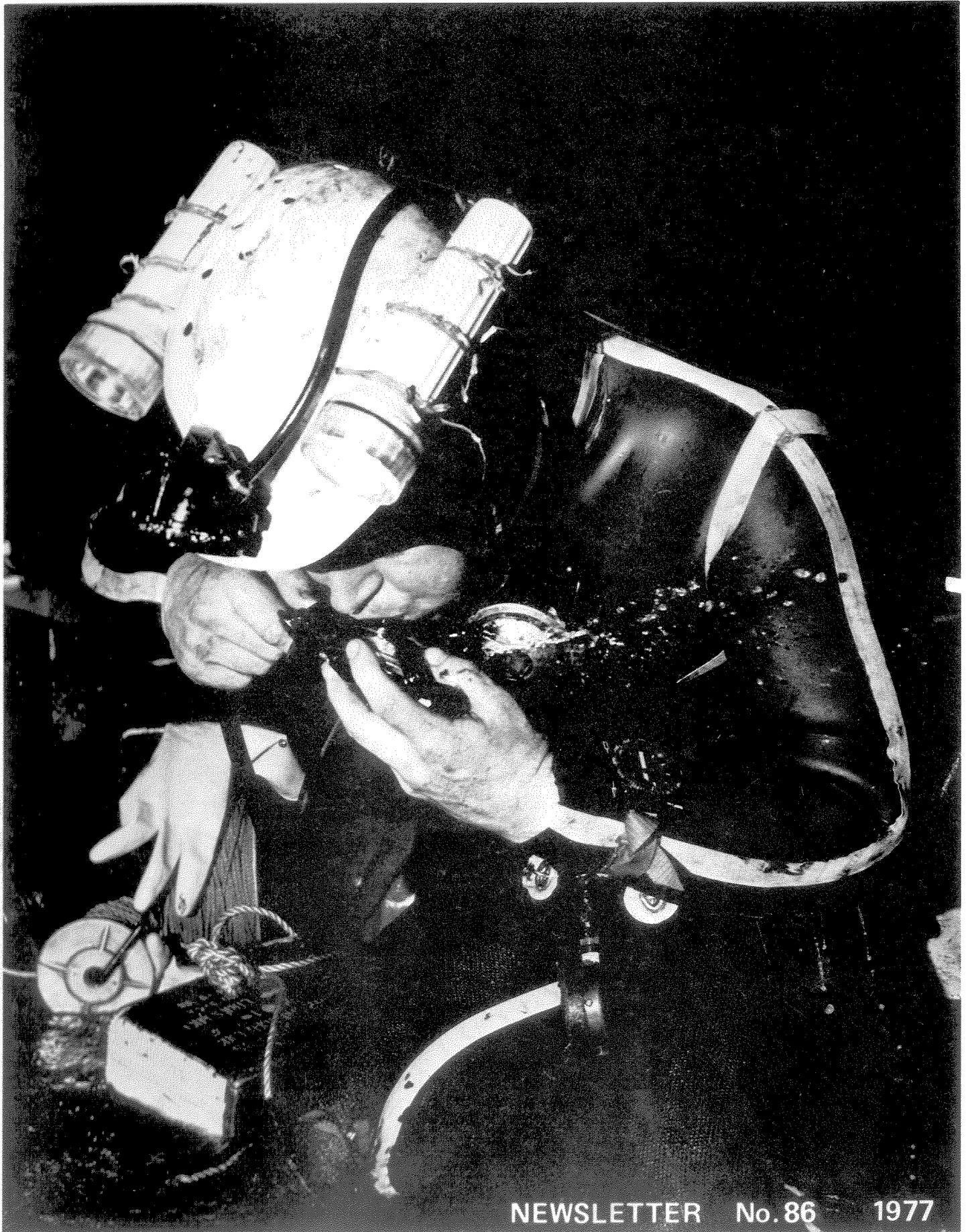


# SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB



SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

NO. 86

NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 1977

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Cover Photograph - 'Martyn Farr in Prods Pot, Easter 1976' by Clive Westlake.

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Wiltshire.

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BERGER '75

The Gouffre Berger is a 4,000 ft. deep pot in the Grenoble area of France and is one of the three deepest caves in the world.

Hywel Ball had booked the cave for the first two weeks in August with everyone finding their own way there, which varied from thumbing to regular service jet for the more affluent. Some had been in the area sometime before the official start of the 'expedition' and were firmly ensconced in the local palais de vin by the time most had arrived, whilst others only managed to be there for a short time. We were all based on the Sornin plateau near the end of a dramatic mountain road and one of the few surface water supplies. Unfortunately that was not too near the cave, resulting in delightful games of hide and seek with an elusive path after emerging from long trips in the middle of the night. Deep clints and grykes also added to that particular sport; indeed route finding underground was far easier than on the surface.

It had been agreed to use S.R.T. for all the big pitches, using ladders only on the smaller ones. This worked well in practice and no problems arose from it.

The Irish cavers were in charge of equipment for the cave and did the job admirably, even setting up an open-air workshop at the camp site. Racks, Michell and Niel Boxes were readily available as a result, as well as commercially made stuff bags and rope protectors. These stuff bags turned out to be the most popular in use over the large adapted jerry cans and S.W.C.C. frame packs which were bulky and clumsy to use. A mixture of racks and figure of eights were used for descending, though boxes were the most popular method used for prussiking, other methods were employed. The rope came from Venturegear - 1,000 ft. of Bluewater and 1,000 ft. of Terylene, plus other odds and ends, other equipment being purchased in Ireland. Each member of the party contributed £30 to cover the purchase of equipment and food, but with its resale to members afterwards, the actual cost per person worked out to be only £20. Considering the amount of good caving done and the amount of abandoned equipment found by members, this was good value for money.

From the pre-set entry conditions we had to have an underground doctor; this was Mick Orr who brought all the necessary first-aid equipment. S.W.C.C. provided a Neil Robinson stretcher which would have been very heavy and unwieldy underground. They also provided telephone wire and field telephones, as the conditions of entry also asked for a telephone link between camp one and the surface to be set up. Somehow we never got round to actually completing this task, although the entrance pitch was admirably rigged. Group insurance had also to be provided.

Avon provided a dingy, but as we had another smaller one only that was taken underground. Lake Cadoux was non-existent for most of the time and the dingy only had to be used on one day. Unfortunately the bolting kits did not materialise, so any exploratory work requiring bolting could not be carried out. Carbide provided the main source of light being more versatile for long trips, and there being no charging facilities available. For wet pitches small dry-cell torches were used strapped to helmets, although often the pitches were done in the dark, which can be very interesting, especially if you're first man up. Relighting a wet carbide at the top of a big pitch is a novelty not to be missed!

Hywel, Martyn and I were responsible for underground food. We followed a recent Everest S.W. Face expedition menu which we split into half and one day, two-men packs (see Appendix 1). This was slightly modified to suit our

requirements after Martyn and I had tried out the original menu at the Far North and had difficulty in sleeping, due to over-eating. It proved most satisfactory, though most people were apt to cheat and eat the food in the wrong order and at the wrong time - one party while at Camp One prior to bottoming had a breakfast consisting of porridge with apple flakes, chicken supreme, beef goulash, farmhouse stew à la beef goulash, beef stroganoff, and Birds Angel Whirl à la beef goulash. This was a fairly common occurrence, especially for that particular party!

