

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Number 16.

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Club News.

AN INDEPENDENT CHECK ON THE SURVEY OF OGOF FFYNNON DDU.

At the invitation of Lewis Railton an independent check on the cave survey was made during the week-end of 3/4th December, 1955, in order to locate with greater accuracy the position of Pillar Chamber relative to the surface, use being made of a recently developed electromagnetic survey device. This equipment, which has come to be known colloquially as the "Burrow's Indicator", consists of two parts, a transmitting coil through which an alternating current is passed thus setting up a magnetic field, and a receiving coil which may be adjusted until no voltage is induced across it by the magnetic field and by which means the position of the transmitting coil may be determined. Work was started on this equipment a couple of years ago in an effort to determine where to dig in order to find new ways into old caves but it has now been found that the work involved in construction and calculation has been such that we are quite content to let other people do the digging; anyway the device was seen to have an alternative use as an aid to cave survey as at Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.

For the O.F.D. tests it was decided to carry the transmitter into the cave and set it up at the highest point in Pillar Chamber and to have the receiving stations on the surface; also to carry out two series of transmissions in order to ensure the maximum chance of success. Accordingly the underground party on the Saturday consisted of Norman Brooks guided by Les Hawes and assisted by Gordon Clissold and Keith Ball who made their way to Pillar Chamber taking just over the hour. In the meantime Bryan Ellis and Bill Little had made their way up the Penwylt road and set up receiving stations on the hillside. Transmissions lasted for an hour and a half. Despite the very loose and dangerous state of the boulder slope where the transmitter was stationed there was only one casualty, Les Hawes who sustained an injured hand while gallantly protecting the apparatus from a dislodged stone.

The following day Bryan Ellis and Gordon Clissold went into the cave and the surface party was Norman Brooks, Bill Little, Les Hawes and Glyn Thomas. The previous day's result had been worked out approximately and this showed that the transmitter had been placed only some twenty feet below the surface, so the underground coil was placed in a slightly lower position in order to prevent another accident caused by falling rock. The approximate position of the transmitter relative to the surface now being known it was possible to set up new surface stations in better positions. This caused the signals to be so loud that one had the impression that it was possible to hear the underground party talking and when a sudden change in the characteristic of the signal above ground showed that the transmitting coil had fallen down it did not require much imagination to guess what was being said! The underground party realised how close they were to the surface when they heard a loud sound of tapping caused by Glyn Thomas knocking on the rock outcrop with a hammer. It is quite a novel way of going caving when you can feel close to your friends who are some distance underground and yet enjoy the sunshine of a pleasant afternoon.

When the job was done a cairn was erected above where we thought the transmitter to have been and then surveyed back from the receiver stations to the survey points already in existence in order to tie up with the cave survey. However this surface survey was roughly done and needed repeating using better instruments and taking more time; this being done on the 25th of February, 1956 by Lewis Railton, Bill Little and David Jenkins. Norman Brooks and Cecil Gullen - another caver from London - also being there to check measurements. This time there was snow on the ground and quite a strong wind blowing but the job proceeded smoothly despite the cold in yet another kind of novel circumstance of cave survey.

The final result when plotted showed that the survey was about 20ft. in error at the highest point in Pillar Chamber. This point was about 20ft. directly below the surface, and was within a yard of being directly beneath the cairn which now stands on the hillside.

We would both like to thank all those members of the South Wales Caving Club who made us welcome at their headquarters, and all those who by their help made the operation successful. Our special thanks go to Les Hawes who transported us to and from London and who even made a sixty mile detour to pick one of us up. We are also grateful to Lewis Railton for giving us the opportunity to prove the usefulness of the new methods and we hope that the results will be of some use to the Club.

It is interesting to note that the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu survey was made exactly two years after the first underground test of the device when the principle was demonstrated in a chalk mine near London.

Norman Brooks.
Bryan Ellis.

More about Mud Formations.

