

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 11 - FEBRUARY, 1955.

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South Wales Caving Club

February, 1955.

Newsletter No.11

CLUB NEWS

New Members

Our usual welcome is given to the following new members :-

R.H. Clarke, 121, Portennant Road, Portennant, Swansea.

K.A. Chambers, 16, Beaumont Road, Orpington, Kent.

Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Clissold (Joint Membership)

'Caravan' Park Farm, Cwmdare, Aberdare, Glam.

Walter Sharpley, 38, Hitherfield Road, Streatham, London. S.W.16.

O.F.D. Leaders

The following name has been added to the List of Leaders :-

Denis Kemp, 34, Scarsdale Villas, London. W.8.

Cottage Maintenance

A large part of the roof blew off the Cottage (No.1) during recent gales. The party the following week-end carried out temporary repairs but the serious condition of the roof calls for proper repair within the very near future. This will no doubt be an expensive job unless members come forward to manage and do the work.

Future Activities

Your Committee has decided to encourage renewed digging at "Wiggy Wiggy" (Waun Fignen Felen) and this site is now being planned as an official Club dig to be led by Peter Harvey in the present year.

Over a period of years this swallet was dug to some 60 feet and was then abandoned. It is now intended to put in a fair bit of work to improve the shaft before going deeper and clearing the collapse which conceals what the original diggers (Dolphin & Co) saw and thought to be the cave. This swallet is now believed to be more significant now that the present extent of Tunnel Cave is known.

Steeple Aven - Tunnel Cave

In the week following Christmas a party of members successfully scaled Steeple Aven. They were using a special sectional steel ladder designed and provided by Lewis Railton: the ladder bearing the appropriate title of "Uppit". It is hoped to include a description of "Operation Uppit" in our next Newsletter.

Caves in Rotten Stone

On the 12th February the farmer at Wern Ddu (turn left after crossing the bridge on the Nant-y-Ffin road from Pen-y-cae) came along to tell us that a hole had appeared in one of his fields. The following day Bill Clarke,

Clive Jones and Les Hawes went across to investigate. The shaft was about 10' deep and it led into a narrow rift passage in rotten stone some thirty feet long. The passage ends in a small chamber which is drained by two bedding plane passages too small to enter. The whole place is inclined to be 'crumbly' !!

The farmer has kindly offered to keep the hole open for several weeks for the benefit of any members who would like to have a look at it or who would like to have a go at digging out a continuation of the passage in an easterly direction where it is blocked by a fall of clay. Please make a courtesy call at the farmhouse before going to the hole.

PAL-Y-CWRT AND OTHER OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACES

On several occasions during 1954 Les Hawes has transported small parties to the Trapp area of Carmarthenshire, with the object of obtaining information for the records on the few small caves of the district. The work has included visits to the caves of Carreg Cennen, a small hole on Carreg Dwfñ, Pal-y-Cwrt, and an area South of Pant Nant-fforchog where a local birdwatcher had reported to Arthur Hill on "large depressions on the moor with water flowing at the bottom".

The large depressions turned out to be shakeholes, mostly water-filled, and in grit. Only two on the extreme southern edge of the area were in limestone and both were taking small streams.

Pal-y-Cwrt proved highly interesting. After the initial visit, two further days have been spent there: the first was intended to be a survey trip but so much time was spent trying to get through the boulder chokes that not a single bearing was taken. The survey was carried out on the second trip with the aid of the clinometer and other surveying instruments kindly loaned by Lewis Railton and the results of this survey and some details of the cave are included in this Newsletter.

Carreg Dwfñ - This is near the Loughor ford, in the Northern side of a hill of the same name. It is a 30 ft. crawl running approximately N-S. The only interesting feature of the cave is the enormous number of insects living there: we had no sample tubes to take specimens but in any case it is doubtful whether the insects are true cave-dwellers.

Pal-y-Cwrt - Coming from Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen turn right in Glanamman on the road to Trapp and turn right at the first crossroads about a mile from Glanamman after the level crossings and the bridge over the River Amman. Carry straight on at the next crossroads and cross (with caution) a small ford. Beyond the next gate on the R.H. side of the road lies a concrete foundation which forms an excellent parking space and the cave is Northwards - towards the Castle - just over the brow of the hill. No special tackle is required although carbide users should fill up at the ford as the first and only available water supply in the cave is roughly a hundred feet in.