Everyone carried sleeping bags and dry clothing if they intended to stay at Camp one. A large food dump was set up there with gas stoves for heating. Food dumps were also established at Camp 2 (the Great Canyon) and Camp 3 (Joly Hall) where previous parties had also left dumps. No one slept there, although the food provided welcome snack meals. Had the cave flooded these would have been essential for any party caught in those areas. On arriving at Camp 1 (Hall of the Thirteen), the usual procedure was to take off your wet suit, lay it on the ground with a polythene sheet or space blanket over it, get into dry clothing and then into your sleeping bag and do all your cooking from it. This was extremely comfortable, but reversing the process and donning a cold, wet, wet suit again was far less pleasant.

The bulk of the equipment - ropes, food, telephone wire, pack frames, stretcher etc. - were taken out in my grossly overladen Land Rover, also carrying six cavers and which gave no trouble at all after a quick engine rebuild on the morning of the ferry crossing. On it's arrival, most of the equipment was transported by human packhorse to the cave entrance, roughly two kilometres away. The following day (August 1st) the tackling of the cave was begun.

#### THE TRIP

Hywel, Paddy, Mike Orr and the Cwmbran boys rigged all the entrance pitches as far as Camp 1, where food was also deposited on the first day. Bolts were used wherever possible at the head of the pitches, with the aim of letting the rope hang freely. This was not possible on some pitches and good rope protectors were essential then. The usual method of rope carrying and pitch rigging was for an 'endless' coil to be carried in a stuff bag, and on reaching the pitch a generous amount was lowered and adjusted according to need after the first man had descended. There were many bolt holes at the top of each pitch, each successive party not seeming to trust their predecessors' judgement. Many were too small to take the standard British bolt, and they also varied in condition.

The following day Pete Robinson, Bomber, Dave Mullins, Martyn Farr and I continued tackling the pitches below Camp 1, getting as far as Tlaudines Cascade and re-surfacing after a mind blowing twelve hour trip. The Irish lads also took more supplies to Camp 1 that day.

The next day Paddy and the Cwmbran boys went in intending to rig to the bottom. Unfortunately they ran out of rope at the Little Monkey pitch and had to return. This upset the timetable somewhat as, on the surface, groups had made arrangements for following them, bottoming the cave at intervals of a few hours to avoid congestion. Martyn, Dave Underhill, Nigel Yarwood and Gareth Davies went in at mid-day on the 4th of August, but the latter three returned to the surface after taking photographs around the Camp 1 area. Dave Mullins and I followed them in getting to Camp 1 by midnight to find Martyn and Che (Cwmbran) firmly ensconced in a plastic palace supported by effluent bins. Paddy and the Cwmbran lads woke us to report that more rope

was needed and proceeded out to tell the next party in to bring rope with them. As it was pointless going on, the party at Camp 1 stayed in bed until the next party arrived and gave them a couple of hours start to rig the pitches. This second party consisted of Hywel, Pete Lord, Sue Jordan, Phil Collett and Dave Drew. Unfortunately the Little Monkey took longer to rig than anticipated, resulting in a very cold couple of hours wait in Joly Hall at it's head. However Hurricane was quickly rigged after that and all nine people were soon at the end of the cave. Following the customary group poses for photographs etc. all returned uneventfully to Camp 1 after being away from there for eighteen hours. The Australian party led by Julia James plus Chuck and Maurice, found us there, and after a quick tin of corned beef each went straight on down and then out in one attempt. We again tried to stagger the parties exiting, but again got caught up in a bottleneck and eventually took ten hours to surface, having been underground for two and a half days.

The next few days saw all members bottoming the cave except Gareth Davies, Carl Atkinson, Bomber, Pete Robinson and Tony Kealey who were prevented from doing so by rising flood water. Pete Lord bottomed twice, the second time with Jeff Phillips, the round trip only taking nine and a quarter hours.

Hywel, Chuck, Maurice, Martyn and Gareth then did a mammoth de-tackling trip to get all the equipment out of the bottom part of the cave before the two inches of rain we'd had that day came through the cave. Chuck went down the Little Monkey and took two and a quarter hours to get the rope up Hurricane due to it snagging all the time. The party then proceeded to go out, meeting Gareth at the top of Gauches. Maurice unfortunately unhooked the ladder from it's belay on Topographers Cascade and fell back down tearing his ankle ligament in the process, but he was able to carry on out. Hywel, Chuck and he finally made it back to camp at 8.00 a.m. the next day after a nineteen hour trip, the last two hours taken up in walking back from the cave entrance. This was the only accident we had, and interestingly happening on a ladder and not a rope pitch. Dave Mullins had a near escape when starting to abseil down from the top of Aldoës when a wooden stemple, used to keep the rope out of a crack, broke, dropping him five feet and showering another party member at the bottom with large chunks of wood! One of two other members also suffered slightly from exposure and exhaustion - due in some cases to their inability to shed any of the goodies they had found on the way!

Three other parties went in and brought tackle up to Camp 1 and then to the bottom of Aldoës, with a final trip taking four hours to bring all the equipment out. The easiest method found for bringing all the rope out was to tie one rope onto the tail of another and then haul an endless line up. Although this may sound awkward it worked extremely well in practice; multiple, simultaneous pitch hauls taking place on occasions. It was far less tiring than hauling one heavy sack up after another. Unfortunately on the last day of de-tackling we found that the local Froggie cavers had stolen the entrance pitch rope, field telephone and a caving helmet. Other things also went missing, but were returned after a 'heavy gang' visited their nearest camp. With an extremely large local caving population we discovered that no gear should be left lying around.

#### THE CAVE

A casual glance at the survey shows a relatively unimposing entrance series. On inspection this however does not prove to be so, and this series alone would quite easily freak out a caver not used to long pitches. The entrance itself lies towards the edge of a shallow, thickly wooded

valley which abruptly drops away in some spectacular thousand foot cliffs to the Grenoble valley. The first pitch, a mere thirty five, leaves one still in daylight, but on entering a narrow rift one soon comes to the first big cave pitch. This is Ruiz's, needing 100 foot of rope, although we used more to get down some small scrambles at the bottom.

Immediately you are impressed by it's depth. For the first 'entrance pitch' it seems to go down and down interminable. A scramble down a 25 foot ladder leads you to the Cairn Hallpitch, which although it is 100 foot deep is broken in half by a large sloping ledge making it seem shorter. When prussiking back up, it seems far longer as the angle of the rock continually throws you off balance, making it rather awkward. Then comes Cairn Hall, a high, cold, draughty place with, as it's name suggests, a cairn of stones in it's middle. The first of the meanders comes next which is a deep rift one has to traverse across, often on rotten wooden boards. After being used to the O.F.D. rifts, it was quite easy, being neither as high or as wide as it's Welsh counterparts.

