

We welcome the following new members:-

N. Dilly 79, Arran Street, Roath, Cardiff.

M. Hourahan. 90, Beulah Road, Rhwbina, Cardiff.

A. Wring. 76, Kensington Park Road, Brislington, Bristol 4.

Correction of addresses.

The following are corrected from the last newsletter.

W.C. Freeman. 45, Harbour Rd., Barry, Glam.

D. Hunt. 19, Spring Street, Cadoxton, Barry, Glam.

Club Trips.

An effort is being made to start the monthly club trip again. The success of these trips depends on the co-operation of members in supporting them. These trips give members an opportunity to visit some of the lesser known caves and advantage should be taken of this fact. If any member has any suggestions for future club trips will they please communicate with the secretary.

August 2nd. Pwll Swnd.

September 5th. White Lady, Town Drain and Cwm Pwll-y-Rhyd.

Pwll Swnd. Meet at 11.30 a.m. at Herbert's Quarry on the top of the mountain road from Brynamm to Llangadock.

White Lady, Town Drain and Cwm Pwll-y-Rhyd.

Meet at 11.00 a.m. at the fork in the road going to the Bridge Cave. This is reached by turning left on the road from Pont Neath Vaughan to Ystradfellte at Gwean Bryn Ewch and following the track to the fork.

Subscriptions.

Some subscriptions have still not been paid up and members are reminded again of Rule 6 which states:-

"Any member who is more than four months in arrears in payment of of subscription shall be deemed to have ceased membership, and shall not be eligible for re-election until payment of arrears has been made."

Will members please send their subscriptions at their earliest convenience to the treasurer.

C.R.C. Transactions.

Volume 2 Number 2 is now published and contains amongst other articles one by C.L. Railton on ropes and rope ladders and another, "Significant Air Streams in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, South Wales", by W.H. Little.

Price 5/- post free.

Admission charge to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.

As from June 1st 1953, the following admission charges were put into operation and are payable to J. Barrows, Y. Grithyg.

1/- per person per weekend (Friday night to Sunday night).

2/6d per person per week.

Caving Notes.

Whisker Cave. 22/854157. The entrance to this cave which is situated in the quarry on the right of the road going to Penwyllt is now blocked. Owing to quarrying the cave should now be considered dangerous and not to be entered.

Pwll Swnd. 22/761184. A cairn has now been built by L.E. Hawes and W.E. Clark. This should be a great help in locating this elusive cave.

Ogof Clogwyn. 32/212123. L.E. Hawes reports that a new section of passage has been added to the Upper Series.

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. 22/848153. Waterfall Series. The traverse wire has now been fixed above the waterfall at the entrance to the series and it enables an easy route to be made from Upper Flood Passage at the start of Boulder Chamber without the usual shower under the waterfall. c.f. Newsletter No. 3. for details of the original climb.

Ogof Capel Ddygen. 22/467128. This cave has in it a small pothole which leads to a chamber containing a pool of deep water. It was suggested in 1951 when the S.W.C.C. visited the cave that it would be profitable to come back during a spell of very dry weather. This has been done by the Taylors who report as follows:-

"On Saturday 6th. June 1953, we returned to the cave and did a certain amount of work endeavouring (not particularly successfully) to find a way through the blockage at the end of the main passage. After getting in about 6' it still appears to be a solid mass of rubble and boulders.

On the way back, however, we managed to have a quick look at the chamber at the bottom of the pot in the right hand passage to find to our astonishment that the pool which normally fills almost the entire floor area had drained away exposing a further chamber equal in area to the original one or even bigger.

This was below the wall which normally forms the boundary to the pool (which, incidentally must usually be at least 8' deep in one part).

We went back on the 13th. June and were able by digging through quantities of sandy silt to enter a small low passage leading to a tiny chamber. In the roof of this were several high fissures, all water-worn.

After this we started heaving rocks around at the site of the main sink and were eventually able to clear a way down about 8' to a water-worn tunnel leading to a body of water. As yet we have no idea of its extent.

It is interesting to note that a man we met near the cave said that in his young days he and his friends were able to descend "a 200' deep pot(!)" from the extreme end of the main passage and he was astounded to hear that it was no longer accessible. Obviously there must be something there if one could find the exact spot to dig."