The entrance is small - about 3' in diameter - dropping into a steep boulder-strewn passage which opens out gradually as it continues downwards over soft stal. and later the thick sticky clay which blesses most of the cave. A second small entrance - not surveyed - is shown in dotted lines on the survey. The R.H. wall on the last leg of the passage has a few small helectites which, unlike some of the other accessible formations in the cave, have escaped vandalism.

Pal-y-Cwrt (Cont'd).

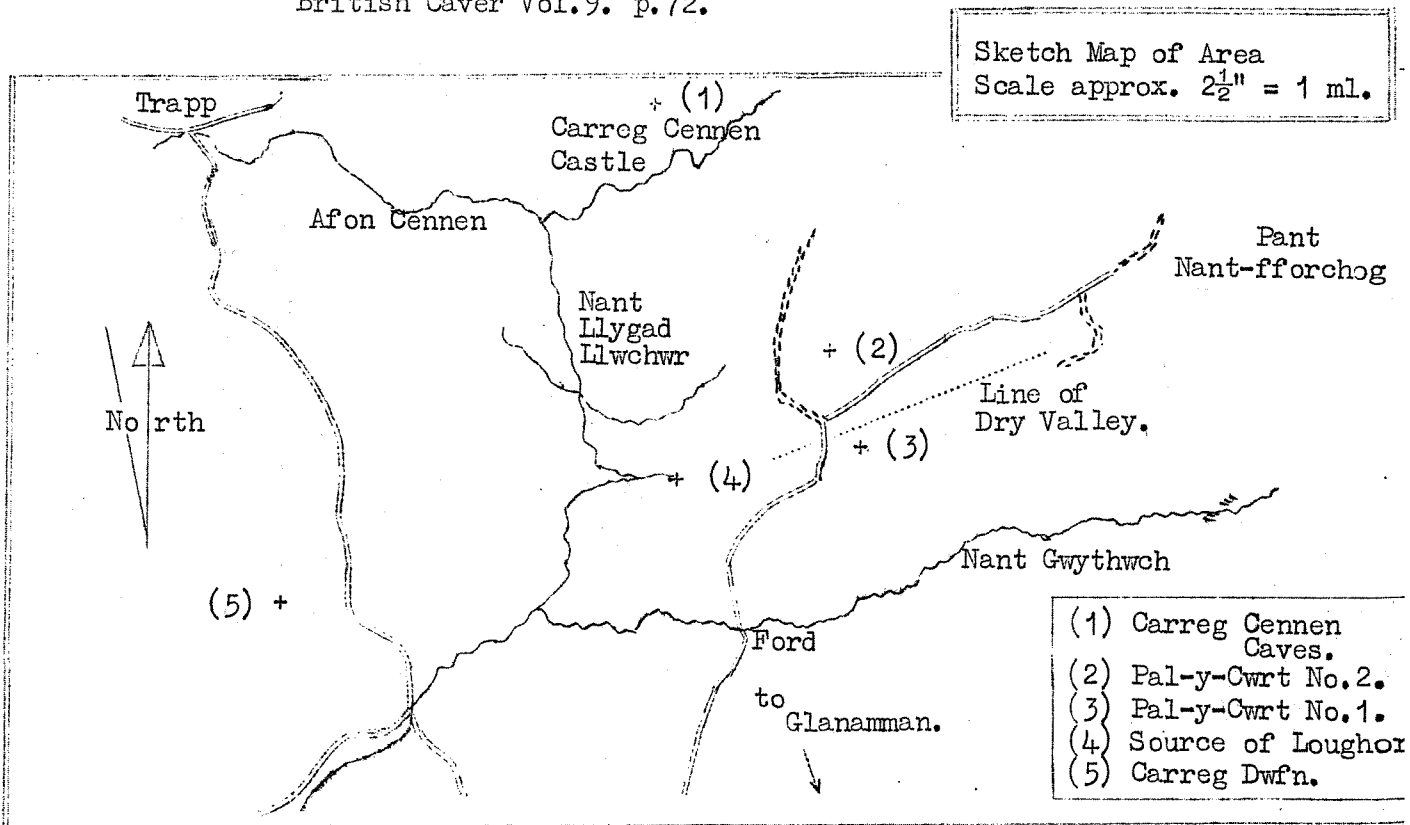
The chamber at the end of the slope is clearly of bedding plane origin - the exposed dip is in the region of 20° - and the amount of mud on the walls, roof, and stalagmites indicates a clay fill which has been partly washed out at some time in the past. The cave is not visibly active now but a fresh layer of silt appeared across the floor of the chamber after the August floods which may be the result of some seepage from a lower level.