The next two pitches - Garby's (130 foot) and Gontards (85 foot)-the first drop into high, spacious halls, the latter from a very tight awkward take off from a large flake, and then followed by three short 25 foot ladder pitches in close succession, leading to the longest entrance pitch - Aldoos (150 foot). This is one of the really impressive pitches of the cave - fortunately dry. Another 35 foot pitch leaves one in a narrow low passage, which makes the arrival at the Great Gallery more of a shock. Squeezing through a narrow constriction, one suddenly senses a feeling of roominess about you, and at first your eyes cannot adjust properly. When they do so it is to see a large canyon stretching away from you giving the feeling of having stumbled out of a cave at night into a large surface gorge. Continuing downwards increases this feeling until Lake Cadoux is reached. This was non-existent when we were there, revealing low muddy banks. At it's far side the first large group of formations in the cave are seen in the Bourgin Hall, similar to those in the Hall of the Thirteen, but not so impressive. A scramble down a fixed rope beyond then leads to the Little General Cascade, where a further 30 foot of ladder is needed. Shortly after comes the incredible Big Rubble Heap where you have to pick your way downhill for a quarter of a mile, sometimes over small, loose boulders, sometimes around ones as big as houses. Finding a set of pram wheels here does much to relieve the tension such impressive places gives. So to Camp 1 at it's foot. Finding so homely a site is very welcome and it's cleanliness and lack of smell is a pleasant surprise. Although there is rubbish there, it is in neat piles and not half as bad as we had been led to believe. Water is a problem there though, the best method of collecting it is to place billy cans on top of the flat topped stals, although the constant loud dripping into them is apt to keep you awake.

Immediately below Camp 1 is the Hall of the Thirteen which has probably the most impressive formations in the cave. Against a background resembling a high Gothic cathedral rise splendid flat topped stalagmites, themselves making the trip worthwhile, even if you get no lower. You have to pick your way through a maze of deep gour pools to approach them and on passing, then go over a steep calcited floor to the Balcony pitch. This is 60 foot but quite pleasant. On descending your ears pick out a deep thundering sound of water and it is a surprise to find the sound being produced by a small flow travelling down a hollow stal (the enormous cascade!). The cave is much smaller here and well decorated, staying like this through St. Matthews Halls, the Calcite Walls (where a hundred foot handline is needed), the twenty five foot pitch into the Cloakroom and on to Abelle's Cascade. Then follows a series of small cascades joined by canals, which would involve some

swimming had not a fixed handline been installed permanently along most of them.

At the end comes Claudine's Cascade (80 foot), the first really wet pitch in the cave, but by using the maypole at it's head to rig the rope to the left of the pitch, much of the water can be avoided. The passage continues to drop steeply after that with 30 foot of ladder needed on Topographers Cascade. A little extra ladder is useful here for one or two other short drops. This part is similar to many British caves but at Eymas Hall it starts to open out to suddenly reveal and stagger you with the Great Canyon. By keeping to the right wall one can descend (a handline is useful as there is a 200 foot drop to the left) to it's floor. It is so large that cavers standing on the bottom appear minute to those above. Camp 2 is here. It immediately closes down again to the head of Gouche's Shaft (60 foot), a dry, pleasant pitch when we were there with no water except for the spot where two French cavers died a month later during a flood. Pitch rigging should therefore be done carefully here. The stream is met below here again and the passage size varies considerably. The next large obstacle is the Grand Cascade, which is probably the worst pitch in the cave. The top part we rigged with two ladders from separate points, necessitating a changeover from one to the other half-way down and in the water, which was most unsatisfactory. The pitch below needed 100 foot of rope. We originally hung this in the water which was very uncomfortable, if not positively dangerous, the water hitting you as you came over a lip half way up with great force, making upward progress and breathing, hard. This was further complicated by having to do it in the dark due to carbides being extinguished by the water. It was re-rigged later making it much dryer, but even so the force of the water on the rope, hitting it against the wall caused it to be frayed almost half way through after only being in place a few days.

Below this was Joly Hall, a most unjolly place, being cold and draughty and the place where Camp 3, looking like the neolithic remains of a peasant hut, was situated. The cave then constricts again, the stream actually sumping, but there is a sump bypass which leads to the Little Monkey Shaft (100 foot) where you have to be a monkey to traverse along the ledges over it, to rig it clear of a deep plunge pool a short way down. This drops you over the lip of that plunge pool, through the water to a place where you can swing off onto a ledge to get to the head of Hurricane shaft (170 foot) and rig it dry. Due to the depth and the water crashing down alongside you this impressed itself most on my mind of all the pitches. Unfortunately it is not freehanging, and many small ledges break your descent. At the foot you have to traverse round a wide, deep, evil looking lake while shielding your carbide from the draught and spray, the passage roof once more soaring out of sight. Clambering over large, clean washed boulders one descends to where the river pours over a waterfall to join the stream you have been following. The cave then constricts again into a narrow, high rift and after finding the dry oxbow where divers' old bottles and containers have been left, you join the stream once more to find a canal section in which you have to swim, taking you to a small waterfall and the terminal sump pool. This has been passed by divers, but by then you feel you are deep enough and so turn round for the long climb out again.

An so after a few large, wet dinner parties, amid torrential rain and hail showers, ended a superb fortnights caving.

#### TEAM MEMBERS

Hywel Ball (leader, S.W.C.C., Reyfad Group); Paddy O'Reilly (S.W.C.C., R.G.); Mike Orr (R.G.); Martyn Farr (S.W.C.C., C.D.G.); Peter Francis (S.W.C.C.); Dave Mullin (S.W.C.C.); Pete Lord (Cwmbran C.C.); Sue Jordan (C.C.C.);



Jeff Phillips (R.G.); Maurice Neill (R.G.); Dave Underhill (B.U.S.S.); Nigel Yarwood (B.U.S.S.); Chuck (R.G.); Gareth Jones (R.G.); Gareth Davies (S.W.C.C.); Kevin O'Hagan (R.G.); Carl Atkinson (R.G.); R.F. (Bomber) Beaumont; Pete Robinson; Tony Kealy; John Parker (C.C.C., C.D.G.); Martyn Bishop (Wessex C.C. C.D.G.); Tony Jarratt (Wessex C.C.); Richard Stephenson (Wessex C.C., C.D.G.); Gwyn Jones (Che) (C.C.C.).

APPENDIX I

Underground Food

The food prepared proved more than adequate, much being left over. It was bought in the following quantities.

