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SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 26

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FEBRUARY 1959.

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1. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held on Easter Sunday, 29th March. Members are reminded that any proposals of changes to the Constitution must be sent to the Hon. Secretary in writing and with the names of proposer and seconder not later than Saturday 14th March 1959. Details of time, place and agenda will be given at a later date.

D.W. Jenkins, (Hon. Sec.)

2. CLUB NEWS

NEW H.Q.

Members will we hope be glad to hear that the Club will soon possess a row of 10 cottages at Penwyllt including one occupied by a sitting tenant, and a fully equipped Mission Room. On the wall of the latter there is an excellent print showing the Broad and Narrow Pathways which the Editor hopes will be carefully preserved for future generations of cavers to read and take note of. Oddly enough, one of the last items approaching the Gates of H— is labelled "Sunday Trains", which perhaps accounts for the fact that there aren't any in Breconshire.

Most of the work involved in the buying of our new H.Q. has been carried out by our industrious Treasurer Les Hawes. The Editor feels that members could make no better tribute to his efforts on our behalf than to give generously to the appeal he is making on behalf of your Chairman and Committee in this issue of the "Newsletter".

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

The following members have changed their address (see list at end of N/L).
Dr.D.M.M. Thomson, G.C. Evans, N. Dilly, T.H. Davies, J.K. Platt, B.J. Woods.

NEW MEMBERS.

We welcome the following new member to the Club:-
Roger Williams, C/O The Union, The University, Leeds 2.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Gwyn and Doreen Sanders on their recent marriage.

3. NEW H.Q. APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Dear Member,

In a week or two's time the ten cottages at Penwyllt, which are to be our new Club headquarters, will be in our ownership. We have paid for them out of the new headquarters fund and we are now faced with the development of the property with no further reserve funds to draw upon.

The property is in good structural condition but naturally enough will need quite a bit of adaptation before it can provide the facilities which we lack in our existing headquarters. A special Committee is being set up to plan the development of the property and high on the list of works they have to consider are such essentials as enlarged and improved cooking facilities, more bedroom accomodation, flush lavatories and better washing facilities. Other needs will surely follow. All of this cannot be achieved straight away. Some structural alterations and floor repairs will have to be carried out and furnishings and fittings acquired at an early date.

To do this we need money. Some of it, indeed most of it I'm afraid, must be yours.

May I then, on behalf of your Chairman and Committee, launch this appeal for funds for the development of the new headquarters. We have decided not to complicate the running of the Club by asking for loans. What we should like from you is an outright donation of whatever amount you feel you want to give. No minimum, and, of course, no maximum!!!

The limit of what we can do in the first year is not, I feel, likely to be dictated by the amount of money we have to spend but by the amount of labour at our disposal. You can expect to hear of the Development Committee's plans for working parties at a later date. These, however, are not my worries.

My job is to ensure that sufficient money will be available to provide materials, fittings etc., as and when they are required. I am relying on you to help me with this job. With your help we can have the best caving club headquarters in the country.

Your donations should be sent to me at 4, Connaught Road, Fleet, Hants. Cheques, M.O.'s and P.O.'s should be made payable to the South Wales Caving Club and all, as the best appeals say, will be gratefully acknowledged.

Yours sincerely,

Les. Hawes.

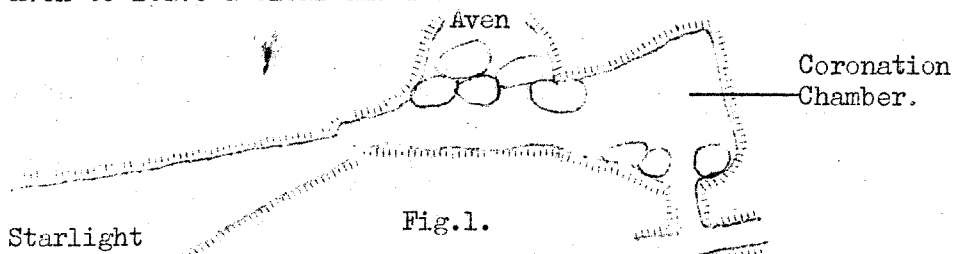
Hon. Treasurer. 26th Jan. 1959.

