

74/73

**SOUTH WALES
CAVING CLUB**

NEWSLETTER



SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

No. 74

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November 1973

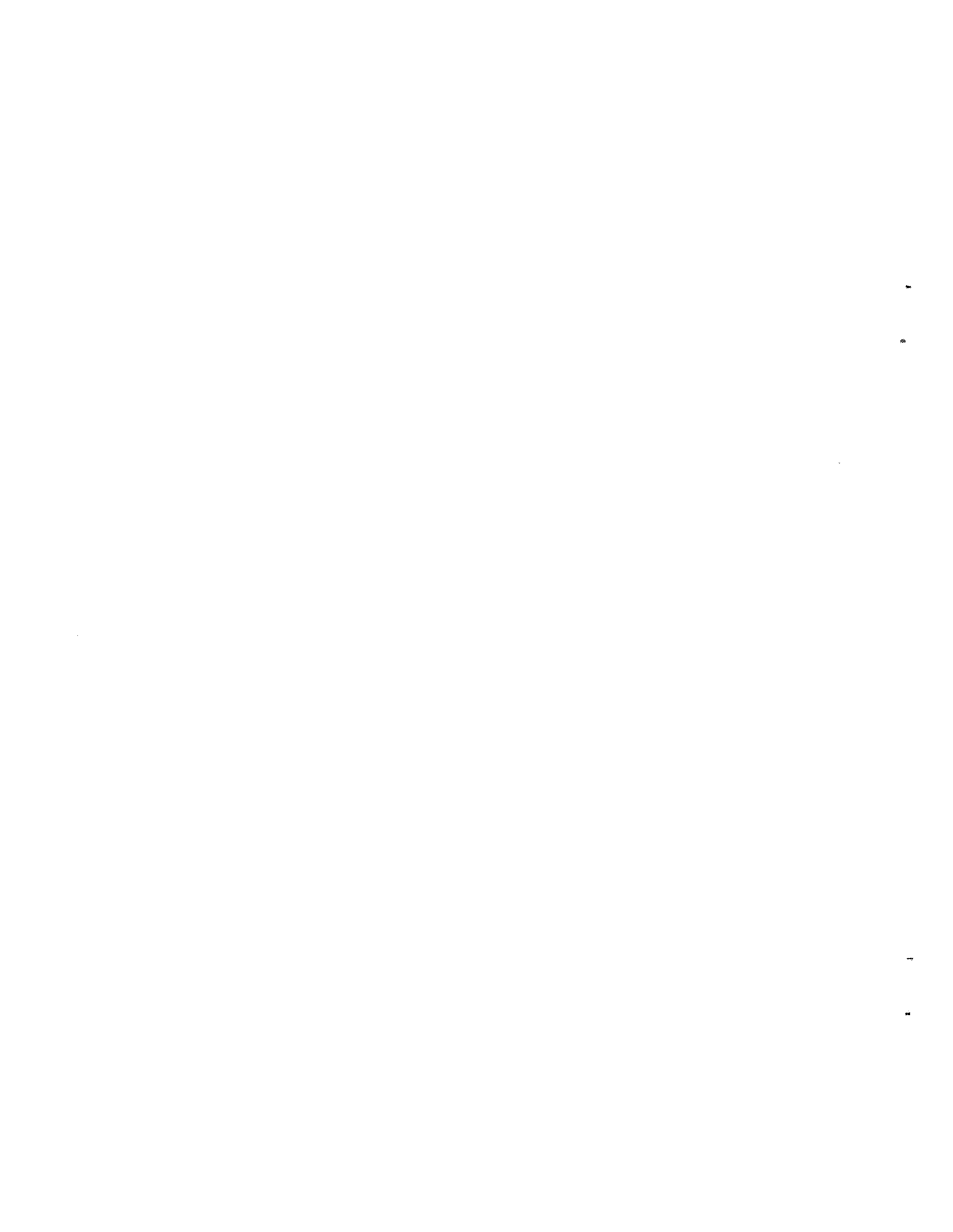
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH

'THE FINGERS'

OGOF FFYNON DDU I. By P. Harvey



CAVE DIVING AND RESCUE

The great increase in the number of people participating in caving activities has inevitably caused an increase in the number of alerts and rescues, but so far cave diving has been very fortunate. Comparatively few situations have arisen in the past where a rescue has developed over a diver, because of the very nature of the sport itself. Generally held as excessively dangerous by the majority of the caving world, the few 'madmen' who did participate were cautiously well trained on primitive but efficiently maintained equipment.

