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# SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

## NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 21.

NOVEMBER 1957

1. Club News.
- 2. Caves at Morlais Quarry.....C. Timberlake.
- 3. Cwmdwr Quarry Caves.....Les Hawes.
4. Miscellany.



## SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

Number 21

November 1957

### 1. CLUB NEWS

#### THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH.....

Where's my speaking trumpet?... Ah, that's better! HULLO, FOLKS! Observant members may notice a change of type face in this Newsletter, which marks the departure of David Jenkins from the Editor's chair after seven years of stalwart service to the Club as Editor and Records Officer. Not that he is going to be allowed to enjoy a restful retirement, for following Peter Harvey's resignation of Secretaryship due to pressure of business, David was immediately elected to the vacant seat. Our good wishes and thanks go to Peter for his keen and conscientious work as Secretary, and a warm welcome to David in his new job: with the thought that if he serves as well and long as Secretary as he did while Editor, we shall have to mint a special medal to pin on his overalls. Meanwhile, your articles, news, gossip and scandal (if printable) will be welcomed at the new Roneo repository, 5, Tai-north, Fainorth, Brecon.

#### NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Club.

D.W. Smith, 75, Gooding Avenue, Braunstone, Leicester.

C. Timberlake, 221, Bwlch Road, Fairwater, Cardiff.

Dr. R. Williams, 207, Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

E.G. Inson, 19, White Barn Road, Llanishen, Cardiff.

#### OGOF FFYNNON DDU

W.G. Harris has been elected to the Leaders List.

#### CONGRATULATIONS

To Clive Leymen on his recent marriage.

To David Hunt, on being awarded a Bronze Plaque by the British Alliance for the best home processed colour transparency in the British Isles. Members may be interested to know that only six such awards have been made previously.

#### IMPROVEMENTS AT H.Q.

Our thanks are due to Gordon Clissold and Les Hawes for the hard work recently put into installing a new fireplace and stove in the Cottage. This is reputed to be so efficient that the heat is driving more and more members into the comparative coolness of the Gwyn Arms - or could there be some other reason? However, members are reminded that this is no excuse for filling the vacant places with wet caving clothes (or dry, for that matter) and are asked to keep the Cottage more tidy than ever.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

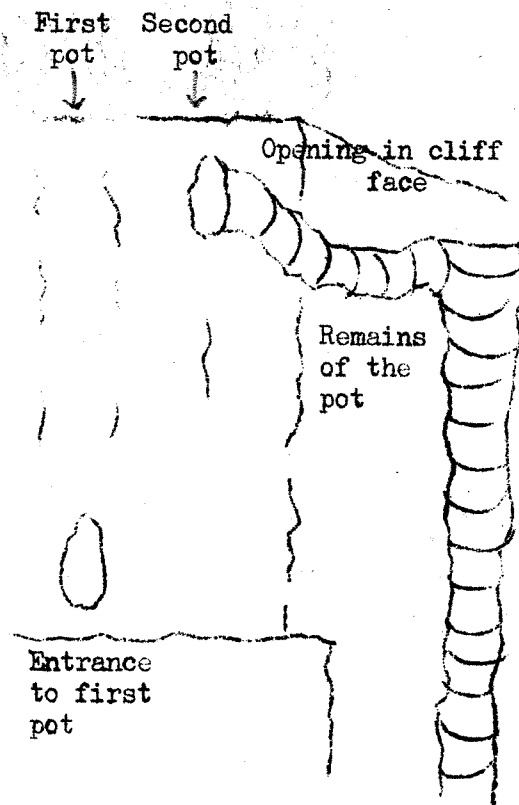
- Cox. M.D. 72, Lawton Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent.
- Davies. T.H. 194, Heathfield Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.21.
- Dilly. P.N. 53, Emery Street, Walsall, Staffs.
- Freeman, W.C. 27, South Road, Sully, Glam.
- Howells. A. not Lando Terrace but Lando Road.
- Palmer. R. Moat House, Hereford Road, Monmouth.
- Sanders. G. Katoomba. Old Road, Birchgrove, Swansea.
- Thompson. D. Dr. 42, Pewley Way, Guildford, Surrey.
- Truman. J. 206, St. Margarets Road, Twickenham, Middlesex.