I suppose the human race
is doing the best it can
but hells bells that's
only an explanation
its not an excuse.

3. TRYING HARD (IN O.F.D.)

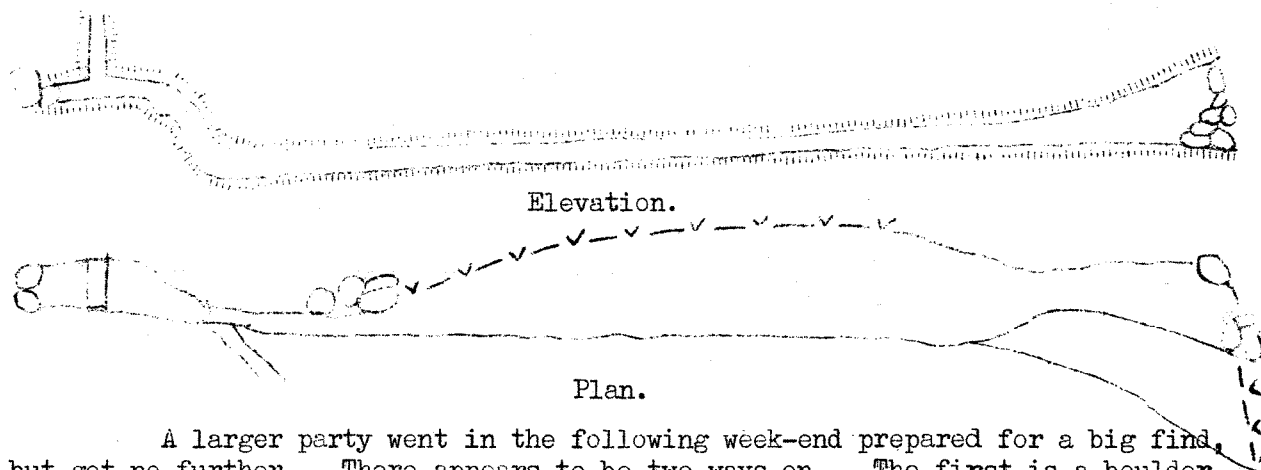
During the past 18 months a concentrated effort has been made on the boulders in Boulder Chamber. In Newsletter 24 Gordon explained how we were tunneling and the success so far achieved. Unfortunately since then very little progress has been made. The reason being, that digging in Boulder Series is now like digging up through a bag of peanuts, every nut removed brings down a shower of others to take its place. However our digging seems to have started a movement in the floor of Coronation Aven. Two holes were noticed in the floor by Bill Harris. He then persuaded a party to go to Starlight and have a look, and after a preliminary survey the digging committee retired to the Gwyn. Around a warm fire and a pint of beer it was decided that the boulders in the aven looked safer than they ever had. Another pint of beer convinced everyone that Coronation Aven was the place to dig.

The original plan was to bring down as many of the boulders as possible from the Aven and drag them into Starlight using a pulley block and tackle. However luck was on our side and the larger boulders came down jammed across the Aven to leave a clear and safe route into Coronation Chamber

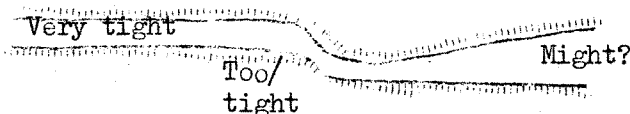


On Saturday 17th January 1959 (The day Wales beat England 5-0 at Cardiff Cymru i fyny!) the situation was as in Fig. 1. The way on seemed to be through the hole in the floor of Coronation Aven

Bill Birch, Bill Harris, Eric Inson and a bloke from Aberdare whose name I can never remember, spent 4 or 5 hours removing the boulders from the floor of the chamber. Then by a form of chemical removal in which Pickfords do not specialise, the hole down was made big enough to squeeze through. Another two hours and they had progressed about 150 ft. beyond the Aven. What a 150 ft. it was a real prospect wrecking passage, a bedding plane 10" to 15" high.



A larger party went in the following week-end prepared for a big find, but got no further. There appears to be two ways on. The first is a boulder choke where the draught disappears in a downward direction, and the second in the bedding plane on the right.