Changing all this have been the recent technological developments, and, perhaps more significantly, the Revolution of Acceptance. This has been a product of slow evolution which has only very recently (within the last two years), assumed its present distinctiveness. People today, therefore, are prepared to have a go, without first undergoing the vital training. Criticism of such activities, together with a stern warning, is necessary, but will go unheeded, especially in distant areas like Yorkshire, where access to a Cave Diving Group, or equivalent facilities, is very limited. Consequently, there will be a great increase in the numbers participating, until future events will inevitably serve to bring home the realities of the dangers involved.

The question of rescue

There are certain basic situations where 'sump rescue' is the only feasible answer if life is to be saved:-

- (1) Where a party of cavers has been trapped beyond a 'low' section of roof, i.e. flooding.
- (2) Where a sump may provide a technically easier or safer route to that used by the 'dry' caver.
- (3) Where a cave diver has sustained injuries in a sump extension and the sump is the only route to safety.
- (4) Where a diver has 'gone lost', or 'overdue'.

Looking at each in turn, it can be seen that the role of rescue is marginally different in each case.

- (1) Flooding: Here one might justifiably quote Dan-yr-Ogof, but the presence of the rescue dump has now removed much of the need for prompt action. Recently a line has been laid from Pot Sump (in 37 Series) to Lake 3, enabling one to dive in under the most severe flood, should the need arise. The link would be most useful to provide food and fuel and only secondarily to bring out trapped cavers. Other caves that spring to mind are of course Little Neath,

where Bridge Cave Sump (1) would provide a perfectly feasible rescue path. Yorkshire caves, generally held as tight, wet and aligned upon the vertical axis, would perhaps fall beyond the scope of the diver in many cases.

(2) The technically easier, or safer route for bringing an injured person to the surface: The example par excellence must be Swildons where the sumps could be dived to avoid nasty little places like Blue Pencil. Nearer at hand one could consider diving the 'Rising Sump' between Dan-yr-Ogof III and II which is large, and only about 130' long. Of course one has to evaluate whether or not the individual in question is capable of withstanding the shock, and the possibilities of exposure should a heating supply fail. (N.B. The C.D.G. Mark II Sump Rescue Exposure Bag is waterproof.)

(3) The case of the injured cave diver: this undoubtedly poses a big question. With all the inevitable 'support' problems encountered, it is becoming a rare occurrence for more than two divers to enter any sump extension, and then they would adopt only the very basic safety measures. The caves to consider are primarily Dan-yr-Ogof and Little Neath although Wookey and Arch-Noon's (Northern Ireland) are also high on the list. Only five people for example have been to Mazeways II, in Dan-yr-Ogof. Should anything happen to both members of a team diving there, then the problems of actually locating the missing persons would be of prime concern (over a mile of passages, Sept. '73). Again, taking the example of Mazeways II, the time factor can be of paramount importance. A diver is injured. It would take an hour to reach and pass the sump, another hour to reach the entrance, several hours would have to be spent locating and alerting capable divers and finding sufficient air (N.B. Bristol). Therefore a minimum of 7 hours could have elapsed before the injured person is reached. This is simply not on. The only answer would be very rough improvisation - administer first aid and then get the person to the sump and manhandle him through! This of course would depend upon the seriousness of the injury.