Members who have changed or are contemplating changing their address are asked to inform the Secretary at the first possible opportunity, and so avoid newsletters and other correspondence going astray.

2. CAVES AT MORLAIS QUARRY

On August Bank Holiday Monday a friend and I went to Merthyr for a few days to visit the caves on the Glais stream at Pontsarn. As the weather was so unsettled we decided not to go down the Glais caves because of the danger of flooding, so we wandered over to the quarries on Morlais hill to look at some caves I had seen there the year before. After a walk to a large hump on the edge of the second level we came to a cave, on the right, which has a fair sized entrance and which had evidently been visited very often. We scrambled through and eventually saw daylight coming down a vertical shaft, and having looked around for a time found a continuation of this shaft going on down on the right of the passage. As we had no rope with us we did not go down but stones we dropped fell for quite a way. It was hard to tell whether they hit the bottom or not, the shaft being not quite perpendicular. We retraced our way out of the cave and climbed the cliff above it and found the shaft through which we had seen day-light; a narrow pothole about twenty feet deep.

Nearby another opening attracted us. This was also a pothole, with a larger entrance than the first, but unhappily we found that blasting had split the 'pot' exactly in half. Lower down its path could be seen right to the bottom of the sheer cliff face (about 150ft. high) All around on this grassy level are sinks, all tending to be perpendicular shafts, filled with boulders, a paradise for the enthusiastic digger (if there are any). These may all be part of a larger system lost by blasting. This part of the quarry is full of small caves usually full of earth or stones at the end.



C. Timberlake.

### 3. CWMDDWR QUARRY CAVES

Quarrying activities in the 1930's brought to light the existence of a cave system on the eastern side of the railway line at Penwllt. In May, 1937, Flatten, Roberts, and others made the first descent into Cwmdwr Cave (later called Cwmdwr 1) and the following description was given in Y.R.C. Journal No. 23 - "Entrance 20ft. above quarry floor. Ladder down 20ft. rotten rock, steep slope of scree, three connected chambers and a short but interesting stream passage". Notes kept by E.E. Roberts add in July, 1938. - "Short part  $68^{\circ}$  true, long descending part  $248^{\circ}$  i.e., runs out under quarry floor".

Quarrying seems to have continued for a short time after this, until a break-through occurred into the passage just beyond the entrance, which ran roughly parallel to the quarry face. Following this, a series of charges brought down the roof of the "main chamber" leaving a large hole in the quarry floor and exposing a passage some 15ft. deep running back into the working face. Work then ceased at this section of the quarry. The hole in the quarry floor was found eminently suitable for the disposal of quarry spoil and was largely filled by this dumping process.

What stopped further exploration in the known passages before the entrance was completely blocked has not been recorded. It seems likely that boulder chokes stopped progress and that little or no work was done to force them. Another factor may have been the rapid deterioration of relationships with the quarrymaster which Flatten recalls following strong objection being made to the use of the cave as a dumping ground.

The personal notes of E.E. Roberts - 3rd/5th July, 1938, indicate that the cave was still open when the new cave (Cwmdwr 2) was discovered. This is confirmed by Arthur Hill's notes "A new hole opened by quarrying operations in Penwllt Quarry, and brought to our attention by Bill Doyle, was examined. A 10ft. climb on to a false floor and a small opening was visible, down which a stone would run for a considerable distance. The hole was opened out and it was possible to look down a distance of probably 40ft. A rope was hung down this rift and we proceeded to the main Quarry Cave as it was thought this was a new connection. No sign of this rope was found after a complete search here and it would seem that an entirely separate cave exists here". Exploration of the new cave took place in August 1938 and a full report and survey by P. Raynes appeared in Vol. III of the Mendip Exploration Society Journal (1938). The description of the cave is interesting - if a little colourful - and the salient parts are reproduced below in view of the valuable information they add to our knowledge of the type of cave development in this particular location. "A small passage ran from one corner at a steep angle into what appeared to be a large chamber. Twenty feet of ladder was passed through. The top end of this 40ft long Master Chamber as we called it was some 31ft high and about 6ft wide - the roof sloping sharply to 10ft high at the middle and rising to 15ft at the lower end. This chamber lies roughly at right angles

