

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB



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Hon Editor: W.E.Clarke, c/o D. Pascoe Clarke & Sons Pontlliw Swansea.

AFTER THE EXPEDITION

In November 1975, after the successful British Caving expedition to New Guinea, most members returned home well satisfied. However for the few remaining it was the first chance to get away from that isolated corner of the highlands and see what the rest of New Guinea had to offer.

The first few days after the main body had left were spent clearing up our base and getting the expedition equipment flown out to the coast. Next to follow were ourselves. Paul, who had never tired of bushwork walked across to the road; 150 miles East along the mountain range. Meanwhile Chas, Chris, Noel and I planned to go North in a more leisurely fashion by rafting down the August River. We flew to Yapsi where the August River becomes navigable and took on a native boy who helped us to build two log rafts and acted as guide.

We spent four days on the river. The water was low, but what excitement we lost through lack of speed was well repaid in real danger. The lack of aqueous padding caused the rafts to be buffeted on the bottom, loosening their lashings. We found ourselves dancing about in bare feet on 150 lb logs which bounced up and down like keys on a piano. The rafts were awkward to steer, and we suffered numerous crashes. The worst was when a horizontal tree trunk graciously allowed the raft to pass underneath it wiping off the superstructure, gear and crew into the river. The other raft we abandoned piece by piece as it fell apart. Our resourceful guide produced from nowhere two old dugout canoes which we lashed side by side and kept afloat with paper and chewing gum. However even in this Rolls Royce of the river we still found ourselves shooting rapids backwards, or even sideways.

On the calm stretches we saw more birdlife in four minutes than we had seen in four months in the highlands. Victoria crested pigeons, flying foxes by the hundred, and the impressive primeval looking Hornbills were all unperturbed as the strange five-headed creature drifted past silently.

On the third day we met the Sepik, one of the largest rivers on the island, a thousand feet wide with four hundred lazy meandering miles to go to the sea. We paddled on for a day, left our vehicle, and after a five hour walk reached Green River, a small isolated patrol post eighty miles from the North Coast. There we spent a week waiting for a flight out. Unless you are into limitless rain forest all we found to recommend it was a sign on the airstrip proclaiming it "Paradise of the West Sepik. the Tourists Delight."

Next stop was Vanimo on the coast, with beaches, bathing and bars! (beats rainforest any time). Unlike air travel, which is very expensive in New Guinea, although sometimes free, travel on the coast would cost roughly £5 for 200 miles so long as you don't mind sleeping on the deck of a cargo boat. We were lucky, and after splitting up Chas and I travelled the 450 miles to Lae in the Captain's quarters for free.

At Lae you are at the eastern end of the Highlands Highway, a road 250 miles long stretching from flat alluvial plains to beyond Mt Hagen via high passes. For £5 or less you can get on a PMV, an ordinary open truck usually packed full with people and animals for a ride which is guaranteed at times to terrify even the most unimaginative soul. Hustling down hills and around bends at around 70 mph it is better to keep your eyes closed. That way you don't see the wrecks which didn't



THE WASHING MACHINE OK TEM P.N.G

photo TONY WHITE



FIRST FOOTSTEPS SELMINUM TEM P.N.G.

photo TONY WHITE

make it. Just before we reached our destination the driver was pulled in by the Police, found to have no licence, and ordered to refund our money.

At Goroka we joined Kevan Wilde, two cavers from New Britain and Chris who had left us at Wewak. Kevan had been on our expedition in the Hindenburg Rangs and had invited us over to his local caving area, the Chimbu.

The first caves we went to see were in the Chimbu Gorge, only a few miles from Kundiawa and were accessible by Land Cruiser. The Chimbu has the densest population of any rural area in Papua New Guinea, and most of the land is cultivated - even sixty degree slopes. Hence there are roads or tracks leading almost everywhere and the entrances themselves are usually accessible due to lack of bush.

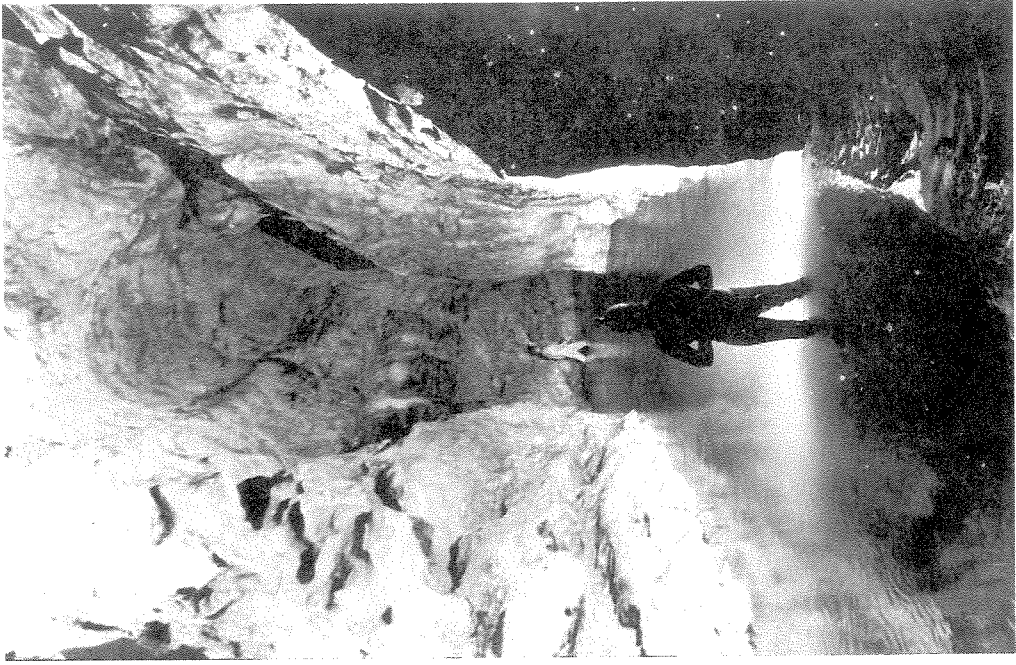
Irapui, the first cave we entered was the nearest thing they had to a show cave. The locals charge K2 (£1.20) to enter and very often act as guides, carrying flaming torches of pit-pit grass. It was four kilometers long and absolutely stacked with stal. Close by was a more active system. In flood this takes a large stream which probably formed Irapui. Inside was a short free dive, through which we were followed by two natives wearing just shorts (no helmets, lights or footwear). The cave temperature is such that we were all comfortable even after four hours surveying.

