

DAVID PRICE - The Gwyn Arms.

All cavers will learn with deep regret the news of the passing of David Price on the 30th December at the age of 66. He had battled uncomplainingly against failing health for a number of years and latterly was forced to spend much of his time in bed. This was much against the grain, and, even as late as Christmas Day, he attempted to take his normal place in the house.

David Thomas Price was born in Sennybridge in 1887. While quite young he came to live at the Grithig Cottage near Ffynnon Ddu when his father was appointed gamekeeper to Madame Patti at Craig-y-nos Castle. It was during this time that he met Cyril Powell (the Ongur) and many were the exploits and expeditions which they shared in their youth. On leaving Penycae Church School he worked at Craig-y-nos Castle and shared in those happy days with so many local folk whose numbers are now so sadly diminished.

In 1915 Davy went to work in the mines, thinking nothing of walking five miles to work and five miles back home after a hard days work underground. In 1918 he married and in 1932 he and Mrs. Price took over the Gwyn Arms.

The call of E.E. Roberts at the Gwyn Arms in 1936 and the information given to him by David Price about Dan-yr-ogof largely contributed to the renewed exploration the following year. Davy was very active in this and was among the first party to reach the Mud Crawl and to make the Letter-Box Climb. Subsequently he acted as guide to the early caving parties on excursions to other caves in the area.

With the decision to open Dan-yr-ogof as a show cave Davy was called in to drive the present entrance tunnel. At this type of work with "plug and feather" he was a master craftsman and none know better than he the problems of working limestone. With opening of the cave he acted as guide and remained in that position until the closure during the war.

When the South Wales Caving Club was formed in 1946 he was a committed member and latterly he and Mrs. Price were elected honorary members of the club in appreciation of their services.

From the days of 1937, when large caving parties first visited Dan-yr-ogof, until the establishment of South Wales Caving Club headquarters at Penybont in 1946, the Gwyn Arms was the base

for all caving operations. During this period and afterwards when the new club gathered strength and large meets were organised David Price earned from cavers the appreciation and respect which was due to him as a most capable host. He was no ordinary landlord. Quiet and unassuming he was a born diplomat, a confidant, and a sound adviser. Perhaps no one fathomed the depths of his mind but glimpses of his knowledge, his clarity of thought and his desire to help his fellow-men, were often seen. He loved his valley, its natural life and its people and it was always his pleasure to relate his experiences with a dry, subtle humour.

Apart from his association with caving, he was a District Councillor for the last four years, and a member of Cymdaethas Cymru and the Brecknock Society.

In the passing of David Price we have lost a very good friend who will be sadly missed. Our sympathy goes out to Mrs. Price, Lena, and Arthur.

A.H.Hill.

The committee take this opportunity to wish all the members of the South Wales Caving Club and all friends of the club A Happy New Year and it is hoped that this year will see further discoveries in underground South Wales.

Change of address.

G. Bradshaw, 7, Allsprings Drive, Gt. Harwood, Nr. Blackburn, Lancs.

P. A. Duncan, 18, Helton Lane, Wendover, Bucks.

The club dinner.

This was held at the Grand Hotel in Cardiff on October 31st. It was attended by fifty-five members and guests and everyone agreed that the function was an outstanding success. This was due to the efforts of Miss P. Hardwidge and W. H. Little on whose shoulders fell the burden of organising the dinner. We take this opportunity of thanking them and all who helped in any way.

Publications.

"British Caving" by Members of the Cave Research Group.
Published by Kegan Paul and Routledge, 35/-.

This book represents the most important addition to caving literature in the English language. For the first time we have a book which tells us nearly everything that anyone could want to know or should know about the subject. Each section is written by an expert while the book is well illustrated by photographs drawn from various sources. Anyone who has any pretensions to calling himself (or herself) a caver or speleologist should find a place for this book on their bookshelves.

It would not be right to conclude without mentioning the editor of this work, Rev. C. H. D. Cullingford a member of this club, whose efforts in collating a book of this nature must be truly monumental. Nor would it be right not to mention Brigadier E. A. Glennie who has not only written a section of the book in conjunction with M. Hazelton but who has also had the task of compiling the index and the list of caves, mines and resurgences; British Caving Organisations and a glossary of caving terms.

