

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

C O N T E N T S

Newsletter No.17.

October.1956.

Ogof-y-ci. by C.Lewis Railton.
Pant Mawr. by Clive Jones.
The Crwbin Caves by J.Platt.
North Wales by Bill Little.
Club News.

Ogof-y-ci. 32/040104

On Sunday 24th. June 1956, a few members decided to have a trip through Ogof-y-ci and because I had not visited this cave before I considered it as a fair excuse to have a change from the survey of Tunnel Cave. Upon entering the cave, most of the party seemed to be content with a speedy look round. Perhaps it was because it was such a pleasant change to be without any encumbrances, such as survey tackle camera etc. that put me in a 'ferretting' mood. Glyn Thomas did not seem to be in any hurry either so we had a good nose round together.

Our first major halt was in a branch passage on the left which terminated in a small boulder choke, from which a trickle of water ran from the right-hand side. It was possible to crawl on for a further 6 to 8ft.. Glyn investigated and reported that small blocks stopped further progress and that to move anything would necessitate lying down in the water. This water, however, struck me as being fairly warm, but unfortunately I had not my thermometer and so had to guess it as being between 54 F and 56 F. Warm enough to have a look! After crawling as far as I could, progress did not look hopeful because the blocks in the way were cemented together with stalagmite and we had no tools. However, by using a handy sized block as a hammer, I discovered that the stalagmite was neither too hard nor too thick. Urged on by what appeared to be a spacious continuation of the passage, visible through gaps between the stones, I continued my digging and made a way large enough to get through, though not without tearing a large hole in the seat of my shorts. Once through, I could stand up for a few feet and then a good, smooth roof curved down until it was within 3 or 4ins of a gravelly floor.

We continued our potter through the cave. At one place, after a patch of hand and knees crawling over a very pebbly floor, we reached a place where Glyn said it was not worth going any further because in a few yards it got too low and very wet. I went off into more sandy looking crawl net-work on the left: one way interested me because, although the passage appeared to be a dead-end, the section changed from a flat, sandy floored low crawl to a slightly rising small, round rock tube. Going to the end to investigate more closely, revealed a hidden break-through in the right-hand wall leading into a more spacious hands and knees crawl passage. A quick glance showed me that I was not the only curious caver to find this spot - someone had been there before. I went back and reported my observations to Glyn who, as the original discoverer of the cave, decided to come past me and have a look for himself. Here we had a short discussion, I contended that I could here the sounds of water ahead, and Glyn thought the noise came from where we had come from. In the end, he crawled on and was soon shouting for me to follow. He had reached where the previous explorer had turned back, why we don't know; perhaps his knees became sore as mine were, but more likely he wisely returned because he was alone. We were lucky, there were two of us and nothing to stop further progress. It is true that someone had

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told the folks on the surface that the cave could be easily done in two hours and we had exceeded this. However, we figured that the others would be out of the cave and would have reported that we were last seen safe and snooping slowly, and therefore we would not be expected for some while.

Sound of running water in the distance enticed us to crawl on. Soon we were walking upright in a narrow stream passage, but not for long because a sudden rise of the floor gave a dry passage continuing on beyond a narrow pool in which the stream welled up from below the surface. We crawled on into what was by comparison a refrigerator; in a couple of yards the temperature must have dropped 5° or 8°, to normal cave temperature. Here, unlike most of the cave, there was no sign of flooding and in places there were some quite nice formations including a good line of helictites. In one place, I did regret not having a camera because the way on was a low crawl over a floor of lovely creamy white, little dry gourds. The passage of one wet, muddy caver would spoil its beauty, but if we did not go, some other caver soon would, so we pressed on in careful line astern to preserve the sides as much as possible. In places we had to take care when crawling past curtains and in others we could walk. One bend brought us up against a block covered with stalagmite and above this was a nice grill of stalactites; beyond the passage continued about 3 or 4ft. high. To break or not to break was the question. We did, just enough for me, as the smallest, to crawl past. On the other side the floor was of damp, sandy mud. In another 30 or 40ft. and round a couple of slight bends, the passage ended in a couple of small tubes.

The extent of the new part may be between 400 and 500ft.

There was quite a draught in the new part but we could not determine its origin. In places, on patches of white flow stone on the walls, were the remains of hundreds of dead gnats and the outline of some much larger flies, which suggests that this passage is not far from the surface and has connections large enough for the entry of these creatures. A couple of lone, narrow live flies were seen and from our description it was suggested that they were young dragon flies.