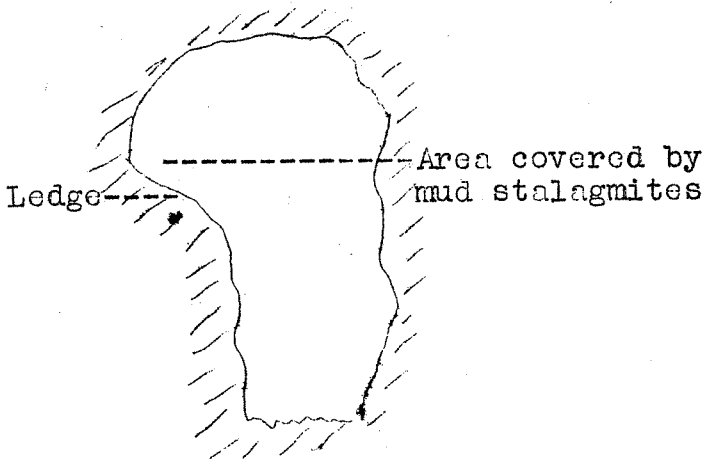
Following Keith Ball's interesting remarks on the mud stalagmites in Llethrid Swallet - a most interesting and unusual collection of miniature mud stalagmites were found in Crwbin Cave when this cave was visited at Easter by David Jenkins, Alun Howells and myself.

A sloping mud-covered ledge roughly four to five feet above floor level was densely covered with small mud droppings averaging $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1" in height. They were spread over the area of the ledge, say, about 8' long by 3' wide, and the whole impression given was that of a miniature pine forest.

Like the Llethrid formations - these are the result of mud drips from the roof of the passage but in this case the formations develop in a part of the cave subject to flooding. I would suggest therefore

that the Crwbin mud stalagmites develop as they do because the cave is heavily mud-choked at its lowest levels and as a consequence flooding back into the cave is extensive and slow to clear. The section concerned appears to flood to the roof and it seems likely that the mud drips from the roof into the water until the water level drops below the ledge. By this time, only the less-liquid part of the mud deposit remains on the roof and this, when it does fall, builds up the stalagmites to their full height in six or seven drips spread over some considerable period. There seemed to be no evidence of a calcite crust although a certain amount of Calcium carbonate (CaCO_3) may well be acting as a stiffening agent in the later stages of formation. Presumably, the formations are taken back into suspension when flooding next occurs and the process starts all over again.

Section of Passage



Rough sketch of formations.



Les Hawes, Ggurch Crookham, Hants.

Further news from Llethrid Swallet.

Further to Keith Ball's description of this cave in the recent newsletter it may be of interest to S.W.C.C. members to know that there are three great chambers in addition to the Anteroom. Apart from the three described by Mr. Ball (the Great Hall, Great Chamber and the Anteroom) there is the Annexe.

This is reached as follows:- take the usual route from the Anteroom to the Great Hall (we have bridged the rather awkward gap over the fifteen foot drop with tree trunks) but instead of turning right round the huge fallen boulder continue on bearing left until after some fifteen yards a tight and narrow passage between rock and a terrific mass of mostly stalagmited rubble is reached.

An almost vertical climb to the left here of thirty feet brings one to the entrance of the Annexe.

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This is another very large chamber - eighty-five feet long, forty feet wide and the roof rises to an estimated height of thirty-five to forty feet. We think that the roof at this point must be atleast a hundred feet above the floor of the rift passages below.

The chamber is filled with a terrific slope of what must be comparatively recently fallen rock and judging from the state of the roof at the height of this slope we think it to be behind and slightly below the ancient quarry in the cwm.

Some of the most spectacular formations in the entire cave are to be found grouped around the entrance - including many columns and several mace-like stalagmites.

On a more practical note we have, by chance rather than by design, diverted the stream inside the cave. By discovering this new outlet for the water (by hearing a faint noise of water dripping) the entrance passages became very much more pleasant, for after some fifty yards the stream vanishes completely and is not seen or heard of again in further passages that used to have up to three or four feet of water in them under bad conditions.

