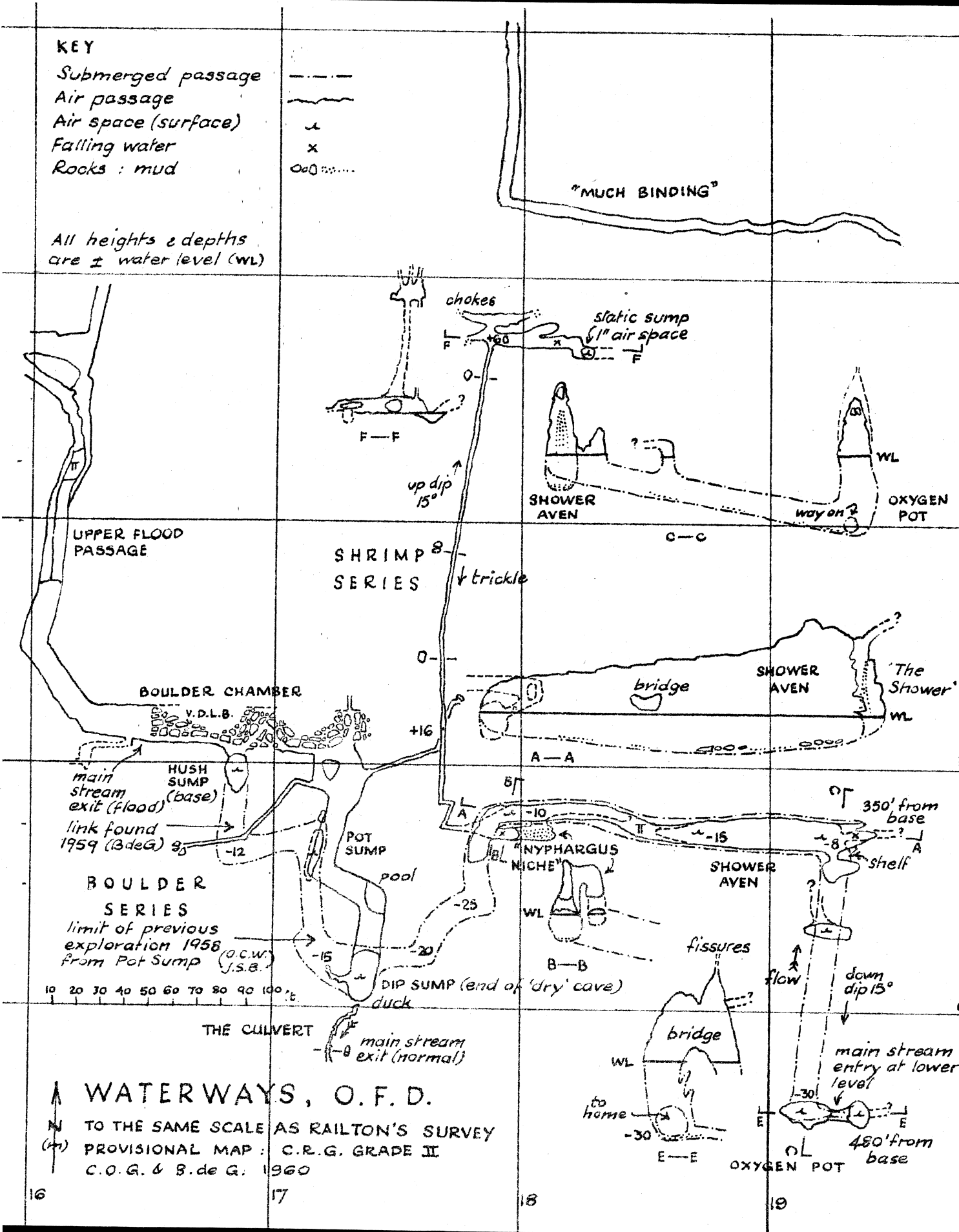
Brian de Graaf.
Charles Owen George.