The Heights of Low's.

(An Operation in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu)

Many is the time we have gone up Stream Passage and, standing at the junction in Upper Flood Passage, below the 10' climb up the chain to Low's Passage, we have marvelled at the height. The everchanging curves of the walls rise nearly vertically; then, almost eluding the eye is a ceiling embossed with pendants rising yet higher to the roof meander.

Unlike the passage at our feet it swings round south to be called Low's Passage and its stateliness diminishes as the roof descends with the dipping strata whilst the present floor of infilled mud rises gently. No willy-nilly stream could have cut so deeply and continuously, yet until cut down to the level of the Railton-Wilde Series it had no apparent alternative bar one; directly above our heads, some 50' up is a dark patch which may be a passage. We cannot see in for it is at right angles to Low's whilst upstream the next bend in Upper Flood Passage hides it again before we can get far enough.

Of course the problem was left but not forgotten. The job went on a mental list until Good Friday 1953 when Stream Passage resounded with the clangs of alloy tubing hitting rock. A heavily laden party of cavers struggled through the water with a variety of tackle - scaling poles, couplers, ladders, ropes, pitons, ladders, rawl-bolts and tools.

Ledges mostly narrow and sloping formed the first objects of attack. Each ledge follows the same bed and the further south we went along Low's Passage the easier it was to reach them. Unfortunately

for us, they were not continuous and ran out at the first bow. Further reconnaissance, however, increased our hopes; half way along the passage an earlier ledge on the western side looked from below to be easily traversible. In a matter of minutes a 25ft "maypole" was assembled, the top of it supporting a ladder. The ledge was reached and it was comfortably wide. A sloping covering of mud was soft enough to kick steps. No. 2 came up and we traversed north towards the first bend, the mud getting harder, the slope steeper and narrower. A spade was brought up and we cut a few more steps: an ice axe would have been handier. Then, round the bend no more mud, just hard steep 'stal'; the spade was useless. We retreated backwards along our tracks realising now that we should have to 'maypole' further ahead where the ledge was much higher above the floor.

Again we shone our lights up, this time looking for a notch in the overhang below the ledge which here was 40ft. above us. "Maypoling" higher than 30ft. is a bit "airy-fairy" even with guy ropes to stop the top of the pole from sliding sideways. 8ft. from the climb up into Low's there was just the crack to locate it. We coupled another section of tube and up-ended it. Behind us was the narrow ledge on the east wall 6ft. above the floor and on to this the bottom end of the pole was placed; not without some struggling as the top of the pole jammed in the crack as we lifted. The overhang at the top was enough to make the angle of the pole pretty steep and we shifted the bottom to make the best of it but made a mess of it instead. At the top of the pole the headers of the ladder are tied through an iron collar fixed to a plug which slides into the tube. We had raised the pole and this head-piece had jammed; lowering the pole had left it and the ladder hanging on their own. Pulling had no effect; this was something we had not bargained for. If we climbed the ladder the thing would probably come adrift and even if it didn't you can't very well take a belay off a ladder when you are hanging on it - that's Grade 8! I have never won a prize for climbing greasy poles; my arms ached as I clung to the top with one foot poised on a coupling bolt and the other hooked under a ladder rung to take the weight. The head-piece came out all right. A tottering moment that seemed a full minute and it was back home in the pole again.

The top still did not reach beyond the overhang and to extend it would make it unstable. The crack was in fact a joint through several beds and it went straight in. A piton banged into it would have been useless in the event of an outward pull. There was nothing else for it but to drill and use a Rawlbolt. Each in turn hung on the ladder using the hammer and star drill. In such a position without a firm footing most of your energy is wasted. Two hours later the hole was deep enough and the bolt was fixed. We called it a day.