How long these desirable conditions will last is a matter for conjecture - knowing Llethrid Stream and its vagaries we are prepared for anything to happen.

At long last we have got round to measuring the length of the Great Hall - three hundred and twenty feet !

The Taylors.
7th. May, 1956.

Weighbridge Cave. Report No.2.

Since the last newsletter there have been several visits to the dig with varying results. Unfortunately it has been found that the place fills up with water which turns it into a fine underground swimming pool especially when the water has been coloured with fluorescein. I proved this after being stupid enough to leave the tools in the cave from one weekend to the next - moral - put not your faith in T.V. weather forecasts!

A large amount of material has been taken out and a drainage channel has been blasted. This should have the effect of keeping the water level down to two to three feet.

There is no truth in the rumour started by Bill Little that the cave is to be known as " Davy's Slockett "

Help has been readily given by members and in addition to those

mentioned in the previous list I would like to thank the following:-

W.E.Clark and his forceful friend.

M.E.Railton and C.L.Railton.

W.H.Little, G.Clissold, J.Bewan, and D.C.Moore.

Mention must also be made of the dig started "next door" by the editor's five year old son and, which looks far more promising than his father's.

D.W.Jenkins.

Fluorescein Test.

The following test was carried out on Friday/Saturday, June 15/16th.

8ozs. of fluorescein was placed in the sink at Nant Byfre which is situated on the opposite bank just below the farm near Pwll Coediog. This was done at about 7.p.m. on Friday. The colour was seen coming out of the 1st. rising in the Tawe below the Gwyn Arms at about 10.30.a.m. on the Saturday.

It seems likely that the stream flows under or near Pwll Coediog.

D.W.Jenkins.

"THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY STAND AND WAIT"

"Just a minute old man....I'll try another piece of touchpaper". How often have you heard this muttered phrase???? You - being the unfortunate type patiently waiting whilst in the gloom something fizzles, flares, fizzles and goes out again. You - being the cave photographer's model.

Modelling for a cave photographer is undoubtedly one of the finest of the fine arts yet, so far, its entry into the lists of honourable professions remains completely unheralded. Writers on Cave Photography mention you grudgingly and yet they owe you so much. Such perfunctory recognition of this sphere of cave science has therefore prompted me to write a few words in the series "Careers for Cavers" both in acknowledgment of services rendered and for the benefit of those thinking about entering the profession.

Let's start with the advice. First of all, choose a lone photographer for your first trip. With two or more photographers 'riding' flashes - a generally unsatisfactory and impracticable business at the best of times - an element of "gamesmanship" develops which would surely put Stephen Potter himself to shame. The metallic clash of tripod legs (substitute heavier thuds and splintering woodwork if the 'Grandmothers' type of tripod is in use) as they battle for the best position. The

hot breath on a rival's lens as a check is made with a powerful torch to see if the shutter is open. The delicate tap with a nailed boot that swings the camera round in the opposite direction as a further half-a-pound of magnesium powder is shovelled on to the heap. These are but a few instances of this sordid business - so be prepared.

Now for the more practical side of things. Having got to the scene of operations you'll be found somewhere to stand or otherwise distribute your bulk. Generally you'll have a wide choice of stance.. for example..a deep icy pool of water, a narrow slippery exposed ledge, a crumbling boulder choke, a jawlike squeeze with a floor of razor-edged gour pool(notable for inspiring that heartfelt remark concerning ones' future) or perhaps in a lofty but draughty chamber once you have been soaked from ankle to elbow.

We started this little lot with an oft-heard phrase. You'll hear plenty more during your apprenticeship and you will notice how the cave photographer possesses a fine vocabulary of descriptive words and phrases to suit every occasion. They range from the cheery "Ha! Would you believe it I've forgotten to put a film in." to a more grimly muttered "I'll try that again. That.....shutter mucking about again!" and finally to that violent outburst that follows your accidentally tripping over a tripod leg, which goes something like "You.....gormless,heavyfootedson of athink the.....thing would float!!!" You soon get to the stage where the true philosophical side of your nature comes to the surface. You have a "face" for all occasions: impassive for the camera but responsive to changes of surroundings. The kindly ear-to-ear grin you retain for special occasions such as being told when you are hauling your sodden slimy bulk out of a sump "That's funny. It doesn't look half as good as I thought it would. I won't waste a shot on that!"