KEY

- Submerged passage
- Air passage
- Air space (surface)
- Falling water
- Rocks : mud



All heights & depths are ± water level (WL)



WATERWAYS, O.F.D.

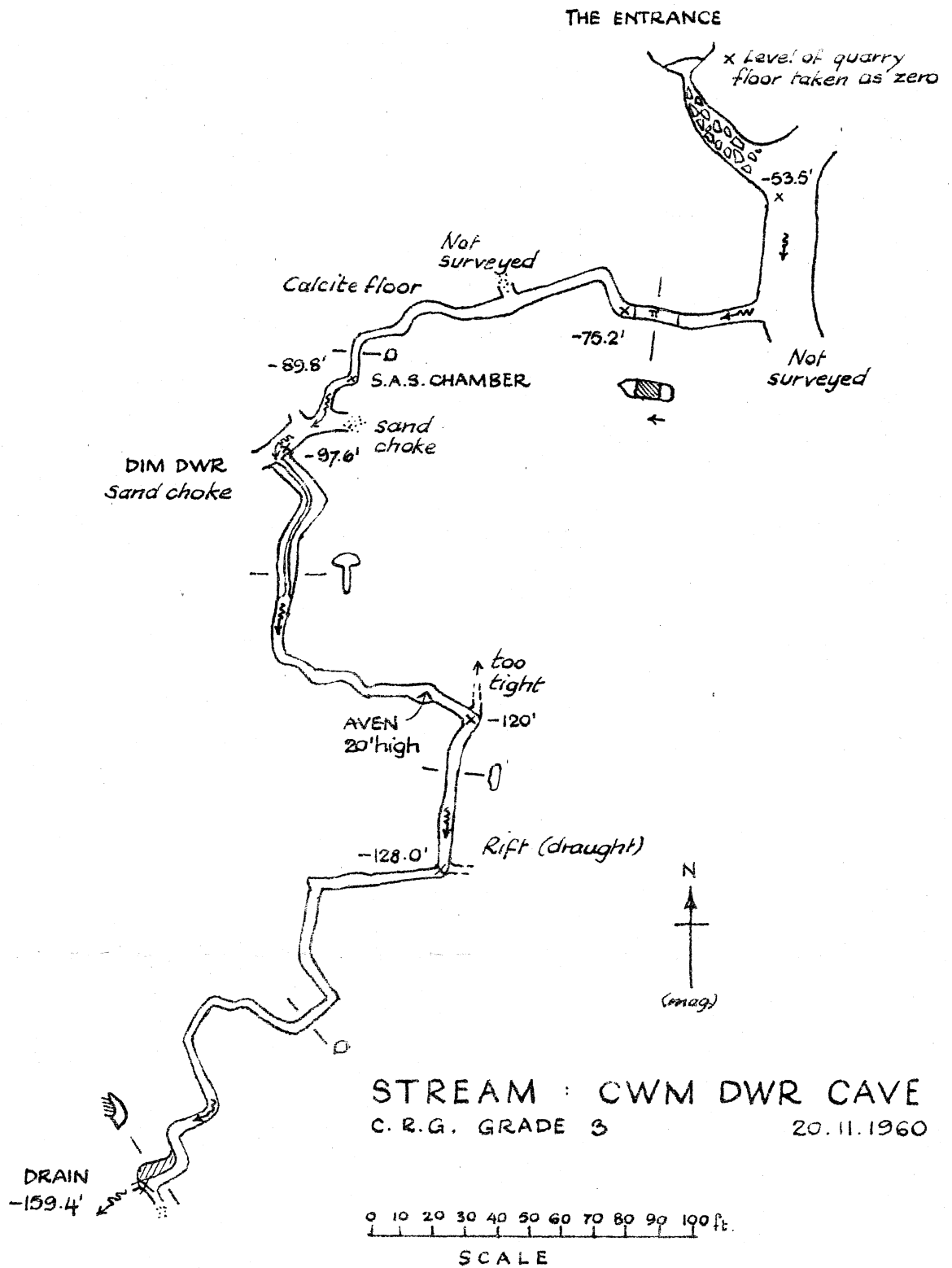
TO THE SAME SCALE AS RAILTON'S SURVEY
 (4) PROVISIONAL MAP: C.R.G. GRADE II
 C.O.G. & B.de G. 1960

16

17

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19



Reduced from original survey made by B. Woods, B. de Graaf, L. Hawes & R. Basham

(II) CWM DWR CAVE.