(4) The 'lost' or 'overdue' diver: is the situation most likely to arise when a sump is being explored for the first time, or beyond previous limits. If a sump is passed, normally by the solo diver, then it is reasonable to assume that exploration of the extension should ensue. Bearing in mind that it probably took so much effort getting there in the first instance, an extension would have to be really good to warrant another trip. So how long does the support party allow? It can take an hour belaying the line, dekitting and subsequently kitting up - on top of actual exploration and diving time. The hazards beyond the sump are many, perhaps a broken mask, light failure or valve problems. The 'lost' diver poses the very real emergency. Losing the line, broken line, or following the wrong line, together with equipment failure and/or physical afflictions en route are the obvious causes. Unless the individual has nine lives the end result can often be predicted. But there's always the chance that there is an airbell, in which case prompt action is essential. This of course will rarely be possible due to divers ever minimising on gear, especially air, and because solo diving is

on the increase, - both largely due to support problems. If the diver is prepared to sacrifice his safety margins he must bear the consequences. He is on his own and can expect little or no help in the majority of cases. Training therefore becomes all the more important.

The point to emphasise is that sump rescue is 'possible'. The actual feasibility will depend on many factors, e.g. provision of adequate equipment and the nature of the sump. The long, deep, tight or unstable sump will pose great problems on top of other issues such as visibility and cold. But anything is possible, provided that the call out is early enough. Points '3' and '4' pose the question of how long the base party is to allow. One has to be an optimist at all times but the only correct procedure must be to rigidly adhere to the time allocated by the diver himself, then in no way can any blame be brought to bear upon members of the support party, should an unfortunate decision have been made.....One hopes such decisions will never be needed.....but in the eventuality, 'sump rescue' would be seen as perfectly practical.

MARTYN FARR

---ooOoo---

OVERLAND TO KENYA

Seaton and Marion Phillips have recently returned from an overland trip to Kenya. Accompanied by their three children they took 6 months to drive to Nairobi in an old Dodge ambulance. They travelled via Morocco, the Hoggar Route across the Sahara, Nigeria, Central Africa, Zaire, Rwanda, Tanzania and finally Kenya. The trip was considered a tremendous success and Seaton and Marion thoroughly recommend it to anyone. They are prepared to offer advice to anyone planning a similar trip. Their new address is in this newsletter.

---ooOoo---

REPORT ON THE RESCUE PRACTICE

HELD AT TUNNEL CAVE

TOP ENTRANCE 18-8-73

This Rescue Practice was well attended, and provided us with much useful information about Tunnel Cave and rescue in general. The stretcher and casualty were carried from a small chamber several hundred feet away from Cascade Aven to the surface. The biggest lesson was, once again, that S.W.C.C. members are by and large so lacking in proficiency in elementary vertical techniques as to make getting 18 people down a pitch a task taking nearly 90 minutes. This illustrates two requirements; people selected to work on pitches during a rescue must be fully capable of doing so and in caves such as Tunnel Cave, it could well be quicker to send some people in via the alternative route(s). With the lessons of Pwll Dwn and Tunnel Cave behind us it is obvious that a rope techniques practice is vital.

Recommendations about the tackle are similar to those made after Pwll Dwn (Newsletter No. 73) with the following additions:

- (i) The stretcher was short of several lanyards which should go with it for securing the casualty.
- (ii) An additional sling or detachable bar to prevent the stretcher spinning on a pitch would be useful.
- (iii) Coloured hauling lines are required.
- (iv) Several ropes in the 40' - 60' range are required.
- (v) A 20' header rope should accompany the stretcher.
- (vi) A number of large kit bags kept empty in the trailer would be useful for carrying loose tackle, particularly when de-rigging.

As far as Tunnel Cave is concerned, this practice, together with several held in 1966, have tested all of the through routes, with the exception of the section from Saddle Bend to Maiden Chamber, which W.E. Clarke records as being "fairly formidable".

When the next surface practice (November 10th, 1973 - ropes and first aid) has been completed, I feel we can assume that personnel training is up to a reasonable standard, and one or two practices a year should both train newcomers and enable the older members to exercise their techniques. Obviously extra trials of new techniques, caves or equipment should continue. More serious at present is our lack of people fully competent to lead an efficient rescue; future practices must have this in mind.

BOB HALL

CLUB LIBRARY

Listed below are the titles of the books currently forming part of the Club Library. For the benefit of members, I have given a brief description of some of the more obscure books. Any new titles received will be included in future Newsletters.