If, having survived this far, you begin to think that your education is complete, you have a shock coming. You must learn to keep your humorous remarks to yourself at all times. There are no such things as philanthropic cavers...that odd sixpence propped up against that crystal has not been left there for the cleaners...It's for scale laddie - just as you are! Don't pick up that matchbox by the rimstone pool and rush off muttering "Just wait until C.P.S. hears about this!"

By now, you'll be thinking what a valuable bod you are. What's the word...indispensible isn't it???? Just how far from the truth can you get???? The photographer, by nature tinged with bitter experience, underrates your intelligence by 100% or thereabouts. Every second his brain is working out a counter-move to your next colossal blunder. Thoughts like "I suppose the idiot will put his.....helmet light on as soon as the flash has gone off" or "Better not get him too near that stal. or that's the last we'll see of that" chase one another through his mind. Even so, his "eye for a picture" never deserts him. With colour film in his camera, don't think he's been too busy to notice that dry bright red sweater under your overalls when it comes to the waterfall picture. "What did you say old man??? Shrink??? I shouldn't think so.. they don't usually." Of course, he's not entirely oblivious to your

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predicament whatever your name and will often unselfishly make it an 'instantaneous' shot. Instantaneous.... that is once he has fixed the aperture, range, shutter speed, height of flash, size of bulb etc., by reference to a complicated mumbo jumbo of relative film speeds, flash factors, flash bounce, size and material of reflectors, colour of surrounding walls etc., such calculations being interspersed with knowledgeable glances to the heavens designed to reduce mental strain and to instil confidence in you - his model. However, even that is better than the 'three days at f8' sort of shot!!

You, in turn, assume greater responsibilities. In post-picture moments you soon learn how to handle red-hot flash powder trays and to take pollution and visibility readings for statistical and navigational purposes. The latter is really most important as even the best cave photographers have been known to so completely fill a chamber with smoke that they can't find their way out again!! You assist in the ritual of packing little cases into bigger tins and bigger tins into larger cases and regard the telescoping of each grit-covered tripod leg as a challenge to your tenacity and strength of character. If you've much time for contemplation, you must sometimes wonder "Does he bear me any malice??" You may recall how 95% of the day's pictures have been carefully arranged so that you have your back to the camera. And you'll not gain anything by mentioning this. Indeed, you can think yourself lucky if he only says "You'll have the most photographed backside in the Club - so what are you worrying about!!!"

Your trip over, be prepared for it. "Not bad that.... four in fourteen hours.... Used to be quite a long job this photographic lark before we developed modern techniques" You'll think up some fitting retort when it's too late but just pause a moment and remember that whereas your job is done, much of his remains to be completed. One day, perhaps, the film may be finished, and then will come those sessions with spiral tanks and evil smelling liquids... and what's all this about making water wetter???? You think again about that sump!!

What sort of reception will the prints get, you wonder. And well you might. You'll wait for them to be passed round assuming that nonchalant air of complete and utter indifference - but what do you hear??? "Who's the Charlie with the size 12 boots??!!" As you listen, not quite so attentively now, you'll hear your blunders transferred into revolutionary photographic techniques. "You see how I got him to leave his light on as he walked back to the camera... gives you a grand idea of the tricky route" or "Notice how I got him with his back to that formation... Unusual eh. Most people have the model staring straight at it" You learn even more. "No.. the water's not really that deep... got him to kneel down in it to give that effect" and "Oh!... that one... of course, it shows just how you shouldn't climb that chain"

Was it worth it????? If ever you succeed in getting prints for your album you might even think so. I hope so... I've got a lot more pictures to take yet.

L.A.Hawes

Editor's notes to the above article.