The temperature in the main part of the cave is obviously subject to considerable variation by the heating and cooling effect of the stream flowing through it, and the study of the temperatures in various parts at different seasons would be interesting, particularly if fauna could be collected at the same time. Before this is done we need a good survey of the cave so the locations could be identified with certainty.

This cave contains some of the finest examples I have seen of branch 'passages' blocked by fill within a few inches of the roof. I use the word 'passages' reservedly because they may be merely large alcoves, but which ever they are, the present stream in running past them has cut away the fill at the entrances leaving a cross-section of the fill standing up to six feet high. A survey of the surface superimposed

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on that of the cave should show whether these blocked 'passages' tend towards the dry (in dry weather) surface stream bed, or whether they head towards some other pre-existing source of water. The careful digging of one of these fills, under the guidance of a palaeontologist, might reveal something of interest.

This promises to be a most interesting cave to study, and I hope someone will quickly tackle the first job, which is to produce a good survey of both the cave and the related surface features,

C.Lewis Railton, Sutton Coldfield.

July, 1956.

Pant Mawr.

It seems to be a habit in this Club to discover extensions of a particular cave system just after the known parts have been surveyed. However, one survey has been completed without the interference of would-be explorers and this is the Pant Mawr pothole survey. In this case the surveyors have been fortunate since the 4 mile walk to Pant Mawr is about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles too far for most Club members and the thought of carrying digging equipment gets little or no attention.

Thus 'all' of Pant Mawr has been got on to paper but for what purpose! To be stuck on the cottage wall and stared at through a haze of wood smoke or perhaps rolled up and placed on the shelf only to be taken down to show visitors and say "Just another of our little potholes as you can see from the survey (8 Imperial sheets) - don't even bother to go there now."

However, the time has come for action and the following notes were made in the hope of interesting one or even two members in Pant Mawr. The possibilities of Pant Mawr come under two headings:-

- (A) Getting past the sump and on towards the Neath Valley.
- (B) Progress in the side passages.

(A) After last summer's drought (1955) the sump retreated some 10-15ft beyond its previous level, still without showing signs of breaking. It therefore appears that progress can only be made by the Cave Diving Group and we must content ourselves in the adjacent side passages. There two digs which might lead past the sump and these are described below.

DILLIES DESPAIR named in honour of the most 'despaired of' member of the Club. Fig.1. illustrates a plan of the despair showing it in relation to the main passage. It will be noted that both ends of the system are blocked. The first party into the passage started excavations at the down stream sand choke, but they had to give up due to the lack of proper implements (atleast that's their story). This dig has been since filled in with a fresh layer of sand indicating that in time of flood the seal is broken allowing an inflow of sand (since there

is no evidence of sand in the upstream side or in the main passage sand must have come through the choke). The upper end of the system is mud choked and provides a very sticky dig. Care should be taken by visitors(or maybe workers?-) to the 'Despair' not to break off any of the crystals on the floor of the down stream passage.

Branch passage just before the sump. As can be seen from fig.2. the dig at the end of the branch passage should prove interesting. The choke is dirty sand and only gradually come up to meet the 'roof' therefore giving a bedding plane effect. The best method would be to dig a trench 3ft. deep and 2-3ft wide into the choke thus giving plenty of room to work.

(B) Progress in the side passages can be classified as follows:-

(i) Firchydrant.

(ii) Digging

(a) the upper end of Dillies Despair.

(b) in the boulders in the Vestry and Organ Loft.

(iii) Scaling

(a) Near Sabre Junction.

(b) In the Great Hall.

(c) Towards the sump.

(i) The Firchydrant.

This has been pushed to about 30ft. The slow tight progress and the constant immersion has made it very unpopular but it is certainly worth further effort. On the way out, reverse, so as to come out feet first for the last 10ft or so.

(ii) Boulder digs.

Most visitors to Pant Mawr neglect to visit the branch passage off the Great Hall. At the end of this passage are two chambers, one of them containing no formations, the other guarded by an awkward climb contains some of the best formations in the cave and is known as the Organ Loft. A number of columns enter the Organ Loft from what appears to be an upper passage. The only possible dig is above one of the columns in a stalagmite covered boulder choke. Great care will be needed not to break any of the columns.