Caves of Wales and the Marches by D. W. Jenkins and A. M. Williams

Prehistoric Gower by J. G. Rutter

Gower Caves by Allen and Rutter (2 Copies)

Caves and Caving by M. Jasinski
English Translation B. Maxwell

Beyond Time Michel Siffre

His account of sixty three days spent alone underground in a cave under the French Alps. An extremely interesting book in which the author is fairly objective, much of the book being extracts from his diary, the medical aspect also being taken into account.

The Descent of Pierre St. Martin by Casteret

Men of Pierre St. Martin by J. Altaut

Caves of Adventure by Tozieff (2 Copies)

More Years under the Earth Casteret

My Caves Casteret

One Thousand Metres Down Jean Cadaux

Subterranean Climbers Pierre Chevalier

Bibliography and Index of Geology and Allied Sciences for Wales
and the Welsh Borders 1897-1958

For anyone doing research of Welsh caves a useful book and time saver. Rather heavy bedtime reading.

Geographia De Cuba A. N. Jimerez 1959, 1960

Two editions of the same book on the geography of Cuba with some reference to the caves there. Unfortunately both books are in Spanish. Will our Spanish reading members please note that there is no waiting list for these books.

Life and Death Underground J. Lovelock

Caving and Potholing D. Robinson, A. Greenbank

The Cave of Rouffignac L. Pere Neugier and R. Robert

This deals with the discovery of the prehistoric cave paintings in Rouffignac in 1956. The controversy surrounding them as well as how the people who painted them lived, are covered.

Radiant Darkness A. Bogli and H. W. Franke

A recent acquisition to the library. It is worth seeing just for the photographs which must be the best colour ones in any caving book.

It is worth noting that copies can be obtained at present at £1.40 from Descent, which is a big saving compared with the £3.25 usual price.

Mining for Metals in Wales F. J. North

Metaliferous Mines of Southern Wales

The Mineral Wealth of Wales and its Exploitation T. M. Tomas

Improvised Techniques in Mountain Rescue Bill March

British Caving C.R.G.

Ghar Parau David Judson

Newly acquired for the Club Library. I haven't even read it myself yet, but according to all the rave notices it has had, it should prove very enjoyable reading.

PETER FRANCIS

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CLUB
NOTES

1. We welcome the following new members:

Ivor D. Davies, 34 Heol Rhosyn, Claremont Park, Morriston, Swansea.
Ann Franklin, 254 Newport Road, Cardiff.
Brian J. Higgins, 1 Abberton Close, Halesowen, Worcs., B63 3ES.
Elsie Little, 29 Wrekin Road, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, Warks.
Fred W. Midgeley, 'Midker', 6 Highfield Avenue, Bridgend, Glam.
David Murrow, 14 Heol y Waun, Seven Sisters, Neath, Glam.
Margaret-Anne Thomson, 145 Watling Street, St. Albans, Herts.

2. We are pleased to welcome back as a member:

Peter Millet, 33 Taylors Row, Coleraine, Co. Derry, N. Ireland.

3. Andy Freem has been added to the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I leaders' list.

4. The following members have sent address changes:

Mr. P. Ogden, c/o Kenya Construction Co. Ltd., P.O. Box 30790,
Nairobi, Kenya.
Mr. and Mrs Noel Christopher, 22 Deva Close, Poynton, Cheshire.
R. A. Hall, 11 Wrekin View, Standford Bridge, Newport, Salop.
Keith H. Parrish, 1j, Lisburne Terrace, Mills of Maine, Dundee,
Argyll.
Mr. and Mrs Seaton Phillips, Llwynffynnon Uchaf, Llandysul, Cards.
Dr. Robert Pyke, 17 Church Street, Cogenhoe, Northampton, Northants.

Please note Editor's change of address:

B. T. Jorgenson, 28 Uplands Crescent, Swansea, Glam.

5. The Honorary Secretary would be pleased to receive up to date addresses from the following members:

Ginny Brooks, Gareth Davies, John Harvey - also anyone else whose address is wrong in the list given in issue 73 of the Club Newsletter.