The most prominent feature of the chamber is a large stal. boss and column above a fine slope of rimstone pools. These formations have been ruined by the writings of pseudo cavers. Directly above there is an aven some fifteen feet high. There are two possible routes from the Chamber - both terminating in extensive boulder-choked bedding planes. The boulders can be penetrated for some distance and it is possible to connect both routes, but as yet no way on has been found. The strong draught which exists in the entrance passage can be picked up again in a shaft going down through the boulders in the West Leg but a collapse seals the way on. This mass of boulders provides several small cavities - one beautifully hung with small serrated curtains and containing small 'idol' stalagmites.

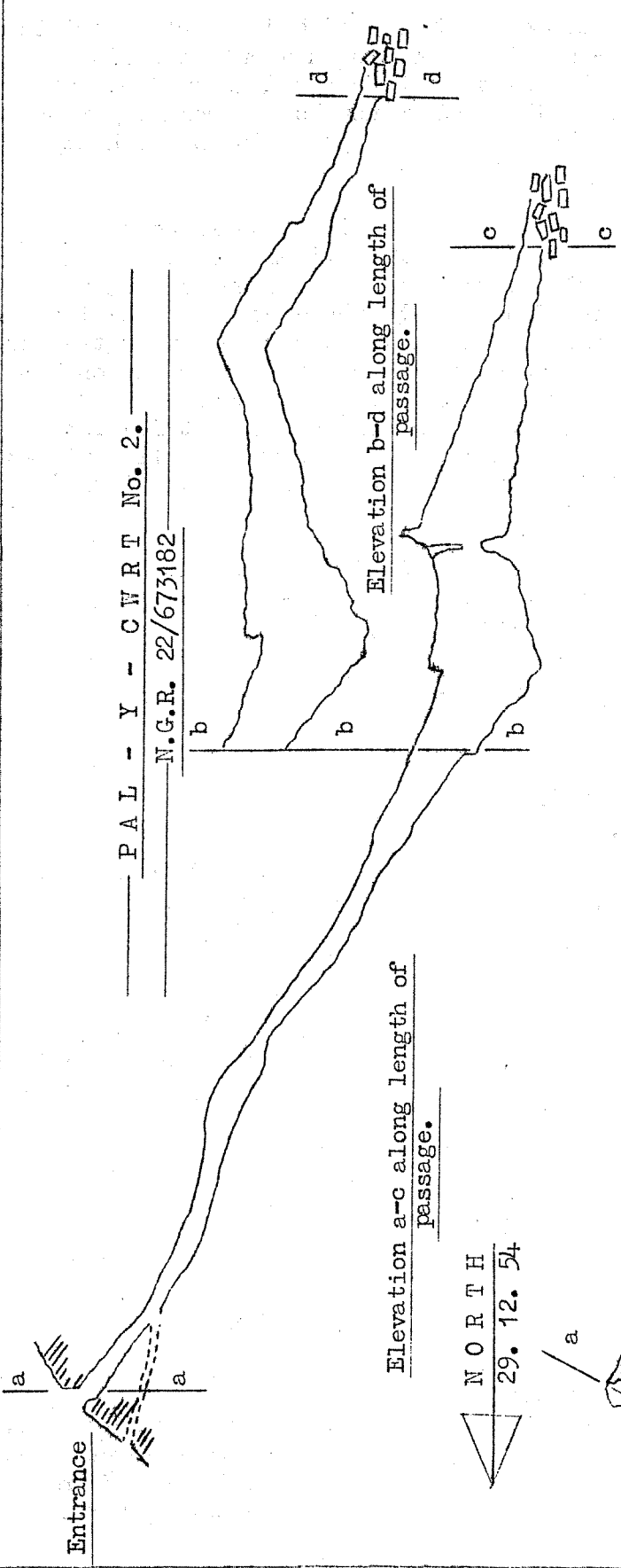
Exploration is not yet complete. Some mechanical or chemical boulder shifting may well open up the way beyond the collapse into less shattered regions and a connection with the Loughor system may well follow.