A second dig in this series is found in the first mentioned chamber and it is in the form of a large boulder cone. Work at the top of this seems practicable and the implements required are, a shovel and a crowbar.

(iii) Scaling.

There are three possibilities in this field which should present no difficulty and since Bill Clarke and John Truman have proved that poles can be taken through the Wine Press there are no obstacles to prevent getting poles to the job.

The first scaling operation is a hole in the centre of the main passage roof about 30ft beyond Sabre Junction. It is about 3ft. in diameter and gives access to a chimney which extends for about 10ft and then appears to join an upper passage.

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The second hole is much better known and is situated just inside the Great Hall. It is a rift in the roof near the East wall. Two polings will be necessary here as the rift divides into two chimneys both of which look promising. One of the chimneys carries a small stream in wet weather and the spray will make work on both the chimneys very difficult.

The third hole is found thirty yards upstream from Dillies Despair in the right hand wall. It might be possible to rock climb into this one via an adjacent flowstone formation.

Let us hope that we shall see a migration from our 'on the doorstep' caves to Pant Mawr which is the deepest hole in South Wales, 350ft. and it could possibly be the deepest in Great Britain.

Figure 1.

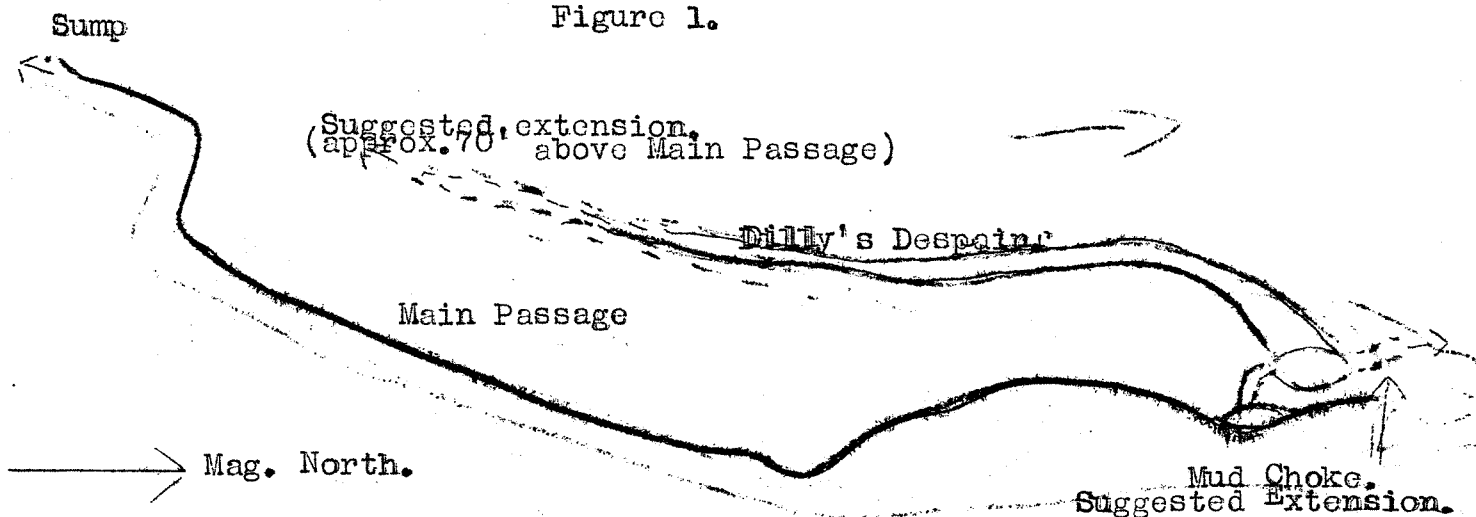
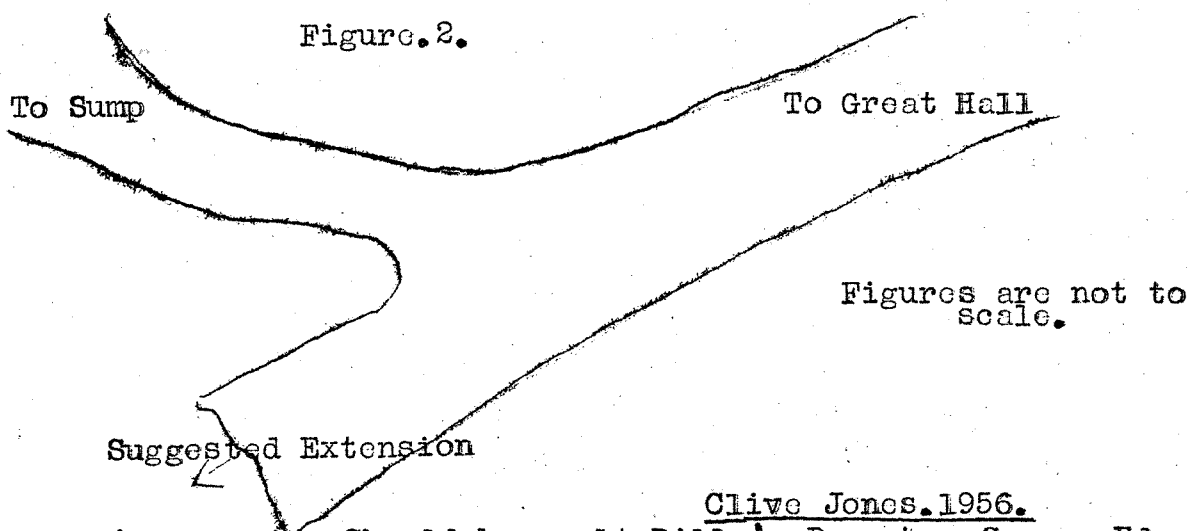