to the entrance rift and contains a number of fine orange coloured stalactites and a few straws. A fine calcite cascade flows down the left wall to the right of the ladder pitch and there is a peculiar cube of sand about three feet high standing against the opposite wall. The floor consists of loose boulders, which are banked up at one end.

The cave then turns to the left at a rough right-angle and passing over a barrier of rock 6ft high, which half-filled the passage, and beneath a very fine cluster of straws and stals we entered a small aven some 26ft high. At the time of the survey I had occasion to climb this aven and found that there were three small passages forming an old upper series near the top, which followed the direction of those of the main cave. All were partly blocked by calcite deposits and were impassable.

Passing on from this aven, I entered a constricted passage about 8ft above the floor of the aven, which terminated in a small chamber with a beautiful white calcite floor which flowed down a rift to the right and which Arthur Price, who is used to such things, failed to get through. A small passage guarded by a fine stalactite runs back in the direction of the aven and is probably part of the old upper series.

Returning to the aven I found that Arthur Hill had gone down a short passage to the right which terminated almost at once in a choked sink. He had then taken a branch passage to the left, which continued for some distance and then terminated in a small chamber and another choked sink some 37ft from the point of entry.

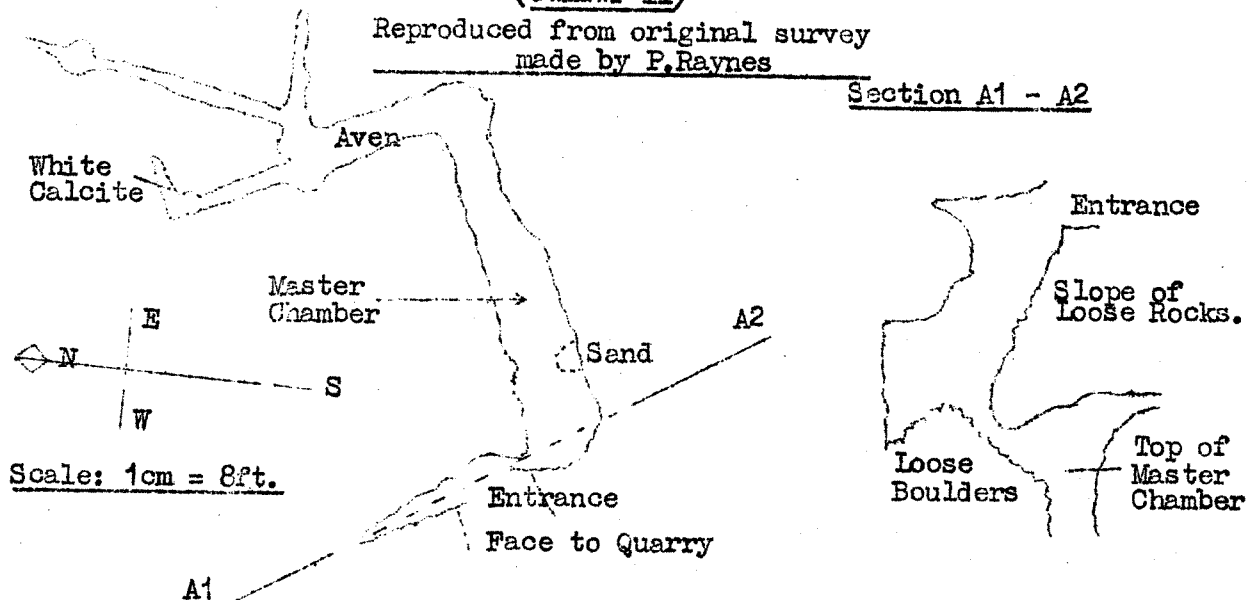
This last portion of cave, though lacking anything of beauty, is of considerable interest as the line taken by the water which flows through the cave during rain and is directly opposite to the direction of that in the nearby Cwndwr Main Quarry Cave. That underground water can do curious things can be seen in the Llangattock Cave near Crickhowell, Brecon, but to find opposite lines of flow so close together is rather surprising.