J.C. Jones.

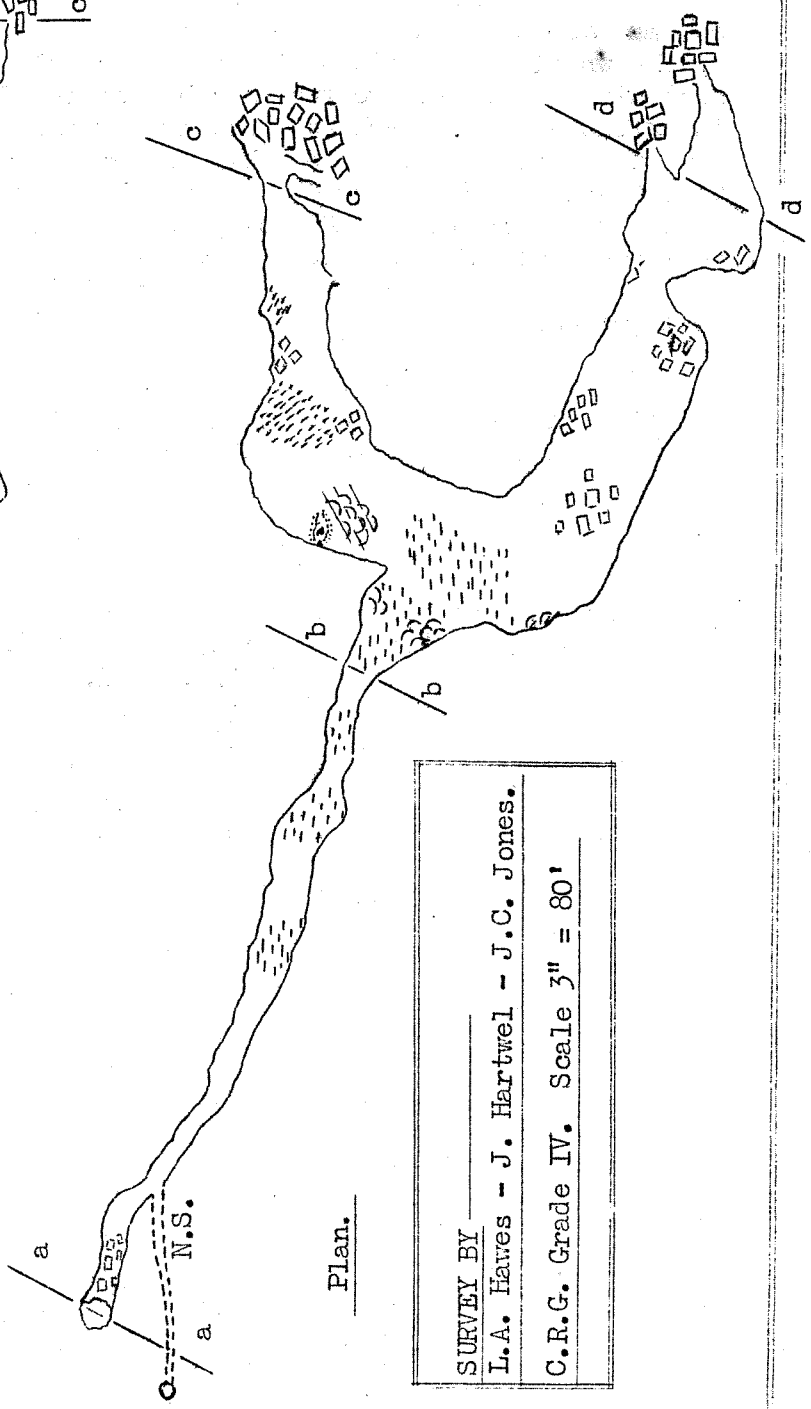
References : Location 22/673182 1" Sheet No.140.
Carmarthen Diary "1836 - 1855".
British Caver Vol.9. p.72.