Figure 2.



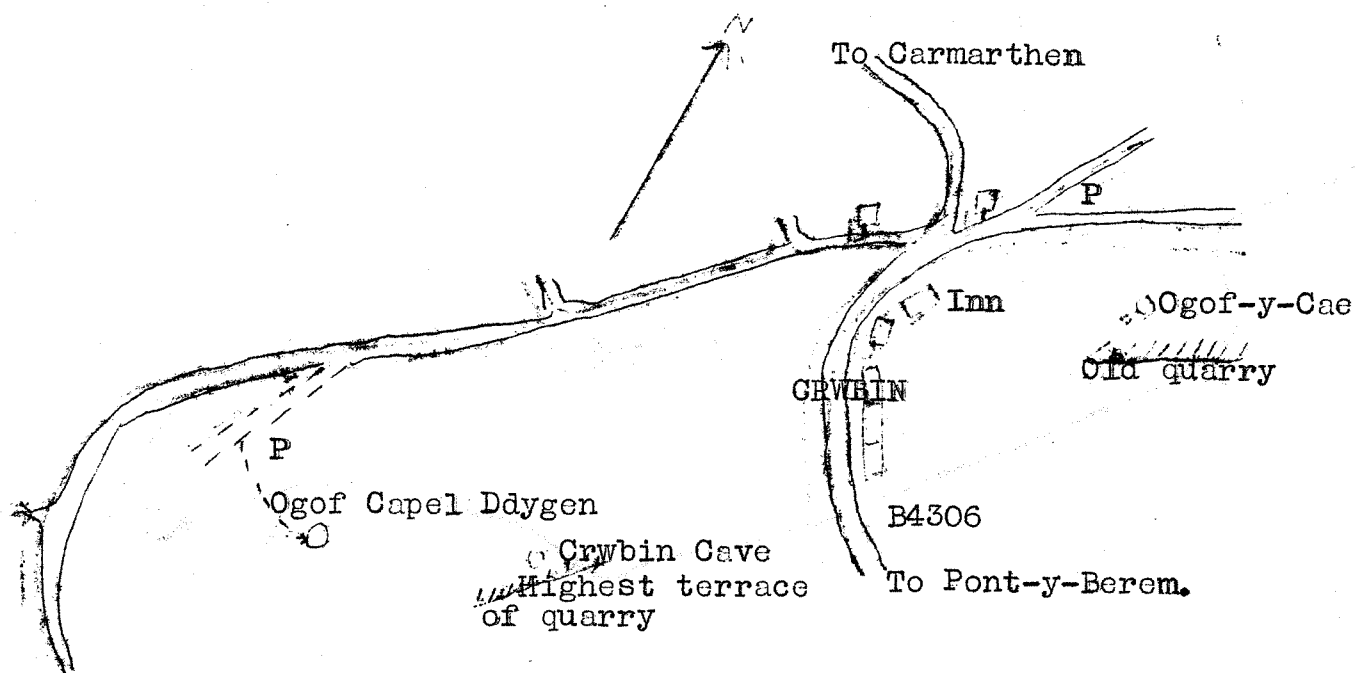
Clive Jones. 1956.