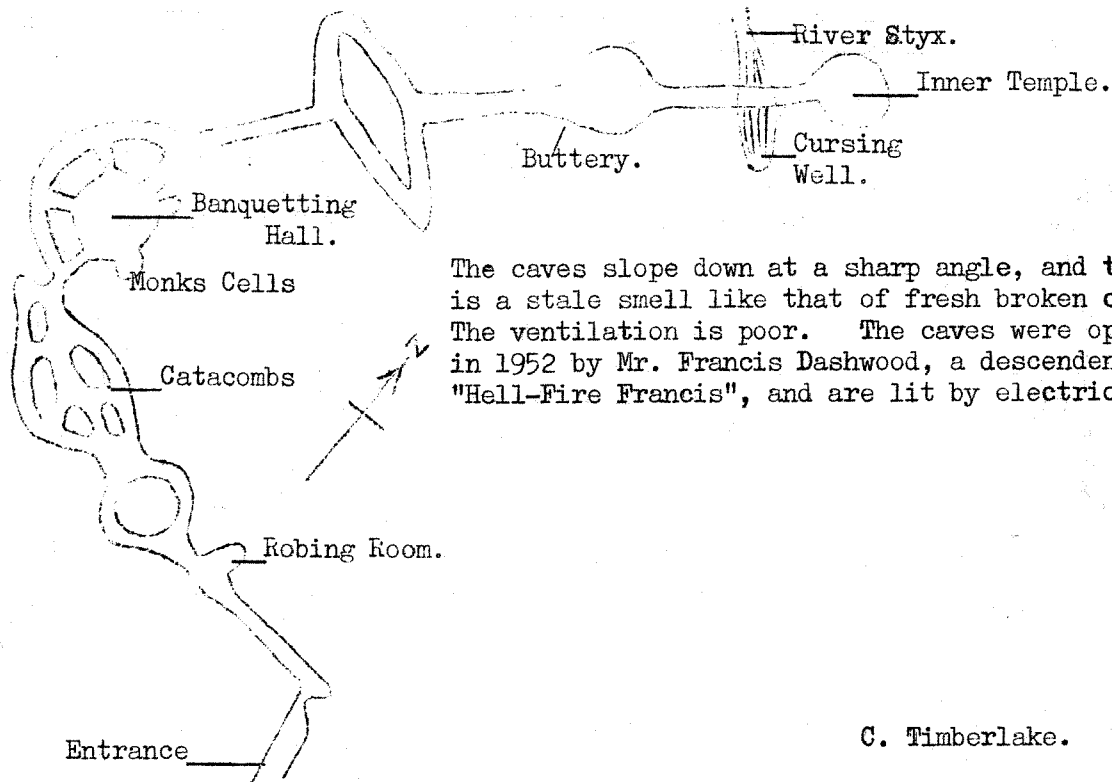


It might be possible to enlarge the tight bit and press on.

Clive Jones.

5. HELL-FIRE CAVES

Being stationed at R.A.F. Holton in Buckinghamshire, in the heart of the chalk country, I do not get much chance for caving, so I was interested to hear of some caves in West Wycombe, a town quite near to the camp. Rather doubting this as natural caves in chalk are extremely rare, I decided to go and have a look. The caves are man made; excavated by Sir Francis Dashwood, Lord le Despencer, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1762, for the practice of devil-worship. They are called the "Hell-Fire Caves" and the members of the society were called the "Monks of Medmenham" or Knights of St. Francis of Wycombe" or more generally the "Hell-Fire Club". They met regularly to perform the Black Mass, and carried out every kind of vice. The caves run northwards under West Wycombe hill for about a quarter of a mile; below is a plan of them. The river marked is a natural one but it cannot be followed far, there is a bridge over it now, but it used to have to be crossed by boat. The banqueting hall is thought to be the largest excavation in the world, in chalk. It is about 40 ft in diameter and 50 ft high. In the buttery are a large number of barrels, which show that the so-called "Knights" had a good time when they met. The inner temple was entered only by the high officials of the Club, and a plaque reads, "in this place took place events of an indescribable nature".



The caves slope down at a sharp angle, and there is a stale smell like that of fresh broken chalk. The ventilation is poor. The caves were opened in 1952 by Mr. Francis Dashwood, a descendent of "Hell-Fire Francis", and are lit by electricity.