The next cave on the agenda was further up the valley, a partly explored pothole 600 ft. deep. Except for my boots all my gear was borrowed. This is a well tried technique for preventing boredom, and in this case did not let me down. The stitching on my chest harness ripped open as I was crossing a knot on the 70m pitch. Two pitches beyond the previous explorers we ran out of tackle and arrived at a third. Beyond we could hear a distant stream - of course - but since we had no rope left even on the surface, we surveyed out and de-tackled.

With one day left in the Chimbu we drove to Chuave where Kevan knew of an undescended shaft. Separated from the road by a short stroll, the only access problems are the villages where we had to shake hands with every inhabitant and many more who came to greet us and insisted that we eat with them. Such hospitality is tremendous, but as our last caving day on this side of the world was rapidly dwindling it was approaching dusk before the first person abseiled the shaft.

The site looked very promising, situated in a dry valley between a large river sink which sumps, and a partly explored resurgence cave four kilometres away. At 41m, 3m from the bottom the rope ended so Kevan returned. Two others succeeded at the next attempt and surveyed their way through a narrow winding rift for 200 m to a squeeze where the draught and the magnetic roar of a river forced them to lay down their compass and tape and drew them into a passage. This was 8 metres by 15 carrying a river large enough to sweep you off your feet. The dream ended after 70m in both directions with an apparent sump and a big lake

Early the following morning Kevan and I went down to finish things off quickly while the others returned to Goroka. We surveyed the new streamway but at the "downstream Sump" we followed an airspace through



UNION CAVE P.N.G.



BITIP CAVE P.N.G.

photos TONY WHITE

into an impressive continuation. We surveyed and explored for 200m and then the bell sounded, our six months in New Guinea were up. We ran downstream for a further 150m but it was still going.

That remains the state of the cave today, wide open at both ends as must be a great deal in the area. So for those who fancy a small expedition without all the problems and expense of air freighting and portering vast quantities of food and gear to the caving region, the Chimbu is the place to go. In some ways it is an easier prospect, and likely to be far more exciting and fruitful, than a comparable trip to parts of Europe. Of course you will need at least £500 for your air fare and a philosophical outlook. After all, out there the CRO exists in the mind only

TONY WHITE

PHOTOGRAPHING CALCITE BY ITS OWN LIGHT

My interest in the fluorescent properties of calcite was first aroused when I was engaged in a dig at Oxwich Bay, Gower. I inspected some fragments of stal. using an ultra-violet light source. The fluorescence which this induced exhibited different colours from the normal appearance of the stal under reflected light. This led me to try to photograph the afterglow in colour to see what could be captured.

For this purpose, in the first instance I made up a simple device consisting of a hand-held dual switch which enabled me to control the flash, and through a solenoid, the shutter so that they could be operated in sequence by remote control.

When camera and flash have been set up the flash is fired. After one second the shutter is opened and the exposure is continued until the afterglow is no longer visible to the naked eye. This may be up to 20 seconds depending on the nature of the particular formation. The duration and intensity of the afterglow vary a good deal, but generally the larger the mass of calcite the longer the glow remains visible.

So far these trials are in an early stage, but I am publishing a note of what I have done so far because I cannot find references in current caving literature to similar work. I am presently building an automatic timing device with a view to a more systematic approach to taking these pictures. It will be interesting to see how the colour varies with different intensities of light and different exposures.

The U.V component is the essential element of the light source. Low temperature light produces little effect. Even so a slight afterglow can be seen if a cap lamp is held close to the stal.

The best results have been obtained with super Ektachrome, normal development; standard exposure has been a PFI bulb in reflector at 1 ft. from the subject. I should be glad to hear from anyone else who has done work of this kind and exchange ideas.

TREVOR MORRIS

CLUB ARCHIVES

Many people have suggested that it would be of general interest if we were to publish extracts from the club records of early activities. These are not now generally available, and even the Record Room at Penwyllt is lacking in some of the earliest publications.

In order to test reaction this issue includes a reprint of the earliest account of the exploration of OFD by the first discoverers.

REPORT ON OGOF YR FFYNNON DDU

Short history of the Ffynnon Ddu system

The history of the Ffynnon Ddu system is one of prolonged attempts to solve its mysteries.

In 1927 Mr Powell of Rhongyr Isaf discovered the upper roadside cave. This was a beautiful remnant of some long vanished system showing unmistakable signs of phreatic action and pointing to the existence of a large system at some lower level.

