PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

Journal and Newsletter

No.102, December 1987.

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DIARY.

Dec-Jan. New Year trip (Yorkshire or North Wales).
1988.
Jan 10th. BCRA Meeting.
14th. PCG Annual General Meeting, 8pm, hut.
17th. 3rd Annual River Dart Lilo Race.
21st. Committee Meeting, 8pm, Hut.
30th. Inaugural General Meeting of Council of Devon and Cornwall Caving Clubs.
Pengelly Centre, Buckfastleigh, 7.30pm.
31st. Annual Underground Late Xmas Dinner and Farce.
Feb 20th. Joint Mitnor working weekend.
March 13th. BCRC AGM, Ripley.
18-20. Cave leadership training and assessment.
19th. NCA AGM, Ingleton.
March - April. Lundy '88.
April 23rd. DCRO AGM, 7.30, Crest Hill, Buckfastleigh.
24. DCRO Cave Rescue Practice.
May 13-15. BCRA Creswell Crags Cave archaeology study weekend.
Aug 26th- Sept 11th. Vercors.
Oct 23rd. DCRO Mine rescue practice.
Nov 11-13. DCRO Training and assessment weekend.

VERCORS TRIP.

There will be a trip to the Vercors region of France in the summer of 1988 from 26th Aug to 11th September. For further details please ess Dave Jean or Lynne Beattie. We are asking for a £50 deposit for this trip by February 20th please.

NOTICE OF AGM.

Notice is hereby given that th Annual General Meeting of the Plymouth Caving Group will be held at the hut, Martinsgate, Plymouth on Thursday Jan 14th at 8pm.

AGENDA.

Apologies for absence.
Minutes of the last AGM.
Chairman's Address.
Officer's Reports.
Business arising from these reports.
Election of Committee and officers for 1988.
Review of Club subscriptions.
Any other business.

BILL MAYERS.

It is with deep regret and a great sense of personal sadness and loss that we report the death of Bill in October. He was a member of the PCG for nearly ten years from the mid seventies..

He joined the PCG following the interest of his son Steve who having left the area has taken up a career in outdoor pursuits.

Bill was a good friend. He came caving with us on many occassions, as fellow caver, parent, youth leader, colleague. For ex- Plymstock cavers many will remember him as one of the better youth leaders at the Morley Centre, others will remember him as the owner of the Treetops day nursery. He took the mantle of chairman of the Radford adventure centre, and without his patience I have no dpubt the project could well have foundered.

He was struck by cancer a few years ago and had to have an eye removed. Even this could not daunt a dry sense of humour.

To wife Pat, to Steve and to Bills two daughters we extend our condolencies.

Bob Cawthorne.

COUNCIL OF DEVON AND CORNWALL CAVING CLUBS.

With the general feeling that our regional caving body, the Council of Southern Caving Clubs, does not represent the interests of cavers in the south west, but merely those resideent on Mendip, it has been felt that a regional body should be ste up. This has been generally supported at discussion at a number of meetings over the last year, including the BCRA Devon conference, so Bill Tolfree has produced a draft constitution and an Inaugural General Meeting has been set for January 30th 1988, 7.30pm at the Pengelly Centre, Buckfastleigh.It is important that as many members as possible attend- and you can stay overnight for the PCG dinner the following day.

The main points of the draft constitution are as follows:

Aims: to foster the spirit of cooperation between cavers and caving bodies in the area, and with other areas and outside bodies. To inform its members, to negotiate and maintain access, and to sponser evevts.

Membership- Group Membership (properly organised organisations) and individuals.

Officers- Chairman, secretary, treasurer, conservation and access officer, and three others. To be elected at each AGM.

If you wish to see the full draft or have any comments on it please see Bob or contact Bill Tolfree.

CAVE NEWS.

Bakers Pit. Further collapse into Glorious Devon Series recently occurred, and another new collapse has appeared in the church car park.

Various members have recently removed a lot of rubbish from the cave, and Andy Bennett and Fiona McWilliam recently cleared up the camp area where much fungus had appeared. There is still much rubbish and a lot of dumped carbide, eg near the entrance and in the Plymouth Etension. Please take a container with you and take something out every time.

It is obvious that certain groups are abusing the cave- please let a committee member know if you find evidence of the identity of such groups.

Mendips. Upper Flood Swallet- a muddy extension has been made from the dig at the end.

Tynings Barrow Swallet. Access- Permission and key from Mr. Reakes, Pinlea, Green Ore, goodwill 25p.

Wales. Daren Cilau- a bypass to the 7th Hour Sump seems likely.

Ogof Capel, Clydach Gorge- a dig has yielded 600m of well decorated passage.

Derbyshire. P8 has been pushed to P8-10, ie beyond Sump 9.

Most people will have heard about the dissapearance of Alex Pitcher in the Gouffre Berger. Alex Pitcher Memorial Fund has been set up initially to raise money to buy two molephone sets for the French cave resue teams. Donations- c/o Paul Allen, BMC Crawford House, Precinct Centre, Booth St. East, Manchester m139rz.

Spain. A number of caves have been linked to give the Sistema del Trave, -1381m deep- the third deepest in the world- in the Picos.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY.

Lundy Rock Climbs, Garry Gibson 1985.
Beneath The Mountains, Rose & Gregson.
Caves of North Torbay, CJ Proctor 1987.
BEC. Belfry Bulletin 441- Eastwater, Hunters Hole, Windsor Hill Quarry Cave.
BCRA. Cave Science 14.2. Symposium on Surveying Caves.
Caves and Caving 37. Little Neath, Ogof Llyn Parc, Canada, Spain, Belize etc.
Chelsea SS. 29.10,11,12. Deneholes, Green Street Green, Andes, Scotland, Ogof Capel & Elm Hole surveys, Czechoslovakia, Austria.
DCRO. AGM Minutes 1986. Agenda 1987. Accounts 1986-7.
DSS. Index to Journals 1-130.
RFDCC. 99. Croes Bleddyn Swallet, Fairplay Iron Mine, Old Stone Well dig (Symon's Yat).
Stalactite (Organe de la Societe Suisse de Speleologie). 1/86- Holloch.
2/86- Le Reseau des Morteys (512m deep, 6.6km long), Le Scherschacht (-401m).

NEW BOOKS.

Devon Caves Vol 3- Caves of North Torbay, CJ Proctor 1987, This covers the area south to Torquay. A number of limestone sollution caves occur, the only one of importance being being Kent's Cavern (900m long). Various short but interesting sea caves and slip rifts are described.

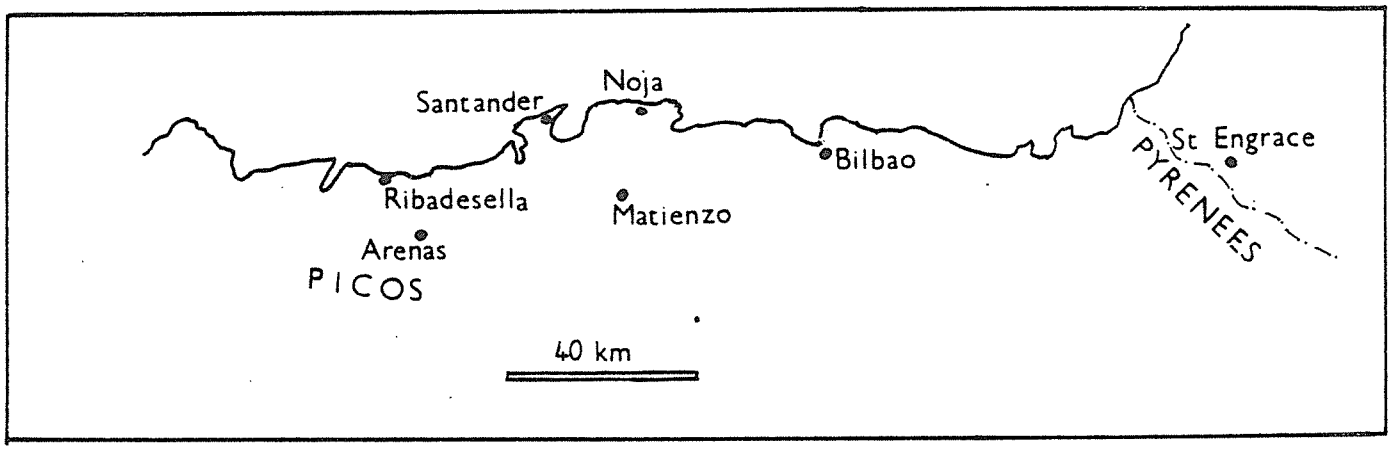
Mendip Underground. A second edition of this guide has now been published. Many of the caves have been extended since the first edition(1977), notably Blackmoor Flood Swallet, Swildons and Eastwater, and new inclusions include Charterhouse and Gough's. Most of the surveys have been redrawn with more detail, and there are many new photos. Beneath The Mountains, David Rose and Richard Gregson. Hodder & Stroughton, 1987.

An account of the OUCC expeditions to the Picos de Europa 1980 to 1986, including the exploration of Sistema Xitu (-1148m deep), Sistema Jorcada Blanca (-600m) and Sistema Conjurtao (-655m).

EASTER TRIP TO SPAIN 1987.

It was a gloriously sunny Sunday morning in April that saw Lynn Beattie, Pete Rustage, Andy Bennett, Kevin Manktelow, Jerry Drake, Tris and myself sailing out of Plymouth Sound bound for Spain on the good ship Quiberon. The voyage was a long one and we spent a good part of it eating, drinking and sleeping but as we threaded our way through the miriad of islands off the coast of Brittany we were sunning ourselves on deck and Andy was entertaining us and the other passengers by playing with his balls. He then taught Lynne how to do it and eventually Tris joined in untill one nearly disappeared overboard.

Our arrival in Spain was not a sunny one. Santander was shrouded in mist and it was damp. We quickly left the city and headed for the hills around Matienzo. Here the mist turned to fog and heavy rain and we were not impressed. We ended up in a bar in Ramales de la Victoria. Matienzo appeared to be a boggy pit in the landscape and so we headed north once more to the coast and the sunshine and a campsite at Noja. This was to be our base while we were in this part of Spain.