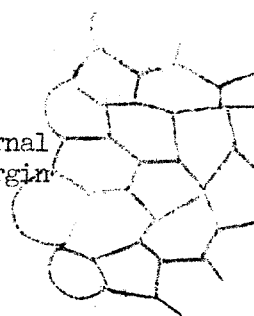
C. Timberlake.

6. HONEY-COMB FORMATIONS(?) STEMBRIDGE CAVE

The formation is found near the bottom of the pitch on the flat bedding plane roof of a passage.

In general the formations inside the caves are Stalactites and stalagmites with an appreciable amount of 'stal' flow, straws being comparatively rare, possibly indicating slow growth. There are no straws in the immediate vicinity of the described formation. The formation covers a patch of about 6sq.inches. The 'cells' are polygonal in outline, the majority being pentagonal and hexagonal. It is interesting to note that the marginal 'cells' have a sub-circular outline.

External Margin



In one part of the area, about 10 'cells' together form a projection about half an inch in length and aspect. The majority are however only about 1/10th inch long.

A possible explanation would be the simultaneous growth of individual straws over the area, with mutual interference in their development leading to polygonal outlines. A fact which seems to bear this out, is the circular outline of the outer 'cells'.

I have been unable to find reports of similar formations elsewhere, and it would be interesting to know if any members have seen other examples.

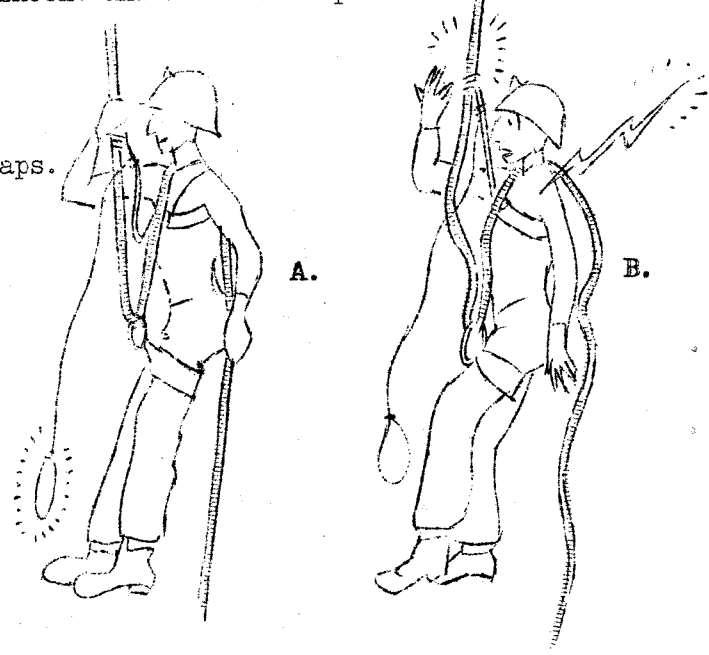
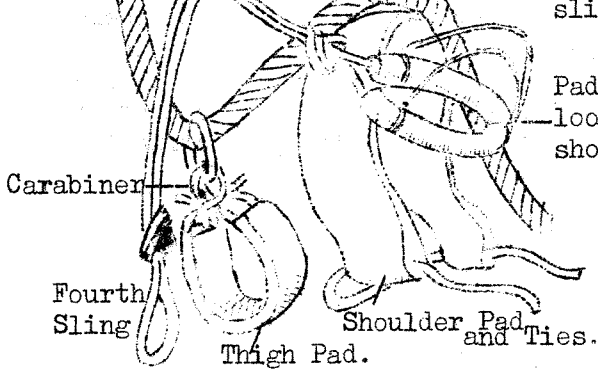
Keith Ball.