During blasting a second cave was brought to light, in the Penwyllt Quarry, which leads downwards and back in the general direction of Penwyllt station. Progress was halted by mud and sand chokes in narrow passages.

In the Easter meet of 1942, operations by the South Wales group of the Mendip Exploration Society led to the discovery of Pwll Pant Canol. This was a high level "feeder" cave and again pointed to the existence of a much larger system at some lower point in the valley.

During the 1946 Easter meet of the newly formed South Wales Caving Club, F.G. Balcombe and J.S. Sheppard of the C.D.G. attacked the main rising of Ffynnon Ddu.

At Whitsun the authors, while surveying the possibilities of the location discovered a small cave on the northern side of Pant Canol. This 280 ft. tight crawl is also probably part of some ancient vanished system.

Location of the present "dig"

When surveying the possibilities of effecting an entrance to the Ffynnon Ddu system a number of facts should have been borne in mind.

There have been two cloudbursts within living memory in the Tawe Valley. These were in 1907 and again in 1933. On each occasion flood water burst out in Pant Canol at two separate and well defined points. The first flood rising lies in the bed of stones at the foot of the Pant and the second at a point just underneath the hedge on the right 50 yds up the valley. From this point a well defined dry stream bed leads down in the direction of the Tawe, and Mr. Downey has stated that many years ago he was responsible for filling up a hole in the rock at its head.

Mr Downey also informed us that some years ago while moving a large stone which lay beneath the little cliff some 25 yds. further up

he had revealed a small hole among the stones through which blew a strong draught.

Examination of the Geological survey and memoirs of the district revealed the fact that this cliff was the edge of a minor fault and lay at the head of a major fault beneath the surface running due North and South.

On the strength of the above evidence the authors decided that a dig at this point held strong possibilities of forcing an entrance.

Work was commenced on 5th July 1946, and a 15ft. shaft was dug through a mass of loose glacial debris. At this point it was evident from the strength and temperature of the draught which blew between the boulders at the base of the shaft that prospects of entry were extremely good. However the sides of the shaft were in a very dangerous condition indeed, and it was decided to postpone further work until timber could be obtained to shore them up.

The attack was resumed on the 3rd August 1946

The sides were made moderately safe, and the shaft, which had fallen in to some extent, reopened and driven to a depth of approximately 18 ft. The timely arrival of Bill Weaver with a rope aided in the removal of a large boulder and a small hole in the cliff face was revealed, through which whistled a cold and uninviting wind.

Ffynnon Ddu was OPEN !!!

THE CAVE

With truly commendable presence of mind (although we say it ourselves) the authors returned to the Gwyn Arms, partook of food and wine, and returned to the scene of the operations post haste.

The base of the shaft gave access to a tunnel of fair dimensions and a turn to the left through a low arch and a deep pool led into an ascending passage, with a beautiful pure white calcite floor. This went upwards to a parting of the ways with a small stream dripping from the roof covering the boulders beneath with a white drip deposit. Straight ahead was a low muddy passage ascending to a small pot-hole with a small pool and a stream dripping in. This pool proved to contain what is certainly one of the largest single finds of Cave Pearls to be found in this country. Near the end of the passage a small "window" looked into another passage, running below at right angles. This was later to become known as the "Bone Hole".

Returning to the parting of the ways the cave turned to the right and led downwards through a series of chambers and large, circular waterworn passages until a distant roaring sound indicated the proximity of the main river.

A second stream entered from the roof at this point and the floor ahead was covered with broken boulders with a high stalagmite bank on the left, and a large passage above. Across the boulders a deep pool gave access to a descending tunnel leading to the main stream passage.

This main passage was for the most part a finely modelled rift with

an average width of about 5 ft. and from 15 to 60 ft. high, which carried on through a series of pools and deep rapids until progress was arrested by a very deep pot. However there was an easy traverse over this, but almost immediately a second similar pot barred the way, and exploration ended here for the day.

After the night of appropriate celebration the attack was opened again the following day. The second pothole in the stream was passed with ease and the river followed up for a long distance, across two more quite formidable pots, to a point where it emerged from a sump on the right. On the left a "dry" passage with a small stream led for a long distance until progress was again halted by a huge boulder choke. The stream emerged from a hole high up in the left side not far from the choke.

Meanwhile others had been busy. Charles Freeman had climbed out of the stream on the right bank, and discovered a series of dry passages. the lower of these passed from a wide and roomy passage to a narrow and uncomfortable crawl through a coral pool to a chamber of vivid colouring. At two places side passages returned to points overlooking the main river. The upper passage, entered by a steep climb up a 15ft. stalagmite bank, was floored with solid stalagmite and at the end broke into a large chamber profusely decorated with large stalactites, and erratic formations. At the far end of this in a deep pool of clear water stood the most impressive formation yet seen, a 35 ft. column of pure white stalagmite some 10 ft. round at the base.

A further discovery brought the archaeologists post haste from Ogof yr Esgyrn, Mr. John Barrows while exploring the passage leading to the cave pearls had descended through the "window" into the lower passage and had discovered a skeleton in an advanced state of decay crouched among the rocks at the upper end which was choked by a heavy roof fall.

Later in the week Messrs Dolphin and Lowe arrived and made a fast trip upstream returning with the news that they had found a large passage high up on the right of the "dry" section past the sump, which apparently "went"

On the same day it was found that the stalagmite chamber was not the end of this series. Turning to the left at the foot of the stalagmite column a 6 ft. Duck led into a passage lavishly decorated with stalactites of all varieties, and on into a second large chamber. A narrow passage off this gave access to a small perch some 80 ft. up in the roof of the main stream passage. It was later found that this was directly over the second pot.