"British Caver", Volume 24. Published by G. Platten.
"Rotherfield", Fernhill Lane, New Milton, Hants. 7/3d.

Cavers know only too well the splendid efforts by G. Platten in keeping us all up to date in what is happening in the world of caving. This volume is no exception and it is a worthy successor to its predecessors.

"The Darkness under the Earth" by N. Gasteret is to be published by Dent at 15/- early this year.

Cave photographers please note!

The largest single flash photograph ever taken was recently taken in Carlsbad Caverns in the U.S.A. Sixteen hours were spent in setting up the equipment which included a dozen cameras and 2,400 large flashbulbs. The photograph in colour showed the Big Room up to a depth of one-fifth of a mile. Details of this and other photographs of Carlsbad can be found in the National Geographical Magazine for October 1953.

Congratulations.

Congratulations to Arthur Price on his recent marriage to Sheila Murphy of Leicester. They have now moved from Leicester and the new address is 103, Kingsland Crescent, Barry, Glam.

International Speleological Congress.

The First International Speleological Congress held in Paris last year was undoubtedly a success. There were many interesting papers and discussions on all aspects of caving. Compared with many other countries, the number of British representatives was deplorably small only four, those being, Warwick, Turner, M.E. and C.L. Railton. With this small number it was not possible to have even one representative attending to hear every paper and discussion. On many aspects of Speleology we are at least up to if not in advance of many other countries. In diving technique we undoubtedly are. It is certainly up to British caving clubs to give serious thought to this matter and to see that at the next congress to be held in Italy in four years time British prestige is properly upheld by having at least ten representatives each prepared to give at least one paper or help on the commissions.

In spite of the few participants Britain worked hard and made some impact on the Congress. Four papers were given in four different sections: (1) Karstmorphology - Warwick; (2) Biology, - M.E. Railton read Glennie's paper; (3) Survey and (4) Equipment - C.L. Railton. Warwick worked on the Statutes Commission and the three other members on the one of an International caving glossary.

The hard work was sprinkled with typical French hospitality: receptions; a tour of Paris; a visit to the Folie Bérghères; and a most enjoyable informal banquet to close the Congress. During three evenings films were shown; these were made in and around caves, by cavers and they were really first class. Perhaps Britain could exhibit such a film at the next Congress? What about it S.W.C.C. ? - you have the caves and the photographers.

M.E. and C.L. Railton.

December, 1953.

Pant Mawr Pothole.

N.G.R. 22/891162.

The story of Pant Mawr Pothole commences some eighteen years ago when there was no caving club in South Wales and when the Mendip cavers were beginning to think seriously about the limestone areas that lay on the other side of the Bristol Channel. Early references to the discovery of Pant Mawr are, therefore, few. The pothole might even have been 'discovered' twice for both E.A. Glennie and G. Platten were working from the Swansea Valley in 1936 but they did not record their finds. The first record is in "Caves and Caving" p.97 "Porth yr Ogof and its Neighbours." in which J. Braithwaite wrote:- "Downstream from the main chamber is very easy going. The chamber opens into a spacious passage. The stream was followed for some distance before a block was reached in the form of a fall of roof. There was no way over the fall, but we found a way through the boulders, following the course of the stream, although this necessitated total immersion. The passage resumed its dimensions again only to continue for a short distance to another fall of roof - which has not yet been passed." K. Murrell says that the date was October, 18th. 1936 and that the party comprised Jim Braithwaite, Austin Wadsworth and himself. That day they hired a horse to carry the tackle, not knowing the depth of the pitch. On that occasion they explored as far as they could get above the waterfall and found that the 'duck' in the first boulder choke was passable. Murrell's second visit was on November 15th. 1936 when he and Braithwaite went through the 'duck' into what I think is the space between the first and second boulder chokes. He concludes:- "I gave up when no obvious way on could be found. We never visited the cave again."