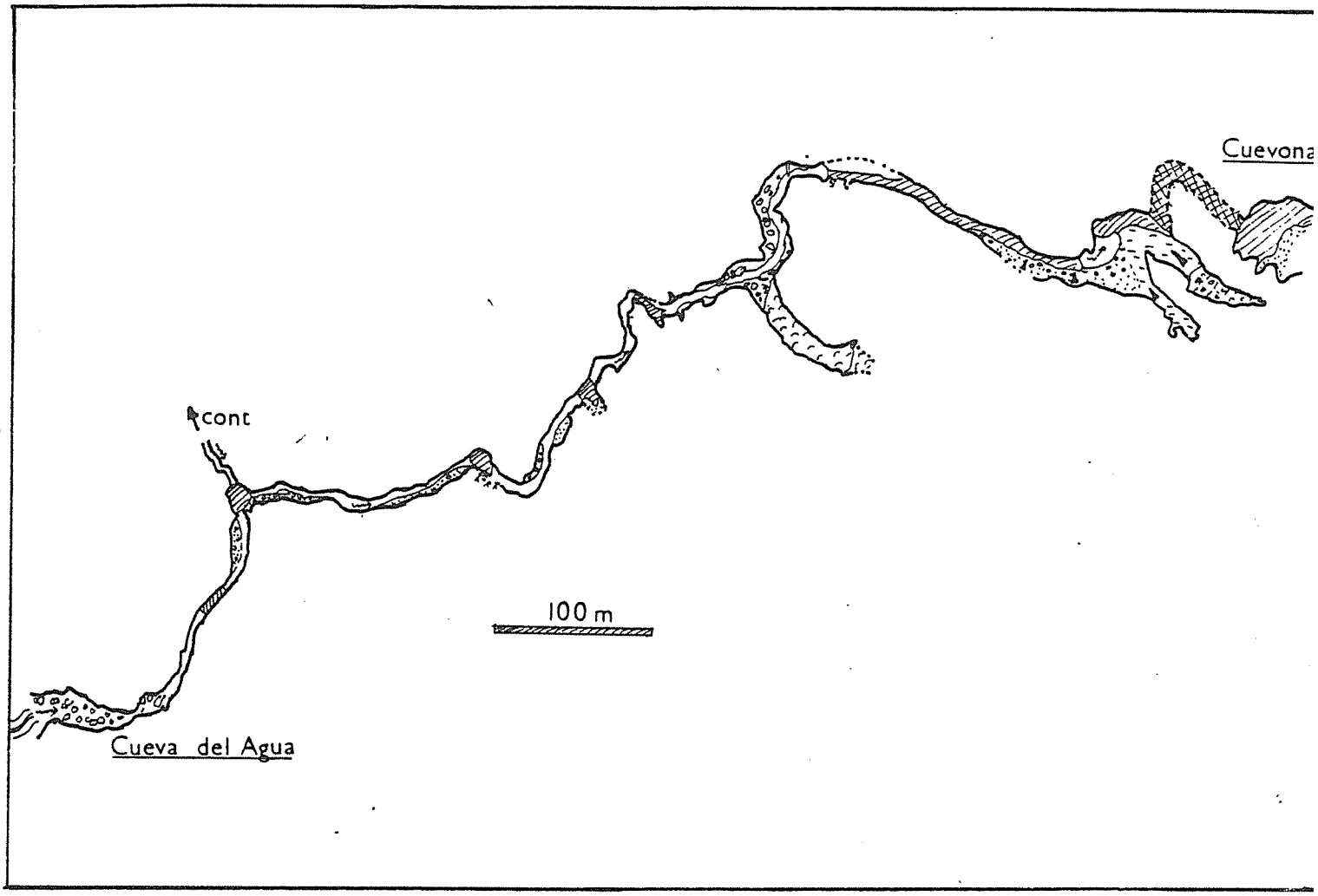


Next day we went first to Santona, a picturesque fishing village along the coast from Noja and then drove to Matienzo for lunch in a quarry overlooking the village. It all looked very different today in hot Spanish sunshine and we were all very impressed.

The Lower Cretaceous limestones in which the caves have developed overlie a base of impermeable sandstones. It was a shame that we weren't really there long enough to look more closely at the limestones and their structure because it looked very interesting and it was obvious that the Alpine Orogeny has had a considerable effect here. The Matienzo depression itself is very interesting in that it is entirely closed and all drainage is underground from it.

Our lunch over we quickly headed into the valley to search out Cueva del Agua underneath Enaso which overlooks the La Vega branch of the depression. We quickly located the cave entrance near a derelict mill and changed for our first trip. The passage at the entrance was 5-6m wide and 8-12m high and remained fairly constant through the cave which we followed for about a kilometer to a wide, deep, circular pool. At first we could keep dry by clambering over rocks but soon we had to drop down to the level of the stream and wade through what we discovered to be remarkably warm water. Of course, this was Spain. We followed the stream passage untill an inlet on the lefthand side created a pool where we had to go around a bend. The water here was chest deep but not uncomfortable. We then climbed a shingle bank and then onto rocks which once more took us well above the level of the river which at this point had become a torrent running in a canyon below us. We were forced to cross the river here and keep to the rocks on the righthand wall. Where the river widened, its turbulence lessened and we were once more able to wade. We climbed on the righthand side to a high, dry inlet before continuing along the stream passage to the pool and sump. Some of us clambered about here and found two high level galleries. The sump resurges at Cuevona on the La Secada side of Mount Enaso. We re-emerged where we had entered and while I sat in the sunshine Pete, Jerry and Andy went bounding up

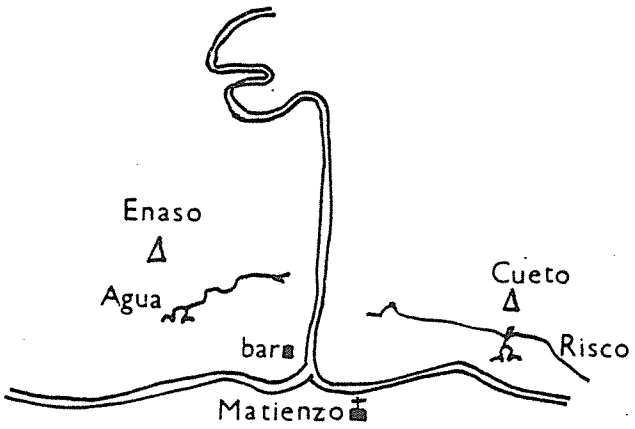
the side of Monte Enaso to look at some very obvious openings.



Together again we headed back to the seaside at Noja for a pretea paddle and believe it or not, Jerry Drake forgot his trousers! We discovered a nice homely restaurrant where we supped throughout our stay.

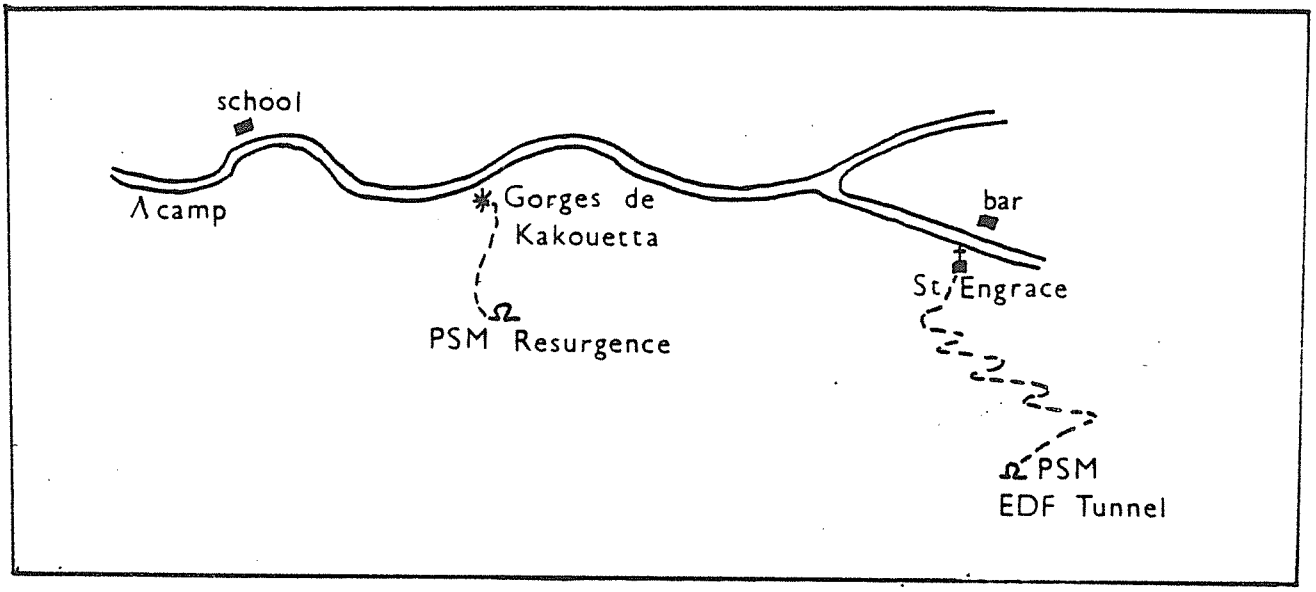
The next day one car went back up into the hills to Cueva Uzueka in the Riano valley. Lynne and I became tourists and went along the coast to Laredo before turning inland to explore the Sierra de Hornijo and the valley of the Rio Ason. We eventually ended the day at Santander where Lynn found a shop with Smurfs singing Yankee Doodle Dandy and we both collapsed into the gutter with our sides splitting with laughter.

Our final day in this area and it was still hot and sunny. We went back up to Matienzo for another caving trip, this time at Cueva Risco. We soon located the entrance behind a farm at Sedo in the Ozano branch of the depression. We climbed down the shaft into the entrance, already I was most impressed. We were following the upstream branch into the Risco series. The streamway was high and impressive and wound its way along. We ignored the Tonto inlet and followed the main stream passage. Somewhere in the Risco River Gallery Lynn and I halted while the others went on. Pete and Kevin came back to us and the four of us made our way out into the Spanish sunshine and had a brew ready for the others.



Good Friday and we were preparing to leave Noja for France. The drive along the coast road to Bilbao and San Sebastian was against the flow of the bank holiday traffic and so we weren't seriously delayed. We crossed the frontier and obtained a supply of Francs, as far as Lynn and I were concerned we were back in civilisation in a place where we could be understood. We took the road that skirted the foothills of the Pyrenees. We eventually arrived at Mauleon where we stopped for a drink and other vital necessities and where we lost Kevin. Having found him again we took the road to Tardets and then up into the Pyrenees to the Basque Commune of St Engrace in the valley below Pierre St Martin.

Saturday dawned as bright and sunny as the other days and we all assembled by the little church in St Engrace in preperation for the climb to PSM. Since it was Kevin who suffered the most I'll let him continue.



'The heat beats down oppressively, a warm dry heat, that still soaks my tee shirt in sweat. "Not much further now" I foolishly think, God, how wrong is it possible to be. "Right", I decide, as I stub out my 1,000,000,000th fag of the day. "One last go, nearly there". I slowly, painfully begin to move my poor battered body into a crawl.