Meanwhile the high stalagmite bank near the entrance to the stream passage had been climbed and the passage above proved to be a by-pass to the stream. Off this on the left Gwyn Bannister discovered a maze of passages of singular complexity, extreme narrowness and great discomfort redeemed only by their patches of great beauty.

The stream may also be followed downwards to some extent until it disappears into a mass of very unstable boulders. A number of passages lead off from the main system towards this point but all are a maze of interconnecting rifts and bedding planes subject to flooding in time of high water.

The few side passages off the stream past the dry series were fully

explored early in the second week after discovery. The only one of any interest was that reported by Lowe and Dolphin, which ran for a considerable distance before it also petered out in a boulder choke similar to that in the main passage. Almost the whole of the known cave has been surveyed on a centre line basis, and the survey is probably accurate to within 5%, the main errors being in the bearings at the far end where continuous shivers of cold rendered their taking a tricky business!

As a result of the survey it has been shown that contrary to expectations the cave runs due East West for 1500 ft. as the crow flies. The actual length from the entrance to the boulder choke is 2600 ft. As the stream was supposed to be fed from Pwll Byfre it was an even greater surprise to find that the sump was turning to S.S.W. and the authors consider it to be more probable that the main stream is fed from the nearby swallets in the Quartz Conglomerate such as Pwll yr Gosseg. Such conditions would however account for the sudden flooding of the system as has been observed. The theory however awaits confirmation at a later date.

The only promising section of the cave available to the normal caver for further exploration is the tunnel which carries the stream leading into the "dry" section at the far end. This would best be reached by some form of ladder as the climb would be difficult enough without the complications of the constant shower bath. We also look forward to the time when the C.D.G. will find it within their power to penetrate the sump and see what is beyond.

The authors wish to thank all those people in the district who gave them endless help during the dig and subsequent explorations. Above all to Mr. Powell for his constant help and tuition in the use of the sledgehammer and to Mr. Downey for his advice and those hot baths which were so badly needed, on emergence from the depths. Our thanks go also to those people who gave valuable aid in compiling the survey of the cave.

Notes

(a) The Cave Pearls.

These were found to be disappearing at no uncertain rate, and have been removed to the Welsh National Museum for safe keeping.

(b) The Bones

These have been entrusted to the care and examination of Mr. E.J. Mason Prf Savory and Dr. Aslett. It is hoped that a report on their age and nature will be available shortly.

(c) Safety

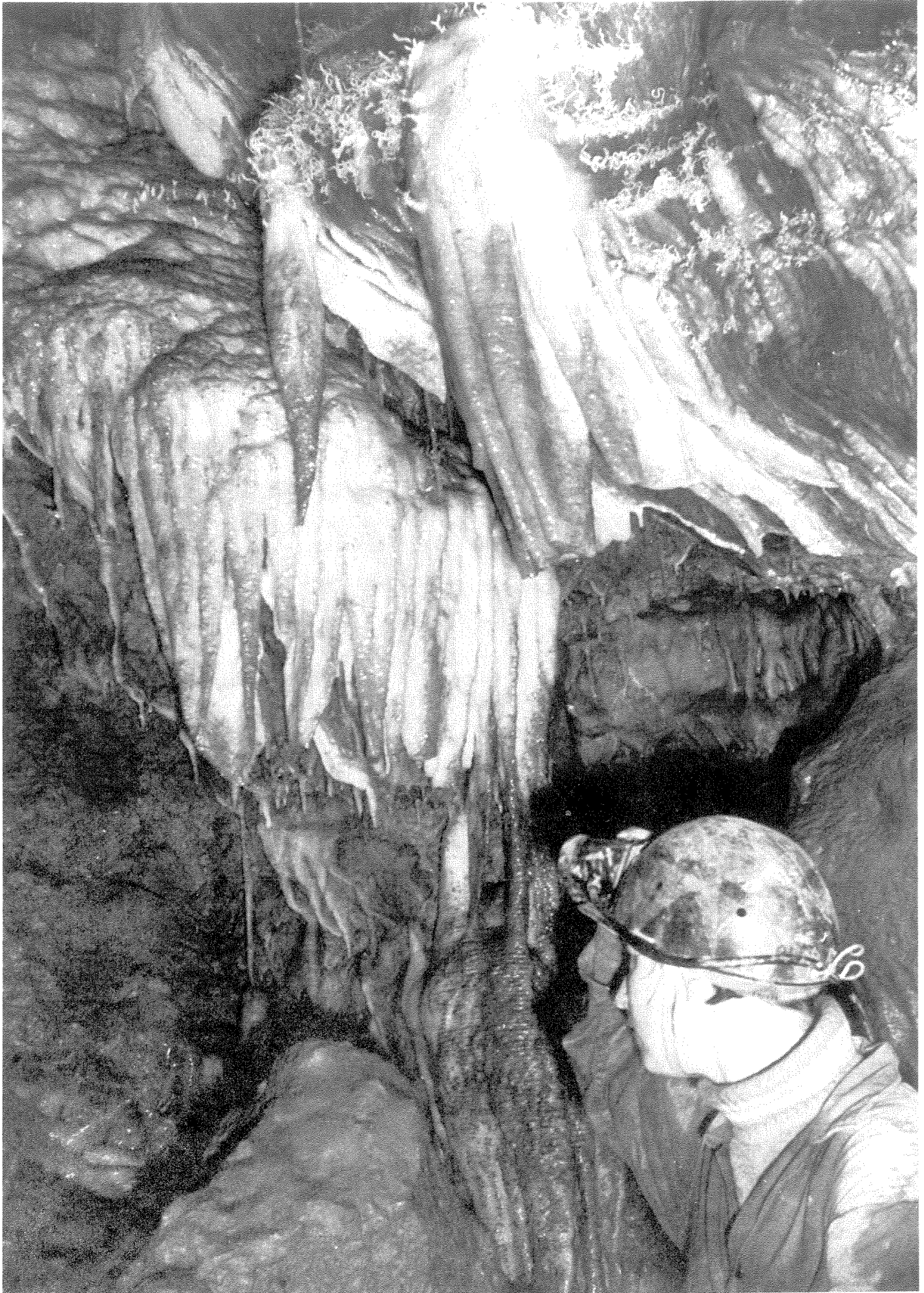
Ogof yr Ffynnon Ddu is liable to sudden flooding and it only requires a rise of 1ft. to make the stream passage impassable. It is capable of rising this amount in less than 15 minutes. It is hoped that any explorers will take account of the weather possibilities before entering and if the stream is already high will not proceed beyond the dry series.