The re-opening of Cwm Dwr cave presented us with four new 'digs' which might lead to the missing miles of Ffynnon Ddu. Each 'dig' was investigated and the one which took both the draught and stream of the cave was decided on as the most promising.

The stream disappeared into a narrowing passage which eventually closed down to a miserable crevice some three to four inches wide and a foot high. We had decided to dig as far as the first corner which seemed to be about three to four feet ahead. Our method of blasting was of necessity inefficient. 'Deterrent' was plastered to the rock and tamped with clay. Usually three to five charges were laid at the same time, and after detonation a period of three hours or so was allowed for the smoke to clear. The usual procedure was to blast on Friday night, Saturday morning and afternoon and twice again on Sunday. Working this way it was an easy matter to dispose of 10 lbs. or more of 'stuff' on a weekend.

The bend turned out to be eight feet ahead and on reaching it we were confronted with a second bend about three to four feet away. Having gone so far, and still being convinced that this 'dig' had possibilities, we continued blasting. It was at this stage in the game that the Cwm Dwr contractors appeared on the scene.

A chance meeting with a company of S.A.S. out on a weekend exercise was the sort of luck we were wanting. Stories of the vast cave which must be somewhere under their feet soon sold them the idea that Cwm Dwr would be the ideal spot for demolition exercises. They returned a month later, with a device for blasting known as a 'Ffynnon Special'. This device succeeded in making a hole big enough to take 14 lbs. of 'banger'.

At first we thought the results of their 'big bang' were rather disappointing. A lot of rock had been reduced to a fine powder and there was considerably more room at the first bend. We could not however see around the second bend. This was a sweeping curve and to be able to see around it we would have to remove completely the inside of the bend. Rubble clearing by Bernard Woods and Edgar Harwood prepared the way for another whack with 'banger'.

On the weekend of November 5th Charles George continued the process of demolition, which was considerably eased due to the fact that the S.A.S. 'banging' had loosened the solid rock wall. At 1 a.m. on November 6th we could see past the blasted bend and into what looked like a chamber. A few feet of rock and rubble had to be removed and we were in. A half pound of 'banger' was left to remove these obstructions and we returned to the cottages.

Sunday morning, and by 10 a.m., Seaton Phillips, Charles and I were standing in a fair sized passage which ran approximately with the strike of the rock. This was followed but soon closed down and ended with a dry mud fill. This looks as if it can be easily dug out. Back to our original dig, and we followed the stream which ran into a rift passage going down dip. We were shortly reduced to crawling and finally stopped by a miserable crevice similar to the

one we had just dug through. Where the Hell was Ffynnon Ddu II ?

The water bid us farewell and disappeared into the crack, but we had lost the draught some little way back up stream. It was soon traced to a branch passage where after about twenty feet it howled through a rift too tight for us to follow. However it seemed that the rift got a lot bigger further on. Several people tried to get through, all without success.

The following weekend Bill Clarke popped into the extension, popped through the tight bit and popped out again. The passage widens out to an aven with a boulder choke floor.

On Friday 18th November Brian de Graf, Charles and I returned and once again failed to get through. No more 'banger' was left to enlarge the squeeze. On Sunday morning we returned and followed Bill Clarke's knee steps to the aven. There are two possible routes from the aven. The first, twenty feet above the floor and the second at roof level (40 ft.) Both require blasting, both take a draught and appear to open up into a bigger passage.

The original shaft is now in a dangerous state and work will now have to be concentrated on making it secure.

Clive Jones.

4. FOUR IN A WYVERN

or

I Dented My Car In A Cave.

(NOTE: Not to be read by the 'purist' caver.)