Note. Dillie's Despair. Should be spelt Dilly's Despair. Sorry -Ed.

The Crwbin Caves.

In the Crwbin area three caves namely Ogof Capel Ddygen, Ogof-y-cae and Crwbin No.2. are to be found. (Crwbin No 2 is now known as just Crwbin Cave. -Ed) Alun Howells, Roy Williams and myself have visited all three within the last few months and so some details of their location and contents follows.

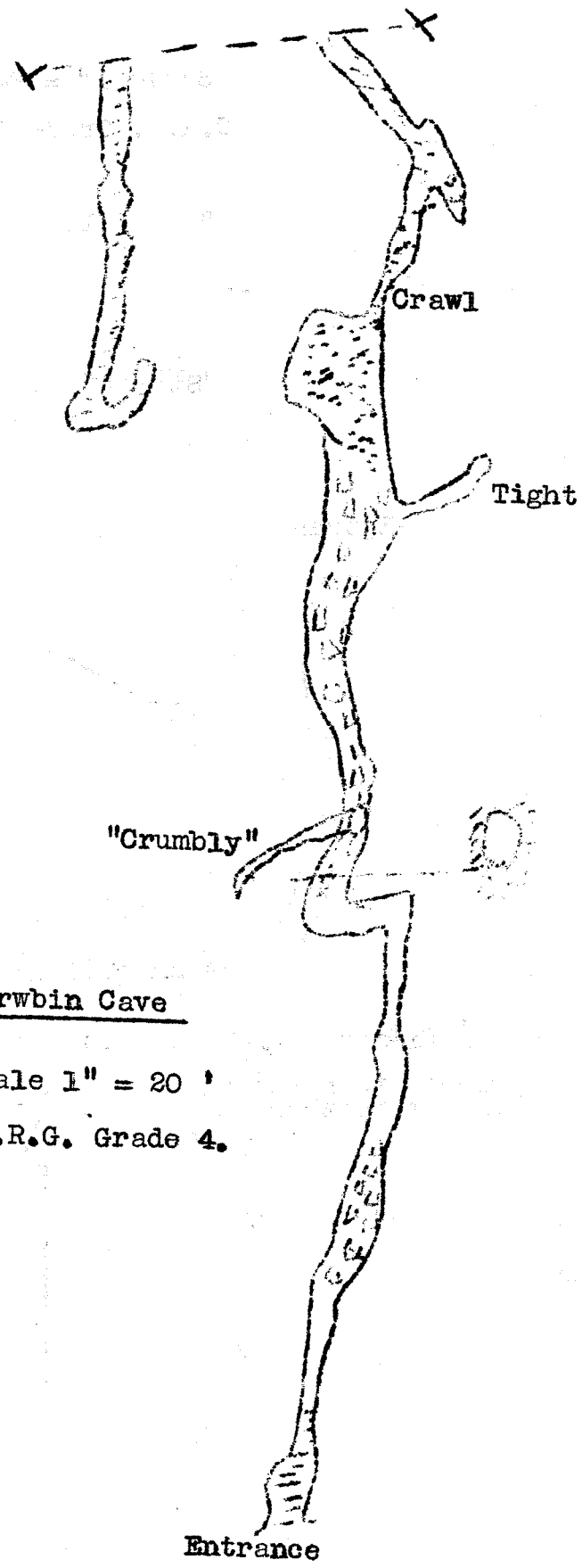
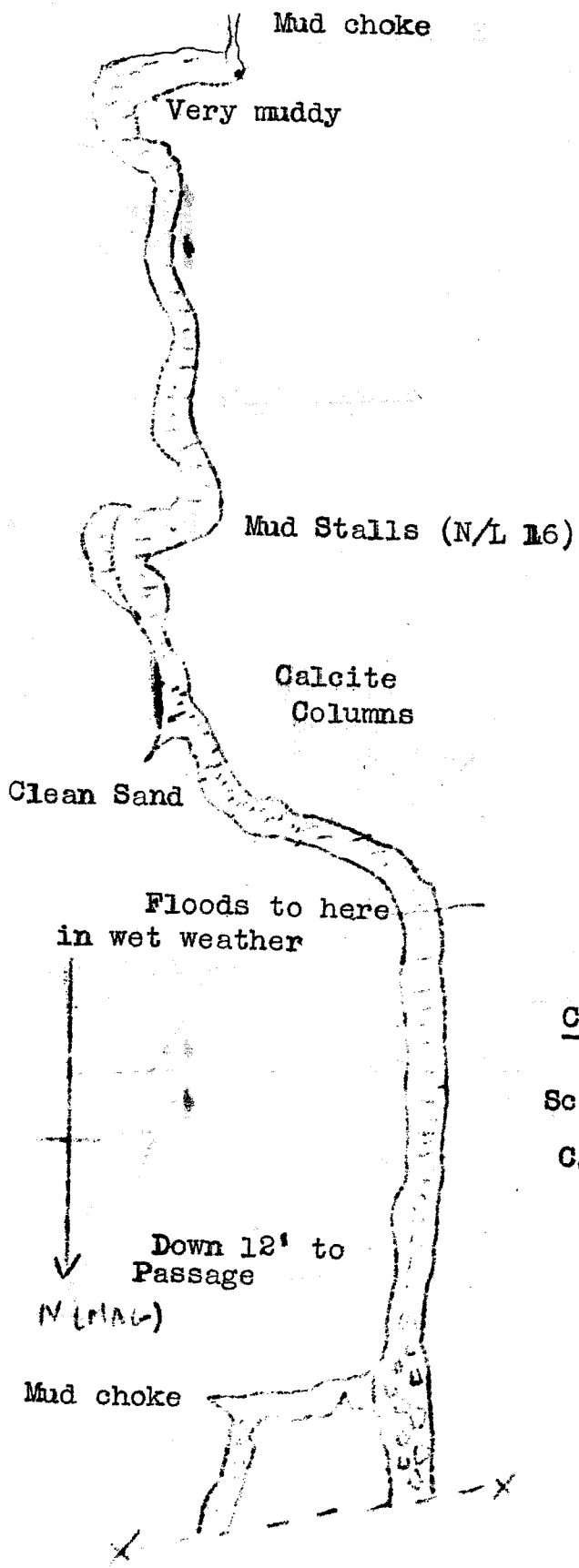
Crwbin is situated $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Pont-y-Berem and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Llangedeime on B4306 (the Pont-y-Berem to Carmarthen road). The caves are all mentioned in the Club records but the following plan may help to clarify their position.