It would seem that the survey was only partly completed with a short time to spare for two weeks later, the entrance was blocked by blasting".

CWMDWR NEW QUARRY CAVE  
(Cwndwr II)

Reproduced from original survey  
made by P. Raynes

Section A1 - A2



The last known reference to Cwmdwr 1 in Arthur Hill's notes refers to the discovery and exploration of a new passage in August 1938. Cwmdwr 2 did not last long. The quarrying responsible for its discovery destroyed it. At least, some reports say destroyed - others say blocked. Although it was described in some detail I have been unable to fix with any degree of certainty its location in the quarry - particularly in relation to Cwmdwr 1.

After many visits to the quarry and much speculation, I have rejected the idea that Cwmdwr 2 is identifiable with the 80' long passage which exists at the present time at the N.E. end of the quarry. There is certainly a resemblance between this passage and the upper level passage leading from the top of the aven - as shown on Raynes' Survey. The bearings are practically identical and one or two features are common to both passages. However, passage lengths do not agree and it is difficult to imagine, if the cave was located thus, how anyone could possibly make the mistake of thinking the two caves were linked (see Arthur Hill's notes reproduced on Page 1).

Nothing further seems to have been reported on either cave or cave remnants from that time until interest was renewed by the author, John Hartwell, Bill Clarke and Glyn Thomas roughly two or three years ago. Presumably the events leading up to the opening of the Ffynnon Ddu system completely overshadowed anything that the Cwmdwr Caves could offer, but it is interesting to note the absence of any comments at that time on the possibilities of these caves being associated with the Ffynnon Ddu system. The high grade O.F.D. Survey since published has enabled us to relate the cave to surface features and there seems to be little or no doubt that the Cwmdwr Caves are indeed part of the Ffynnon Ddu system.

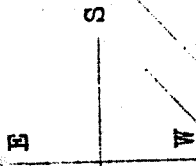
Although Cwmdwr 2 is useful in establishing the general idea of the cave development in the area - it takes second place in plans to excavate in the quarry. The blocked Cwmdwr 1 has been chosen for the present attempt to get into this part of O.F.D. beyond the railway line. Interest centres on the "strike" passage, known from earlier reports to be running in a westerly direction under the quarry floor. It is known to slope down steeply and it is hoped that its junction with a further "dip" passage will be at a sufficient depth to have escaped the effect of quarrying and drift infilling. The point of excavation is some 800ft. from the railway line and almost double that distance from the now defunct Penwlllyt Inn.

Work has proceeded irregularly and has suffered from the usual distractions to which digs are prone. A visit to the quarry with the original quarrymaster fixed a point at which a break-through into this passage had taken place. This was some 20ft. from the quarry face and away from the major dumping area. However, cross section trenches failed to locate this hole. Since then, the main effort has been directed to clearing quarry debris from the open section of the passage, with the object of finding the roof level downwards from the collapse and digging under the roof until the end of the debris slope is reached. The fill was reported not to extend more than 15ft. from the quarry face but the source of this information is apparently not 100% accurate.

CWMDWR QUARRY - GENERAL PLAN

Reproduced from original survey made by John Hartwell  
and Keith Ball (S.W.C.C.) 1955/56

Passage  
referred to  
Para 2. Page 3.



Entrance

Remnant Passages of  
Cwmdwr Main Quarry Cave  
(Cwmdwr 1).

Entrance Passage to 20' Pitch.