— P A L - Y - C W R T No. 2. —
— N.G.R. 22/673182 —



N O R T H
29. 12. 54



SURVEY BY	_____
L.A. Hayes - J. Hartwel - J.C. Jones.	
C.R.G. Grade IV. Scale 3" = 80'	

THE GENT'S DIG

Historical Note - The dig, previously known as the Ladies Dig, has been viewed with interest as a possible link-up with Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. As the earlier name suggests, the first attempt was made by lady members of the Club - but who they were has not been recorded.

In 1950 a serious start was made by Arthur & Gwyn Hill, Peter Harvey, Lewis & Marjorie Railton, and others. A promising start led to further efforts by Peter Harvey, Don Coase, Lewis Railton, and others.

These efforts were usually made during 'holiday meets' with the result that parts of the dig fell in. Finally it was abandoned and no further work was carried out until Les Hawes and Co. attacked it again last year

Editor.

Nothing useless is, or low;
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest. (Longfellow).

Boulder Chamber - Starlight Chamber - Coronation Aven - these are just a few of the names familiar to those who have battled unsuccessfully to extend Ogof Ffynnon Ddu during the last six or seven years. Early last year, David Jenkins and I decided to have another go at getting in from the surface and we finally chose the Ladies Dig as the scene of our attack.

The dig is the last - down dip - in a group of shakeholes on the high ground overlooking Penwyllt (roughly on the 1200' contour). The dry valley coming down from the Byfre direction passes the dig to the East.

Our first job was to dig back to solid rock all round and our early days were spent hammering up slabs of fallen rock and clearing clay from the sides of the shaft. At first we employed a crude and rather laborious straight bucket pull up the side of the shaft but as work progressed we developed a ropeway and pulley system which made the hauling-up job much easier and certainly removed much of the anxiety felt by the digger crouching beneath a small overhang at the bottom! Soon we had clean fluted rock all round and good downward progress was made. One day, with a party of five, work was co-ordinated to such good effect that buckets were filled, hauled up, and tipped once every 1½ minutes. Most unfortunate for the last digger, who found the bottom of the rope ladder almost out of reach at the end of the day!

A large slab on the floor proved both unbreakable and unliftable and Glyn Thomas was called in to remove it by a rapid chemical process in which he specialises. Ten feet down and we could see an arched roof appearing under the lone tree. It sloped downwards but was blocked a few feet in. At this stage we decided (more in hope than in fear) that the open shaft looked remarkably like the Pant Mawr entrance and thereafter the digger was belayed to the surface.

The Gent's Dig (Cont'd).

The Club Log reads "The Gent's Dig is now an Ogof". A sober reflection of the excitement we felt when part of the floor slid away to reveal an attractive black opening. Clive Jones made the first entry, followed by Brian Jones. They remained down for what seemed an interminably long time to the lone watcher on the surface. Entrance was made by sliding down a steep muddy slope - the side of a boulder and mud cone which levelled out on one side into a small flat-roofed chamber extending roughly southwards. Bones were scattered about in untidy heaps on the floor but seemingly in no sort of arrangement. We collected a few choice ones to bring out for identification (the preliminary verdict is horse - did someone say female ???!) We pressed on down the slope and through a small opening to the present base of the cave. The boulders were quite healthily arranged on the slope above our heads but up dip we could see a few "untouchables".

Running down dip was a small passage with a squeeze entrance. It opened out quite comfortably but ended disappointingly with the roof meeting floor after about fifty feet. The floor was washed pebbles and silt. Was this the outlet for surface water collected by the many tubes in the roof ?? Investigation proved that the cave floor of loose boulders would take all the surface water likely to percolate into the cave. Despite its proximity to the surface there is little doubt that the passage strongly resembles a roof meander.