After an interminable time I reach my goal. Now where did I put those trousers and trainers, God I hate that sleeping bag. I finally emerge from the tent into the glorious French sunshine at our campsite. Its then time for a quick wash and scrub up and a quick breakfast and coffee.

The campsite was about 6km outside St Engrace in the French Pyrenees, we'd stayed there as the villagers didn't seem to want cavers in the village. The gear was then packed into our rucksacks for the trip to the Gouffre de la Pierre St Martin, anything that wasn't essential for the trip was left in the cars or tents. David, who has done the trip up the mountain before, says that the height of the cave is about the same as Ben Nevis. I, unfortunately, have never had to walk up Ben Nevis, the worst I can think of is 'Murder Hill', but this was guarenteed not to give me any idea of what I was getting into.

We got into St Engrace at about 9.30 where we parked the cars and took out the rucsacks and did some last minute checks. We then set off to the track leading to the mountain. After going about 100 yards we encountered our first hurdle. Dave looked around and said, "This is all changed since the last time I was here, there should be a track".

"Great start", I thought. There was a small bridge and a small road to a farm and a sign, in French. Our faithful translators got to work and decided it said 'No Access to the Cave'. I couldn't say aye or nay as my French is marginally better than my Spanish which only consists of "Siete cerveza pour favour" and "Muchias Gracias", which were probably the most important things I needed to be able to say.

We sent Tris, who spoke reasonable French, to the farm to ask if it was the route to the cave. According to Dave there was a zig zag track up the mountain that goes directly to the cave. Tris returned to further lower our spirits, the farmer had said the road doesn't go to the cave.

We eventually decided to try a bridge that led to a gate, where, lo and behold,

running parrallel to the fence was a well marked path that seemed to lead to the mountains. As we progressed limestone became more evident, poking its way through the soil and green grass. The path ascended quickly and entered a fairly densely wooded area. There seemed to be a large amount of felled trees around, which we had to stumble and climb over. The sun beat down, even through the trees it was going to be a scorcher of a day! Pete, who had gone up a steep slope, called back to us. We all hurried to catch up with him. My God, look, we all thought, a path. David proclaimed this to be the lost path to PSM.

We moved fairly quickly after this, pausing briefly to allow the unfit ones, ie me, to catch my breath, ie have a cigarette. The higher we got the less dense the trees became, and the view gradually became more spectacular.

We rounded a corner and the path went on fairly straight into a steep sided valley in the distance. We continued to walk while Tris decided to get higher to take some more photos. We became rather nervous at one point because Tris was traversing a very iffy looking scree slope. We weren't worried about him, but if he slipped it was us directly below the scree! We pointed this out and he stayed where he was so we rushed out of range. He then descended and caught us up. Further on we ran into a Land Rover with a party of French cavers who were getting changed out of their gear.

About a mile further on we entered trees again and walked up a steep area, towards a highish spoil tip. Pete, Andy, Jerry and Tris rushed on whilst David, Lynne and I plodded on up another path. After a fairly steep climb we crested the hill and saw the hut. This speeded us up and we eventually reached the hut at about half past eleven, so it had taken us about two hours to get up. The hut was rather manky looking, upon entering the expressions 'extremely rickety' and 'please can I get out' sprang to mind. Outside we ate our melted chocolate and changed to enter the cave. Jerry Drake will continue the story as something very special happened to him.

The way into the system that we were using was the EDF tunnel, built as part of a hydroelectric scheme. Unfortunately this suceeded in depriving the Spanish of their water supply and so was abandoned leaving cavers with an easy way into the La Verna chamber. This is a little suspicious since cavers must have provided the imformation to the electricity authority.

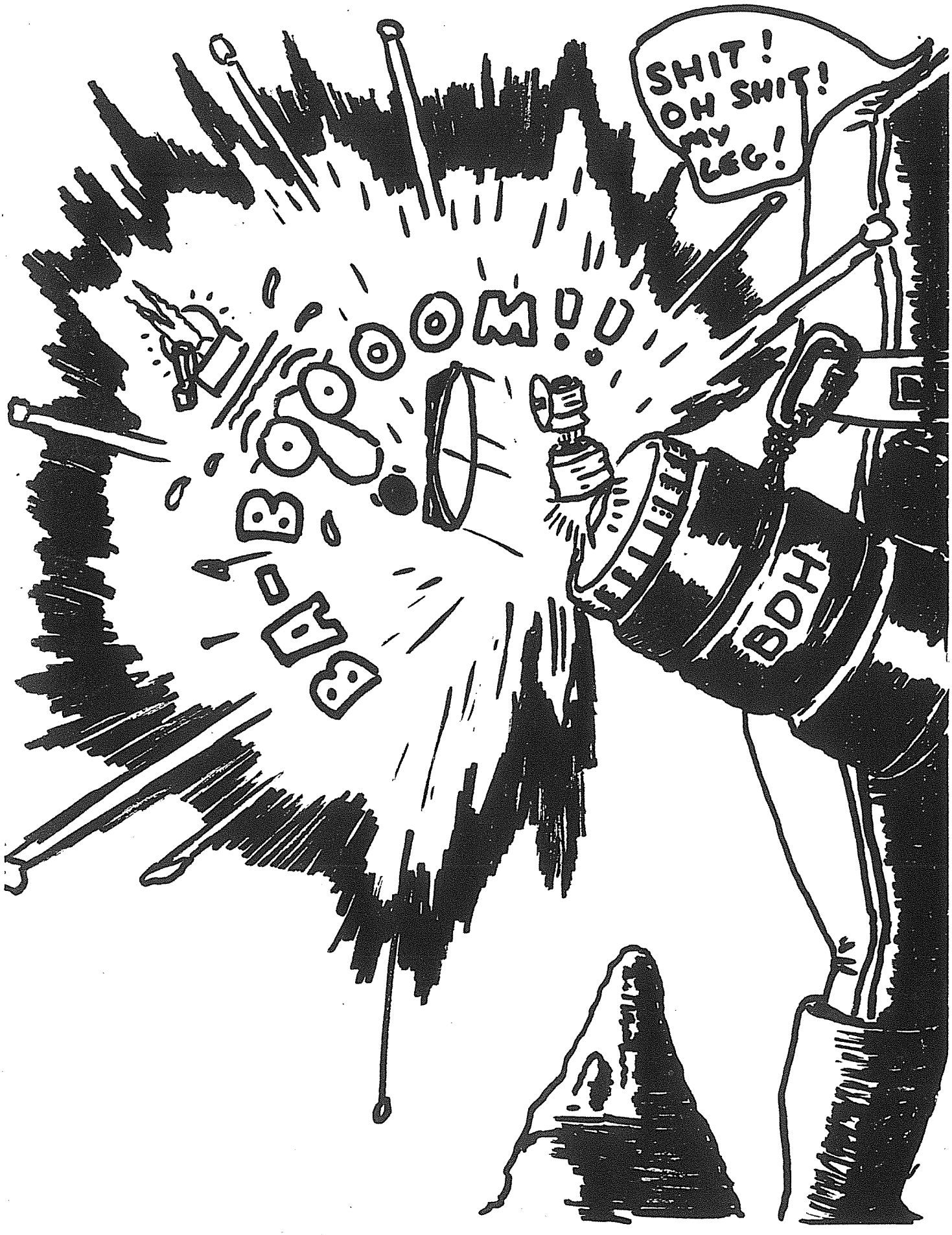
After getting changed and adding '87 to the Plymouth Caving Group '78 and '82 scratched inside the caving hut we made for the tunnel entrance. The draught from this could be felt from thirty feet away and a tee shirt held by the door was blown out straight! A strong draught (!) indicated a big cave, but nothing quite prepared us for the cavernous chamber at the end of the mined tunnel. Walking into it can be compared to walking out onto a mountainside at night. Our lights followed the roof and walls but soon lost them as they curved away. In the distance a large waterfall could be heard but only vaguely seen. We were all stunned including Dave who had seen it before. Being English we had a brew up.

After this we headed for the Chevalier chamber, passing plaques dedicated to two cavers who had died in the system, one of the being Marcel Loubens who died on the 1000ft Lepineaux shaft, the original way into the cave in the early days of exploration.

Before reaching Salle Chevalier most of the party decided to turn back and return down to the valley. Pete, Andy and myself carried on following the river upstream. The chambers that followed were not as large as La Verna, but more impressve in their own way as their dimensions could be made out. Because of the size of the passages and chambers and the small size of some of the interconnecting routes conventional route finding would be impractical, so a series of luminous tape arrows had been laid out along the route. Thus the continuous cries in horrendous French of 'I see a markeur'. As the streamway was about ten times the volume of Swildons these 'markeurs' were important so as not to get your feet wet. Peter was of the opinion that the only thing the French detested more than getting their feet wet were squeezes. We were rather puzzled when a series of markeurs led us through squeezes labelled PGM. We thought this may stand for Pete's Gone Mad but it turned out to be a flood bypass to the normal route.

On leaving the Chevalier chamber a loud explosion beside my right knee instantly led me to believe I had lost my leg. Andy, who at that instant was trying to relight his carbide lamp, thought he had blown himself up. Peter was wondering what the French for 'Cave Rescue' was.

It turned out that the carbide in the bottom chamber of my spare carbide lamp had reacted with some moisture in the BDH container in which it was being carried. The resulting pressure build up then blew the top of the lid off!


SHIT!
OH SHIT!
MY LEG!
BOOOOOM!!!
BOH

The trip in general followed large passages and chambers, the stream being present for most of the way. Formations were quite formidable by ordinary standards, but were completely swamped by the size of their surroundings. In the Lepineaux Chamber at the base of the 1000ft shaft we climbed over the cone of debris from the shaft. This was so large as to necessitate a handline for the descent! Further on another interesting feature was a ridge of loosely calcited mud and rock spanning a chamber, only a foot across at the top and falling away very steeply for at least 50ft on either side, the route being over the top.

In the final large chamber, Salle Aragonite, we circled around the central boulder pile (so large it took us a while to realise we were still in the same chamber) and, after a short rest in a beautiful aragonite grotto, headed out. Peter had decided that he had now done everything there was to do in caving and was now retiring!

For the second time that day we crossed the French - Spanish border without getting our passports stamped.

We reached the entrance in the early evening after eight hours underground and jogged back down to Sainte Engrace in the twilight, arriving back in time for a couple of beers before returning to the campsite.

All in all, the most amazing trip, spoilt only by the number of spent carbide dumps in the cave.

While all this was going on the rest of us left the cave and lounged for a while in the sunshine before descending to the little pub by the church in St Engrace. After a few drinks we returned to the campsite via a walk up the very picturesque Kakouetta Gorge to the resurgance of PSM.

The next day was Easter Sunday and we left St Engrace heading further along the Pyrenees. We eventually arrived at Lourdes (where none of us were cured) before carrying on to Cirque Gavarnie, a most amazing sight.