Later Dingle and Greenwood made further unsuccessful attempts to continue the exploration. In 1939 Dingle led a B.S.A. party there at the time of the Swansea meeting of that Association. Pant Mawr is unlikely to have been visited by cavers during the war as the area was used as an artillery range whilst after the war the Braithwaite - Murrell Passage was not enough to induce anyone to go through for a long time or, perhaps it was the crumbling shale which put people off. The S.W.C.C. made only occasional visits until the summer of 1952 when Peter Harvey put fluorescene in the sink 120 yards north of the pot. Five days later the Little Neath was coloured a vivid green.

Nearly a year later a couple of Rawl bolt holes were drilled in the rock at the top of the 48ft. pitch on the east side thus saving the weight of a sledge hammer, an iron stake and a long tether for the ladder. This is a great saving of energy considering that the caver has to climb 1650ft. on the ridge between Pwll Byfre and Pant Mawr, the pot itself is situated at about 1,450ft. The easiest approach being from the west via Penwyllt and the old quarry track on the slopes of Pant Byfre, to the tramway leading to Pwll Byfre. After ascending the ridge east of the end of the track a wide stretch

of moorland is seen. The posts which are the remains of an old fence around the pot may be seen between a sink on the left and a wall which runs from east to west on the right. These are the only landmarks for Pant Mawr is a desolate spot and devoid of any shelter. Should the mist come down a compass will be your best friend.

After several visits in the summer of 1953 Dai Hunt and I made a survey of the upstream parts and down to the first boulder choke. By September 12th. Bill Clarke had wriggled under the boulders and rediscovered Braithwaite's miserable wet route. The following day Clarke went through again, this time with Dr. Aslett. Beyond the wet crawl they climbed upwards through the second choke after walking a few yards down the stream. This brought them to a fair sized chamber decorated with straws and some strange stalagmites which were as misshapen as the blocks on which they stood. These blocks appeared to have slipped down the sloping floor. An ox-bow passage on the right bypassed the next constriction, a collection of eccentrics and a gour pool before swinging back into a large passage again. The floor sloped unevenly downwards over strewn blocks (the Dining Hall). Soon the stream reappeared and the way led on. Cross passages were seen above reach, running from east to west. White curtains hung down 9ft. fortunately out of the reach of muddy fingers. Then, for a few feet, the stream ran over bedrock to continue over assorted boulders of Old Red Sandstone, grit and limestone blocks which had fallen from the walls and roof. Eventually the stream disappeared under the right hand corner of a heavily calcited roof fall. Aslett and Clarke came back wet and tired but they had found the way on.

Rain during the week cleared off on Saturday but conditions were still uncertain on Sunday, September 20th. Denise Medina kept watch on the surface while Clarke, Leyman and I went down. We crawled into the Braithwaite-Murrell route to find only 2ins. of air space in the tightest spot. Froth marks on the walls clearly indicating the state of affairs after rain. Discretion, we decided, was a good excuse for not getting wet. This route runs against and under the right hand wall. Retracing our steps we climbed over the boulders, under the sagging roof and carefully searched every cranny. A hole beneath a crumbly shale band, whilst looking most unattractive, proved to lead to the shattered zone between the first and second chokes. We held our breath until Clarke returned and helped him out without dislodging things. A few minutes we had made a narrower but safer entrance behind a large block to one side. Just inside we built a pillar of stones to prevent any further drooping of the slab in the roof. The route was now a reasonable one and not affected by a moderate increase in the stream. We pushed on down to the third choke and scrambled into a central opening, traversing behind the calcite flow on the right. It went easily avoiding any loose blocks. Before us stretched a large chamber the end of which we were unable to see (Great Hall). We walked down a mud slope, clambering over muddy blocks, towards the sound of running water. The stream had reappeared again to be joined further down by a jet of water shooting out of a 6 inch hole on the right (the Fire Hydrant). Our way continued over blocks and high mudbanks in which

we kicked steps. The square section of the passage changed to a rift 3 feet wide while the roof, walls and even large formations were covered with a soft adhesive mud. The stream ran sluggishly and we followed it until we were thigh deep. It appears that at times the passage must flood up to the roof. Time had flown and we were out of contact with our weather watcher for, four hours ago the weather had looked uncertain as we had left the daylight - a decision was made to return. As we dragged ourselves up the pot we realised how tired we were. The cloud was down over Fan Gihrych and soon the wind was blowing the rain into our faces as we plodded across the heather. A weary but happy party decided that it could do what it likes now - it did!

