

NEWSLETTER I

The South Wales Caving Club, May 1952.

TO ALL MEMBERS:

At the A.G.M., Easter 1952, the following officers to serve for 1952/1953 were elected as follows:-

President	F.J.Nord, O.B.E., D.Sc., F.G.S., F.S.I.,
Vice Presidents	E.A.Glennie, C.I.E., D.S.O., A.H.Hill.
Chairman	J.M.Davies
Hon. Secretary	D.Hunt.
Hon. Treasurer	C.E.Hill.
Committee	Miss P.Hardwidge, P.A.Densham, D.W.Jenkins,
Records Officer	D.W.Jenkins
Tackle Manager	P.I.W.Harvey
Cottage Warden	D.C.V.Moore.
Honorary Members	T.Ashwell Morgan, Esq., J.L.Morgan, Esq., David Price, Esq., Mrs. David Price, Cyril Powell, Esq., M.R.Downey, Esq., J.Barrows, Esq.,

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

The Secretary stated that caving activities during the year had been overshadowed by the marooning of Bill Little and Lewis Railton in O.F.D. last August. This was followed by their subsequent discovery of an overland route from the R.A.W.L. series, thus obviating the need to use the Stream Passage. They have put in much hard work in fixing hand and foot holds to make the route safe.

He concluded by saying that he found it impossible to carry on as Hon. Secretary of the Club, owing to pressure of work. He reminded us that he had been Secretary of the Welsh Branch of the Mendips Exploration Society from 1938 until the formation of the South Wales Caving Club in 1946, and Secretary of this club up to date, and now felt it was time for a younger member to take over. Although he was resigning as Hon. Secretary he did not intend to give up his association with the Club. He hoped later to be in a position again to be more actively associated with the Club. He ended by thanking all members for their co-operation and expressed the wish that members would give continued support to his successor.

Charles Freeman proposed the adoption of the report and co-opted a vote of thanks to Arthur for all the work he had done for caving in South Wales, and nursing the club through its formative years.

Colin Hill seconded the motion saying everyone would miss Arthur and his tactful handling of Club matters and fatherly advice to members, especially those who occasionally "overstepped the mark".

TREASURER'S REPORT.

GENERAL ACCOUNT.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure.</u>	
Subscriptions, Joining Fees,	£45.15. 0.	Stationary, Newsletters,	£28. 7. 3.
Donation from B.C. & C.C.	10.10. 0.	Equipment	6.12. 6.
Interest	1. 1. 3.	Rescue Operations	7. 9. 6.
		Club Dinner	3. 0. 0.
		Rescue Organisations	15. 0. 0.
		Donation to Mendip C.R.O.	2.10. 0.
<i>Loss for Year</i>	5. 8. 0.	Cheque Book	5. 0. 0.
Loan for Jan.			
	<u>£63. 4. 3.</u>		<u>£63. 4. 3.</u>
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COTTAGE ACCOUNT.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure.</u>	
Cottage Fees	£30.13. 3.	Coal	£ 6.17. 6.
		Electricity	2. 4. 6.
		Sanitary	2.11. 1.
		Paraffin	1.10. 0.
		Repairs	11. 4.
		Calor Gas	4. 9. 0.
		Gain for Year	<u>12. 9.10.</u>
	<u>£30.13. 3.</u>		<u>£30.13. 3.</u>
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ACTIVITIES:

Notes of the Easter Meet of the South Wales Caving Club, 1952.

During our Easter meet several interesting trips were done by members. On Friday and Saturday the Canyon on O.F.D. was visited and photographs were taken. Some members were introduced to the new escape route from the Rawl series. - again in Ffynnon Ddu. A short trip was made in Dan-yr-Ogof although the lakes were not crossed.

During the meet some further exploration was done in O.F.D., by W.H.Little and P.A.Densham when the escape route traverse, previously crossed by W.H.Little and Lewis Railton, was extended with the hope of linking up the Railton-Wild series.

In this they were disappointed although they managed to extend the traverse for a further 120 feet, part of which was along jammed boulders above the stream passage. A small tube was entered but this was only an oxbow. From the far end of the Boulders it was possible to see the first window in the R.W.series, but access could only be made by means of a suspended wire. P.I.W.Harvey had previously reached this collapsed passage at the far end via a Maypole, and his footprints were in evidence.

In the scientific field Lewis Railton and Bill Little assisted by Richard Stanley, were busy and finished their survey of the recently opened Escape Route.

COMPLAINT:

A complaint was made at the A.G.M. that the O.F.D. was becoming very untidy through cavers leaving old batteries, used carbide, cigarette packets, etc., around the cave. We appreciate that it may not be the general practice of members to leave rubbish around, but the need to keep our caves tidy cannot be stressed too often. It required little effort to conceal or bring out any waste material of this description, and even small bits of rubbish dropped indiscriminately add up to a considerable amount over a period. We hope all members will, in future, bear these remarks in mind.