It has been proved possible to find Ogof-y-cae and Ogof Capel Ddygen from the records description but at least five afternoons were wasted in trying to locate Crwbin Cave. This was eventually found by inquiring at the "Three Compasses Inn" from where we were directed to Heol Ddygen. From here we were conducted to the cave entrance which is very inconspicuous.

Ogof Capel Ddygen. 22/128467. Total length. 232ft.

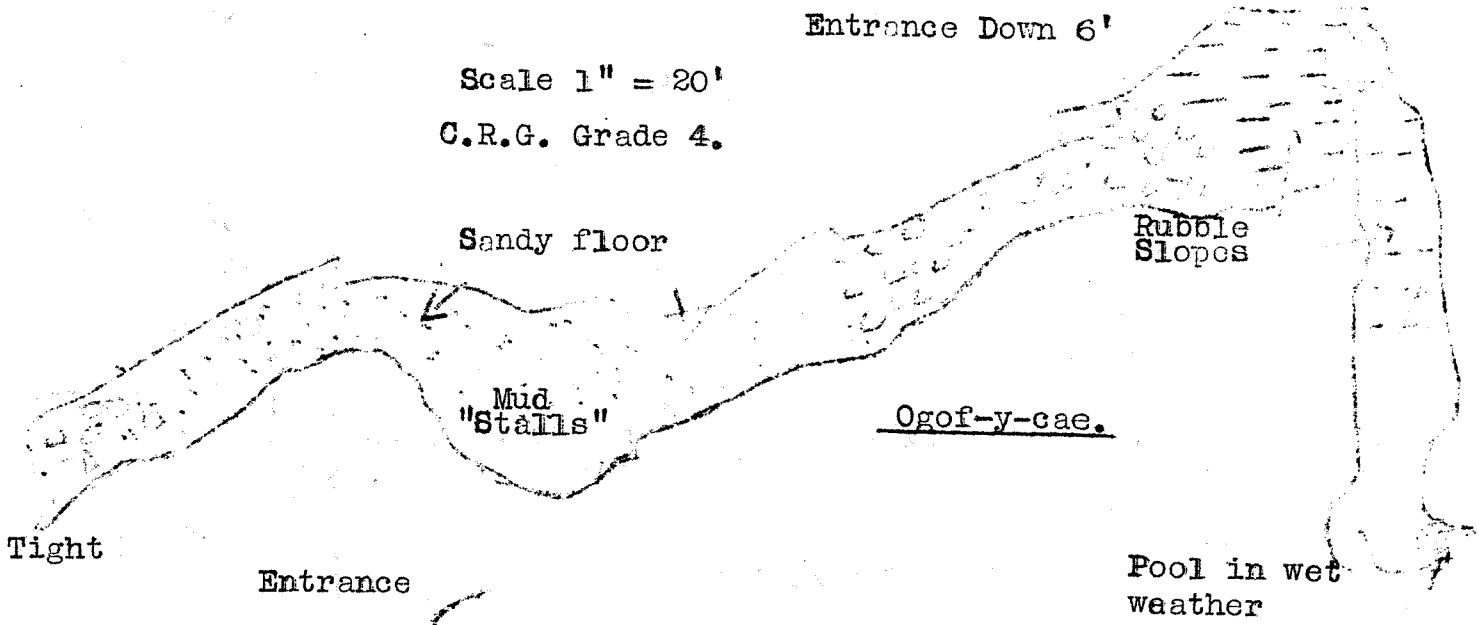
The entrance is fairly obvious and is 5ft high and 10ft wide. This leads to a 27ft high passage which, after turning through two right angles terminates in a clay blockage 142ft in. At 18ft. in the cave in the right hand wall behind a heap of boulders, is a small crack. This leads to a 70ft. long passage of nearly tubular form, 3 to 4ft in diameter. 42ft. in there is a short (9ft) pot down leading to a sloping passage which usually terminates in a pool. Above the pool is a calcited rift which goes nowhere. After dry weather the pool disappears and access can be gained to a further 20ft of crawl which eventually becomes too tight. The pot is easily descended by means of a fixed wire rope left there by someone unknown.



Crwbin Cave
 Scale 1" = 20'
 C.R.G. Grade 4.

Entrance Down 6'

Scale 1" = 20'
C.R.G. Grade 4.



Entrance

Pool in wet weather

Boulder floor

Ogof Capel Ddygen

Small depression

9' pot

Floods to here in wet weather

Muddy



Scale 1" = 20'
C.R.G. Grade 3.

WATER

It is believed that some digging and 'banging' has been done by some Club members a few years ago. (Quite true - Ed)

Ogof-y-Cae. 22/133475. Total length. 200ft.

The entrance is a hole about 3ft by 1½ft in a flat patch of grass. This leads into the top of a mound of gravel and quarry refuse probably tipped into the cave from a nearby quarry (Beware of tins, glass, etc whilst descending the slope!) Proceeding in a south direction the passage opens out to about 6ft. high and 9ft. wide and ends after 46ft. in a round chamber with a small pool in the left hand corner.