Next week Clark, Leyman and I were joined by Arthur Price and we made an early start. At one side of the main passage Arthur climbed up to an opening where I joined him. I was intrigued by a calcite slope and climbed up carefully without damaging the erractics on the wall. The slope leveled off at a crystal floor. I walked against the right hand wall and gazed at the sight before me. After belaying a line on a stalagmite the others came up. By keeping to the right we avoided the risk of damage to the formations which are mostly on the left-hand (up-dip) side. Written description does not convey the thrill of discovering such a chamber. The profusion of erractics of all sizes with 4ft. straws and scintillating flows have to be seen to be appreciated. The reverence with which we admired the beauty of this chamber prompted us to give the name of "The Chapel".

As the water was lower we waded downstream on our return from the Chapel. We came to what we expected - a sump. A tight squeeze on the left suggested an alternative route. Some obstructing 'stal' was kicked away and round the corner we were stopped by a little pothole, too slimy to traverse or to climb out of. Bridging poles were needed but we had none that day.

On the way back to the third choke we looked at the west side of the Great Hall where a wide north-west passage brought us to a boulder choke. I wriggled over the top to the right but it was completely 'stalled' up. Leyman pulled out some small stones in a little stream on the left and went through. We followed him under a flowstone umbrella where a short passage led into West Chamber. This is a hopeful looking place about 25ft. high and as wide. Obvious passages were tried - Arthur climbed up a rift but it became too tight while Clarke climbed up a concealed waterfall but the short passage was choked. Coming back to the umbrella we climbed over it and chimneyed up between thickly curtained walls. There was another chamber (Northside) and a small waterfall. The far side consisted of a heavy flow of pink crystallised calcite but the tributary passage was choked. With this our efforts for the day came to an end.

During the next few weeks exploration continued. The high passage on the west side between the second and third chokes was attacked. Truman and Clarke lassoed a block above the calcite wall and hauled up a ladder. A short passage was blocked at the end with calcite and there were long straws on the right. A climb up the calcite revealed

a grotto in the centre of which a long narrow curtain formed into a column by joining up with a stalagmite. It was very white and graceful and since the upper part was tooth shaped it prompted us to call the chamber Sabre Chamber.

Later when going towards the sump Railton spotted a side passage on the right. This was another tributary; a little stream coming from a crack had partly washed out the fill for a hundred feet or so. Beyond the stream it was too low for further progress.

Dry weather had considerably reduced the main stream to show that the sump was not always a sump but that it connected with a wet pothole. This was the one which had stopped exploration in the Bye-Pass. A scaling pole had been brought so Clarke ascended the far side to find much the same again but narrowing down. It has not been pushed to the bitter end so who knows what may yet be found. At the start of the sump passage is a muddy brown aven. Dilly ascended this and covered everyone below him with sticky mud. A vertical squeeze revealed more space, and the mud calcite slope turned out to be a series of deep gours, some dry but others filled with crystals the size of Iceland Spar. After a couple of hundred feet of passage it narrowed and then gave way to a sand floor before becoming too low. Helmets became shovels and buckets and progress was made. Further on the roof was higher. We went again a week later armed with the proper tools and we scraped a way through. After a few yards the passage closed down again. To continue the operation would be a prolonged digging job as the sand must be dragged back some thirty or forty feet for stowing.

Pant Mawr had grown some tenfold to some 3,000ft of passages. The spaciousness of the main passage is not exceeded even in the Yorkshire pots. The shale bands have in many places influenced the flat roofs usually as a result of collapses on a large scale. At some time the cave has been completely filled with mud and this is now being washed out again. There are deposits of 'stal' on mud and mud on 'stal'. Perhaps it is only mud and boulders that hold up the water beyond the sump, this seems to be the reason why these great passages terminate in small rifts. Pant Mawr showed a difference of 320ft. from moor to sump as shown by an altimeter. Although these are not always reliable in such places it may be that Pant Mawr is the deepest pot yet found in Wales. The next obvious step is for an high grade survey to be made - any volunteers?