CAVE RESCUE:

At Headquarters, there is now a Cave Rescue First Aid Box which is white with a Red Cross. Members are requested to note that the equipment in this box is for Cave Rescue only. Use of any of the contents may well embarrass the successful recovery of an injured caver.

First Aid equipment for general use is kept in a metal container at Headquarters.

PUBLICATIONS:

"Exploring Caves" by Rev.C.H.D.Cullingford. This Book is published in the Compass series. Price 7/6d. It is primarily intended to introduce caving to school boys. As prominence has been given to the caves of South Wales, it should be of interest to all cavers in this area, and especially members of this club, as it is dedicated to Arthur and Gwyn Hill and the S.W.C.C.

The book approaches the subject from historical and sporting aspects

and mentions many caves in other districts as well as a full list of caves in South Wales. There are some amusing anecdotes, including one of a dramatic plumbing of the depths of Pluto's Bath by our eminent doctor.

C.R.G. NEWS.

The Second General Meeting of the group will be at the Lecture Room of Wells Museum, Somerset, on June 21st commencing 5.p.m.

Two papers will be read one of which will be given by P.I.W. Harvey on Cave Photography the other by C.Lewis Railton on caving in Norway.

The trip on Sunday will be G.B.Cavern further details of which will be given at the Meeting.

The following C.R.G.Newsletters are available from Brig.E.A.Glennie Hon.Secretary, C.R.G.Seaton House, Shrublands Road, Berkhamstead

Numbers 1 - 10 inclusive
13 - 20 "

Price 1/0d. each or the complete set for 12/6d.

CONGRATULATIONS To:-

Don Coase and Clare Ainsbury on their recent marriage, also to Colin Jenkins and Jean Philips on their engagement.

Report by Bill Little on Ffrydiau Twrch Camp.

A Joint Meeting with B.C. & C.C. and S.W.C.C. Saturday, 28th July - 12th August 1954

1st and 2nd. weeks: W.H.Litte(Leader)B.C. & C.C., S.W.C.C.
K.Levick, S.W.C.C.

2nd week only: A.B.Afford, B.C. & C.C.
K.Stohwasser, B.C. & C.C.

GENERAL:

On Saturday Levick and myself went by lorry from S.W.C.C. Headquarters to Tyr-y-Cof Farm and set up camp in the upper Cwm Twrch Valley opposite Ffrydiau Twrch (The Twrch Springs). Tools and tackle were carried up the following day.

Mr.W.Hull of Darwen Farm was visited and was very friendly. Dairy produce was also obtained there. Supplies of groceries etc. were obtained in Cwm Llynfell 3 or 4 miles down the valley by a good path. It was a walk of an hour and a half back to camp from there, also 3½ hours walk by compass from camp to Gwyn Arms.

The weather was very wet during the first week, and the camp site of the level grassy shelf opposite Ffrydiau Twrch became waterlogged. Since the Twrch rises 4 or 5 ft. after a storm a lower site was avoided.

The following Sunday Mr.Dai Davis of the Upper Cwm Twrch brought us the key to "Sarfan" the empty farmhouse opposite Dorwen. By the time Afford and Stohwasser arrived on the second Monday, comfortable quarters were arranged having a roaring wood fire for drying etc. Mr.Davis would not accept any rent, and accordingly before we left there his credit at the Uplands Working Men Club was increased by 4 pints.

CAVING PROSPECTS.

The Valleys of the Twrch and the Llynfell contain many remnants of

of a past fill with Glacial debris, mostly rolled boulders. The Twrch runs roughly down dip so that the shales below Dorwen give way to grit as one goes upstream. This is noticeable at Cwnstabile water falls. This grit forms a cap on most of the hills North of this point until reaching the start of the Carmarthen Fans, which are of course Old Red Sandstone. The Limestone, therefore, tends to outcrop on the hillsides where not covered by gritstone, screes or else drifted boulders and sand.

The rising of Ffydiau Twrch (larger than O.F.D.) occurs about a third of the way up the hillside, Pen-yr-Helyg, M.R.162/277, but is just below the line where the screes running down from the top of the hill meet remnants of the former glacial fill of boulders. Assuming glacial fill to have predominated only for a short period of time, it would therefore, appear that the cutting down of the Twrch Valley has been much more rapid than the downward development of the cave system from which this spring emerges.

No fluorescine tests have been made to find the source of this water, but it would seem probable that this is collected over a wide area of higher ground to the West extending even as far as Pwll Swnd. Only one swallet was observed, and this is in the upper part of the Llynfell Valley, but this is only operative after heavy rain. This swallet is some 300 ft. higher than Ffydiau Twrch rising (The wartime edition of 1" O.S. Map shows a small stream terminating there, but the 1947 edition incorrectly joins this stream into Nant Llynfell). The slow and small reaction of Ffydiau Twrch rising to storms and drought, also suggests that swallets do not contribute water to much extent, so no more can be expected. Since the Llynfell Valley still has a considerable filling of glacial debris it is likely that the swallet played a greater part in the local hydrology prior to this, so far as the surface is concerned. The high permeability of the debris may, however, only mean that the water is gradually sinking over a wide area, and still concentrates beneath the surface of this swallet. There may virtually have been no change beyond the concealment of a cave entrance.