Three years having elapsed since 'Four in a Husky' we decided to see some more of the mountainous limestone areas of France. This time the party consisted of George and Mavis Jefferson together with their children Gareth and Lindsay in their Ford 'Squire' and Margaret, Paul, Barbara and myself in our Wyvern. To those who wish to camp at Dover the night before sailing I recommend the camp site at Whitfield on the Canterbury road.

The crossing on August 4th was uneventful and the next three days saw us pressing south to Bordeaux and along that road of all roads, the 100 mile straight between Bordeaux and Bayonne where the annual fete was in full swing. The end of that particular day saw us well into the Pyrennees at St. Jean Pied de Port. What a wonderful place for the photographer when the weather is fine!

It poured with rain and we travelled on through Mauleon and Tardets to Oloron and a muddy camp site. It is of interest to note that our route took us reasonably close to Pierre St. Martin i.e., by French standards.

The weather now improved and we left Oloron and climbed up through Larins and over the Col d'Aubisque (5,600 ft.) down to Argeles Gazost. Those who wish to remain friends with the Jeffersons will do well not mention this day for they have the fondest memories of mist and boiling.

Of all the days we hoped that it would be fine I think that it must have been the following day when we visited the Cirque de Gavarnie and so it was. We travelled down the Gorges de Luz to Luz and then on up to the Cirque in brilliant sunshine. This we did as early as we could as the road is very popular and the traffic becomes very heavy later on. Although the Cirque is one of the great tourist attractions of the area, having many thousands of visitors (and mules), it is an incredibly fine sight. The cliffs rise to some 10,000 ft. and the highest waterfall in Europe plunges down in a single 1,500 ft. fall. For the caver it is an area of great interest for among the peaks lie the great ice caves of Mabore and others. It seemed to us that to get to the caves would be no mean effort, let alone to explore them.

The next day saw us on the long climb over the Col du Tourmalet (6,000 ft) Only 45 miles from Argeles Gazost to Bagneres de Bigorre but it took us all day. At Bagneres de Bigorre we visited our first show cave, the Grotte de Medous. By British standards it is, of course, way above anything we have got, but I have seen better. The guide was good and considerate in that he did speak slowly so that we could try to understand what was said. During the rest of the day we crossed numerous cols and passed near the Gouffre de Henne Morte. Finally we camped at St. Girons surrounded by magnificent limestone cliffs. Near St. Girons is situated the Laboratoire Souterrain de Moulis and it was there that we went the following day, the visit having been arranged by Jeff who is going to give a detailed account of this wonderful experience. All that I will write is that I have the fondest memory of following him around armed with a large dictionary and of trying to translate such phrases as 'lethal high temperature' and the like.

From our next camp site at Varilhes we visited the Grotte Labouiche and at the entrance were greeted by a photograph of Bill Little's backside and an account of the Franco-Anglais Expedition of some years ago. This is a show trip that is well worth anyone's time. It is almost entirely in a boat and as little as possible has been done to spoil the natural beauty of the cave. It is a long trip and the distance travelled is nearly three kilometres. Not satisfied with this we went on to Mas d'Azil where a road runs through the cave and I did the seemingly impossible by denting the side of my car in a cave!!!! What a sight! I mean the cave not the car. A huge cave containing a road, a car park and a show cave. Historically the cave is well known and once more the guide was good enough to try to speak slowly for us. Again this is more than well worth a visit and it should not be missed.

Our stay at Varilhes came to an end with regret for the fete was in full swing and we were loath to leave the place. What a pity it is that we

cannot enjoy ourselves in this country like the Southern French man and woman I suppose that a great deal of it is due to the weather but some of it must be due to the absence of the 'Thou Shalt Not' policy which exists in this country. South again and after a look at the impossible camping conditions on the Cote Vermeille we went on to Perpignan and found the worst site of the whole holiday! Consequently we were off as soon as possible the next day and found a good site at Narbonne. From here we went to the Mediterranean at Grisson, Agde and Sete. It was Ann and Rob Williams who had told us to visit Sete and we were very glad that we had taken their advice, for it is a fascinating harbour with much to attract the photographer.