7. ROPE NOTES: THE FOURTH SLING WORKS AGAIN: ROPE RESEARCH PAYS OFF.

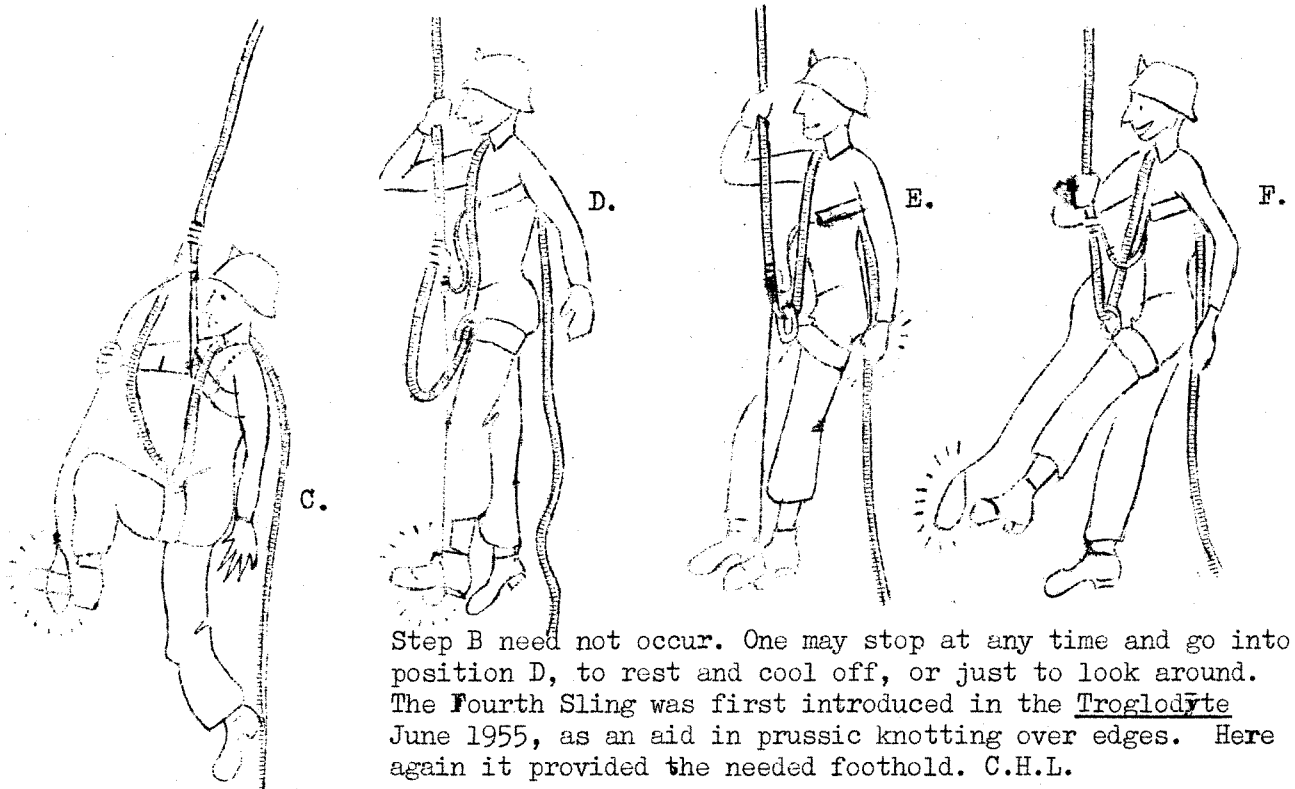
Dan B. Rappells up Rope! Defies Gravity! Guaranteed, Tested and Demonstrated.