Probing in the boulder floor opened up a hole and we could peer down between the wall and the base of the boulder cone for about four or five feet. At one place we exposed a shelf of bed-rock with a space below and we wondered if this was instrumental in holding up the cone. A hefty charge was packed in but when the smoke had cleared very little damage had been done and things remained pretty solid. Another day, when conditions above prevented surface digging, we probed deeper into the floor until we had to leave rapidly due to what Daniel would call "A great movement in the cave" !!

The winter season is not particularly affable towards surface 'haulers-up' on this bit of exposed moorland so work has ceased until the Spring. We had 'acquired' some timber and sheet iron but the shelter we built had to be forsaken to work the ropes and tip the buckets so no great advantage was achieved. We hope to speed excavation on renewal with special tipping buckets and a mechanised pulley system.

In the meantime we have plenty of time to ruminate on what we hope to find this year. It is, of course, dangerous to theorise at this early stage but the writer is quite willing to stick out the proverbial neck in the hope of attracting the views of other members. First of all, we think that we are digging in the top of an aven - the extreme solutional activity in and around the dig indicates more of the cave than we can see and we think that further development is vertical. Our recent experiences in Steeple Aven (Tunnel Cave) have illustrated only too well that avens or chimneys can be blocked with wedged boulders at or near surface levels. In the terms of the surveyed limits of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu the dig is roughly half-a-mile from the nearest section and, estimating the continuation at known levels, somewhere around sixty odd feet above. The general view that the main cave lies in a more S.Easterly direction could well mean that progress beyond the dig will be of a 'crawly' nature but quarrying nearby has exposed, and subsequently destroyed, quite a moderate little system.

The Gent's Dig (Cont'd).

There is no apparent regular draught although summer conditions have brought about a slight expulsion.

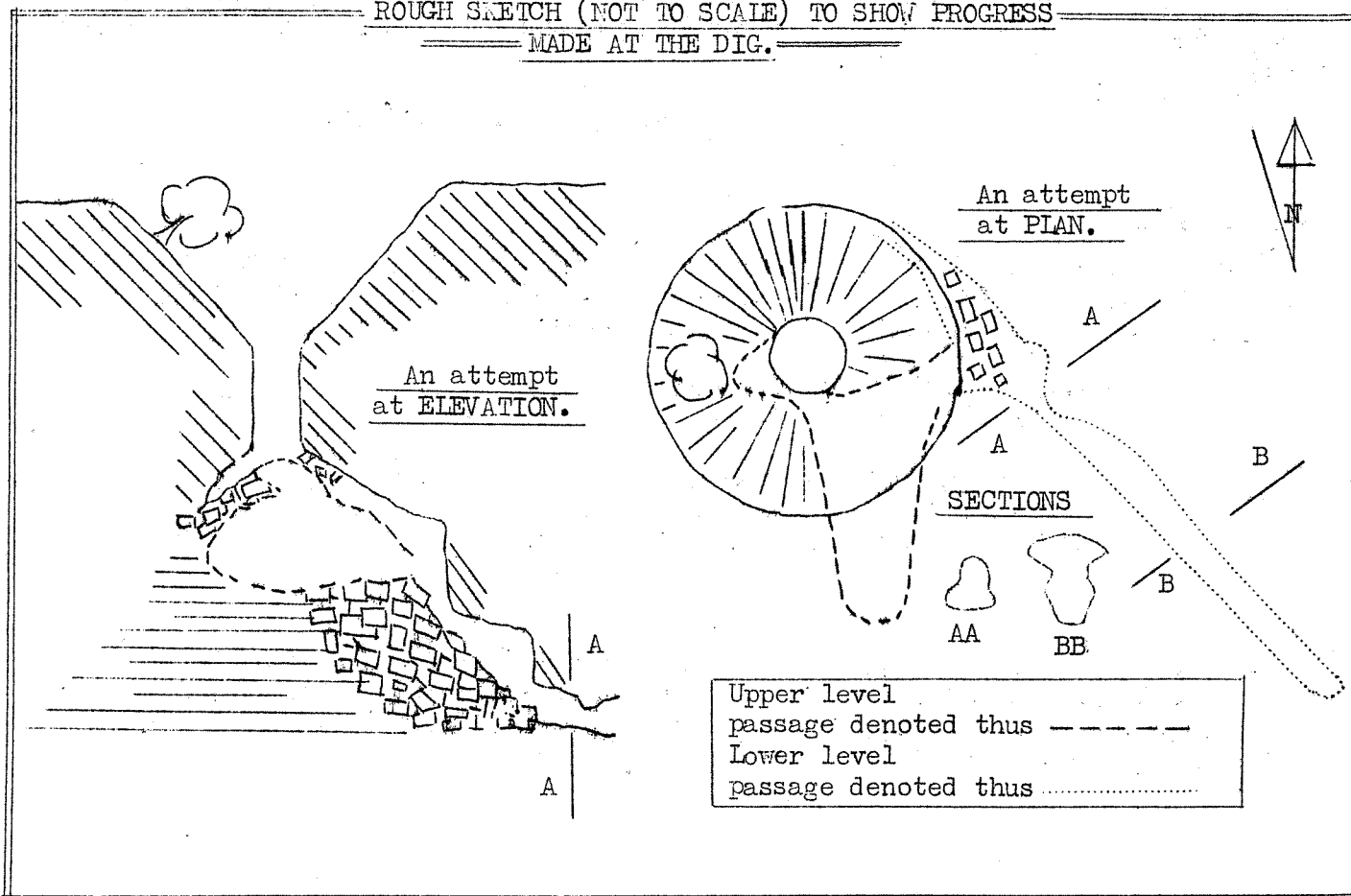
This article would obviously be incomplete without a word of praise for all those who have worked on the dig and in particular the little band of regulars whose efforts have been sustained whatever the weather :-