1 tin Welsh Fruit Humbugs (5½ lbs)  
1 tin Fox's Glacier Mints (5 lbs)  
Soups: Oxtail 24 pts. (dehydrated)  
Minestrone " "  
Chicken " "  
Garden Veg. " "  
Complement 250 sachets.  
Snappies polythene bags - 720 small, 300 large.  
Batchelors dehydrated dishes (main meal):  
Chicken curry 4 catering packs  
Chicken Oriental " "  
Bolognese Sauce 2 catering packs  
Beef Goulash 4 " "  
Beef Curry 5 " "  
Savoury Mince 2 " "  
Beef Stroganoff 2 " "  
Farmhouse Stew 2 " "  
Chicken Supreme 1 " "  
Veg. Savoury Rice 7 " "  
Beef " " 4 " "  
Golden " " 7 " "  
Mild Curry " " 2 " "  
Curry powder - 1 large tin  
Scouring pads - 2 packs  
Mash potatoes - (128 servings)  
Birds Angel Whirl - 2 packs  
Tea bags - 1,000  
Apple Dice - 2 packs (dehydrated)  
Sliced Onions - 2 packs "  
Peas - 2 packs "  
Coffee bags - 128 three cup bags  
Currants - 14 lbs  
Sultanas - 14 lbs  
Porridge - 14 lbs  
Sugar - 40 lbs (sachets)  
Milk powder - 840 tablespoons  
Salt - 3 lbs  
Springlow one man meals - ad finitum.  
Oxo cubes - 70  
Dextrosol - 140 packets  
Mars Bars - 280  
Chocolate - 420  
Toilet Rolls - 70  
Matches - 140 boxes  
Peanuts - 140 packets

These were split up and used as follows:

Two man one day rations

- 3 oz porridge oats
- 6 oz sugar
- 9 tablespoons milk powder
- ½ oz salt
- Springlow pack
- 4 tea bags
- 2 coffee bags
- oxo
- chocolate extras
- 1 packet Dextrosol
- 2 Mars bars
- 2 bars chocolate
- Sweets. 2 packets peanuts
- Tissues (toilet roll)
- 8 oz. mixed dried fruit
- 1 packet soup
- 1 main meal (dehydrated) + rice  
or Smash.

Two man ½ day rations

- 2 teabags
- 2 cubes oxo
- 2 coffee bags
- 3 oz sugar
- 3 tablespoons milk powder
- 1 packet Dextrosol
- 2 Mars bars
- 4 bars other chocolate
- Sweets
- 1 tin sardines
- 1 packet soup

This gave an estimated 70 x 2 man day rations and 60 x 2 man ½ day rations, giving 260 caving days (10 days x 25 people).

APPENDIX II

Pitch/Tackle List

- 1. Rope 35 ft. )
- 2. Rope 100 ft. (Ruiz) ) - These are approximate lengths
- 3.) only.
- 4.)-Ladder 25 ft.
- 5.)
- 6. Rope 100 ft. (Cairn Hall
- 7. Rope 130 ft. (Garby's)
- 8. Rope 85 ft. (Gonthard's)
- 9. Ladder 25 ft.
- 10. Ladder 25 ft.
- 11. Ladder 25 ft.
- 12. Rope 150 ft. (Aldo's)
- 13. Ladder 35 ft.
- 14. Ladder 30 ft. (Little General)

Camp 1

- 15. Rope 60 ft. (Balcony)
- 16. Ladder 25 ft.
- 17. Rope 200 ft. for calcite walls
- 18. Rope 80 ft. (Claudine's)
- 19. Ladder 30 ft.
- 20. Rope 60 ft. (Gauches)
- 21. Rope 100 ft. (Grand Cascades)
- 22. Rope 100 ft. (Little Monkey)
- 23. Rope 170 ft. (Hurricane)

REFERENCES

- Berger newsheets etc.
- Martyn Farr's diary
- Pete Francis' diary.

WOOKEY HOLE : THE PROBLEMS

Wookey Hole is undoubtedly the finest diving site in Britain. The spacious passages and superb visibility make explorations a pleasure when compared with the masochistic determination demanded at so many other caves. Even so, the problems that have confronted divers are no less severe:-

Length of diving:

Over 2,000 feet of submerged passages have to be traversed to reach our terminal point, beyond Chamber 25. Fortunately, in one way, the diving can be broken into 6 or more stages. This allows one to transport fresh cylinders to advance diving bases, in preparation for further dives. However, portering these items is difficult for one usually prefers to have ones hands free, to hold the line and fend off projections.

Depth of diving:

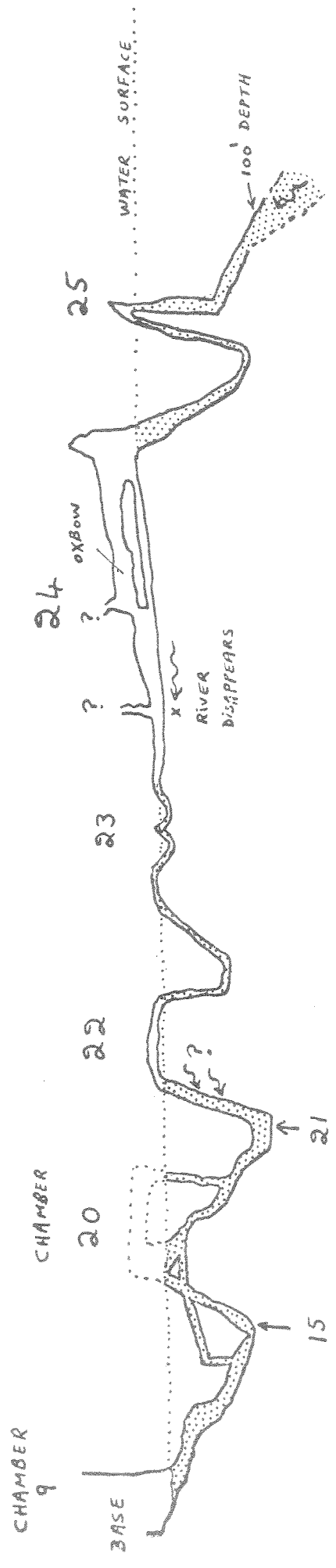
This is the greatest problem. Each time one descends, there is a greater consumption of air. The situation is then exacerbated by the fact that buoyancy is lost and that one has to expend greater efforts to swim. I never use any lead at Wookey, even though two wet suit jackets are worn; for once below 30 feet depth the natural buoyancy of the rubber is counteracted. The disadvantage with this is that it makes for difficult progress in shallow sections, for example in 23. Here the sumps are shallow, small and extremely muddy. (There is no flow through this section as the River Axe disappears in 24 -see sketch - to reappear in 21.) Under such conditions one constantly ends up against the roof, very disconcerting.

Combination of length and depth naturally leads to the problem of decompression, or the removal of excess nitrogen from the blood. So far no prearranged 'stops' have been taken to allow the gas to evolve and we have in fact run outside the safety limits. Further progress must entail such 'stops' and as a result, increase our air consumption over the dives as a whole. Another problem by which we are so far unaffected is Nitrogen Narcosis, and this will certainly be present below 130 feet depth.

So what then are we doing about pushing on? In the first place a great deal of new equipment was plainly essential. We need more and bigger cylinders, depth gauges, decompression metres (with tables in reserve) and better suits. The expense was virtually prohibitive, but we have been extremely fortunate in obtaining sponsorship. The Show Cave management, for example, have provided us with a handsome figure, with which to shop around. Other sponsors, to date, have been The Rolex Watch Company Ltd., Helly Hansen (U.K.) Ltd., Ultimate Equipment Ltd., Ladysmith Busywear Ltd., Typhoon and Damart. To each we are extremely grateful and without such support the dive would just not be on.