Mans
Best
Friend

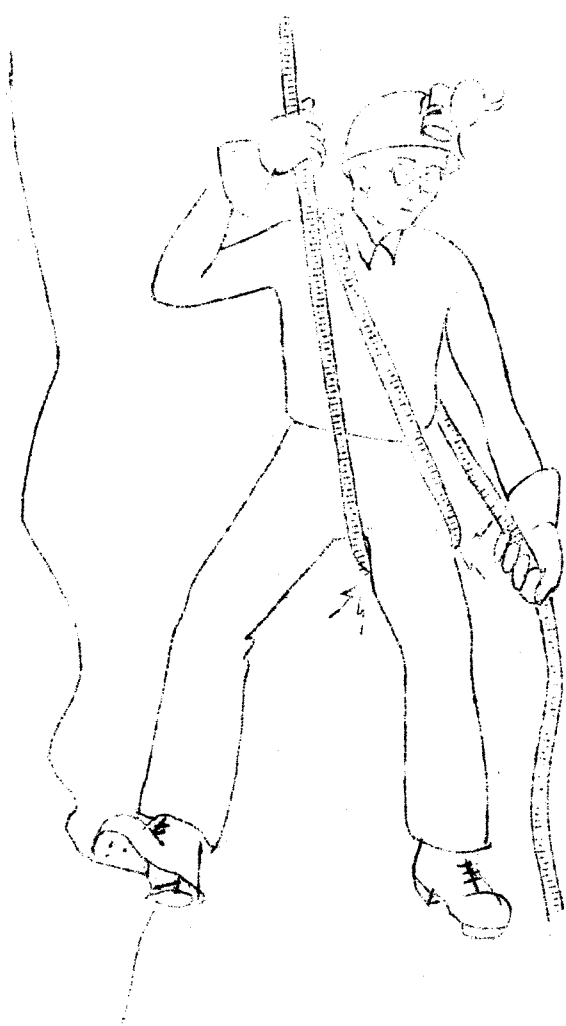
The gear developed to make rappelling safer, easier and more comfortable by Dan Bloxson, is sketched on the left. Below shows how Dan uses the chest prussic knot as an auto-safety, and how the fourth sling gets him back into the rappell after a stop. He is rappelling normally at A; stops at B; with or without shock: and at C he steps into the fourth sling



Standing up in the sling at D; he recovers the rappell at E; holds the rappell while kicking off all weight from the auto-safety at F; taking all weight on the rappell and he is back at the first condition, A. By alternating through positions CDECDE he moves up the rope!!



Step B need not occur. One may stop at any time and go into position D, to rest and cool off, or just to look around. The Fourth Sling was first introduced in the Troglodyte June 1955, as an aid in prussic knotting over edges. Here again it provided the needed foothold. C.H.L.

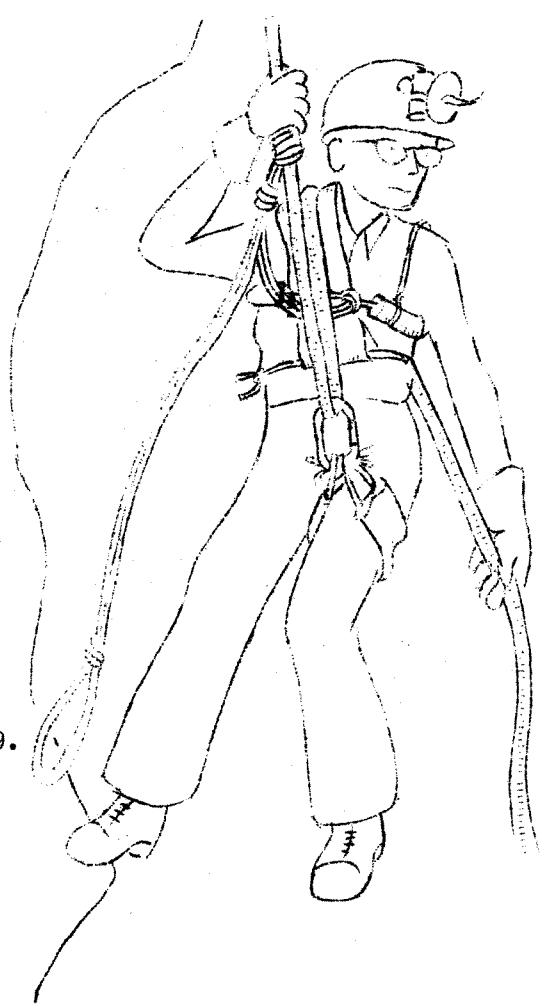


THE
BODY RAPPEL
or
"HOT SEAT"

Suited for Short
Drops, Hard on
Thigh and Shoulders.

THE
COMPLETE
CARABINER
RAPPEL
With Padded Gear
and using the
"Auto-Safety"
and the "Fourth Sling".

With acknowledgements to Cord H. Link
reprinted from the TROGLODYTE Vol. 1. No.9.
(see Newsletter No. 25.)



8. LIST OF MEMBERS

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Hon. Editor.....F. de Graaf, 5, Tai-north, Pennorth, Brecon.
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Tackle Manager.....G. Clissold.