Our intention was to recross the frontier into Spain. Very wise as we had practically run out of French money and petrol. Our troubles were only just begining as all the high roads were still closed due to snow. Eventually, in the nick of time, we found a pass that was open, Somport, and Andy freewheeled down the Spanish side of the Pyrenees to a layby just outside Canfrc where we all spent the night.

Next day was a little overcast but we had a long drive ahead of us across to the Picos de Europa. We followed the Rio Aragon towards Pamplona where we stopped to see the place famous for the running bulls. Then it was driving on to Victoria and then Bilbao in order to follow the coast road once more, this time to the Picos.

We set up our camp at a national park site just outside Arenas after we had first driven up the Cares gorge to Sortres, a small village high on the plateau. The next day we were to search for another Cueva del Agua near Sortres's twin town of Treviso and so we drove down the Cares and up alongside the Deva to La Hermitage to sort out a route. Once again I'll let Kevin take up the story as once again he suffered, though not as much this time as others did.

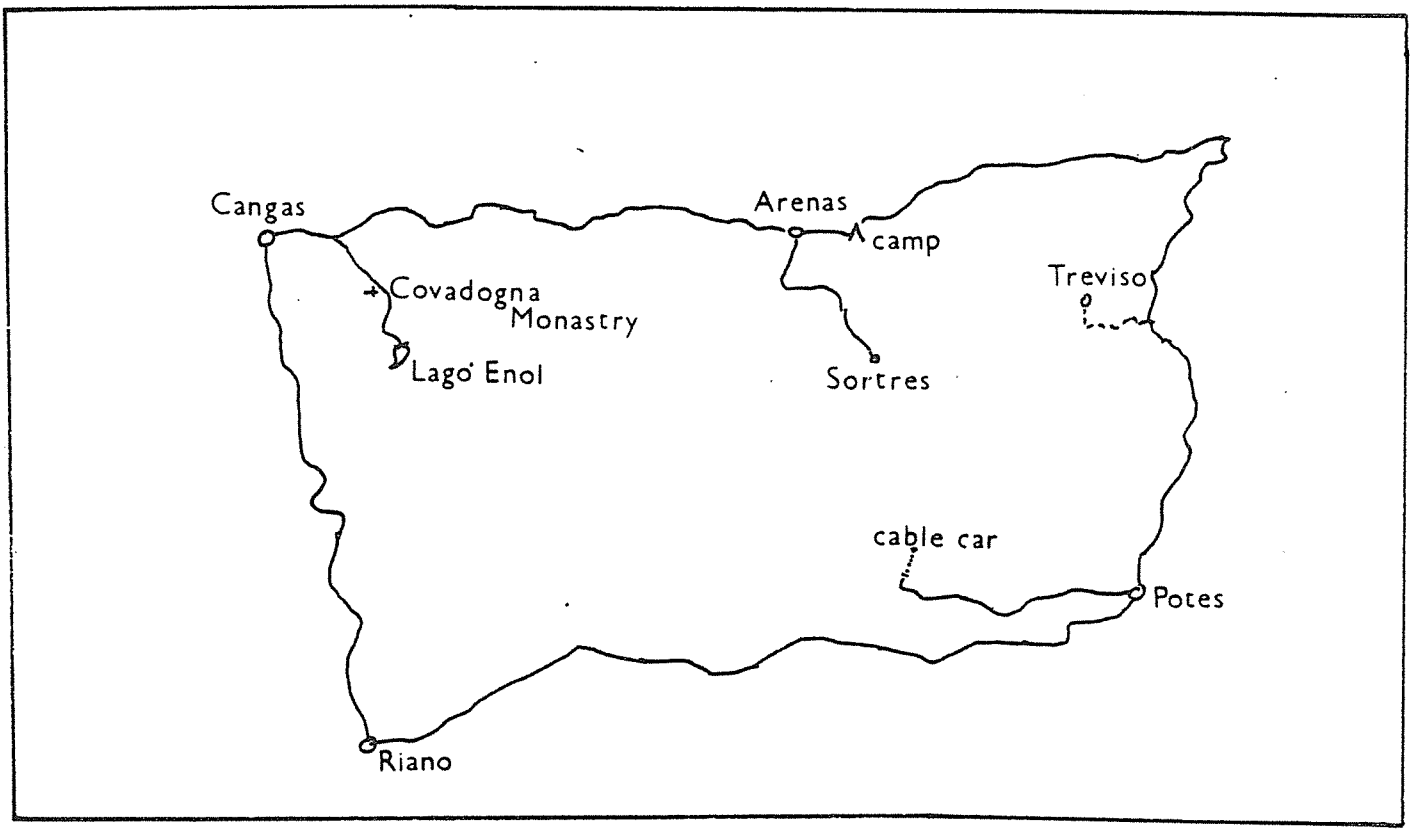
'The previous day we had cased the surrounding area supposed to contain Cueva del Agua. After checking the journals and Pete's maps, we decided to try the Urdon Gorge up past the hydroelectric station. Todays trip was to carry the gear up to the cave and to start to rig some of it. Peter, Andy and Jerry could do a long trip the next day whilst the rest of us went sight seeing.

We arrived and had a quick dinner before setting off past the hydroelectric power station. According to the map we had about two miles to go along the edge of the river. The river, unfortunately, was rather steep banked and too fast flowing for this type of thing and so we decided to follow the path which ran beside the river, apparently all the way to the cave. Because of this I had elected to wear dry gear, as had Pete. Tris unfortunately wore his wetsuit. David and Lynn wore just normal clothes as they weren't going underground. Andy and Jerry rucksacked their caving gear. Peter, Tris and I carried the tackle.

The river was a beautiful glacial river, with a beautiful blue colour. We walked about half a mile upstream on the left and came to a bridge and got on the right side of the river for the cave. A little further on was a rather mangled metal bridge showing much evidence of the force of a falling boulder.

The path slowly got higher above the river as we walked. I noted this to Pete and he said that to reach the cave we would have to go to a small town called Treviso at about 700 m. "700 metres," I thought, not knowing anything about 700m long let alone high!

Well there's 3.3 feet to the metre so multiply that by 700. Brilliant, huh, except my maths doesn't run to things like that, then someone told me it was 2310 feet.



"Jesus wept," I decided as I remembered the 1500 metres at school and that was on level ground. I was disheartened by this.

We rounded a bend and the track zig zagged sharply up a small vertical valley. In the limestone were several exciting looking dark places, some places even had stal hanging.

The path rose at about an angle of 30-40°, but it seemed steeper. It became apparent that the track was part of a goat track, ie dung. There was also between the tracks a large amount of loose boulders, which we tried to avoid. We progressed up about 400 ft and the path then progressed along the left hand rock face as we'd seen it originally, at an angle of about 45°. This was to continue for about 200ft until we reached a switch back where we rested for about ten minutes and took some photos. We then continued along another switch back and were out on the outer face of the mountain, nearest the river. Across the Urdon valley we could see the hydroelectric canal.

"Well," I thought, "can't be much further now". I rounded the corner and sagged. We still had to climb about as high as we had already gone. Lynn was taking some photos so I followed the others who were already a long way ahead. They stopped about half an hour later to let me catch up. Then we waited for Lynn who hadn't caught me up. Peter looking down said that he could see her. The rest of us lookee and had to admit that the goat he had seen did have a vague resemblance to Lynn, but not to the point of calling her a goat.

After several more minutes of a nonexistant Lynn, Peter ran down to find her. After about 15 minutes he came running back! I'd had to crawl! He came up to say that Lynn had slipped and twisted her knee so he was going back down. Dave decided he should go to drive them back to the campsite.

So Andy, Jerry, Tris and I continued our ascent. Due to the heat Tris was beginning to have trouble with his wetsuit which he had already stripped to his waist. He then took his long johns off and then his booties and poured the sweat out of them. He then put on his wellies.

At this point I realised that a tackle bag is very badly designed, the straps were cutting into my shoulders and had become very uncomfortable to carry.

We carried on for about another hour and reached the electricity pylon we had been heading for. Tris was by now very dehydrated and he said that there was no way that he could carry on unless we stopped at Treviso and get some water. As this idea was discussed we saw a pair of mating eagles flying below us about 100ft away. Several pictures were attempted. Then one of them alighted on the rock face behind us about 200' away. It is a pity no one had a zoom lens with them.

We eventually decided to leave the gear hidden under an overhang below us on a grass outcrop and go to Treviso to get some water to slake our thirst and rehydrate

poor Tris. We carried on for about 200 metres and rounded a bend and found we were seperated from Treviso by a substantial valley. Our path continued off and zig zagged to the top of the moutain and then down to Treviso. Our rough guesses said that we'd have another 2 to 3 miles to walk and Treviso from where we stood looked rather small and uninviting.

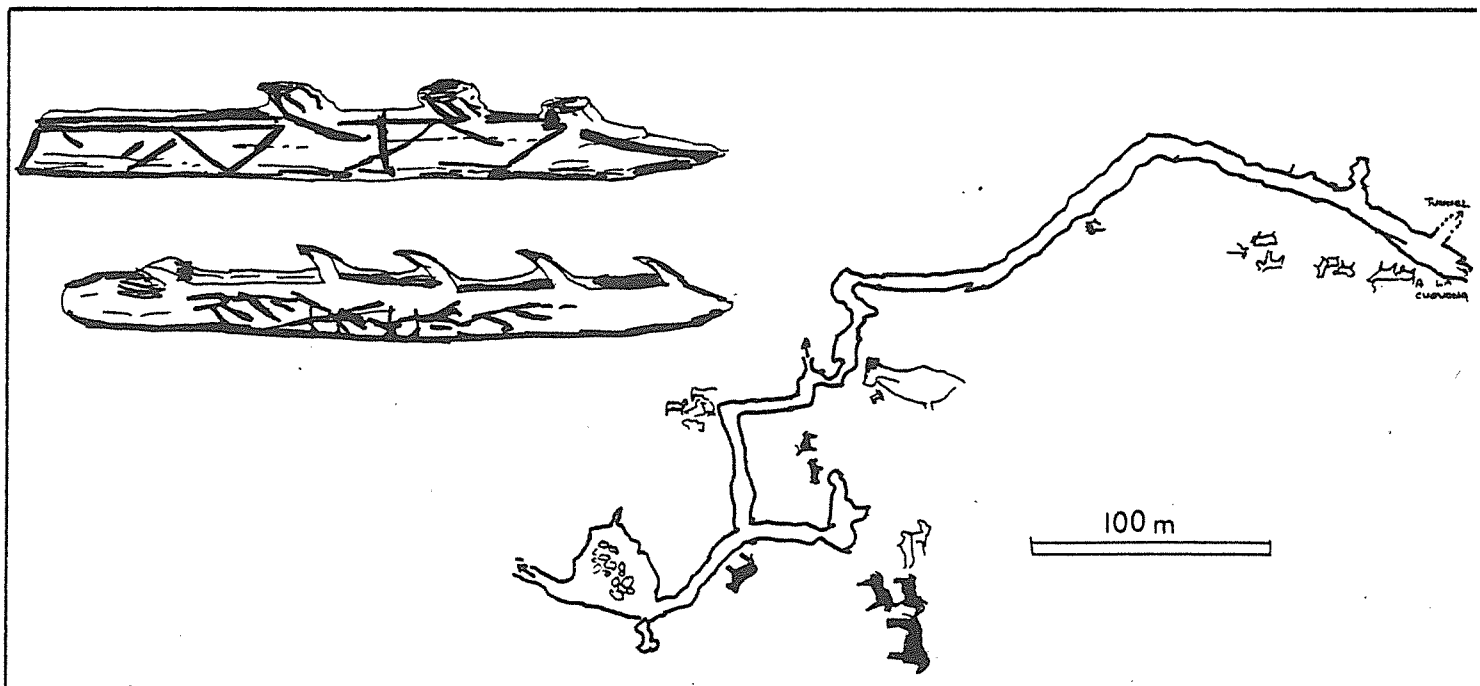
We decided to cut our losses and head down again and try the river for a drink, we'd based this assumption on the fact that we'd all drunk tap water from the standpipe near the Cueva del Risco and lived, despite the dead goats and rabbits at the bottom of the Risco shaft. We got down in about two hours and drank from the icy water of the river and cooled our weary feet and made our way to the car.