If I was asked what one piece of equipment I valued the most on such an exercise, the answer would have to be a Dry Suit or 'Uni Suit'. This type of suit is fundamentally different to the wet suit in that the diver remains dry at all times. In addition to the improved insulation that this provides, the fact that it is constant volume means that the buoyancy can be neutralised at whatever depth one happens to experience. They are obviously very expensive, the better varieties costing over £350 each. However, the adoption of such a suit, although offering numerous advantages, does incorporate certain drawbacks. The thermal insulation (6mm neoprene) for example, between sumps will be a disadvantage. Another potential problem will be that of a leak, for in certain types of suit the air

WOKEY HOLE : DIVERS' EXTENSIONS :



SCALE :  
 300  
 FEET

SUMPS

VERTICAL SCALE EXAGGERATED THREE TIMES THE HORIZONTAL

might rush to the feet, completely inverting the diver and possibly trapping him against the roof. Such a situation would not be pleasant and it is hoped that our suits will incorporate neck and ankle seals, to reduce this possible hazard.

The equipment therefore necessary to push on, is being slowly gathered. Concurrent with this, preparations are being undertaken to facilitate easy movement through the system. We have so far roped climbs and a swim in 24 and two short, rigid steel ladders have been ferried into 25. These will be used to scale the Wall which completely separates the two sump pools. Cylinders have been deposited at various locations in 22 and 24 and bivouac gear is being assembled. It is hoped to adopt pure oxygen for the decompression stage in 25 (reducing decompression times by 50%) and this again will entail further portage.

A major handicap experienced at the present time is that of the sheer volume of water flowing through the streamway in 24. It has prevented all access to the Oxbow and therefore to 25. Even so, work is proceeding, the latest centred on the climbing to the high level passages in 24. These can be seen on the sketch. It is hoped that a short bolting trip will gain entry to the one above the disappearing river. Having already climbed about 50 feet it can be seen to be six to eight feet in diameter and well worth further effort - even if it does turn out to be an oxbow.

All this does present some very exciting moments. Because there are usually only three people involved, D. Morris, C. Edmunds and myself, we invariably end up portering large quantities of gear. There is little room for error and we are well aware that we are out on a limb. The latest incident occurred in December when Colin was transporting the steel ladders to 25. He noted that there was a lot of slack in the line (in which I'd been severely enmeshed once before) and attempted to tie some of it down, to a boulder. On his return dive, in very poor visibility, he became entangled at 60 feet depth. His first cylinder gave out and he still wasn't free. Changing onto a 15 cubic feet cylinder (mini bottle) he realised the need to conserve air, ordered his thoughts and freed himself, to make his exit - shaken! Our problems on this occasion were far from solved and I was forced to donate one of my cylinders so that we could rejoin Dave, waiting in 22. On reaching there a great hagggle ensued, as to who was having what cylinders in order to dive out. Colin and I dived with next to no reserve, while Dave was a little better off. After that we started depositing additional cylinders!

The continued exploration, by diving from 25, is now planned for March which should give us sufficient time to practise in the new suits and see all preparations complete. It will certainly provide a British Cave Diving Depth Record, and again be the first British instance where decompression has been necessary. All in all, it must rank as one of the most technical cave diving expeditions ever planned.

M. FARR.

.....  
I am sure that all members of the Club wish Martyn every success! (Ed).  
.....

THE TIMES THEY ARE A'CHANGIN'

(Being extracts of caving in the Peak District  
over seventy years ago).

EXPLORING ELDEN HOLE - 1900

"From afar the black mouth of the Hole is plainly visible, an oblong rift, whose extreme length and width we found to be 111 feet and 18 feet respectively. For safety's sake a wall encircles it, a wall which is said to have had countless predecessors, for the first impulse of a visitor is to select a large stone and send it thundering into the depths, with the result that the floor at the bottom is piled with the ruins of walls built and rebuilt for many a century back".

"We tossed for the privilege of descending as far as the rope would go, and the lot fell to a gentleman whose Norfolk suit had been much admired. With little help from us he climbed slowly to a sloping rock 70 feet down, called out that a few more feet of rope would enable him to see the bottom, and, as that was not forthcoming, he returned hand over hand. As soon as he came near enough for us to see that his new clothes were a mass of black slime from head to foot, our feelings of envy were much assuaged".

Six weeks later they were back, this time they had 400 feet of Alpine Club rope and seven experienced rock climbers.

"We came at length to the sloping rock where our scout had previously stopped. Would it be possible to climb further was now the question, so as to let our men singly down the lowest pitch from a convenient shelf. The third man, Mr. Henry Bond, and I braced ourselves as firmly as we could on a steep slab coated with slippery mud, whilst Bagley (of Norfolk suit fame) attempted to climb along the ledges of the side wall. Suddenly, with a shout, he slipped off, swung in under our slab, which proved to be overhanging, and pulled Bond, who fortunately had a grip on my rope, four feet from his moorings before the party above could check him; for a few seconds the tension was alarming. And now, with muscles astrain, we let him down inch by inch into the shaft. When would he stop? we wondered anxiously, as the rope chafed through our burning hands and slipped over the edge out of sight. Hurrah! he had alighted somewhere, and none too soon, for my rope was paid out all but a foot or two".

The author is lowered to the bottom of the 200 feet deep shaft and he carries out a short investigation of the cave.

"I now returned from the cave to the bottom of the Hole, just in time to see the lightest man of the party, Mr. F. Wightman, lowered over the last hundred feet. He barely touched the rocks anywhere, but, with a camera on his back, came down slowly, spinning like a piece of meat on a jack.

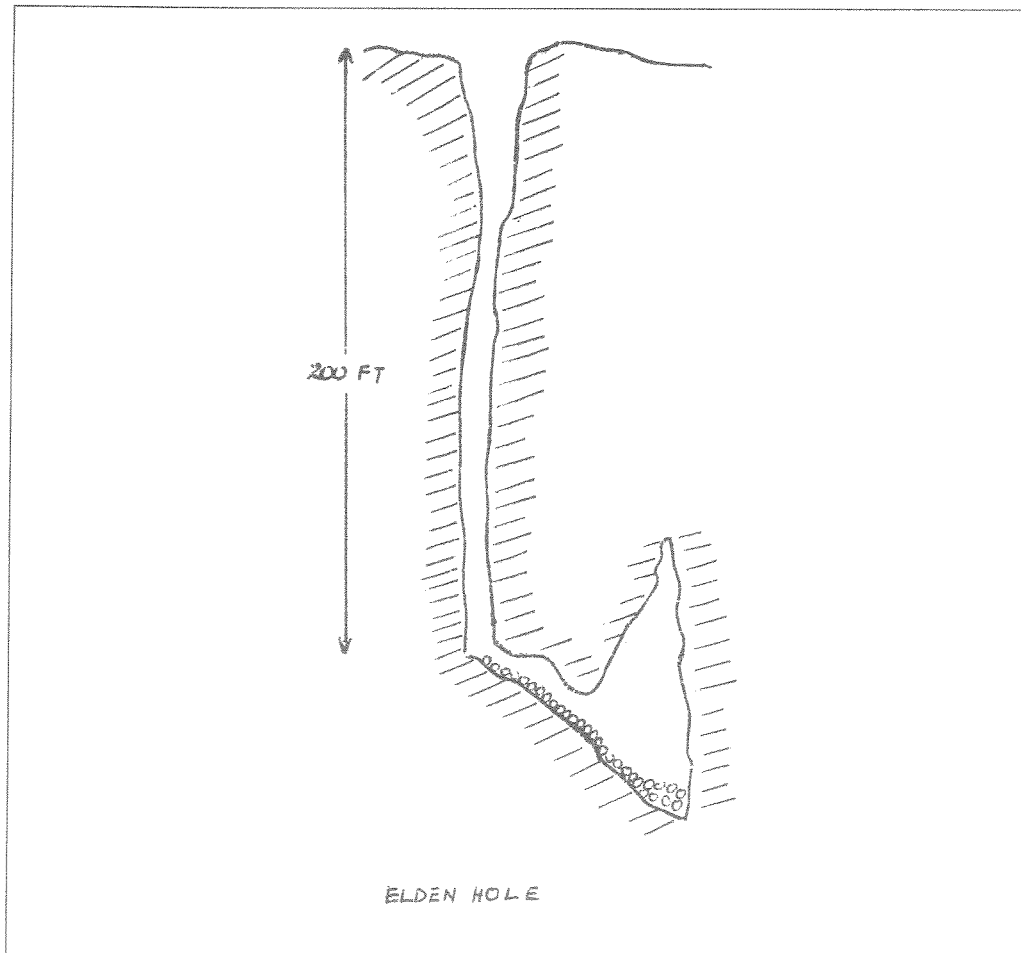
It now transpired that all hope had been abandoned of getting any more explorers down, the strain of pulling a man up a hundred feet sheer being too much for the party, fixed, as they were, in an awkward and dangerous situation. While we prepared to photograph our strange surroundings, they packed a Gladstone bag (what else?) with electric lamps, paraffin, fireworks and, most important of all, a supply of bottled drinks and sandwiches, which were badly needed, for several hours had elapsed since we left the surface of the globe".