Our journey now took us north through Lodeve to Millau. Three years ago when I travelled from Millau to Lodeve, I had noticed one or two places which looked possible for further exploration. It was my intention to try and find these again. The first was easy for it was situated in a quarry. We entered and found a large passage which narrowed down after some distance. Both Jeff and I feel that with a little effort this could be made to go much further. This cave we called Grotte Margaret. Some distance further towards Millau, I saw the depression I had noticed three years ago, and Jeff and I set out to investigate it. It proved to be a pothole and after an easy climb down we were in a steeply sloping passage and it was easy to see that in times of heavy rain that this pothole would take a large volume of water. After a short distance we were stopped by a pitch of some 30-40 ft. As time was against us we had to leave it making a promise to come back to it at a future date. This pothole was named Gouffre Mavis. Finally we stopped at some open fissures on the roadside. They were full of refuse and were named the Rubbish Dump. It is possible that they would 'go' with a little effort.

The next day we set off from our camp site by the Tarn and explored the Tarn Gorges. They are magnificent and rival the Ardeche Gorge which we had visited before. Of interest was a monument to Martel and Armand at Le Rozier. At the top of the Tarn we climbed up onto the Causse Mejean and visited Aven Armand. Again this show cave should be visited by anyone who is in the area. It is an enormous chamber filled with a forest of stalagmites, the tallest being some 90 ft. high. Our journey back to Millau took us down the Gorges of the Jonte.

On the following day we set off to visit Montpellier le Vieux. This is an area of limestone rocks which in the distance appear as a ruined city. Indeed it is almost unbelievable the shapes into which these rocks have been weathered. We all remember this spot for the countless lizards and the scorching heat.

From Millau we travelled back through Cahors, Sarlat and Soulliac to our old camp site at Montignac on the Vezere. Again we ran into the local fete in which we found dancing in the streets and got on the wrong end of a firework display -- most interesting. As we had visited Laseaux on a previous occasion we parted company from Jeff and Mavis and set off for Sarlat. This is a wonderful place for a photographer and I thoroughly recommend it for anyone who likes to visit quaint corners and old houses. We now went on to Domme where we were once again indebted to Ann and Rob for their advice to visit the village. It seems like a place where time has stood still, and the sort of place where everyone lives to a ripe old age. The town crier was in action and she was an old

woman with a kettle drum. Reluctantly we left Domme and went on to visit the cave of Font de Guame. Although the paintings do not strike one with the force of those at Lascaux they are most interesting and again the guide took the trouble to make the trip interesting for us. Lastly we stopped at Les Eyzies where we had a look around the National Museum of Prehistory. Naturally we took good care to arrive before the doors closed!!!! (see previous N/L)

Our holiday was over except for the long drive back north. What a stupid thought. Travelling along the Le Mans race circuit the car came to a stop and when help arrived from Mulsanne we found that the petrol pump had packed up and that the rocker arm had dropped into the sump. While this was going on Jeff passed us in his car and as we were just off the main road he was unaware of our plight. However we spent the night in an orchard and by eleven the next morning we were able to set off. After some hours we caught up with Jeff and Mavis who were much relieved to see us.

At last safely on the ship all was well and we were ready for a meal, expecting Jeff to join us when he had got his car on board and seen to the passport formalities. The ship sailed and the public address system asked me to report to the purser's office. Wondering what I had done wrong, I duly presented myself, to find that Jeff had been left behind and that there was a blue haze over Boulogne. Eventually he caught the next boat.

It was a wonderful holiday and everyone enjoyed himself. From Llandrindod Wells back to Llandrindod Wells was 3,052 miles and took 100 gallons of petrol. In the dark dismal wet weather that we have experienced ever since we can look back with happy memories of our trip.

D.W. Jenkins.

5(i) MOUNTAIN RESCUE EPISODE.

October 1960.