ALL letters of complaint should be sent direct to the author. The Editor and the S.W.C.C. take no responsibility for any actions of libel arising out of the above article.

In a letter last week to the editor from the above author the following was written, "Sorry about that shot of you on the 1st pot. It was hopelessly fogged because I used too large a bulb."+++++ *****

No comments - Ed.

Lastly new members are respectfully requested not to ask how the author managed to attain such a beautiful sunburnt appearance. Between ourselves it was just one of those 'big 'eaps'.

The Badger Hole and Careg Cadno.

In the middle of June 1955 I happened to be at the cottage for a week the same time as some visitors from Sheffield University. One afternoon one of them helped me to start digging at the foot of the cliff a little way below the natural arch on the opposite side of the Tawe to which the cottage stands. Those of you who have not seen the arch will get an idea of its position if you imagine yourselves standing on the bridge near the cottage with your backs to Dam-yr-ogof and looking just a little over three-quarters of the way up the hill which faces you. (The arch is called Eglwys Caradoc - Ed.)

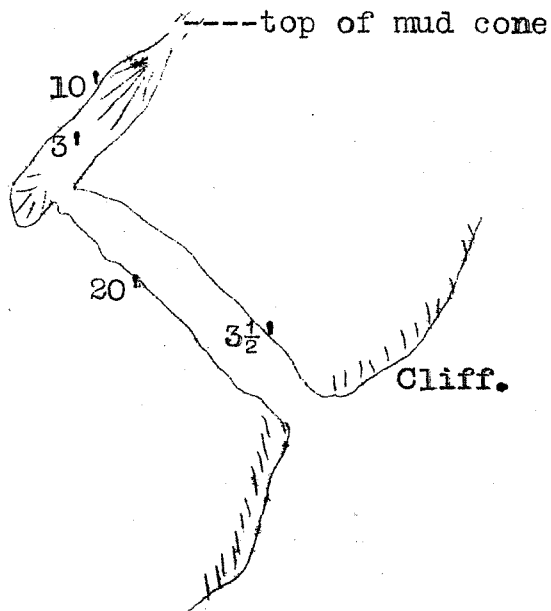
Before digging commenced, it was impossible to get head and shoulders into the hole which appeared to go in as far as we could see. We removed a vast amount of thick sticky red mud and a number of large stones and after an afternoon's work we had penetrated about 10ft. of passage. During the course of digging we excavated a number of badger bones together with a badger skull. Badger dung was encountered like layers of coal in the mud.

The following day I had two helpers and after moving more mud we found a portion of stal floor going upwards through a slit, beyond which we could see what appeared to be a large passage running at right angles to the entrance passage. After a lot of pushing we entered the passage only to find that the point at which we were digging was at the foot of a large mud cone and the walls of the passage converged leaving a small hole, the way on, at the top of the cone. Further digging was impracticable.

The walls of the new passage were covered in thick white mouse milk, and a number of long legged flies and spiders of the type often found in cave entrances were also encountered. Fresh badger tracks were evident. I have given rather a long account of this hole because it is one of the very few to be found in this large patch of limestone. At the time of digging I had hoped that it might lead into the cave which

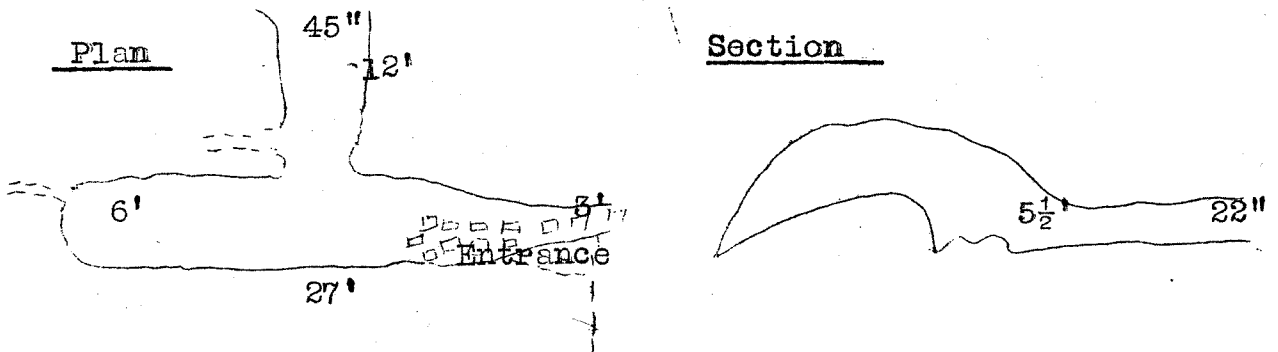
must exist behind the rising in the castle grounds. I have given this up for the moment,