The author and his companion, Mr. F. Wightman, spend several hours exploring and photographing the cave. They return to the bottom of the shaft and Wightman is hauled up, then it is the author's turn.

"I gathered that it was my duty to tie myself and the bags in a bundle to the rope, and be hauled up. The return journey was a trying one, both for those hauling this augmented load and for the battered victim, who, with rope round his chest, and with one heavy bag in front and another behind, choking respiration, swung to and fro in the dark and slimy pit, with hardly a ledge to rest foot or hand upon so as to give the hauling party a moment's relief. No wonder they described me as groaning all the way up; I was struggling for breath. Between my legs the bottom of the Hole was visible by glimpses, fitfully lighted by the last shred of cotton-wool soaked in paraffin; the dismal view receded slowly as, with a cheery 'Heave-Ho!' the others hauled to the best of their powers. Oh! what relief and what refreshment to step again into the open air! The wide hillside, the clear cold flood of moonlight, and the lakes of mist in the vale seemed never so beautiful as after our dreary imprisonment. I had spent all but nine hours below the ground".

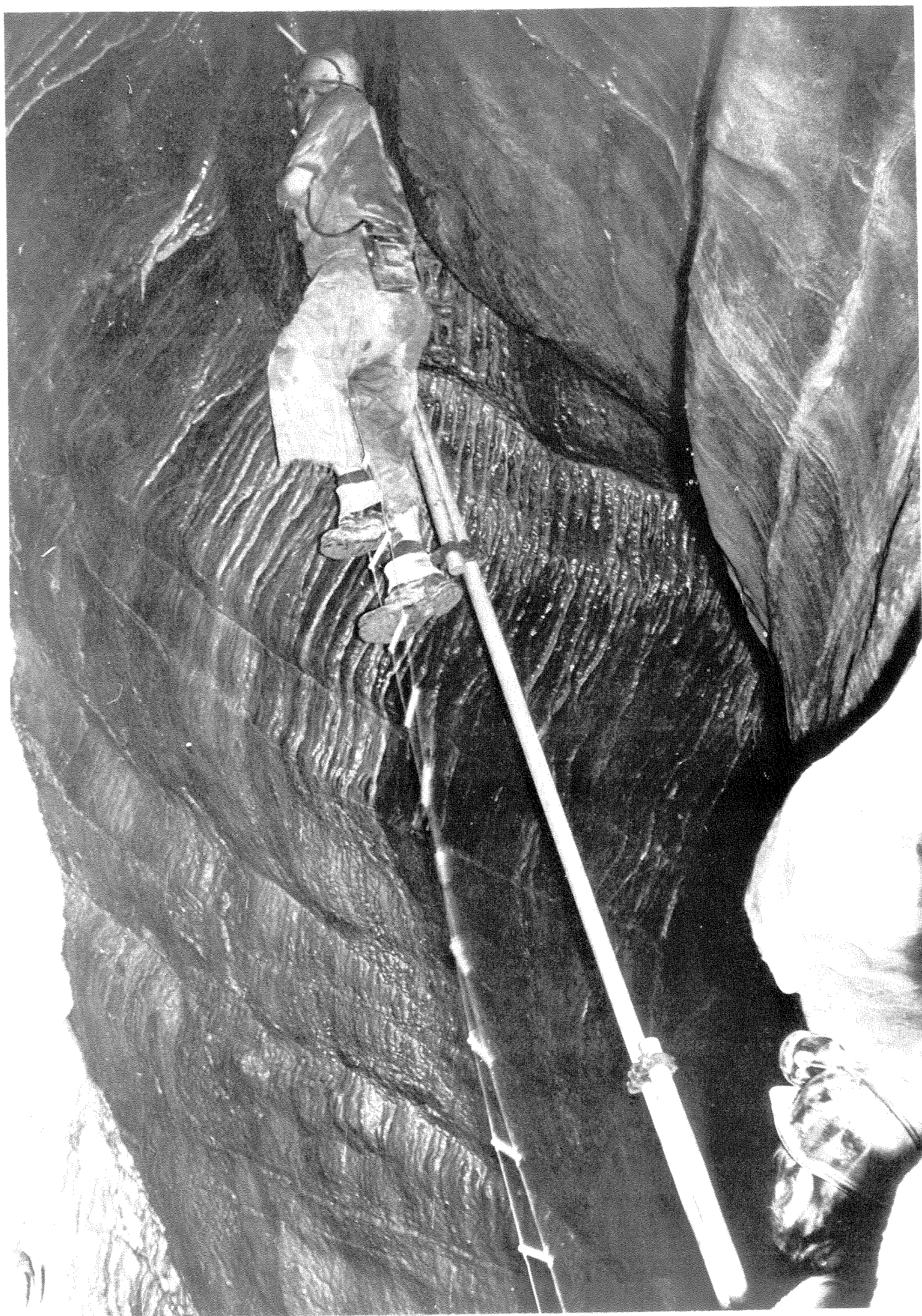
Extracted from E.A. Baker's book 'Moors, Crags and Caves of the High Peak'.

B.T. Jorgensen.



O.F.D. II. Peter Harvey  
Maypoling. →

by Alan Jackson





## A SECOND SPONSORED WALK

The first sponsored walk was a great success, not only for Conservation but as a Club event.

Every member is aware of the present threat to the caves in our area and the possibility of future threats.