6. The following members have either resigned or are presumed to have withdrawn from membership this year:

Geoff Cope, Derek R. Davies, David C. Pearce, Walter Sharpley,
Derek Watson, Derrick and Joan Webley, Dr. David Williams,
Graham J. Nicholson.

- 7.

ADVANCED NOTICE - CLUB DINNER
* * * * *

This will be held on Saturday 16th March 1974 at the
Castle of Brecon Hotel. Full details will be circulated
later, but the charge will be about £1.75 per head. The
headquarters will be reserved for members and personal
guests; coach transport will be arranged for those
wishing to avoid driving.

* * * * *

8. The Annual General Meeting will be held on Easter Sunday, April 14th, 1974
at 5.00 p.m. The venue will be notified later.

9. There are minor amendments to be made to the following addresses as
published in Newsletter No. 73:

Mr. and Mrs C. Bacon, 1 Panteg Close, Culverhouse, Cardiff.

Hywel Ball, 114 Castle Hill Road, Belfast 4.

T. C. Bryant, Glyn Coed, Victoria Road, Maesycwmmwr, Hengoed,
Glam., CF8 7RF.

Mr. and Mrs G. L. Clissold, Silhouette Cottage, Staunton,
near Coleford, Glos.

Mr. and Mrs A. C. Coase, 6 Meadow Mead, Rectory Road, Frampton,
Cotterell, near Bristol.

Dr. and Mrs P. N. Dilly, 86 Ashburnam Grove, Greenwich, London, SE10.

Gerry and Sheila Eldridge, 6 Keats Road, Greenmount, Bury,
Lancs., BL8 4EP.

M. J. Farr, Efail-Isaf, Cwmdu, Crickhowell, Breconshire.

Harry Gilinsky, 35 Beaconsfield Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham,
B12 9PE.

Colin R. Graham, Nuppend Farm, Alvington, near Lydney, Glos.,
GL15 6BD.

Rex A. Henriksen, 74 Springwood, Llaredeym, Cardiff.

Mr. and Mrs D. W. Jenkins, Deneraile, Brookfields, Cefnlllys Lane,
Llandrinded Wells, Radnorshire.

Dr. J. P. Matthews, 10 Bishops Close, Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF4 1NH.

Mr. and Mrs P. M. O'Reilly, Llethrid, 18 Greenogue, Rathcoole,
Co. Dublin, Eire.

A. F. Salt, c/o 14 Grafton Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham 11.

Miss Denise E. Samuel, 4 Brent Court, Church Road, Hanwell,
London NW7 3BZ.

10. The British Cave Research Association (B.C.R.A.) is now in being.
It is an amalgamation of the British Speleological Association and
the Cave Research Group of Great Britain.

The Honorary Secretary is David M. Judson, Bethel Green,
Calderbrook Road, Littleborough, Lancs.

The Honorary Treasurer is R. V. Davies, c/o Westmorland Teachers
Centre, Kendal, Westmorland.

The person selling publications is Bryan Ellis, 7 School Lane,
Combwich, Bridgwater, TA5 2QS.

11. The following members have followed their Colonialist instincts and
moved to foreign parts:

Mike and Viv Coburn and Family - New Zealand

Frank Salt - Australia

Obituary

Members will be sorry to hear that Marjorie Railton died in
October of this year.

LETTER
FROM
JUGOSLAVIA

I received a letter recently from a friend of mine in Jugoslavia, Primez Jakopin, a research student at the Ljubljana University. The Geology department at his university is one of the few in the world to have a chair in speleology and ever since I visited the place, I have been interested in the methodology of approach they adopt with caves.

The following is an extract from the letter I mentioned, relating to the measurement of caves by volume instead of length. This is of interest in that it is rather a novel idea and also it gives an insight into how the Jugoslavs work.

Numerical valuation of caves - The cave is generally a tree-shaped structure in three dimensions. As it is a hollow form etched from stone its three dimensions become difficult to measure except perhaps by multiplying them together and producing a volume.

Man has always wanted to describe caves in a subjective form - they are like.....and a suitable comparison is made. However, for scientific purposes it is necessary to measure objectively. The latter measurement should be authoritative and therefore uniformly defined.