Brian Jones. Clive Jones.
John Hartwel. Glyn Thomas.
P. Gelatine.

Finally, in a lighter vein, there are a couple of rumours rife amongst S.W.C.C. members which need to be scotched. First - the name of the dig was changed before Dick Underwood spent a day there. Actually it was changed because those digging felt that they stood a better chance of 'acquiring' an appropriate nameplate with the new name !! Secondly - there is no substance in the stories circulating about the finding of rare 'Hawes' bones at the dig.

Les Hawes.

ROUGH SKETCH (NOT TO SCALE) TO SHOW PROGRESS
MADE AT THE DIG.



WILL'S HOLE (Sychrhyd Gorge)

This cave is now a good deal more interesting for a silica washing stream from the mine higher up the gorge has been diverted to flow down the tramway and to vanish into Will's Hole slightly lower than the Terrace Caves.

The stream reappears as a very heavy drip from the roof about midway along the Great Gallery and then flows down the passage to join the larger stream entering the trap. Where it emerges from the roof some particularly pleasing calcite formations have been washed clean and look much better for it.

OGOF FFYNNON (Ystradfellte)

On Wednesday, 17th November, 1954, we re-visited this cave and spent some time clearing the waterworn passage in limestone on the extreme right of the entrance. Tight but very promising.

At the end of the left hand passage is a hole in the corner where one used to be able to indulge in an awkward scramble down through massive jammed boulders to reach the large chamber below. This hole is still there and the passage appears to be as it always was, but there the resemblance ends for a major collapse of boulders has occurred, leaving an empty space below what is now a false floor of wedged blocks (and none too secure at that). Below the hole is a great pit going down for some twenty feet and looking most inviting but so dangerous that no attempt has been made to go down. It looks as though further falls are likely at any minute.

The Taylors. 23.11.54.

"OUR CAVES"

Our thanks are due to Brian Price for the fine issue of "Our Caves" sent with this Newsletter. In order that the series may be continued would members please send any suitable material to :-

B.D. Price, 143, King Street, Brynmawr, Brecks.

The Editor, who has been very busy with personal and operatic affairs, wishes to thank Les Hawes for his kind help in producing this Newsletter.

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