In the other direction the rubble descends steeply into a roughly triangular chamber 16 x 19 x 20ft between 5 and 8ft high. From the far corner after climbing over a heap of boulders a wide passage leads off and continues for another 113ft. This varies in height from 2 to 10ft. having a sand floor and ends in a boulder choke. There is a possible continuation in the left hand corner. The only formation of note in the cave is a small series of crystal pools near the end of the passage. There are several 'vandalised' remnants of 'stalls' in other parts of the cave, together with some trampled remains of splash pits in a mud bank, one of them being 1ft 3ins across by 1ft. deep.

Crwbin Cave. 22/129467. Total length. 417ft.

The entrance to this cave is a crawl 1½ft high, 2ft. wide at the base of a small outcrop. This leads to a downward sloping rift in a southward direction which becomes 10ft high, 35ft. in. After a further 15ft. the rift narrows down to 1ft wide in one place, and then turns a double right-angle bend. After this the passage becomes very muddy, as it is for the rest of the cave downward sloping all the way. 12ft. in there is a roughly circular chamber 8ft. high. Just before this a rift goes up from the right hand wall. This tends to be crumbly and is only 1ft. wide. This may continue further but it has not been fully explored yet. After a further 75ft. there is another chamber 9ft. high from the left hand wall of which a very small muddy tube leads off. This can be followed for 54ft back parallel to the main passage. This ends in a sand choke. The main passage continues to a total length of 256ft. and ends in a sump. After the dry weather of this Easter the sump had dried up and it was then possible to go for another 107ft when it became too tight.