Badger Hole (from memory)



Careg Cadno.

This may be reached by crossing to the Old Coach Road from the Gwyn Arms and walking along this until almost opposite Glan Haffes house where a limestone outcrop occurs. Near the top of this outcrop is a small cave which I had a look at in September 1955. The cave runs from south to north and the diagrams indicate its internal geography.



I began excavating with the aid of Keith Ball and others, a passage running eastwards which is sloping downwards into the hill. Digging has progressed slowly owing to the lack of support. This is quite understandable owing to the mass of decayed vegetation which is everywhere in the cave. This is damp and not at all pleasant to crawl about and dig on as clean red mud. There is moon milk on the walls of the cave together with large spiders.

There are two reasons why the cave is interesting,

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1. Its proximity to Pwll Coediog(a high swallet).
2. A part of the Byfre sinks somewhere in the region of the place where the railway crosses it and rises again a short distance below Glan Haffes house. Careg Cadno is situated between the sink and the rising.

On a hot day a slight draught can be detected out of the cave. However, I do not think it is enough to have any great significance and a number of "Barth" man hours will probably be required before red mud is encountered. Would-be diggers in this cave are welcome.

Roger Smith.

Ogof Glan Byfre.

Since this newsletter contains news of a colour test in the Byfre and of two new caves in the area a short report of yet a third cave would not seem to be amiss.

The hole which is situated near the bridge crossing the Byfre near the council houses was first noticed by D.W. Jenkins and P.I.W. Harvey after the fluorescein had been put in the Byfre sink.

The following week Jean and Gordon Clissold and Clive Jones also "discovered" it and they started to remove some of the clay. A week after that it was attacked by D. Hunt, Roy Williams, Alun Howells, and myself. A large amount of clay was removed and large boulders were encountered.

On July the 7/8th more material was removed and on the 8th. I was joined by Bill Clarke, Clive Jones, Roger Smith, David Walters and a fair number of the local population who turned up on hearing Bill's persuasive friend in action. The passage was a wonderful mud bath after the rain but the boulders were quickly pulverised and an entry was made into the passage beyond only to find that it closed down after a few feet. This was followed by a rapid departure of muddy and disappointed cavers and clean and disappointed 'locals'.

Total length of passage about 25 feet.

D.W. Jenkins.

Dan - yr - ogof. August, 1955.

It is not very often that the Club has access to Dan-yr-Ogof and there is still a lot of cave there to be discovered. While several members were spending a week in the Swansea Valley in July last year permission was obtained to visit the cave and the opportunity was taken to do some further exploration. Peter Harvey had been wanting to look at an aven

beyond the lakes and near the 40ft. pot, so on Friday, July 29th. we took all the necessary equipment for a maypoling operation. Most visitors to Dan-yr-ogof have abandoned the use of the dinghy on the lakes and now wade across wearing as little as possible putting on dry clothes on the far side. This method, by the way, did not appeal to certain adherents of the "Over Thirties Club". While returning, their dinghy refused to function on the Third Lake and they were reduced to the indignity of wading the rest of the way.