Numerous shake holes occur on either side of the upper Llynfell and are mostly above the level of the fill; whilst less likely to be so extensively choked as those below the upper line of the Mill, there is little specially favouring the choice any of them as a place for forcing entrance to the system.

The whole area calls for the closest inspection lest some chance hole has been overlooked, but in the light of what is known only two determine places prompt excavation. These are in the immediate vicinity of the rising and the swallet.

EXCAVATION: (1) at the rising.

About 1947, Messrs. Harvey and Nixon carried out several excavations a few feet above the rising at Ffydiau Twrch. The remains of these were visible and with respect to the summer level point of rising are approximately at 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock, and 3 o'clock. These excavations comprised niches cut through the glacial debris for several feet revealing shattered and fissured limestone bedrock. There were also several layers of interbedded limestone shale each 1 or 2 inches thick. The 10 o'clock dig gave access to two small passages which tightened up, or were choked after some 10ft.

A point about 10 o'clock 20ft. from the rising was selected after prodding and listening at points all round. A slight air current was noticed and also the sound of running water heard. After

preliminary clearing of the glacial remains, tunnelling was commenced through badly shattered limestone bedrock. Running water was encountered after tunnelling 10ft. so the working floor of the tunnel was kept above this. The height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. at the entrance increased to about 4ft. after encountering the water, time and opportunity being limited work on the tunnel stopped at 15ft. It was decided to attempt to reduce the water level in the tunnel by trenching into it from a much lower level. This was never completed, but the large blocks obstructing this were cleared down to the level of the rising aided by a crowbar. It is hoped that winter rains would assist the work of the future party in driving the tunnel into the hill side up an incline of about 15° by preventing a fill up of material at the entrance, this inclined tunnel in my opinion is the only practicable method of encountering this system from this end, since presumably any negotiable passages of natural origin will be several beds higher. In all probably a natural opening existed a little higher or the water would not be running out between the now shattered beds of rock. Any earlier entrance must be filled by either screes or glacial drift prior to the second downcutting of the Twrch Valley.

(2) At the Swallet.

Beside the point where the intermittent stream from the uppermost part of Cwm Llynfell sinks, is a small outcrop of limestone. Prior to the concentration of our efforts at the rising several days were spent in excavating a trench about the base of this outcrop. The most likely looking side (left hand when facing it) is completely covered by glacial drift whilst the sandy patch in front of it seemed too far away from solid rock. A long period of continuous effort would be necessary to clear away this debris in the hope of uncovering a horizontal passage. Any vertical shaft must be expected to be filled with stones. The only encouraging signs besides the outcrop, which suggests the comparative shallowness of drift, was the fact that where the drift was excavated on the left hand side it appeared to be washed clear of sand. The disadvantage of digging in this otherwise easily moved material was the "running in" of the sides. Unless strong shuttering is erected it is necessary to cut back the sides very considerably, thus many times increasing the work. It would not however, be impractical to make a determined attempt here in the future, but as it is likely that considerable quantities of drift have been carried into any passage which might exist there, any discoveries might be disappointingly terminated by having to dig under impossible conditions inside.

CONCLUSION:

Two possibilities exist, the most likely one being at the resurgence, although no cave discoveries were made in the course of this expedition, the next determined party may succeed. Many more trips would be worthwhile. An enjoyable and interesting time was had; particularly affected by the new-found accommodation. The wild and deserted scene was noticed to contain much more life than at first seen, and ranged from a herd of ponies to a fox. Apart from the occasional shepherd, man is not much in evidence in the area with the exception of fishermen who do not stray far from the River Twrch. A map and compass are essential in this area from the point of view of safety. As a party of 4 we were better able to carry the equipment and consequently we all returned to the S.W.C.C. headquarters by buses from Cwm Llynfell. The final day of the holiday was spent by commencing a dig in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu to connect Swiss Cottage with the Maypole series, but this too proved

to be more than could be finished in the time available. No doubt success in these enterprises would have been achieved had not several other Cavers been prevented from attending the camp, but it is hoped that further parties will carry on where we left off.

W.H.LITTLE.

G.B.CAVE Mendip.

Members are advised that entry to this cave is restricted. Trips can only be made by arrangement with the University of Bristol, Speleological Society. They have been advised that the following are guest dates when the members of this club may explore the cave under the leadership of the U.B. S.S., May 31st, July 6th, September 6th at 2.30 at the cave entrance.

A week's notice of the intended visit is necessary to the Hon. Secretary, of the University, the Speleological Society, Bristol, 8.

NUMBER 1.

In response to the request that newsletters should be numbered, please note that this is the first of a new series.

The B.C. & C.C. are visiting South Wales over the weekend of June 13th-15th, and Headquarters has been put at their disposal for the week-end.