The next day was Wednsday and the more determined among us, Andy Pete and Jerry, had forgotten the Traumas of the previous day and were determined to find Agua, this time by driving to Treviso by Sortres. Their encounters with a Spanish road repair team 1500 metres up in the Picos must be a story in itself. But Lynn, Kevin, Tris and myself left them to it and went for a tourist trip around the Picos. We went first to the monastry at Covadogna, where the Christians turned back the invading Infidels. It was all very peaceful now especially with a swish new road built with EEC money. We carried on up the mountains to the two very beautiful lakes Enol and Ercina surrounded by melting snows and the first of the spring flowers. This was a mountain paradise. We carried on around the Picos through Cangas and Riano to Potes where we turned off for Funte de and a cable car ride to the snowy tops of the mountains. The views were fantastic. We completed the circuit via Potes and Panes to the campsite.

Thursday was our last day in Spain. We left Peter in the campsite in Arenas in the same marvellous sunshine that had been with us throughout our holiday. We made for Ribadesella on the coast where we visited Cueva de Tito Bustillo, a show cave named after one of its finders. We entered the cave through a man made tunnel. We came first to a chamber in which the tools of prehistoric man had been found. Then we saw a painting of a horse, very faint due to flooding in times past. Then we came to a part of the cave well decorated with paintings, deer running after each other, a stag and a 2m long horse in red, purple and black, The nice thing about this cave was that it didn't appear, at the time of our visit, to be terribly commercialised.

We drove back along the coast to Santander and the ferry home with time to relax on the beach, shop for a few knick knacks to remind ourselves of a very pleasant holiday and, of course, the usual duty frees.

Dave Jean, Kevin Manktelow, Jerry Drake.



Cueva de Tito Bustillo

CRUSHER CAVE, BUCKFASTLEIGH.

This is a new cave in Higher Kiln Quarry. It lies on the east side of the quarry, grid ref. SX 7435 6645, altitude approx.58 m O.D.

A rock shelter in a west facing quarry face contained excavations made by Anthony Sutcliffe in search of bones, apparently with no success.

In August 1987 Mark Elliot (PCG) and Tom Vowler (Bideford CCCC) dug in the floor of this excavation, (the so-called Hyaena Den), where a tiny hole could be seen. This soon broke into a narrow rift passage trending south west under the quarry floor. A boulder chamber was reached and various tight holes led off. A pit in the floor leads to a further passage containing beds of graded horizontally bedded conglomerates, similar to some of the recent stream deposits in Bakers. This suggests that this was part of a wet-weather drainage route, possibly active untill quarrying changed the whole area.

The cave consists of phreatic rifts developed along NE_SW trending joints. As it is running towards the quarry floor and is close to the base of the limestone, no great potential can be expected for future discoveries, but it is possible it was connected to as yet unentered cave between Joint Mitnor and Rift Cave.

Geophysical work by Rich Thorman (PPS) in the 1970's suggests that a similar cave extends under the quarry floor from the rift cave entrance, following parrallel fracture lines to those in Crusher Cave.

In the rock shelter at the entrance to Crusher Cave, a 0.8-0.5 m diameter phreatic tube extends northwards, about 6m long, with scalloping showing a northwards water flow. This ends at a mud choke.

There are several other holes in this part of the quarry which could yield more cave.

Crusher Cave, named after it's tight entrance, is about 18m long and 3m deep. Access is via the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust.

Alasdair Neill.

SPIDERS HOLE, BUCKFASTLEIGH.

As part of the investigations in Higher Kiln Quarry over the summer, Spiders Hole was surveyed by Fiona McWilliam and myself to determine it's relationship to the Joint Mitnor extension.

The cave is the most southerly in Higher Kiln Quarry, grid ref. SX 7436 6641, altitude approx. 66 m OD. It is one of the less often visited of the Buckfastleigh caves. A 2m climb leads into a phreatic tube. A left hand branch is short; in front a 5m free climb leads to low bedding chambers developed at several levels. These contain nice formations and several potential digs. An exposed traverse part way down the climb leads to a small passage ending at a tiny chamber. Above the traverse is a tight aven which seems to close down about 10m up.

The cave is named after its large population of Meta menardii.

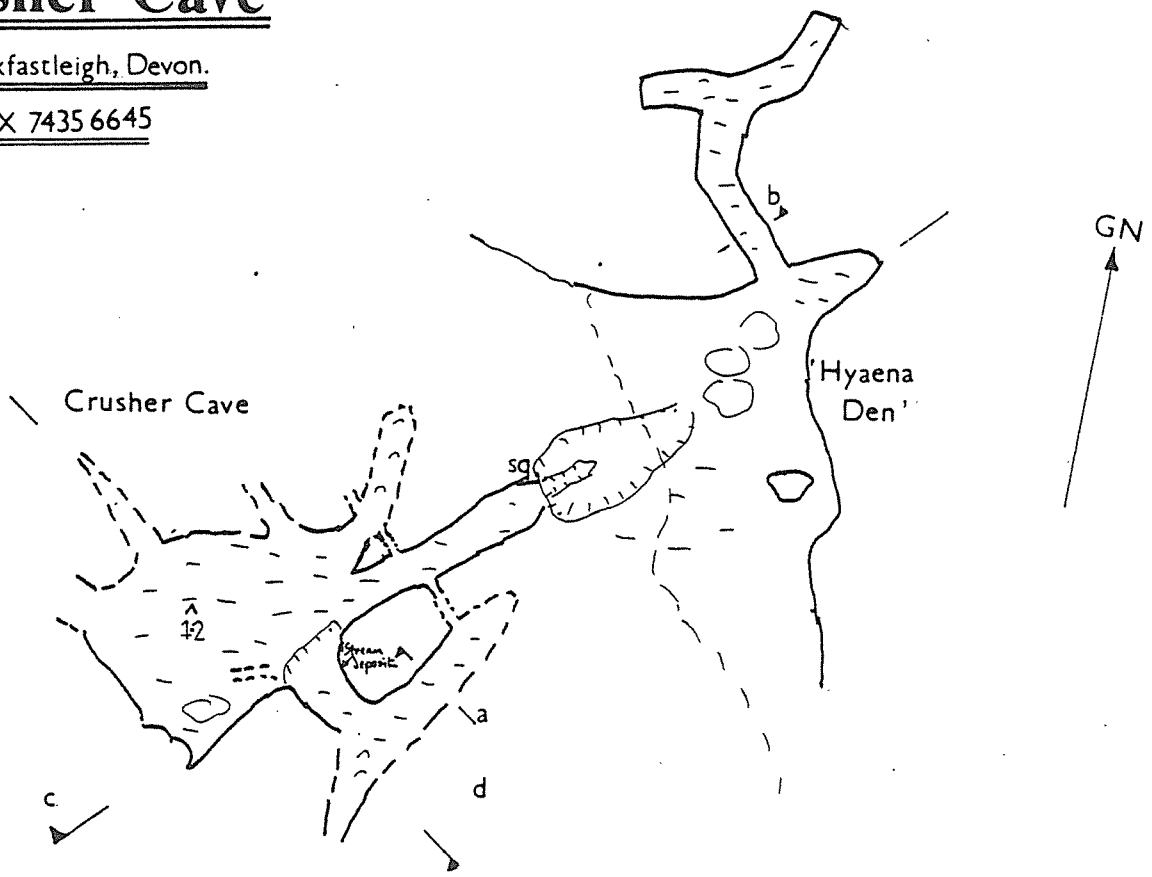
Access is via the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust.

Alasdair Neill.

Crusher Cave

Buckfastleigh, Devon.

SX 7435 6645

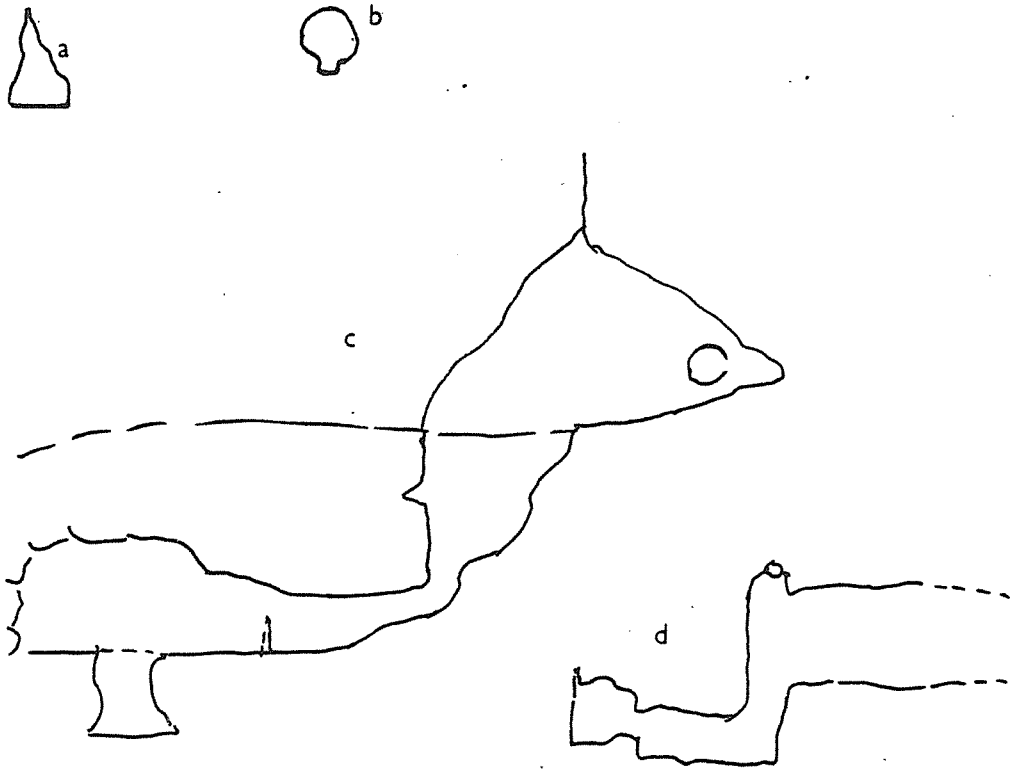


5m

Surveyed & drawn:
A. Neill, PCG, Sept 1987

BCRA grade 4c.