It needed three sections of the Maypole to scale the aven and it proved quite a wet operation as a lot of water was coming down. A small chamber was entered about 20ft. up and the ladder was anchored to a large boulder. Leading off the chamber was a bedding plane and this was followed for a hundred feet or so but it became too low to follow any further. On the other side of the chamber a short crawl over a calcite floor led to a passage but it proved to be blocked with calcite at both ends. It contained a lot of fine helictites - the best yet found in the cave. There were also many straws up to 3ft. in length particularly in the bedding plane. As no draughts were found and no likely places to dig, the Maypole was taken down and all the tackle taken to Boulder Chamber. While the maypoling had been going on members had been there and found a draught coming down a hole in the roof so it seemed a likely spot to use the Maypole again.

On August Monday a large party went into Dan-yr-ogof again and pushed up three sections of the Maypole and a lightweight ladder into the hole in the roof of Boulder Chamber. The hole was elliptical about 6ft. by 2ft. and the top proved to be about 35ft. overhead so the scaling had to be done in two stages. There was a convenient ledge just big enough for the feet and a hole was drilled for a Rawlbolt. The Maypole was raised and the foot of it placed in a niche and lashed to the Rawlbolt. It was found that the Maypole just reached the floor of a passage overhead and before any exploration was done a hole was drilled for a Rawlbolt to belay the ladder. The passage about 10ft. high by 4ft. wide ran NE - SW on both sides of the hole. To the SW it led to a large chamber and a hole in the floor proved to connect with the Boulder Chamber below. The passage continued beyond with almost circular section widened to about 40ft. and ended in the inevitable boulder choke through which came a strong draught. The choke was entered at several places but not much progress could be made. It will need lots of rapid chemical action to force a way through but it is the most likely spot in the cave for further progress.

Several other smaller passages were explored but none were of any great length or led to anything big. One ended in a small chamber since called White Grotto and it contains some fine pure white stalactites and a crystal pool. Another led to a chamber with the floor covered with hundreds of little gour pools formed in orange calcite. Before the tackle was taken down, Rawlbolts were put in and a long loop of nylon cord left with which to operate the Harvey Skyhook. With these two scaling operations about 400ft. has been added to Dan-yr-ogof leaving perhaps another five miles to be discovered!

those involved were, G.Clissold, J.Hartwell, P.Harvey, L.Hawes, D.Hunt, J.C.Jones, D.W.Jenkins, W.H.Little, Sybil Bowden-Lyle, C.L.Railton, R.Smith and T.A.Underwood.

Dai Hunt.

North Wales Meet, July 27th - 29th.

All members are invited to attend this meet and they are asked to let the Meet leader W.H.LITTLE 29, Wrekin Rd., Sutton Coldfield, Wares, know if they wish to attend as soon as possible.

The Meet will start on Friday July 27th, at Pant-y-fan Farm near Tremadoc, Caerns. Pant-y-fan is a farmhouse operated by the Cave and Crag Club as a mountain hut i.e. sleeping bags and all food must be brought. Depending on the weather a number of climbs and walks will be available on local rocks, Snowden and the Ogwen Valley.

The approach to Pant-y-fan is by road from PRENTEG near Tremadoc. For accuracy see 1" O.S. Sheet 107. Snowden.

PLEASE LEAVE GATES AS FOUND.

To Beddgelert
4 miles.
A 498

Caution. Track muddy after rain. Lane narrow and good surface very steep

Ordinary cars park here.

To Prestin: 8 miles
PRENTEG Phone Box B4410

Vary rough track

Good surface stops here

To Caernarvon

Steep.