W.H.Little. December.1953.

The committee of the S.W.C.C. have decided to issue the following advice and warnings.

1. It is recommended that a hand-line should be used in going from the edge of the swallet to the top of the ladder. This especially applies in wet and icy weather.
2. Maximum care and precautions must be taken in the boulder chokes as these are very dangerous.
3. The true extent of flood conditions is not yet known and due precautions must be taken during inclement weather.

The Pant Canol Link-Up.

There are two places in the Upper Toast Rack Series of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu where draughts enter or leave the cave, and it was on Sunday, July 19th. that Bill Little, John Truman and I decided to investigate this area. The better place of the two for a dig is the one called the False Sand Choke, the other, Draughty Boulders, being at the end of a wet crawl.

Some years ago the False Sand Choke had been written off as a dig as it appeared that the only way on was through a narrow fissure overhead about six inches wide and the lower passage ended abruptly against solid rock. On clearing away the sand and stones around this "solid rock", however, it proved to be just a fallen slab from the roof. This was quickly persuaded to break up into handy sized pieces with the aid of John's noisy friend "Mr. G" which we had taken in with us. Having no room at the dig for debris, it had to be taken back about twenty feet to fill a side passage. Behind the slab, the passage went on about three feet wide below and parallel to the fissure and filled to the roof with coarse sand, pebbles and some boulders.

We returned next weekend and with the aid of Peggy Hardwidge we removed much more material.

On August Sunday while Bill and I were taking visitors around Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, John went on digging. He found the ceiling rising into the fissure and on taking out some boulders broke through into Pant Canol. About five cubic yards of sand and stones had been removed and fifteen feet of Ffynnon Ddu filled in - a small price to pay for a further three hundred feet. Since then Draughty Boulders has also been proved to connect with Pant Canol.

Dai Hunt. 22/12/53.

A new survey of Pant Canol is printed overleaf. - Ed.

Tunnel Cave.

On Sunday Dec. 27th. the boulder choke in the Tunnel Cave near Dan-yr-ogof was forced and a huge passage was entered. It runs roughly N-S for about 150 yards and it is about 30ft wide and high. From the end of a high rift the passage runs NW for some hundreds of yards. The first party was stopped at a difficult climb as no rope was taken in. Further exploration is needed and an account of this will appear in the next circular.

Dai Hunt.

OGOF PANT CANOL.

Survey by N. Dilly
and J. O. Myers.

Drawn by N. Dilly.
August 1953

C.R.G. Grade IV

Symbols as recommended
by C.R.G.

Scale, 1" = 20'