Calling at Dungeon Ghyll Hotel at dusk, our party of four were informed that a man had been seen to fall from the summit of Pavey Ark an hour or two previously. Such a fall would mean a free drop of 500 feet to the shore of Stickle Tarn below. Three of us set off at once, leaving the fourth to notify the local Mountain Rescue Team, and inform them of our departure.

We scrambled up the 1,400 feet to the near side of Stickle Tarn very rapidly, and pushed on to its further side, beginning our search by torchlight exactly below the summit of Pavey Ark. We quickly found what we feared - the body was that of a 12 or 13 stone man, and it was clearly impossible to attempt

its removal without the stretcher party. We had expected a long and dreary wait, but I was amazed that within twenty minutes the stretcher party had arrived. The body was fastened on to the Thomas stretcher which was fitted with skids and slings; it required a team of eight, two on the handles, fore and aft, and two each side on the slings. The worst part of the return was down a boulder strewn gully, a descent of 1,000 feet in half a mile or so. During my spell on the slings I discovered a useful tip and passed it on to the others; to lean outwards in the sling. This not only lessens stumbling, but also gives the stretcher a smoother, more taut ride. This would rarely be possible in a cave, of course. We were back at Dungeon Ghyll Hotel within an hour and a half of leaving the scene of the accident. We certainly travelled at a rate of knots considering the terrain, some of the boulders were hip high, and although there were several torches, these were inexpertly handled, and one had literally to feel ones' way down. The Mountain Rescue leaders were climbing instructors and I gathered that speed in evacuation and descent was considered to be almost the first essential. Splints are carried of course.

NOTE:

In abseiling, keep the shoulders well back; it's easier and, more important, helps to keep the anarak (or overalls) away from the abseiling sling and karabiner in front.

Two bad accidents recently occurred through a fold of loose anarak jamming quite inextricably in to the abseiling karabiner - probably the accidents occurred in free abseiling. For the same reason, do not clip the abseiling karabiner to the body sling. Keep the anarak hood over ones' head lest it foul the abseiling rope over the shoulder.

"The wings of man's actions are plumed with the feathers of death."

Sir Robert Cecil. 16th Century.

"Be flipping careful."

E. Aslett. 1960.

5(ii) COLLECTED NOTES REGARDING GELIGNITE FUMES.

Fumes from Gelnignite, Polar Ammon. Tests by Coal Board in Hydro Electric Tunnels.

Oxide of Nitrogen 0.0006 to 0.003%
Carbon Monoxide about 0.02%
Also Carbon dioxide, water vapour and Nitrogen.

No details as to amount of charge, space or ventilation but "0.02%

of CO inhaled for 8 hours is dangerous." "0.001% of Nitrous fumes, inhaled for a few minutes may be fatal."

NITROGEN OXIDES.

Nitrous and Nitric oxides - nitrous fumes. A few minutes exposure to 1 in 1,000 concentration may cause death. Such a concentration would not give warning as it would not cause cough etc. An atmosphere in which nitrogen oxides can be detected by smell is very dangerous.

The reaction of nitrogen oxides with moisture causes nitrous and nitric acids to be formed.

Oedema of the lungs occurs within a matter of hours - the higher the concentration of gas, the sooner. The symptoms of oedema are caused by the lungs filling with fluid, in effect drowning (though the treatment is different). Increasing shortness of breath, bubbling in chest, rapid, shallow breathing, expectoration or vomiting of clear, greenish fluid. May also damage red cells of blood causing blueness (cyanosis). Repeated exposure to nitrogen oxides can cause serious chronic effects in the lungs.

Treatment.

Absolute rest, lying down. Oxygen. Do not relieve thirst with excessive drinking of fluids. No attempts at artificial respiration.

CARBON MONOXIDE.

No smell. Symptoms may be 'blackouts' dizziness, headaches, unconsciousness - may be no symptoms and victim may be unable to assist himself before becoming aware of danger - exertion will accelerate toxic effects.

Treatment.

Oxygen - artificial respiration if breathing stops.

NOTES.