To Criccieth

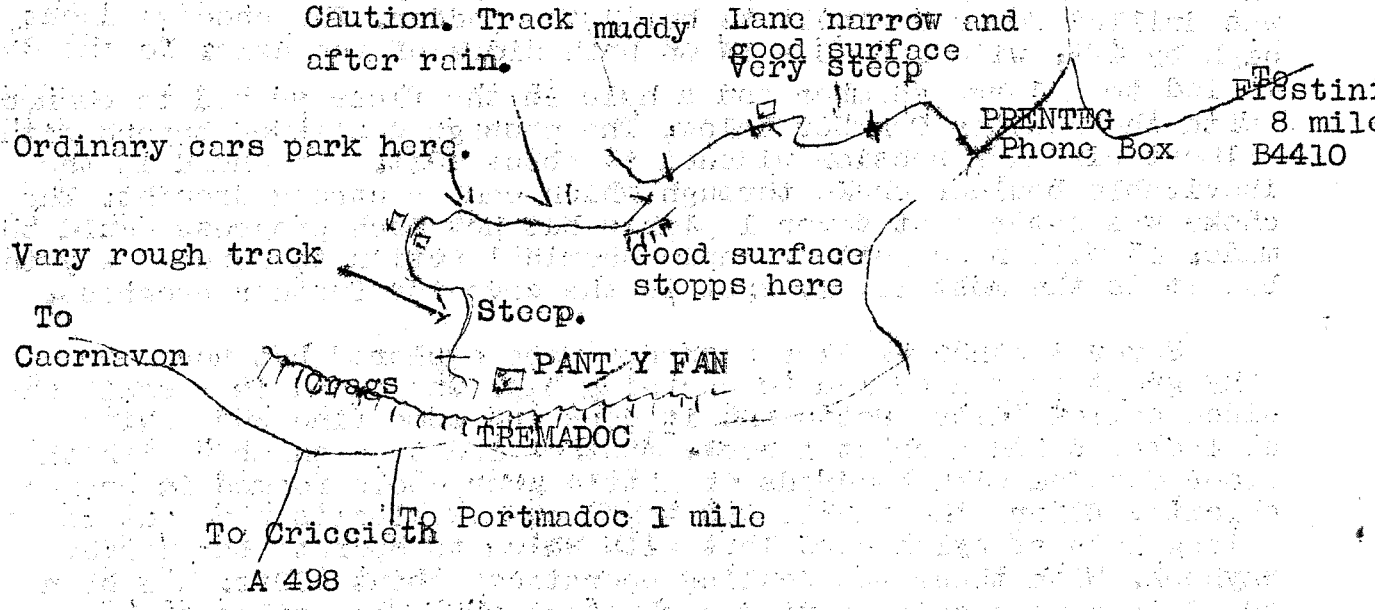
PANT Y FAN

TREMADOC

To Criccieth

To Portmadoc 1 mile

A 498



Annual Subscriptions.

The South Wales Caving Club is very much like other Clubs in that it charges an Annual Subscription to its members. The failure of quite a large proportion of our members to observe this time-honoured custom prompts me to ask those concerned to send their twelve-and-sixpences as soon as their individual states of solvency permit.

L. A. Hawes.

Hon. Treasurer.

Camping.

Members and visitors who camp but use the cottage cooking facilities will be asked to pay the usual cottage fees.

New Members.

We welcome the following new members:-

J. Bevan. 13, Cecil Rd., Erdington, Birmingham. 24.
 G. V. Page. 148, Sixth Cross Rd., Twickenham, Middx.
 T. N. Round. 25, Shaftsbury Rd., Wednesbury, Staffs.
 D. H. Walters, Police Station, Llandrindod Wells, Rads.
 D. P. Webley, 39, Heol Isaf, Radyr, Cardiff.
 D. R. Williams, 11, Tyle Teg, Burry Port, Carms.

Newsletters.

The Club has purchased a new duplicator and I think that members will agree that the standard of production has greatly improved. However, in order to make the purchase of this machine really worth while it is necessary that there should be plenty of material for the newsletters.

For the next newsletter there are only two articles to hand at the moment - one by Clive Jones on Pant Mawr and one by J. Platt on Crwbin. Please let me have more material.

D. W. Jenkins.

Hon. Secretary. P. I. W. Harvey, 157, Commercial Rd., Newport, Mon.
 Hon. Treasurer. L. A. Hawes, Corner Cottage, Rounton Rd., Church Crookham,
 Hants.
 Hon. Editor. D. W. Jenkins, Dinmore, Dyffryn Rd., Llandrindod Wells, Rads.