Pitch

Original Entrance

Scree

Scree  
Slopes

Present day  
Excavations

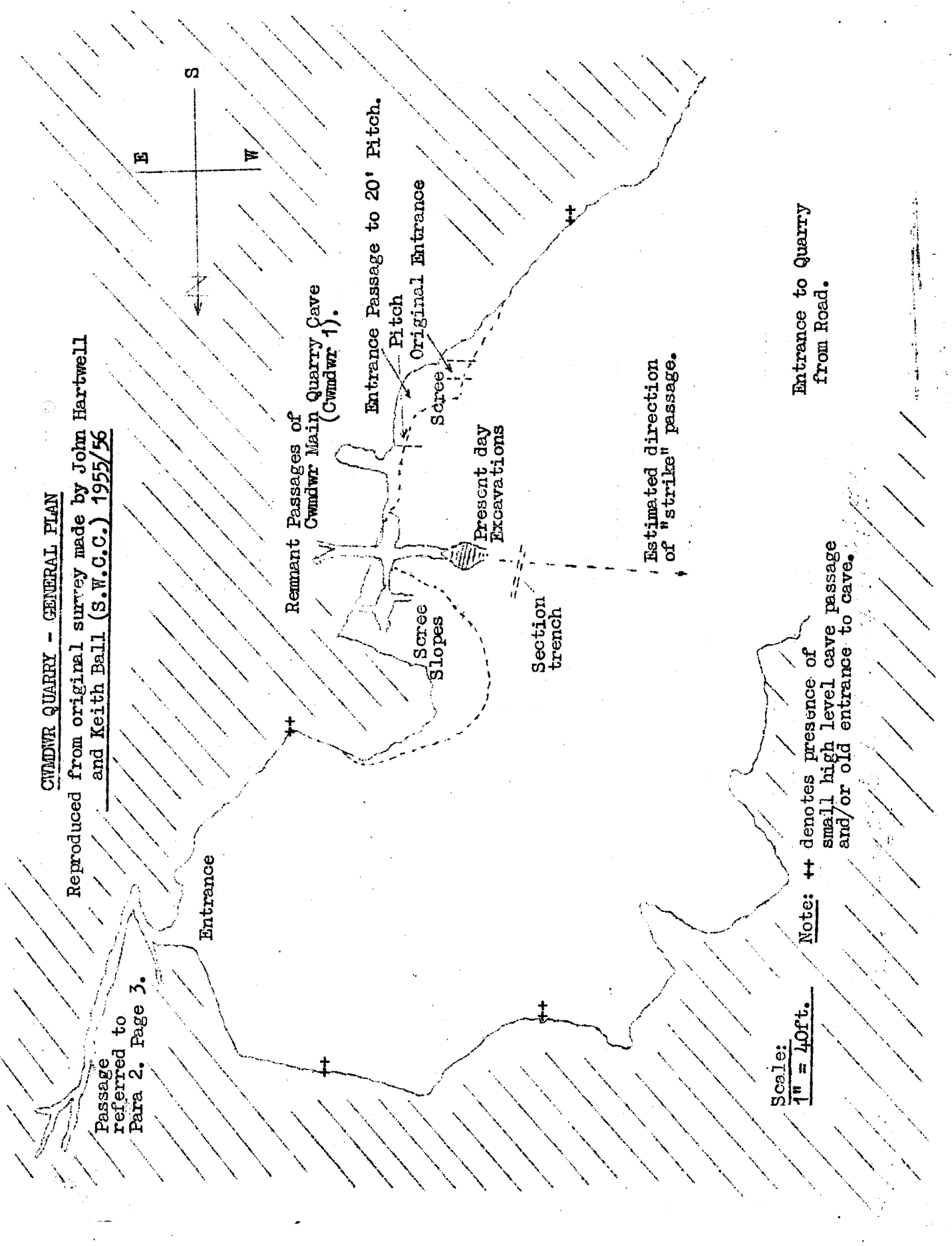
Section  
trench

Estimated direction  
of "strike" passage.

Entrance to Quarry  
from Road.