Both Conservation and Rescue suffer from inflation. The Conservation fund in particular is dwindling in real terms without any actual drain being put upon it. Rescue is different, because we can buy equipment immediately, but of course the price of equipment rises every week. The recent purchase of ropes has depleted the Rescue Fund and by the time the Walk has taken place the D.Y.O. Dump will have been re-stocked.

The Walk will take place on Sunday 6th June starting at 10.00 a.m., and the route will be similar to the last, but longer and a little more difficult. The mileage is to be fixed at 15 miles for the sponsors' convenience.

The sponsor form is loose in the centre of the Newsletter, and spare copies are available from Penwyllt or myself. All monies to be sent direct to Eric Inson.

On the rear of the form is a sketch map of the route. It is in sketch to avoid O/S copyright fees, and the Control/Refreshment points are marked. I would welcome eight volunteers to man the four control points, and this involves carrying refreshments to the points marked.

Once again, if you cannot walk, please sponsor. Any queries to the address below.

B. Jopling,  
44 Carhampton Road,  
Sutton Coldfield,  
West Midlands,  
B75 7PF.

Foot Note:- There is a very strong rumour that there will be typical S.W.C.C. celebration on the evening of the 5th June. What better way to 'walk off' a hangover!!

OFFICERS' REPORTS

FOR 1976

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SECRETARY'S REPORT 1976-1977

In retrospect the year 1976-77 has been one of great activity in many directions, with little in the way of rewarding finds. Members have dug, photographed, travelled, dived, surveyed and researched assiduously in the quest for more cave, but so far the spectacular breakthrough has not come, although the log book records numerous finds of 20 feet of passage and even 200 feet at times.

During the year the Committee has received 21 applications for membership, all of which have been approved. This increase in new members is most encouraging at a time when visiting the Club is, for many, an expensive way of spending a weekend. Many of these new members have come to Penyllt as personal friends of existing members and have thus been very rapidly involved in Club activities. Prospective members, coming to the Club for the first time with just a letter of introduction are rare animals indeed; we would welcome suggestions from members as to how we can convert enquiries into actual visits.

To balance out these new members, however, we have lost several long-established members through non-payment of subscriptions. Despite reminders and personal entreaties by the Treasurer, some people have just not paid up.

Visitors, too, have increased in numbers, sometimes straining the accommodation limits to the seams. Visiting clubs not staying at Penyllt have made use of the excellent showering and changing facilities and, on several occasions, the cave rescue services as well.

Underground activities have increased, especially in areas where little digging has been done in the past and promising results have been obtained, although as yet no major breakthrough has been seen. A rapid count of underground digs resulted in a grand total of 9 (4 in Cwm Dwr, 2 in Gan yr Ogof, 3 in O.F.B.), although there are probably more. Surface digs were predictably popular during the summer, especially ones which involved a walk past a certain well-known bathing place. In fact, Peter Francis is now digging in so many places that he has had to sub-contract much of the work.

I suppose that I should mention the great fire, as a significant event in the Club's year. Sufficient to say that there was a fire on the moor and it was eventually put out, or went out, whichever you prefer. It has been written about enough.

At the end of my first year as Secretary I should like to thank the rest of the Committee for all their help, especially Denise who has produced the newsletters and stood in for me at times.

1977 OFFICIALS

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## RESCUE OFFICERS REPORT

### 1. Incidents

The Club has been involved with a number of incidents during the year. A broken ankle in OFD II, a fall causing a leg injury in Pant Mawr and a number of searches in OFD for overdue parties. This latter type of incident is now so frequent as to indicate the need for some action to prevent their happening.

### 2. Tackle

There has been some re-organisation of equipment during the year and some new rope has been purchased but is not yet in the trailer. The Rescue Nife cells are in need of servicing, which is a rather time consuming job that I have not yet managed to tackle. Brian Jopling has been a great help in this area doing most of the work. He has also been working on a new stretcher which will incorporate several new ideas.

### 3. Training

There has only been one major practice this year, that being in Dan yr Ogof when a patient was carried from the Abyss as far as Boulder Chamber when lack of time forced abandonment of the practice. The practice was most useful and a report has already been published. Subsequent to the difficulties encountered in the crawl a further small practice was held using a special stretcher and a small Tifor which gave us more food for thought on the D.Y.O. problem.

### 4. Administration and Representation

The Club has continued to support the South Wales C.R.O. and I have served as Secretary to the Organisation during the year and have been elected to do so for a further year. In this capacity I have served on the National Cave Rescue Council, the Cambrian Caving Council and the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Management Committee. I had some part in the National Cave Rescue Conference which was held in Ebbw Vale in November, and proved to be a worthwhile happening which did not get as much support from members as I might have hoped for. I have also visited Otter Hole to advise the G.C.R.T. on rescue provision for the cave.

### 5. Conclusion

I feel that we can consider ourselves fortunate that no serious incidents have occurred in any of the more extensive systems in our area as we are not yet fully ready to cope with a bad one. The next year must see more involvement in the problems of rescue from all members whether active cavers or not; there is much to be done on the twin fronts of Tackle and Training.

R.A. HALL

\* \* \* \* \*

## CONSERVATION REPORT

The main activity this year has continued to be the effort to save O.F.D. from being quarried away; this now looks like being successful. Roger Smith has continued to represent the Club's interests in this matter and a separate history of the negotiations appears.

However, it is not very encouraging if caves saved from the quarrymen are damaged by cavers. There have been further complaints about litter in caves and damage to formations. In this respect all cavers and particularly all leaders are responsible for conservation.

Cribarth was also threatened with quarrying in early Summer. This danger has now receded but the situation is still being watched.

W. CLARKE.

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### FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT PENWYLLT QUARRIES

One of the problems which has bothered the Club for a long time has been that Hobbs Quarries held planning permission to quarry over area 'C' (see plan). This fact has meant that from time to time there has been the threat that quarrying might take place in the area if the Company didn't get the planning permission it required in other areas. I have been fortunate enough to be able to represent the Club and negotiate with the old Breconshire County Council, the Powys County Council, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Welsh Office and the quarry company, to name but a few. The object of these negotiations has been to eliminate this long term threat to the Cwm Dwr part of the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu system. Initial approaches started in 1970.

On 6th January 1977, a legal notice appeared in the Brecon and Radnor Express in which the Powys County Council gave notice that it had made an Order under Section 45 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to modify planning permission for winning and working minerals at Penwyllt so as to delete and exclude from the planning permission land, the substratum of which forms part of the system of caves known as Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. The notice continued to say that the owner and occupier of the land had notified the Council in writing that they did not object to the Order and that any person affected by it and who wished to object to it being made had to give notice in writing to the Welsh Office not later than 7th February 1977. In the absence of any objections the Order would take effect from 28th February 1977 without being confirmed by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Within 2 days of the legal notice appearing, it was reported in the Swansea edition of the Western Mail that the National Park Officer had told the National Park Planning Committee of Hobbs agreement to give up planning permission over the land over part of the cave system. Alongside this minor report subtitled 'Caves saved from Quarry' was a report beneath large headlines 'Too Much Stress on Conservation, Warns Planner'. Under this latter title the Director of West Glamorgan County Council was reported as having told the County Environment Committee that the Draft plan for the future development of the Brecon Beacons National Park was conservation biased and inward-looking. In addition he said that the proposals in the Draft plan could have an adverse affect upon West Glamorgan and that quarries were needed at Penwyllt and Penderyn otherwise Barland's Quarry, Gower - the County's only other source of limestone - would be unable to cope with the demand from the local building industry. The Environment Committee decided to write to the National Park Authority asking for its Draft plan to be amended.