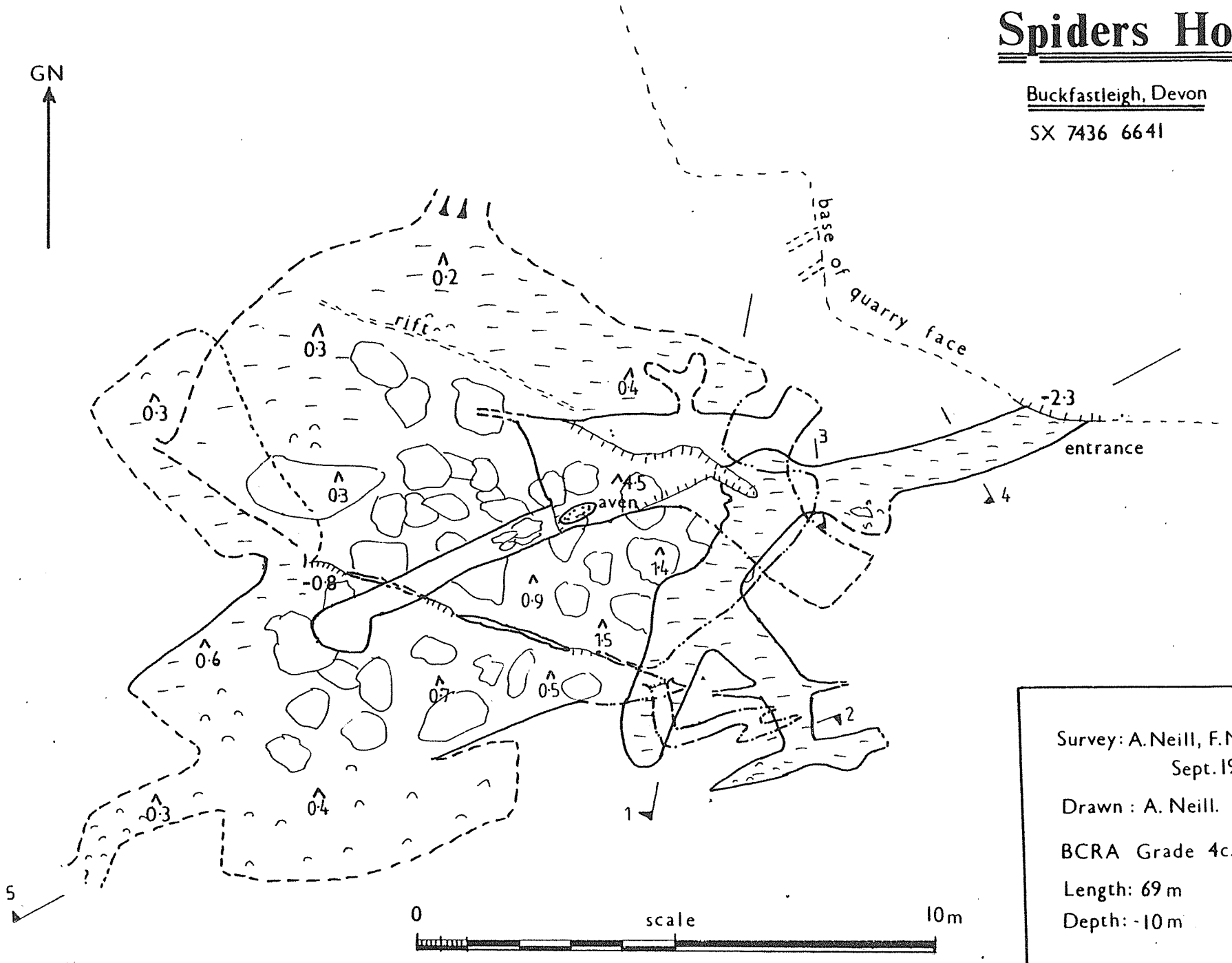
Sections



Spiders Hole

Buckfastleigh, Devon

SX 7436 6641



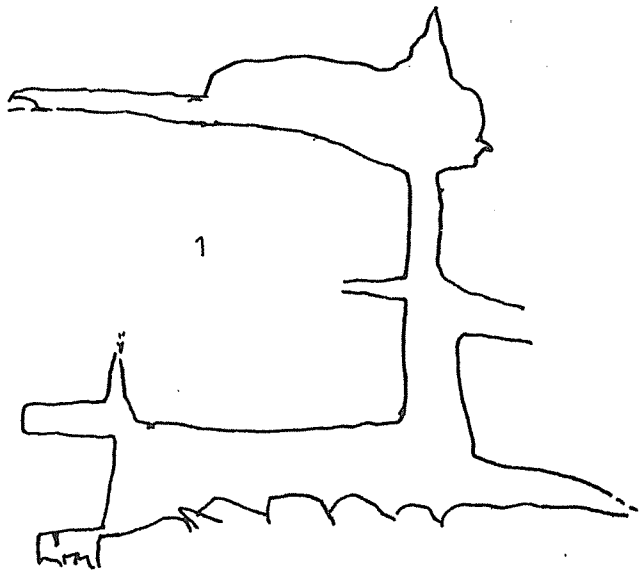
Survey: A. Neill, F. McWilliam (PCG)
Sept. 1987.

Drawn : A. Neill.

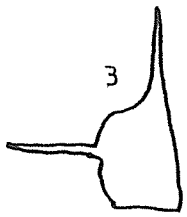
BCRA Grade 4c.

Length: 69 m

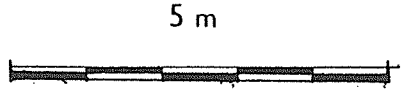
Depth: -10 m





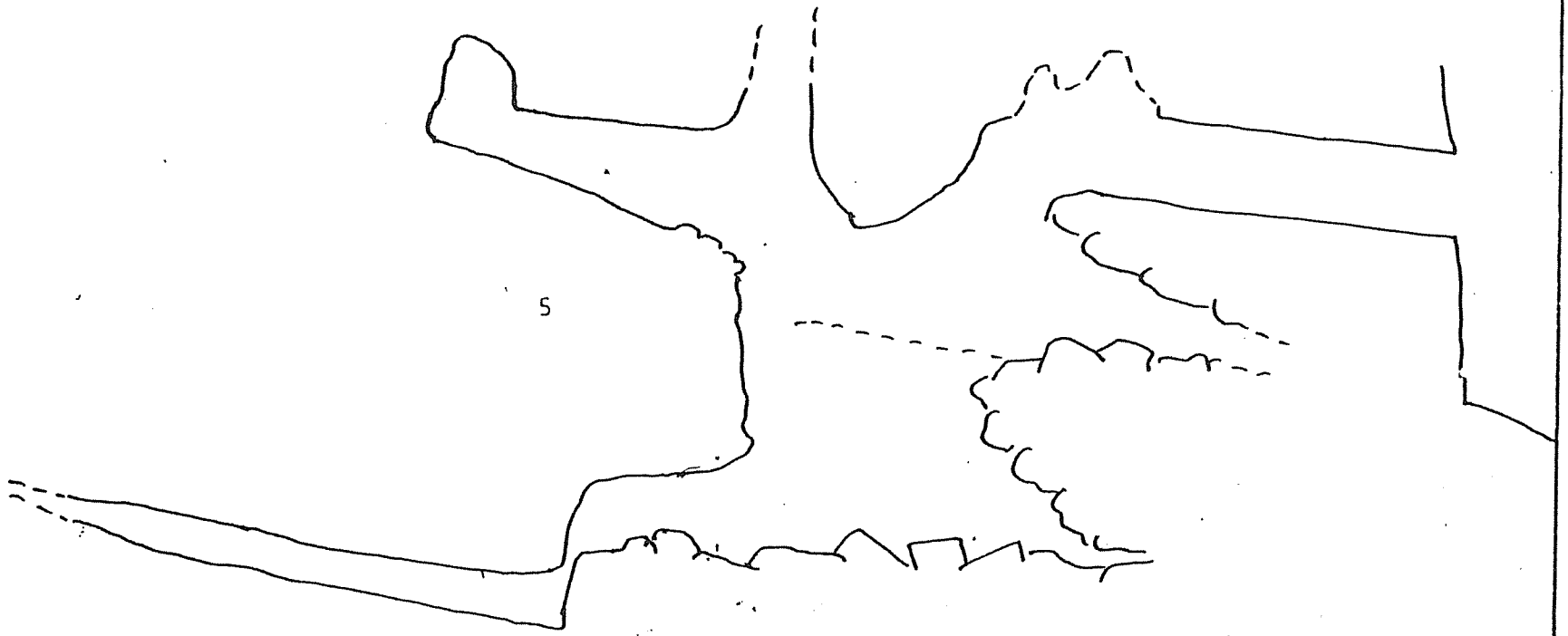






SPIDERS HOLE

SECTIONS



UNDERGROUND IN SURREY.