40' Grassy

slope to
valley

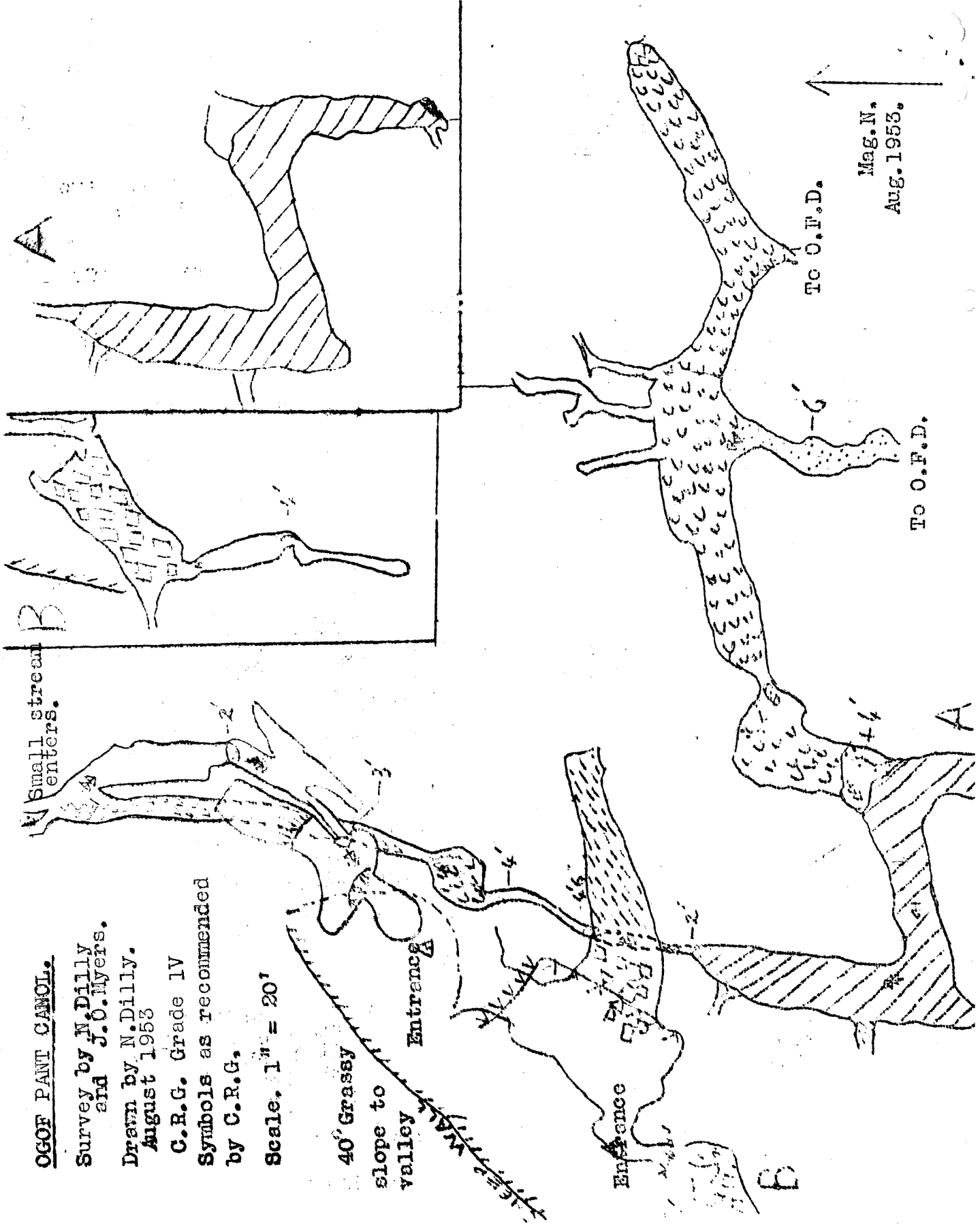
Entrance

Entrance

To O.F.D.

To O.F.D.

Mag. N.
Aug. 1953.



Additional note to Tunnel Cave.

Explorations of last weekend (Jan. 2nd - 3rd.) have shown the the rift passage divides into two and a rough estimate of distance so far explored is about 4,000ft.

Editor.

Since this circular was started the following news items have come in.

New Members.

We welcome the following new members:-

R.L.B.Bennet. 15, Glamor Park Road, Sketty, Swansea.
T.A.Underwood. 12, Harris Terrace, Penrhiwceiber, Glam.

Additions to Address List.

The following should be added to the list of members published in the last news letter:-

C.H.D.Cullingford, The New House, Monmouth.
D.H.Davies. 232, Inverness Place, Cardiff.

Change of address.

J.Truman. 19, Dorset Rd., Ealing, London. W.5.

O.F.D. Leaders.

The following member is added to the list of leaders:-

W.E.Clark. 23, Beechwood Road, Uplands, Swansea.

"Our Caves".

The latest addition to this series is included in this news letter and it has been produced as usual by B.D.Price to whom our thanks are due.

Tunnel Cave.

The latest news from Dai Hunt puts the distance so far explored at one mile. Extensive engineering is now needed.

Hon. Sec. D.G.Hunt. 19, Spring St., Cadoxton, Barry, Glam.
Hon. Treasurer. Miss. P.Hardwidge, 15, Heol Wernlas, Whitchurch,
Nr. Cardiff.
Hon. Editor. D.W.Jenkins. Dinmore, Dyffryn Rd., Llandrindod Wells.