- (1) The effects from carbon monoxide will be immediate, those from nitrous fumes are more likely to be delayed - therefore if a casualty is found unconscious after recent blasting and breathing has stopped it would appear that carbon monoxide is the likeliest cause. In any case, and whatever the cause, removal of the casualty from the fume zone must be immediate and must precede any attempt at artificial respiration.
- (2) Cavers certainly work in atmospheres while the smell of the fumes is still apparent. How much of the smell is due to nitrous fumes or to other products of combustion, I do not know. If due to nitrous fumes, NOTE "smell is very dangerous".

- (3) The Divisional Explosives Engineer, Coal Board, states that "the number of accidents due to inhalation of fumes from shot firing is very low". It may however, be presumed that shot firers work under far better conditions of ventilation, waiting periods etc., than cavers do. Also they are less likely to engage upon heavy work immediately they re-enter the fume zone; of course, exertion increases the amount of noxious gas which is breathed in.
- (4) If a party is going to work in a possibly dangerous fume zone, it may be as well for one, at least, to be kept in reserve away from the zone or up draught (if any). Consider other parties who may be down draught.
- (5) In the recent episode of under-water blasting it is probable that nitrous fumes went into solution with the water so giving rise to a layer of nitric acid gas (HNO_3) upon the surface of the water. HNO_3 especially causes oedema of the lungs.
- (6) Remember repeated exposure to nitrous fumes can cause chronic lung damage, but I think this refers to continuous exposure as in a chemical works. No doubt cavers should ration themselves and not put in sessions of repeated blasting, especially if combined with heavy work.

E.Aslett.

6. BOULDER COLLAPSE IN O.F.D.

Whilst crawling through the "Blasted Hole" (between Low's Chamber and the R.A.W.L. Series), a visitor dislodged a small rock releasing the large block over the crawl. Fortunately this came to rest again in contact with the crawling caver and the wall without crushing him. This lucky man was just able to get out. In an effort to stabilise things the Block slipped further, completely closing the hole.

The leader and front half of the party later rejoined the rear half via R.A.W.L., Bolt Passage, Bolt Traverse, Maypole Traverse and Stream Passage. The trip out was the more 'interesting' due to the stream rising to a 'sporting' level.

On Sunday, Ann Williams, Eric Inson and myself (Cave Art Contractors) went in via the 'Escape Route'. A few hours of work with crowbar and 'banger' altered things once again.

The new way through is about one yard from the original "Blasted Hole" but is now a vertical climb instead of a crawl. We hope it will be safer, BUT PLEASE BE CAREFUL IN BOULDERS, TEN YEARS OF USE DOESN'T PROVE A THING, OR DOES IT?

W.H. Little.

7. AN ELECTRONIC AID TO MAPPING CAVES.

Recently I was shown an article in "Electronics" (for September I think), in which a device for mapping caves was described. It consisted of an oscillator running at 2 KCs, feeding a loop. The receiver consisted of another loop and an audio amplifier. The only snag was that American transistors were used and I was unable to find any information about them. However the thing was made using British transistors and the circuit was altered a bit. There was a bit of difficulty in getting any power from the transmitter into the loop

Anyway it was working well enough for a trial; the maximum range was about thirty feet. The transmitter was put in an Aven in Cwm Dwr, while Neil Jones and Rob Williams wandered around looking for it. It was found to be some yards from where it ought to have been. Later evidence (i.e. a smoke and noise test), showed that it really was there.

A later and it is hoped improved version of this equipment is now being made.

B. Birchenough.

Hon. Secretary.....Dinmore, Dyffryn Rd., Llandrindod Wells, Rads.
Hon. Treasurer.....Cribarth, Court Moor Avenue, Fleet, Hants.
Hon. Editor.....Neuadd, Llangorse, Breconshire.
C.R.O. and Tackle ...G.L. Clissold, c/o The Meend, Staunton, Nr.Coleford, Glos.
Manager.

*****WITH*BEST*WISHES*FOR*CHRISTMAS*AND*THE*NEW*YEAR*****