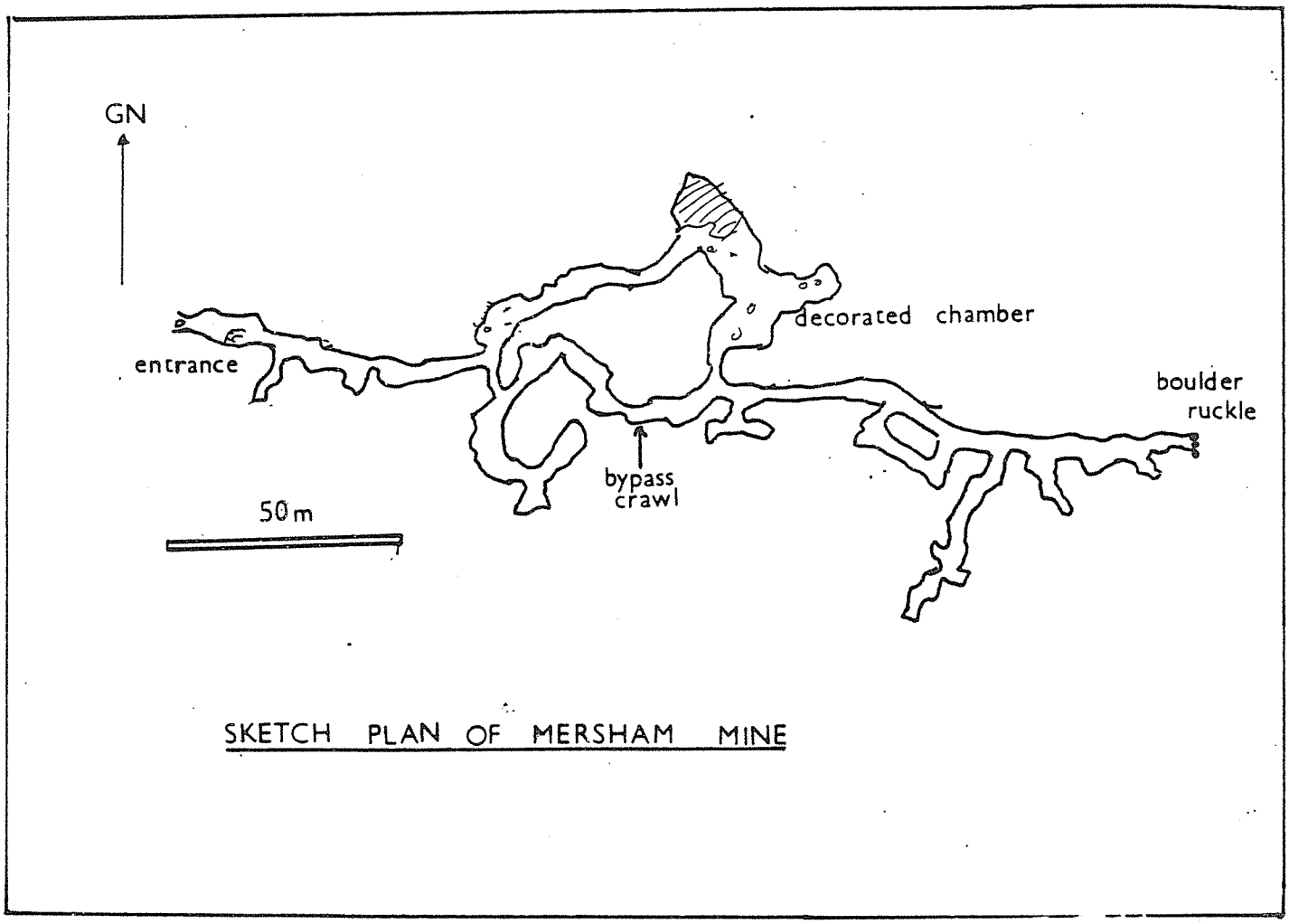
For a long time my friends in the Claygate Venture Scout unit had invited me to take a look at one of their favourite underground spots. So it was a cold, damp November morning that found four of us standing just outside the village of Mersham where various motorways and railway lines intersect. There are a number of mines dotted along the lee of the south facing scarp of the North Downs and all of them have been well documented by the Chelsea Speleological Society.

We quickly found the entrance to the hearthstone mine in a ditch beside a motorway embankment and descended down through four oil drums that were being slowly squeezed out of shape. The passages in the mine are fairly regular being about 2m wide and between 1.5m and 2m high. The mine is basically linear along the strike of the rocks which dip gently north towards the London Basin. It is obvious that originally the mine would have been entered down ramps which are now collapsed or filled in. On either side of the passage the deads are stacked up filling the space from floor to ceiling. Although called Hearthstone the mined rock is actually an arenaceous Cretaceous Greensand which is quite gritty and crumbly to the touch. Some side passages to the south and at the eastern end of the mine have worked faces but the actual working faces abandoned at the closure of the mine are following the dip.

Because it was particularly wet this part of the mine was flooded and on the inward trip we bypassed the large pool of water by wriggling over the deads. On the outward route we went through the water and there were some quite interesting formations in this part of the mine.

Actually getting out of the mine proved interesting. You can slide down but not up! The out of shape oil drums made it difficult to get up the ladder but eventually I scrambled out.

Dave Jean.



SKETCH PLAN OF MERSHAM MINE

SOUTH WALES - MAY 1987.

Present- Mike and Andy Bennet, Debbie Foster, Mark (Lionel) Vinall, Ziggy, Ali Neill, Jerry Drake.

We had Otter Hole booked for Saturday the 2nd, so drove up on Friday night to St. Arvans where we were given permission to camp behind the pub. To catch the tide entailed a start at 6.30 so we were up about 5 . We met our leader, Mike Dunwoody, and others from the Hades Caving Club at the forestry car park where we got changed. A fair walk through the woods brought us to the entrance above the mud of the River Wye.

The entrance series makes Prid or Bakers look clean- lovely mud wallows in passages of varying size, with some squeezes and climbs. Route finding is easy- just follow the pipe. Some formations can be seen which would be quite impressive but for the mud which covers everything.

We soon came to the tidal sump- a low arch containing a shallow pool at this stage of the tide. Immediately beyond this a rickety fixed ladder climb leads over Choke I and a drop back down led to the main streamway. Here we were able to wash off the worst of the mud.

Heading upstream, much of the way by traversing or over boulder piles, led us to Choke II where a 7m pitch regains the stream. Just beyond this is a junction; left the streamway can be followed for just a short distance to Sump II. The right turn leads to a series of tight muddy climbs etc which are the way up into the Extension. The whole Extension is a continuous array of fine formations, probably the best in Britain. Notable is the Hall of Thirty, a 12m high chamber full of stalactites and huge bosses, and Long Straw Chamber with straws up to 4m long.

Some way after the Hall of Thirty is Camp I where water entering is drinkable and is collected in various containers. Beyond this is Fault Chamber where a number of side passages lead off- we explored these on the way back- folloewd by Gour Passage and Long Straw Chamber. Beyond this a 3m climb in the right wall is the way on, leading to Coral Passage and Tunnels Junction. Here the route divides into Tunnels Right and Tunnels Left. Just before this Ali found a draughting rift going off,blocked by a boulder. This was removed but the passage didn't seem to go. (If anyone finds my sling and krab there please can I have it back- ed).

Returning to the sump, we found it still closed and had to wait about half an hour or so before the eye-hole above the main sump opened up with the falling tide. This entailed a pull through the eye hole, a small hole taking a howling draught, then a swim across the lake beyond- not so comfortable for Ali and Mike who were in furry suits.

Beyond this, mud and grovel in the entrance series and we were out after about seven or eight hours. Although not containing any particular difficulties, this trip is quite long and arduous so is not recommended for the unfit or inexperienced.

After thanking Mike for this excelant trip, we drove over to Crickhowell, via Doreen Gascoine's (to pick up the Aggy key). Here we set up in the campsite by the bridge.

On Sunday nobody felt particularly keen on caving so we drove over to Llanthony in the Black Mountains. Here we frequented the pub built in the ruins of Llanthony Priory, and afterwards walked up onto the ridge to the east. That evening we met up with some DSS members who had done a Grand Circle trip in Aggy that day.

On Monday Lionel didn't do anything, suffering from too much slime in Otter Hole; Debbie stayed to look after him, while the rest of us went caving.

Mike, Andy and Gerry went down Aggy and did a 6 hour trip towards Sand Cavern Passage.

Ali went with Wurzel and Rob (DSS) to the Antlers in Darren Cilau (4½ hours). On the way out Ali met some Chelsea members who were trying to demolish the entrance series by emptying their carbide generators into a pool and waiting for Ali to detonate the resulting acetylene with his carbide- fortunately he heard what they were up to and put out his light, sothe entrance series is still there and Ali plus said Chelsea members are still alive!

On emerging he found that Andy's car had been broken into and most of our clothes, tents, caving gear etc. had been stolen. Much of this gear, along with that belonging to many other people, was eventually recovered by Merthyr Tydfil Police and charges have been brought.

LUNDY '87.

A large party of PCG members, ex members and friends visited Lundy on October 10th to 17th. The party consisted of Mark (Lionel) Vinall, Mike and Andy Bennett, Dave Kennington, Helen Wilson, Dave Moses, Ali Neill, Jan Murphy, Jim Dunford, Mike Heard and Simon Van Uden.

Elaine Mercer picked all up around 6 on Saturday morning in order to catch the 9.30 ferry from Bideford. Our original mini bus booking had been cancelled so we ended up in one one which was rather too small to take all of us and all the gear, but somehow we got everyone in. On reaching Bideford we hit the Wimpy for breakfast, then took our gear to be loaded on the ferry, the Oldenburg. This is a converted Rhine cruise ship which started work as the Lundy ferry last year, replacing the previous helicoptrer service, which became too expensive due to new legislation covering helicopter flights over sea, and the ship Polar Bear. The boat carried, apart from ourselves a fair number of 'twitchers', the most common migratory life form on the island, also known as 'bird freeks'.

After a somewhat two hour trip we arrived on the east side of the island wheere the boat anchored off the Landing Beach. From here we were ferried to the beach on a launch, while the luggage came ashore by landing craft. We headed straight for the Marisco Tavern and sampled the first of many pints of John O's, the island's home brew which is definitely an unusual pint. We then staggered off in search of our accomodation, the Barn, which we found to be about thirty seconds from the bar and shop. The Barn is one of a number of buildings available as visitor's accomodation. It is chead if you can fill it, particularly out of season, and has all facilities including showers etc. The large main room has a large fireplace, which was never empty while we were there. Some of us then went for a walk around the nearer part of the island.

The island is 5km long by about 1km wide and its highest point is 140m above sea level. During the week several of us walked around the island several times, and visited the various points of interest- the 3 lighthouses (one disused), the church, the old quarries,Marisco Castle, the Montague steps (a route down to the site of the wreck of a pre WWI battleship), etc etc.