P.I.W.HARVEY

I.S.NIXON

P. 11 G-B Cave Mendip Ladder Cave Extension
P. 13 Swildons Hole Barnes Loop

photo ALAN JACKSON
photo ALAN JACKSON



PWILL HEOL POWELL

Since we are delving into the past, and in view of the various problems of recent years this seems a good moment to revive memories of the Great Shaft Project. Rod Stewart has kindly sent in the original document of the idea which he and Bill Little and various others Worked out in the period from 1964 onwards. I gather that the final plans were of a very comprehensive nature, but unfortunastely only the initial draft of the proposal can be recovered at present. All the same it seems worth circulating in the hope that it may stimulate some of the current activists to thought and perhaps even action when they see the extent of these conceptions which were sadly frustrated.

..... There were Giants in those days.....

Proposed Shaft Project

Object: To make a shaft on SWCC owned property into a cave known as the Jama suitable for future use for:-

- 1 - Access to the cave by ladder or winch etc. as a vertical shaft.
- 2- To make practicable the installation of pumping equipment etc. to provide an alternative water supply for SWCC HQ.
- 3 - To extend telephone and other forms of communications.
- 4 - to make a practise and equipment developement site.

Methods and facilities:-

The excavations will be situated in front of Nos. 8,9,& 10: as far as practicable in front of No. 9 so as to cause the mimimum of interference to the existing amenities at the HQ and thereabouts.

1 - A concrete and concrete block, or brick 'Blockhouse' would be constructed on bedrock so that the top, when covered with concrete would be approximately level with the existing gardens of nos 8 & 10. Adequate support of the foundations of the existing buildings and pipework would be maintained during constructuon of the blockhouse and thereafter by the return of all necessary soil and stone around the blockhouse.

2 - Upon or close to the above site temporary places will be made for keepin^g and operating a compressor, drilling equipment, winding equipment and any other tools and plant for use in making and maintaining a shaft

3 - All work and any other activities at this site whether upon thw surface or within the blockhouse or in any shaft made in connec tion with it shall be in control of the Project Engineer, who shall be appointed by the committee of the SWCC. The Project Engineer shall be responsible directly to the committee of the SWCC for the safety of the operation at all times, but he shall have the right to delegate this as necessary.

4 - The Project Engineer will loan, free of charge, a compressor and drilling equipment subject to any mechanical failure; but the SWCC shall provide or pay for the cost of fuel, oils, drill bits, explosives, cement, sand and other necessary drilling, building, shuttering, and reinforcing materials, hand tools, winding equipment, scaffolding ladders, beams etc.

5 - Swcc shall provide free electricity for winding, lighting and other sundry purposes up to a maxim^um demand of 3 KW.



Control

1 - The project engineer or his delegate shall ensure that only those required by him to assist shall be present on the site or in the shaft or blockhouse. Any other visits for the purposes of inspection shall be only with his permission subject to the trustees of SWCC or the committee of SWCC from time to time having the works inspected by one of themselves or by a representative. Reasonable notice shall be given to the project engineer or any other delegated person for the time being in charge of operations.

2.- The spoil drawn from the shaft and works shall be placed within 100 ft. of the top of the shaft in a reasonable manner and so as to be usable by SWCC as ballast, aggregate, roadstone or walling stone, but ungraded. A reasonable area of roadway and space beyond shall be reserved as needed for dumping spoil.

3 - All necessary fencing, guards and covers shall be fitted or erected and maintained as necessary until the completion of the project. Completion of the work shall involve fitting of a permanent safe door or manhole cover at the top.

4 - the project will be considered to have ceased after a period of 12 months from commencement whether completed or not. After this period SWCC shall accept full responsibility and control. The project engineer may end his responsibility at any time earlier upon declaring his responsibilities completed.

5 - The project engineer shall obtain insurance cover against public liability for the period for which he holds office. The cost of the cover so far as it relates entirely to this project shall be paid from Club funds. All persons taking any part in this project shall do so entirely at their own risk and without remuneration or reward.

ROD STEWART ET AL.