The following weekend two more alloy tubes and a 7ft. prop were carried upstream, together with another 50ft. of ladder. A day was spent in extending the pole and, having tied it back to the Good Friday Rawlbolt two thirds of the way up we ascended to the ledge. Mud covered as before, it provided space enough for two to

~~When the entrance of the high ledge passage we had suspected from~~
below. Unfortunately we were still 10ft. away and unable to see
right into it and between us was an 8ft. gap in the ledge. We
consolidated our position with another Rawlbolt and transferred the
ladder from the "Maypole" to it. This belay enabled us to lean out
over the 40ft. drop, but without seeing much more of the hidden
passage. It was, it seemed, a double-decker passage - the lower part
on this level and the upper part 10ft. higher, running from underneath
the roof meander. The surroundings were very pleasant; on the east
wall was another ledge wider but steeper. Down below odd lights
moved about in a dismal bergshund, but up on the ledge was another
world in the midst of roof pendants undaubed by mucky fingers. As I
gazed into the roof my light went out and I was thankful for a good
belay.

A fortnight later we worked in shifts and the first one went
in at mid-day on Saturday. When I got there with the grub party in
the evening the place looked like a mad gymnasium. Crossbars were
wedged and the "maypole" was stuck on a 3" ledge by the Good Friday
Rawlbolt and crossed obligingly to the East Ledge. Ladders were now
hung down both sides of Low's, but an attempt to traverse the East
Ledge was hopeless since the steep mud was stalagmited and almost
devoid of holes. From the far end of this ledge we should be able to
see into the hidden passage and then we could probably bridge across
right into it.

More poles again. The next journey up Stream Passage was
a slow one. We carried an 18ft. larch pole, which just got in through
the new entrance. By pushing and backing in the side passages and
bedding planes we approached Low's triumphantly. We hauled it up to
the West Ledge when a better idea struck me. The bottom was lashed
to the Good Friday Rawlbolt, then paying out the rope from the top
it rested against the East Ledge, with the rope made fast to the top
bolt on the west side. A gentle pull could swing it like a boom round
to the hidden passage. So, down the west ladder and up the east ladder
where the top of the boom was easily reached. A spare line was tied
to this boom which reached to the floor. The slope had been too
steep to traverse, but holding the boom it was an easy walk. The
hidden passage got nearer. Standing opposite it, all could be seen -
the whole damn lot. It was nothing more than a bay. But what happened
to the upper part? The overhang still obscured the view. Sitting
with the hanging rope under one thigh and over the other shoulder
it only needed a push to swing right across the passage. After the
initial creakings of the lashings it was very pleasant out in the
middle. I could look up into the meander. An open joint ran up from
the lower suspected passage but again one more overhang obscured the
view right into the corner. I abseiled down level with the floor
of Low's and swung on to it from over the Junction. We should have to
"maypole" up from the ledges into the meander. A short pole was
assembled and hauled up to the West Ledge. Gingerly it was poked up
into the meander; an extra tube extended it further and its short
ladder hung down to the edge of the East Ledge. Another Rawlbolt was
put there for a belay. Secended from there in climbing style, the

effects of the "maypole" slipping could be minimised; better to knock your teeth out dangling against a wall than hitting the deck.. 60ft. below.

The "maypole" did not slip. Above the pendants were two narrow ledges facing one another so closely that you could stand with one foot on each. The ripple marked walls bore evidence of the one time stream that flowed to the south end of the passage. The secret of Low's was laid bare; a poised block explained the gap beside it. There was no new passage. At least we could be satisfied now we know there wasn't one. The experience with the poles would be to advantage in other places. Now, an orderly retreat was needed. All the tackle was lowered except the east ladder supported by its Rawlbolt. Below it, in the crack, was a thread belay. Through a piece of cotton line tied in it was passed a long rope. Then, climbing above it on the ladder the Rawlbolt was again reached, and, with one foot jammed in the crack to unhook the Karibiner the ladder was dropped to the floor. One hand was strong enough to put the spanner on the Rawlbolt and then both were dropped. A last look at the pendants before leaving them to their eons of undisturbed peace. A short slide down the crack till the doubled rope took the weight and the last man abseiled to the heap of tackle below.

The withdrawal was made complete and this could be looked upon as a success. Anyone can enjoy dangling on a rope. It is the man that holds the rope, the 'porters' and the chap getting cold waiting for you that makes the team. In this team all equally important were:-

John Alexander.
Noel Dilly.
Peggy Hardwidge.
Peter Harvey.
Dai Hunt.
Jack Myers.
Glynn Thomas.
John Truman.
Nigel Stanley.