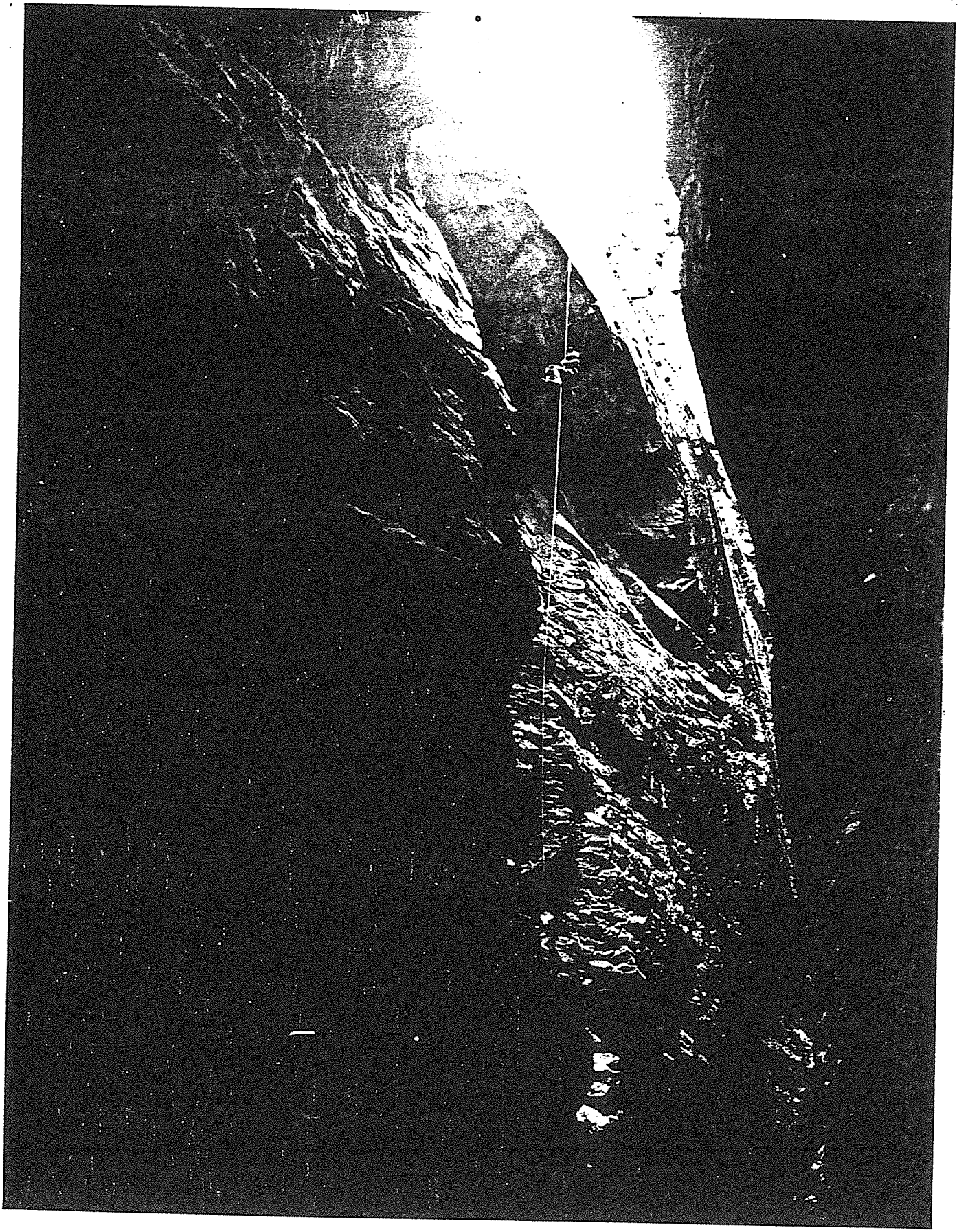
The weather all week included occasional heavy rain and continuous high winds, which we assumed to be about normal, but in fact the mainland suffered widespread damage with the worst gales for many years while we were there. The island gets much of it's electricity from a large wind generator.

The heavy winds and high seas ment that the best climbing, on the lower levels of the cliffs on the west coast, were out of the question and aloso made access to most of the sea caves impossible. However we managed some routes on the higher level cliffs on the west coast, eg Epicentre, a 90' hard severe in the Earthquake, an area of impressive slip rifts half way up the island. We also did some routes on the smaller cliffs on the east side of the island, mostly out of the wind. However we managed to recce all the major cliffs for future visits.

Among the more memorable incidents, Mike managed on the first day to drop his helmet down a gulley on the side of the Devil's Slide, the 400' slab which is probably the classic climbing site on the island. Simon managed to retrieve it from a 10' deep gulley full of foaming waterafter rifting down to sea level- not a good idea as ebs are useless on wet slimy rock. Mike having retrieved his helmet was rather more relieved at not having to retrieve simon's body from the surf than he was at getting his helmet back.

On the following day Mike and Andy, after an abortive attempt at climbing, went fishing on Quarry Beach on the east side of the island, where the weather was warm and dry in complete contrast to the other side of the island. Ali and Dave M. went climbing on the nearby Knight Templar rocks. Meanwhile Mark and Dave K. were out in the bay off the Landing Beach searching for a new wooden fender off the Oldenburg which had been lost during the landing the previous day. Back at the Barn that evening everyone related the day's events to the rest of the group. Mark and Dave had located the fender, Andy and Mike had failed to catch the evening meal, Dave and Ali had managed a few small climbs and Helen had started her clooction of fungii- the best record so far of the island's fungii. Tea consisted of a large pot of veg stew washed down by a big bowl of boiled limpets courtesy of Mike and Andy, which needless to say most people declined. Especially Linel who turned a funny shade of green at the sight of them.

Next day Dave took Helen (Nelly) for a diving lesson and Mark and Ali snorkelled round to a sea cave, which they explred, going right through the middle of Rat Island. That evening Mike H. was due to leave. His gear was loaded on the Oldenburg, but then the wind switched round to an easterly gale. As a result the boat ferrying the few



DEVIL'S LIMEKILN
photo M Vinall

passangers from the beach was nearly swamped in the surf and the Oldenburg left without them. One of the island's other boats was sunk at the same time. That night many pints of John O's were drunk, and Linel 'Cute, Cuddly & windswpt' Vinall was enticed by one of the locals, however he decided he was on holiday and declined the offers.

Next day Mike was taken to Clovelly on the island's dory and Dave and Mark helped in the search for the lost boat which was eventuallr recovered.

On Thursday Lionel took Andy for a diving lesson while Ali went snorkelling. Several seals had been spotted just off the dive beach which forms the gap between Lundy and Rat Island. A large male was bobbing up and down in the bay as the afternoon dive session started. The visibility being only reasonable it was difficult to make anything out but Ali was definitely of interest to the seals, and rumour has it that for the rest of the week he had a tendancy for lying on the beach clapping his hands together and making strange noises. He may be in pup!

On Friday we decided to go for something a bit more epic. The Devil's Limekiln gives the biggest cave pitch in Devon, in a shaft somewhat similar to Alum Pot leading to a system of sea cave passages. Linel, Ali and Andy descended this on the seawards side, a 70m pitch starting down a huge slab, the second half being an impressive wind-swept free hang. A number of climbs have been made in the shaft varying from VS (on the inland side of the shaft, 100m deep), to an incredible E6 (up the slab by which we descended), first ascended a few weeks previously. After that we went to the Earthquake again for some photos.

On the last day we managed a trip through the Rat Island sea cave, to encounter a large group of seals on the rocks at close quarters on the rocks by the north entrance, while waiting for the Oldenburg.

Andy Bennett, Alasdair Neill.

MEMBERSHIP LIST.

L. Beattie, 34 Elm Road, Mannamead, Plymouth.	Tel.	Plymouth 228491.
A. Bennett, 10 Clayton Plave, St Judes, Plymouth.		Plymouth 262947.
C. Bloxham.		
M. Bond, Moorstone Barn, Murchington, Chagford, Devon.		Chagford 2234.
S. Burnham, 8 Courtlands Close, Tavistock, Devon.		Tavistock 3547.
H. Browning, 2 Sandy Park West, Tavistock, Devon.		Tavistock 66551.
P. Browning.		do.
R. Cawthorne, 3 Valletort Road, Stoke, Plymouth.		Plymouth 563588.
J. Cawthorne, do. do.		do.
G. Conroy, 3 Westmoreland Road, Wallasey, Merseyside.		
G. Davies, 51 Greenbank Avenue, Greenbank, Plymouth.		Plymouth 667342.
R. Davies, 14 Sefton Close, Lipson Vale, Plymoth,		
J. Drake.		
M. Elliott, 37 Glebelands, Buckfastleigh, Devon.		
P. Green, 2 Keep Cottage, Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon.		0803-866215.
M. Heard, 176 Devonport Road, Stoke, Plymouth.		Plymouth561506.
H. Ingram, 51 Greenbank Avenue, Greenbank, Plymouth.		Plymouth 667342.
N. Ingram, do. do.		do.
S. James, 5 Dorset Grove, Montpelier, Bristol.		Bristol 540207.
D. Jean, 13 Tor Road, Hartley, Plymouth.		Plymouth 700293.
J. McArdle, 10 Ashford Road, Mutley.		
K. Manktelow, 42 Lands Park, Plymstock, Plymouth.		Plymouth 46480.
E. Mercer.		
P. Nash, 8 St Francis Court, Honicknowle, Plymouth.		Plymouth 790911.
A. Nash, do. do.		do.
A. Neill, 25 Lipson Road, Greenbank, Plymouth.		Plymouth 262206.
A. Phillips, 19 Richmond Road, Crownhill, Plymouth.		
T. Roberts.		
P. Rustage, 34 Elm Road, Mannamead, Plymouth.		Plymouth 228491.
A. Shepherd, 2 St Austin Close, Ivybridge, Devon.		
S. Van Uden, 40 Beaumont Road, St Judes, Plymouth.		
M. Vinall, 25 Lipson Road, Greenbank, Plymouth.		Plymouth 262206.

3rd. ANNUAL DART RIVER LILO DESCENT

The 3rd. annual Dart River Lilo Descent will take place on January 17th. 1988.

It will be over the same course as last year (New Bridge to Holne Park).

Competitors are asked to meet at 1000 hours at New Bridge car park N.G.R. 711 709, ready to start the descent at 1100 hours.

A fee of £4.00 per person will be charged to cover showers and refreshments, any profit will go to Devon Cave Rescue Organisation and a local Youth Group.

No person will be allowed to participate unless they have:-

1. A wet suit.
2. A protective helmet.
3. A buoyancy aid.
4. An air bed.

No person under the age of 18 years will be allowed to participate.

No responsibility will be accepted for loss, damage or injury to any property belonging to the competitors , spectators or to any persons themselves by the organisers , land owners , their agents or associates.

Please sign and return the form below with your fee no later than Sat. 9th. Jan to either :-

Mr. Brian Johnson,
106 Mill Street,
Ottrey St. Mary,
Devon.
EX11 1AF
Tel. Ottery St. Mary 3212.

Mr. J. Whitely,
17 North Street,
Denbury,
South Devon.

Ipplepen 812840.

I have read and agree to the conditions of the event and wish to take part.

Signed .....

Dated .....

Please print your name .....