Editorial Note

I am happy to publish this because it helps to grind my own axe - in a manner of speaking. There were costings attached but they are 13 - 14 years out of date, so I refrain from publishing them to avoid unseemly mirth. Perhaps the shaft should be inside No. 9 so that all amenities would be immediately available, and the man driving the haulage could sit with his back to the radiator. After all, if we have our own private entrance to OFD we can do away with the OFD management committee: Down with committees!

THE STUMP AND WERN HOUSE

In September 1977 the Club took possession of the two cottages known to cavers as "The Stump". Looking west from SWCC headquarters the right hand cottage is known as Penwylt Inn, or "The Stump" and the left hand cottage as Wern House. Both cottages belonged to relations of Mr. Percy Bengree who lives in Pen Pant, the cottage opposite the quarry managers bungalow on the hill to Penwylt. Mr. Bengree was born in one of the cottages and these, together with the adjoining land became his on the death of his uncle Mr. Evans. I have known Mr. Bengree for some years, and one day at a time when he was particularly distressed at the

damage done to the property by vandals he said he would rather give it away than see it fall into ruin. I suggested that the club might be interested in the long term, and that we might seal it and make it weatherproof for use some time in the future.

Negotiations between solicitors took some two years - the nominal price for the property was £25 - and with solicitors bills the overall price was in the region of £450. Our own solicitors reduced their fees because there were legal problems which had proved impossible to foresee when we decided to purchase the property, and so their estimates of fees proved way out. The title deeds make fascinating reading, but are very bulky. I hope to give extracts from them on a future occasion as they give some of the history of Penwyllt. For those interested we have not purchased the mineral rights.

The figure shows the details of the land. The cross hatched areas represent what we have actually purchased. The area shown dotted indicates land to which we have access at all times. Access is via footpaths A and B. Mr. Bengree has signed a declaration that in the past coal has been delivered by vehicles without hindrance over path B although it would appear that there is no vehicular right of access. Mr. Bengree owns the plot labelled D on the plan and in the sale to us there is the provision that the rest of the plot D will be first offered to us if the plot is sold by Mr. Bengree within 21 years of Sept 1977. The price will be agreed with an independent surveyor and the offer will remain open for two months. This offer can only be taken up by the South Wales Caving Club, through its trustees.

The terms of the sale of the present property to us are such that we may not sell or otherwise dispose of it within 21 years of purchase other than after first offering it back to Mr. Bengree at a price to be agreed by an independent surveyor.

We are also granted rights :-

- 1 - To drill for water on land D and lay whatever pipes are necessary to supply water for domestic purposes within 21 years.
- 2 - To construct a drainage system comprising a septic tank, manholes etc. This must also be done within 21 years of 1977 and the position must be agreed in writing with Mr. Bengree.

In the sale to us we were precluded from selling or leasing the land, but Mr. Bengree has since relented and said we may lease it with his written agreement if this will help to get work started. He does not want the property to become a ruin. The Swindon Speleological society hopes to lease it from us, but only if certain vehicular access problems are solved. We shall retain our small field in which to camp if necessary.

It would appear that Mr. Bengree has allowed Mr. Lyn Lewis to graze his sheep on the property for a long time. This may have established a grazing right. Mr. Lewis rents the field between the station and plot D from the Penwyllt Silica Brick Company. Although he has no objection to materials being delivered by vehicle he does not want vehicles crossing the land on a regular basis as he feels his stock will get loose through gates being left open. Whether the Swindon group will take a lease on this basis remains to be seen. There has been little enthusiasm

on the part of SWCC members to do work on the property so far. The state at present is that the building is badly in need of renovation and work needs urgently to be done on the roof. It would be a great pity if this valuable possession did in fact fall into ruins. Any help which members feel able to offer in preventing this state of affairs will be gladly accepted.