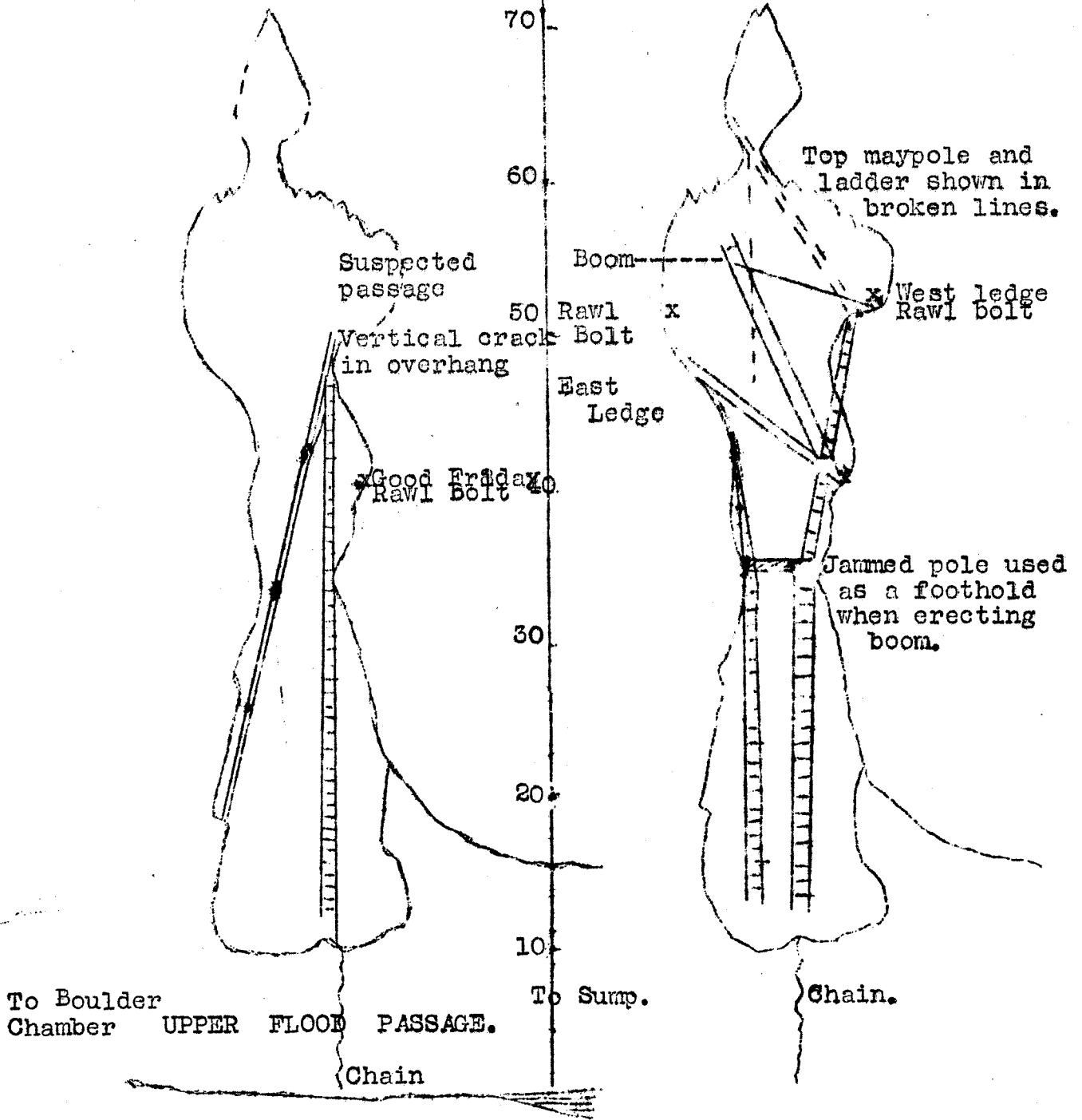
W.H.Little.

1/5/53.

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The Second Attempt

Later stages showing first ladder belayed to a Rawl bolt east ladder on oblique maypole and the boom swinging free.



Scale. 1" = 10ft.