Regarding passageway as a simple tube is out of date as length cannot be taken as the most important characteristic when cave formation depends to a great extent upon the varied cross-sections found.

Mine surveying has introduced the use of the polygon in measurement. The difference above sea-level between the entry and the lowest point was named a depth and the total horizontal projection of the polygon was declared the length of a particular gallery system. This however is still only two dimensions and was anyway mainly concerned with depth/horizontal distance ratio.

One of the reasons for not measuring passage size or volume is the awkwardness of surveying in caves and another, most important reason, is that there is no available mathematical model to work from for measuring such a varying factor. However as machines are making quick and cheap treatment of big amounts of information possible, cave measurement by volume becomes more feasible.

What I think the letter implies is that if volume were taken as a measurement it would be convenient to store mathematical 'maps' of caves on machine tapes. With the volume of a particular passage one could have a better idea of its geological nature - the idea is not new but it does show that the Jugoslavs are making the science of speleology a precise study coupled with modern technology.

GARY K. JONES

EDITOR'S COMMENT - I wonder where Ogof Ffynnon Ddu stands in a list of the largest caves by volume?

---ooOoo---

INFORMATION FROM A CIRCULAR OF THE NATIONAL CAVING ASSOCIATION

ACCESS TO SPANISH CAVES FOR FOREIGN CAVERS

The arrangements tentatively made by Geoff Matthews for helping English cavers to get past the compulsory Spanish paperwork now required have broken down, not due to any fault on the part of Geoff. He has asked the Spanish caving authorities for some workable alternative arrangement and this now is: Any English Caver wishing to visit Spain must write direct to:

The President,
Comite Nacional de Espeleologia,
Alberto Aguilera 3,
Madrid 15, SPAIN.

A letter of recommendation from the English National Body is essential or your request will not be entertained. You will need to apply at least 9 months in advance for any trip and are warned that there have been threats of arrest and confiscation of equipment if cavers are caught without permission from the Spanish Authority.

ACCESS TO FRENCH CAVES

Access arrangements should be made with the Mayor of the district in which you wish to go caving - he has the right to give or withhold permission. For information on how to contact the Mayor in areas you wish to visit, write to:

The Secretary,
Federation Francais de Speleologie,
130 Rue St. Maur,
75 Paris,
11 eme.,
FRANCE.

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"GNOME PASSAGE"

OGOF FEYNON DDU II

By P. CARDY



NEW ENTRANCES

V

CONSERVATION

Martyn Farr's article in Newsletter No. 72 Feb. 1973 "The Conservation of Resources" raised some interesting points and several members have replied with their own views on 'conservation'. Here are two of the replies received.

"In an interesting article in the last Newsletter, Martyn Farr raised a series of points that ought to be at least challenged lest they be assumed to reflect current thinking in the caving world. While no one will argue that 'conservation' of our 'resources' in the broadest sense is, (or should be) the ultimate aim of all cavers, it is totally wrong to suggest that the natural exploratory instincts of the sensible caver should be culled in any way. In suggesting this, Martyn is questioning the very spirit behind caving and all caving exploration and without that spirit our sport and science would not even exist. The natural sequence in any discovery is to 'push' it as far as possible and to decry the efforts of those seeking second (and third) entrances to major cave systems is to fail to recognise the logical progression of events following a discovery. True, the greatest appreciation of the beauty of a cave is by those who first step into it - the feeling must be akin to those very first steps on the moon - but to infer that once the initial breakthrough has been made the exploration must be slowed down to 'leave something for the cavers of twenty years time' is not only unrealistic but irrational.

To deal with some of the particular points mentioned in the article.

In Ogof Ffynnon Ddu the search for a second entrance was not a consequence of the passing of Dip Sump. It had been sought for some 20 years. That the breakthrough was made by divers is largely irrelevant - the dig was no more than 10 feet away from Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II at the time and could have provided the entrance the following day or during the succeeding years. Nor was the finding of the third entrance a necessary consequence of the discovery of the Upper Series - its discovery was largely a by-product of the search for Ogof Ffynnon Ddu III and the farthest extension of the system. Had it not been discovered when it was, it would only have been a matter of weeks before the Engine House dig would have entered Column Hall and what price conservation then? There are at least

five other sites as close to the surface as the Top Entrance is and any of these could have been 'accidentally' opened (and may still be).