ROGER SMITH

Sept 1978

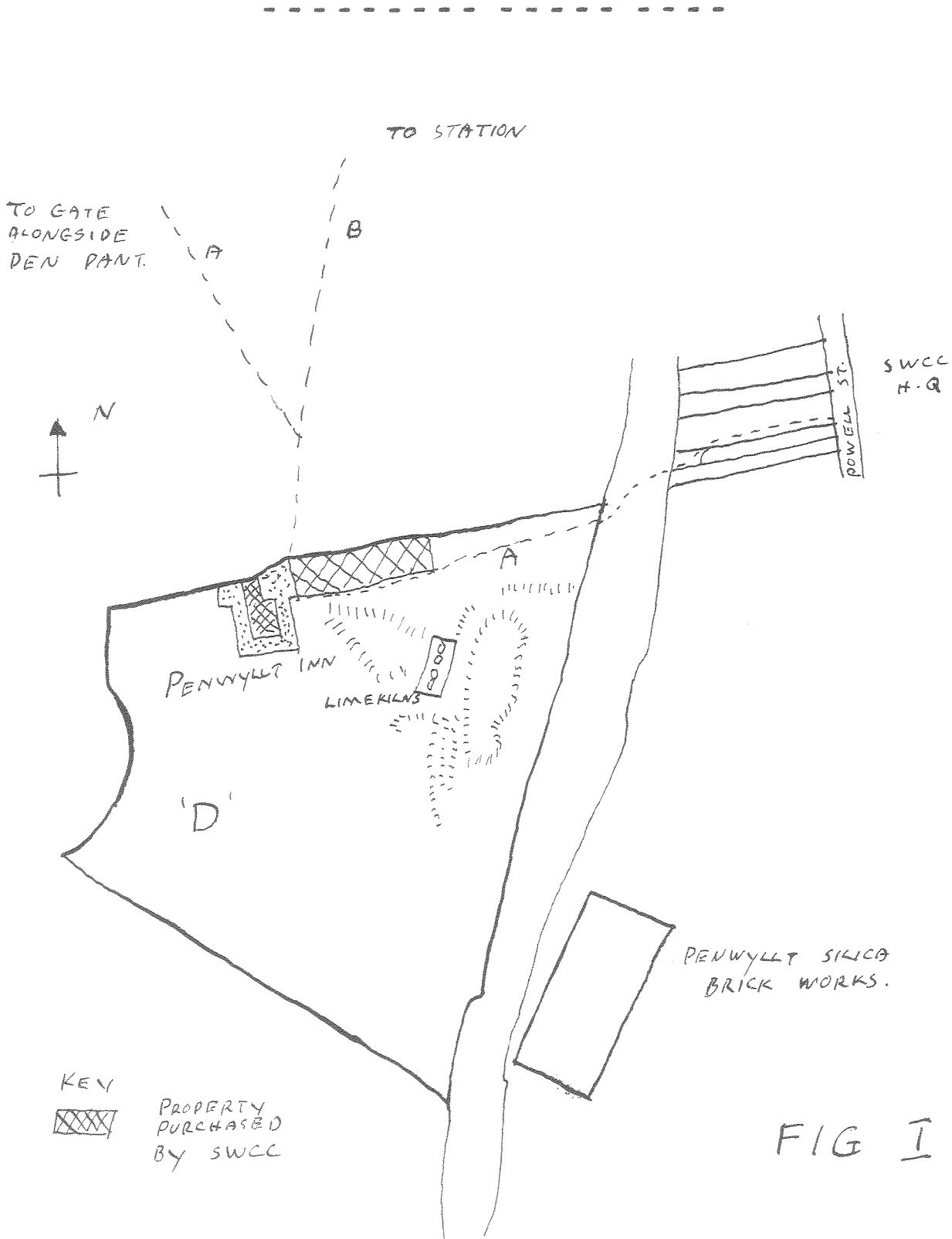


FIG I

OVER HILL AND DOWN DALE.

The time had come for me to leave work yet again. So I resigned from the firm for a second time and set off in a Ford Transit in company with Phil Rust, Martyn Farr, Rob Palmer and Liz Millet. We said farewell at the Ancient and after a bumpy crossing we arrived in Ireland early one morning.

It was not long before we had actually set up camp in the field close to the rising at Roaring Well, County Tipperary. The landowner, Mr. Craik-White of Elack and White whisky was soon there to welcome us with open doors and was most enthusiastic at our return. He had heard all about our previous visit in 1976 and was only too anxious to help us.

After a discussion of what we expected to find he promised all the help possible: including the odd social evening, the use of his electricity for cell charging, even a bath if required:- as if divers need a bath.

The first day's diving led Martyn and Rob to explore a further 250 metres of cave, bringing the total to nearly 400 metres. A good first day's work, while Phil and I had a look at No.2 rising which turned out to be too small. Meanwhile Liz made acquaintance with C.W. (Craik-White) who was a keen photographer.

The first report given to C.W. caused his enthusiasm to bubble over. As the undergrowth had almost completely impeded access to the small rising Mr. C.W. set one of his staff to clear a path for us and this provided an easier approach. With a chain-saw all the overgrown bush was cleared in a matter of hours; nothing seemed too much trouble.

The second day saw Martyn and Rob pushing on upstream while Phil and I surveyed up to sump 5, over 160 metres. The other two had now reached an inlet, Thonogue inlet, making nearly 600 metres of explored cave. So far hardly any dry passage had been found. The diving is quite pleasant in a smallish size passage hardly deeper than 3 metres and normally less than 10 metres in section. The visibility was usually no more than 3 metres and far less on the return. New line was being installed throughout; this was of the glowline type as we had large supplies donated by Marlow.

During the next few days we made two more dives and also surveyed the surface for sinks etc. After clearing up a few points we completed the survey up to date, including sumps 1 - 12. At present the end is reached at a small slot not worth pursuing since it requires a mini bottle. With explosives there may be a worthwhile extension. The inlet also took on smaller proportions and surface debris was seen, so there cannot be any great distance to the sink. We visited all the surface area searching the sinks with Jack English as our guide. He is the owner of Mitchelstown caves. Jack had loaned us a six inch map and gave us a great deal of help.

We made another visit to Roaring Well to take a few pictures before saying farewell to the C.W.s as we set off to Clare. We called first on Oliver Lloyd and the UBSS to learn some details of the area, since this was our first visit. Totally demoralised by their welcome we set off again to find a camp site and eventually got settled.

The next few days were spent searching for the submarine resurgence, but the sea kept us at bay; so we looked for better things. Soon we were joined by Pete Francis, Paul Miles and Sally Farr making the company eight all told. Next on the list was Aillwe Cave. With inspiration from D. Drew we made a dive here but the second sump became too tight. Then we turned attention to the Dulin River Cave, but again nothing was found. The sump became nasty and small. It was confused by mud banks. We moved on to the Callaun Valley and here we made a dive in Callaun 2. After passing sump 1, an evil place of low beddings and cross rifts a dive of some 25 metres led through a small streamway to sump 2. However this proved too deep for the air supply available.

Rob and Phil had searched for, but not found the sea resurgence. So now a little disappointed at the lack of success we made a couple of very pleasant sea dives before Rob had to leave for home. We dropped him off and made our way back to Tipperary. When we arrived the reception from the C.W. s was most friendly. As usual they were eager to hear what we had found. Since we planned to spend only a few more days here we finished our work on the little well up to the small slot beyond the fifteenth sump. This is now totally surveyed. We also had a tour of the Mitchestown Caves and took some photos.