One feature of the cave is the remnants of a small tube about 9ins in diameter which can be traced in the roof of the main passage for the first 180ft. In the passage after the sump (which is full of water for about 15ft in wet weather) on the right hand wall is the largest formation in this area and consists of a curtain of stalagmite columns about 3ft wide by 4ft. high. Just after this the side of the passage is covered in a grass-like growth of mud stalagmites about 1ins. high and ½ in diameter spaced about ½ in apart. Above these there is a passage heading upwards which has not been explored because to get in it one would have to climb on the mud formations.

Other caves in the area.

1. There is a small cave called Ogof Hengoed in a quarry about 3 miles from Crwbin. (22/447103) There is about 15ft. of passage and there is a deep pool in the floor.

This cave is in the process of being quarried away.

2. Just above Graig Farm at Mynydd y Carreg is the entrance of an old gold mine, which, according to a local farm worker contains a natural cavern and a natural water-filled shaft. (22/095453).

J. Platt. April 1956.

North Wales.

or

They came to a gate.

The diversion of South Wales cavers to the craggy North and miles from any natural cave might have surprised some members. They may be wondering if a climbing section is being formed - nothing of the sort! Good all-round caving requires both mountain walking and rock climbing experience, so what better place to polish up on these than in Snowdonia? Thanks to the Cave and Crag Club the splendid facilities of Pant Ifan were layed on for the Club meet on July 27th. Late on Friday evening an assortment of cars drove up the winding mountain track to the 'Hut' (an eight roomed farm and barn).

Saturday was fine and in spite of the low cloud Phyllis and Peter Harvey, Jean Clissold and David Jenkins drove off to Pen-y-Pass picking up Edward Aslett on the way and did a cloudy Snowden by the PYG track.

John Hartwel, Gordon Clissold, Tom Round, John Bevan, and myself warmed up on some 'cliffs' on Craig Pant Ifan. This was followed by the 'Hounds Head Pinnacle' and a 'severe' well lead by Tom Round. Following a brew of tea "worker's playtime" the authors 'very Diff' was climbed this route being technically harder though less exposed than the previous. The vegetation at times became an added impediment and on one pitch ludicrous remarks regarding the monkeys in the trees applied to all in turn.

In the evening the rock (and tree) climbing party resorted to licenced refreshments in Tremadoc and debated the chances of the still absent Snowden party having been run over by the Snowden railway. They, however, had been tempted by the fleshpots on Ponygwryd and had stopped there for dinner.

Sundays extra special drop of rain unfortunately made any

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to go outside too hazardous for anything more than armchair climbing. The many waterfalls in full speight supplied some consolation on the way home - no cars lost.

In spite of the last days washout the meet was well enjoyed. A repeat order was unanimously approved for some future date when once again cavers accustomed to the gloom will be surprised to see the rock on which they are climbing.

Bill Little.

Club News.

New Members.

We welcome the following new members:-

T. Andrews, 135, Danson Rd., Bexley, Kent.

Mrs. R.L.B. Bennett, 13, Glanmor Park Rd, Sketty, Swansea.

Miss. Ann Mason, Apsley, Derwen Rd., Cyncoed, Cardiff.

Change of Address.

Rev. C.H.D. Cullingford, Rosemary Brae, Fairlight Cove,
Hastings, Sussex.

J. Platt, G.E.C. Hall of Residence, Castle Bromich Hall,
Castle Bromich, Warcs.

D. Willis, 25, Chamberlain St, Wells, Soms.

Cottage Warden.

Owing to the departure of John Hartwell for H.M. Forces the post of cottage warden has been filled by John Bevan. We take this opportunity of wishing John Hartwell all the very best of luck and good fortune while he is away from us.

Working Party.

A working party is required for the weekend Oct. 13/14th to help repair the cottage roof. All will be welcome.

For Hire.

The Weighbridge dig is for hire to responsible persons during the winter months as an indoor skating rink - Ed.

Hon. Sec. 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.

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