# PENWYLLT



## Key

- A Land with planning permission for quarrying
- B Land which may one day be threatened
- C Planning permission revoked in this area from 28.2.77

These newspaper reports clearly indicated to me the pressures that both we and the Powys County Council are going to have to face at Penwyllt in the years to come, especially as there is a rail link to the Penwyllt Quarry. The present situation is that the quarry company is to be given permission to quarry area 'A' to the level of the railway line and I understand that a landscaping plan has been agreed with the National Park Authority. It is to be hoped that the working quarry will not break into unknown parts of the cave and contaminate the streamway.

Following enquiries to the Welsh Office I have now received a letter informing me that there have been no objections to the Powys County Council's proposed revocation Order. Consequently the Order will come into force on 28th February 1977 over area 'C'. There is, however, no cause for complacency among Club members. We now know that the Powys County Council will be under great pressure to allow further quarrying once area 'A' has been quarried away. I anticipate that a further application will be made for permission to quarry in area 'B' within 5 years. The exact date will depend very much upon the demand for limestone and the economic state of the country. The Club needs to discover the caves which undoubtedly exist under area 'B' and map their extent. The dye testing experiment described in the last newsletter has provided us with useful evidence but insufficient in my opinion to guarantee that we win our case at a public enquiry. I hope that all diggers will realise the importance of this last challenge before it is too late.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who have helped in winning our latest achievement. It would not be appropriate to identify individuals but the Club is lucky to possess some valuable members and friends, without whose help progress would have been very difficult.

ROGER SMITH  
25.2.1977.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### EDITORS REPORT

Since I took over as Editor last year, the Newsletter policy has been to reflect, as far as possible, the activity of the Club as a whole. Also the Newsletter and Newsheet have become increasingly important for communication within the Club, particularly since petrol prices have forced many members to curtail their number of visits to Penwyllt.

Unfortunately there has been a distinct lack of enthusiasm on the part of active cavers to write about what they have been doing (maybe because much of it is unprintable, or maybe some folks are naturally modest?). However the Newsletter is surviving and now, thanks to the efforts of various members has enough material for this and the start of another edition. Many thanks go to Alan Jackson, our printer, who has spent many weekends cloistered in the printing room and whose enthusiasm has always pulled me through when I was at the point of giving up because of lack of contributors. Thanks also to Marilyn Jackson for all the typing and to all those people who provided articles.

As I hope to stand as Editor again at the A.G.M. may I stress that the active cavers should keep on contributing - and the not so active might consider writing about caves as a substitute for being down them. Once again, many thanks to all those involved.

GARY JONES.

EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

On sitting down to write my fourth report as Equipment Officer I was struck by how little I have done since last Easter, so I now feel that along with several other members, my enthusiasm has waned to where I can no longer be of service to the Club, and this in all probability will be my last report as Equipment Officer.

In earlier years I very much enjoyed working with and for some of the many members, and had the best interest of the Club at heart. This no longer seems to be so in my case, and I hope that whoever takes over can give the job as much enthusiasm as it deserves and that the membership who attend Penwyllt to go caving, give him or her as much support as they gave me in my first two years.

There have been one or two jobs that we have managed to get completed, largely due to the efforts of Sam Moore and Brian Jopling. There is a new Oldham Charger and the old Nife Rack has been replaced by a more compact unit. It is hoped that these will be placed in the newly built in use Tackle Store - Front of No. 3 (Bus Station). This was built by Laurie Galpin to release downstairs Front No. 3 for Ladies Showers.

Maypole Inlet ladder was replaced by a stainless steel ladder. There were reports that this was going rusty. I have given this a preliminary check and this does not appear to be the case, but a water borne deposit is collecting on the side wires, although I will have to do some further investigation.

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I gave was broken earlier this year, but has now been repaired. Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II gate appears to be working satisfactorily and should be complete with new lock by the A.G.M. Cwm Dwr gate has also given us no problems as yet. Various other small projects have been carried out by S.A.M., Jopo and Bob Hall.

Equipment was loaned to an Expedition to Ecuador on which several Club members were invited. One Bosun's Chair was jettisoned while we were there due to safety reasons. The Club was recompensed for its loss.

I hope that next year sees a re-awakening of club spirit and I will offer my assistance to the incoming Equipment Officer if it is required.

PETER CARDY.

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RECORD OFFICERS REPORT

I should like to place on record the Club's gratitude to Bruce Foster for housing the 'Library'. The complete records have now been moved to the Headquarters at Penwyllt and are temporarily in the small common room. It is intended to complete the rear of downstairs No. 10 as a Library/Print room by Easter.

As usual we have exchanged newsletters and magazines with British and foreign clubs. Some books of interest have been added to the collection.

KEN MADDOCKS.

\* \* \* \* \*

WARDENS REPORT

Projects under way this year:- The Ladies showers (otherwise known as the Tackle Washing Room) was completed - all credit to Frank Baguley and Laurie Galpin, and sundry odd helpers. Sporadically the Records and Printing room has been worked on and should be substantially near to completion by the A.G.M. A very few members filled in some of the pointing on the 'allocated areas' and the pine end. This still has work to be done on it, and it would be more to our credit if more people were willing to do their share.

The Small Common room has been re-decorated and re-ceilinged, and now temporarily houses the records. The room is now locked - the Records Officer holds a key, and one is at my house.

During the latter part of this year pressing work commitments and domestic difficulties have kept me away from the Club for longer than I would have wished, and accordingly the Committee co-opted S.A.M. onto the Committee and he holds the post of Assistant Cottage Warden.

I see no immediate easing in my domestic commitments, and it is with regret that I cannot stand as Cottage Warden next year.

BRUCE FOSTER

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMBERS' ADDRESS LIST

\*\* Honorary Members

ALDRIDGE J.D.	Mr & Mrs	20, Beech Hill, Northlands Wood Estate, Haywards Heath, Sussex.
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BREWSTER E.C.		Hill House, Chapel Lane, Forest Row, Sussex.
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CLARKE W.E.		c/o D. Pascoe Clarke & Son Ltd. Waunlan Works, Pontlliw, Swansea, Glam.

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JONES G.K.	Mr & Mrs	37 Springfield, Bradford on Avon, Wilts.
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KENNEY C.H.		Springfield, Tor Hole, Chewton Mendip, Bath, BA3 4LS
KIRBY S.		Saul Lodge, Saul, Glos
LEVETT A.F.		16 Othello Close, Rugby, Warks.
LISTER J.		c/o Little Foxes, Polperro, St. Agnes, Cornwall.

** LITTLE W.H.	Mr & Mrs	29 Wrekin Road, Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands.
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LLOYD O.C.	Dr	Withey House, Withey Close West, Bristol, BS9 3SX
LOMAS H.A.		151 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester 9.
MADDOCKS K.J.G.	Mr & Mrs	Pencae, Bryn Road, Upper Brynamman, Dyfed.
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