Next stop was the Aille river caver in County Mayo. Here we made a couple of dives in the huge resurgence pool down to -35 metres. We found a passage here, but again at this depth the need for large amounts of air imposed a limit. So we left it in peace. It was a good practise in the dry suits.

The Aille river cave gave us some good results in new passages, but nothing really impressive was found. A lot of minor connections were made and added to the survey. The terminal dive reached -31 metres, so this probably the main drain outlet on its way to the Ballybourke rising.

Finally we turned towards the North, arriving in Fermanagh to the company of the Irish-Welsh contingent. We set to work on such sites as Hammer Pot, Marble Arch, Upper Cradles, Carregbeg, Teampoll Shetric with hopes of finding something new.

Our last few days were spent carefully. At first the downstream side of things looked bad, but a dive in lower Cradle gave Martyn hope of something new. Even though after a dive of over 150 metres at -20 metres no surface was found; his attempts in John Thomas should have proved a link, but sadly did not. However success in the upstream sector led to 500 metres of new passage leading from Upper Cradle to the sink at Monastir. We ran out of line, which meant a halt at sump 3. Still there must be only a short distance to go. The sink at Monastir has a total debris blockage and may not yield a connection, but you never know.

A thoroughly enjoyable trip in Hammer found us struggling through the narrows but not much more than the way on was found. Downstream is wide open but evil. The upstream continuation was missed in bad visibility.

We next went to Carregbeg. Feeling very optimistic we dived the upstream main sump and found the way on. The nature of the dive is quite intimidating. Undercut ledges trap the line, so to ensure a safe return it needs to be weighted. The inlet sump was also examined. The diver ran out 50 metres of line and it still continues. This is a good site for future, so the line and reel were left in place.

Our final objective was Teampoll Shetric. After many attempts in the past the mainstream sump now gave way to a small underwater choke and led to the continuation. This is quite an awkward site, and although it is wide open we left it for another time.

Altogether we had a very enjoyable time. Many places were checked and some interesting things found. The rest of the party walked the surface areas and assisted the divers with valuable support. There is still plenty to find but it will need a lot of effort. One still lives in hope.

Our grateful thanks to all who helped us in any way.

DAVE MORRIS

The Last Stage

Since I wanted to go to France and dive in some of the more beautiful syphons I thought - no time like the present. So all was arranged and we set off. We travelled in a VW Caravette with George Bee, Paul Atkinson et al., and had a super trip via Paris to Le Chapelle en Vercors for the International Film Festival. Our first week was spent watching some of the caving movies. Apart from the usual chaotic pandemonium the films were an education.

In between some heavily intoxicating we saw the spectacular show caves of De la draye Blanche and the Chorange near Vercors, and met Ben Lyon Sid Perou and plenty of other people we knew. Unfortunately George became ill, a touch of Wine or Spam poisoning, which immobilised us for a while.

At last we decided to go underground. This was to be an Occasion, so off we went to the Gouffre Fumant. It was quite an interesting trip; the usual scene take your own bolts and anchors. We planned on a photo trip but not a lot worth taking. Totally relying on George's lighting is not to be desired as one of the cells, so happens the one I had let me down. Mick Jordan and I with one light between us when trying to take pictures near the end had to retreat and repair the cell at the bottom of the entrance pitches. It was quite a sporting dry cave up to this point. It has some smallish but fine pitches 15m 40m 15m 15m. A canal then leads to the end but this was wet and we left it.

The film festival was over and we drove to the Massif de la Chartreuse, a beautiful region with fine mountains. We made camp in the valley between impressive peaks.

Next cave was to be the Guilers Vit. Rumour had it that this had not been dived to any end, but when discussing it with three French Divers from the Speleo Club de Paris we learnt that it had been pushed to 620 metres, and 450 metres of passage leading to a 10 metre climb. This sounded good.

The entrance lies half way up a great cliff face where the river rises. This is some 800 metres above the valley floor. A long slog is required to reach it with full diving kit so two journeys were made. Once the kit was on the spot it was relatively easy. With twin 72 cu. ft. bottles back mounted and working independently the divers progressed to the most beautiful cave diving ever.

It was surprisingly cold but absolutely crystal clear and huge; over 15 metres Square and -15 metres deep it is a cave divers paradise. Passing sump 1 which is 205 metres leads to a 6 metre climb up an interesting cascade. Entry to sump 2 is a luxury and this is equally clear. Due to the line having been torn out by flood debris laying a fresh line was imminent, but we continued to meet fragments and it was better to lay a newline all the way. This meant some shortage of line and as we entered sump 5 the line ran out. It had to be belayed to a suitable eyehole. The old line was met here and was followed for about 20 metres to where it surfaced in an air-bell. As this was the end of the line an exit became inevitable.

The syphon from 2 to 5 was very shallow with a maximum of -5 metres and continued to loop in and out of small bell chambers. There was little passage. We were a bit disappointed at being unable to reach the limit but having run out of line we were stumped. We returned to sump 1 where P.J.A had been re-lining the traverse for the last two hours, then we had a fabulous dive back to base after a most impressive five hours of diving.

I'm sure with a good team and more line the climb can at least be examined, the only problem being more syphons needing more air. Then it will be hard work.

So much for the diving. Then it was back home via Paris and finally to the smog grime and society of city life.

DAVE MORRIS