It must also be emphasised that the discovery of subsequent entrances in no way 'slashes the accident risk', nor is this a valid reason for seeking another entrance to a system. The accident rate is the same - what is reduced is merely the consequences of having an accident, and only marginally at that.

It is also wrong to suggest that the status quo in regard to Dan Yr Ogof is the best situation. Not only is it degrading to have a cave under the whims of a possibly unsympathetic owner who could in the future readily refuse access to cavers for ever, but it cannot be in the best interests of caving (sport and science) to have such a situation in existence. The logical step is to seek the 'missing miles' of Dan Yr Ogof, and almost with certainty, a second entrance will materialise. Like all other caves Dan Yr Ogof can be 'preserved' with one entrance or four but it is a preservation that must be paid for - not however, by inhibiting natural exploration tendencies.

Without doubt a good deal of damage has been done in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu and, without doubt too, 'cavers in general' are to blame. Unfortunately much as we like to regard ourselves as individualists there is a remarkable hard instinct in our sport. With notable exceptions the majority of cavers seem to spend about three years actively caving and form a great faceless mass of cavers - these are the ones who do the most damage. Those who are new to the sport are frequently (though not always) well-informed as are those who have been part of it for a longer time. It is those who like to be regarded as the 'big boys', the 'hard ones who don't need life-lines' or who do solo trips for a variety of egotistical reasons who are largely to blame for damage to caves, and the S.W.C.C. is not entirely blameless here.

Certainly within my own experience I have never met a novice caver who had anything but total respect for his surroundings; the mature cavers have this respect as second nature, but those who come in between have little regard for the beauty or majesty of the underground scene, and it is these that must be educated or controlled or both.

A distinction must be made between 'fair wear and tear in a cave' and careless vandalism. It is inevitable that a path will be beaten and that many stalactites will be broken in the normal processes of caving no matter how well-behaved a caver is. But there should never be any need to explain, for example, how the Trident or the Columns in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu became smashed. There are those sites which need never under any circumstances be damaged.

I can recall that during the explorations in the Upper Series in Ogef Ffynnon Ddu we often broke formations because it was absolutely impossible to progress without doing so - we had a running joke whenever the choice of progress with damage or no progress came up: it ran: 'Smash it before someone photographs it'. Cynical maybe, but at least it showed that we were worried about it. How often since then have I seen damage done that makes it apparent that not many people do worry about it; pearls removed, the obvious track forsaken, handprints on stalactites; the list is endless.

The answer is not less caving, less searches for new extensions (although judging by the reports there seems to be this tendency at Penwyllt these days) but tighter controls on WHO goes caving. I now reverse my previous conviction that caving should be uncontrolled, but I think that the greatest way of controlling what goes on is by example. New members to the Club should be obliged to demonstrate that they are competent cavers in every sense, perhaps by a probationary period of membership - and that competence can only be achieved by good example from within. The scandalous campsite in Dan Yr Ogef is not a good example, nor are the numerous bits of flotsam and jetsam in Ogef Ffynnon Ddu, relics of ancient digs. I fear too that visiting cavers must be prepared to present their credentials if sought by the Club. We DO have a duty to posterity and our generation of cavers is going to be judged on the way we discharge the duty in regard to conservation not in how much digging or diving we leave undone for future generations. Fortunately for caving, cavers will follow their natural exploratory instincts and whether a new entrance to Dan Yr Ogef materialises or not, strict measures to conserve any new discoveries must be made, not by any one individual but by cavers in general and by the Club in particular. Certainly our whole planet would have an excellent conservation record had man never existed and so would our caves if they had never been entered - the real problem is how to live with the effects and to minimise them to an acceptable level, for like quarrying the effects of random despoilation cannot be rectified.