Scale:  
1" = 40ft.

Note: ++ denotes presence of  
small high level cave passage  
and/or old entrance to cave.





Work is complicated by occasional collapses of the sides of the dig where frost action and perhaps the effects of quarrying have produced extreme shattering of the bed-rock. We are also hampered by a scree slope to one side of the dig, which, despite levelling work at the base, often adds to the excitement.

All credit is due to those who have contributed so much in sheer hard work to the present satisfactory state of the dig, in particular, Gordon Clissold, Bill Little, Lewis Railton and Mary Boughton who have spent many hours on the digging platforms.

Should this point of attack prove abortive - and sufficient interest remains - certain Club members favour clearing the southern end of the "dip" passage. This passage was at the foot of the original 20ft. pitch of - to quote the reports - "rotten rock and steep slope of scree". Obviously, if such work is envisaged, a Wimpey-size job lies ahead.

My grateful thanks are due to E.E. Roberts, Arthur Hill, Gerrard Platten, and others for the great help they have given in supplying the information on which the historical part of this article is based. In dealing with events of nearly twenty years ago and information collected from many sources it is only natural that I should encounter conflicting reports. In presenting the results of my research, I have tried to incorporate only those details which have substantiation from two or more sources and which appear to me to fit in with the physical features as they exist at the present time. If, in so doing, I have misrepresented some of the true facts of the case, I should be more than pleased to receive material for the correction of my errors.

Les. Hawes. Church Crookham.  
September, 1957.

#### 4. MISCELLANY

LOST owing to sudden storm at Ogof Fawr, Penderyn, 1 aluminium water bottle complete with  $\frac{1}{2}$ pt. milk. Any member visiting this incredibly disappointing cave is asked to keep an eye open for this (now) battered bottle and return same to the Hon. Ed.

A small dig was begun on the camping weekend during which the milk went underground. The best prospects seem to be in the old sink to the right of the present entry point of the stream. A promising rift beneath a rabbit burrow unfortunately soon closed down, but with time and labour could be enlarged. Prospective diggers may be encouraged and refreshed by the cooling draught which issues from this hole.

"Ogof Fawr" (sic) can take a surprising amount of water: the stream rose a good 18" overnight but there was no sign of the water backing up.

The Editor

During a wet afternoon whilst sampling an enjoyable cup of tea at the "Y Grithig" Mr. Powell gave the information that another hole had been opened up in the new quarry face. Later in the day two locals from Penwyllt called at the cottage to inform the Club of same. It appears that sitting drinking tea (a Club custom) this time paid dividends thanks to the local inhabitants.

After some hesitation a party assembled and a race to the quarry took place at dusk. After clearing a lot of debris away the pitch was rigged. It appears to be the top of an aven in the R. & W. series, only removing of many new and old boulders may prove the point. There are two passages leading from the aven but both close down. The lower passage is blocked with sand, it has been suggested that this may lead to Bat aven passage? It was a little disappointing to find no way on but pleasing to know that there are many friends who keep their eyes open for the Club. The party packed up with the help of Bill's spotlight on the face. There has been a number of names given, Whisky Aven was one due to the smell of same at the bottom, care is required to traverse pass the glass. This aven was well and truly launched by the Hon. Cottage Warden, with a fine speech following in, I believe, Chinese. As this name is bound to bring back happy memories it will I'm sure be appropriate to call it "Whisky Aven". The party consisted of Mary, Jean, John Hartwell, Bill Little, and John Bevan.

Gordon Clissold.

Hon. Secretary.....D. Jenkins, Dinmore, Dyffryn Rd., Llandrindod Wells, Rads.  
Hon. Treasurer.....L.A. Hawes, Corner Cottage, Rounton Rd., Church Crookham, Hants.  
Hon. Editor.....B. de Graaf, 5, Tai-north, Pennorth, Brecon.  
C.R.O. & Tackle.....G.L. Clissold, Caravan, c/o Plasnewydd, Llwcoed, Aberdare, Glam.  
Manager