Perhaps too there is a lesson to be learned from North America where the processes of cave formation seem to be largely (a) phreatic initiation, (b) vadose modification, (c) discovery and exploration, (d) further development via commercialisation. As in general limestone processes are the same everywhere, then I for one will not worry too much about how much undiscovered cave we leave for exploitation in the future. To me commercialisation is a far worse evil than cavers will ever be, for it kills caving as a sport and for most of us that is why we took it up in the first place.

Finally it is interesting to speculate on whether Martyn's wish that 'natural barriers' be artificially maintained has any significance. Has he possibly discovered Dan Yr Ogef IV beyond Mazeways? By encouraging cavers

to leave something for the future is he trying to retain it for that elite minority of despoilers, the divers? Should we not be trying to dig our way in ?????

P. M. O'REILLY

"Two distinct possible developments could cause Martyn to fear for Dan Yr Ogef's future; one is the development of an entrance from the surface beyond the lakes or worse beyond the crawls, and the other is the bypassing, with an easy route, of the crawls. Of these the possibility of a new entrance should cause us the most concern. Several arguments are put forward from time to time in favour of a new entrance; not one of these can really be justified in my view. One supposed justification for such an entrance is the feeling that our right to the lower entrance is not absolute by any means and that we may in the future want access independent of the show cave. My answer to this is to argue that, as with Tunnel Cave, if we ever do lose access via the show cave then a top entrance could be considered but until that hypothetical event I for one would accept even more restricted access through one entrance knowing that the far reaches of Dan Yr Ogef remain almost untouched. It may be contended that we could control a new entrance tightly but being acquainted with the practicalities of access politics I know that, in the present climate at least, we could not operate a leader type system: remember, we only run leaders at the request of the owners of Dan Yr Ogef and these leaders are hard to find. Could we get sufficient support from a membership, which is not as yet very conservation conscious, to run a leaders system and could we justify such a system to the critical caving world?

Two other arguments in favour of a new entrance are commonly put forward: one is that the lakes and crawls are inhibiting further exploration and the other is the genuine fear of a serious accident requiring an easy stretcher route out of Dan Yr Ogef II and III. The 'aid to exploration' argument is the one used for Ogef Ffynnon Ddu and what is the result? We may gain a length of new cave but we almost 'lose' that part near the new entrance as it becomes a tourist area. Another consequence is that long trips of the Githig-Armoury-Grithig type, which although sporting, lose much when one knows of easy escapes via intermediate entrances. What of the speleological implications? In respect of geology, geomorphology etc., the discovery of new caves is most important and although the despoilation of areas of cave passages may not greatly affect its scientific evidence (Pollen dating via

mudbanks is one case for which this is not true), to the biospeleologist the maintenance of a conserved cave is of prime importance. On balance, I feel that, speleologically speaking, a new entrance is unjustified even if areas of new cave could be guaranteed.

The rescue argument is more difficult to answer, but I feel that to make a cave safer must make it easier which ethically we should not do beyond a certain point: the position of that point does, I believe, render a new entrance unethical.

As far as the crawl bypass in Dan Yr Ogof is concerned there is no doubt that the crawl protects the further reaches of the cave effectively but is also a serious rescue problem. Rescue-wise, I feel that we must strike a balance between safety, conservation and the maintenance of a sporting cave; to do this effectively we must learn as much as possible about rescue in the crawl and about possible bypasses without actually taking any steps to make the crawl either redundant or much easier. Perhaps Martyn and others, anxious to see Dan Yr Ogof preserved would join in planning further rescue investigations in the area. The crawl is also a barrier to exploration as on one hand people are disinclined to stretch their necks out when they know how difficult rescue would be and on the other hand, the transport of equipment, especially maypoles, is difficult or impossible. On this score, I feel that anything which tempers a caver's attitude on the side of safety is worth keeping and that the efforts of Edwards, Ball and others have proved maypoles to be unnecessary in many cases.

To conclude, I feel we must, in the interests of both sport and speleology, work to ensure that the route to Dan Yr Ogof II and III gets no easier, whilst studying in some depth what can be done should a serious accident occur beyond the crawl. Despite all I have said, there is one new entrance I would like to see opened and that is Waun Ffynen Felin."

BOB HALL

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