

Irish – Welsh – Mendip Expedition

Gouffre Berger

France

August 1975



Gareth Llwyd Jones

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Gareth Ll. Jones

With notes from

Dave Drew

Paddy O'Reilly

Mike Orr

Jeff Phillips

PHOTOGRAPHY

Gareth Ll. Jones

Kevin O'Hagan

Martyn Farr

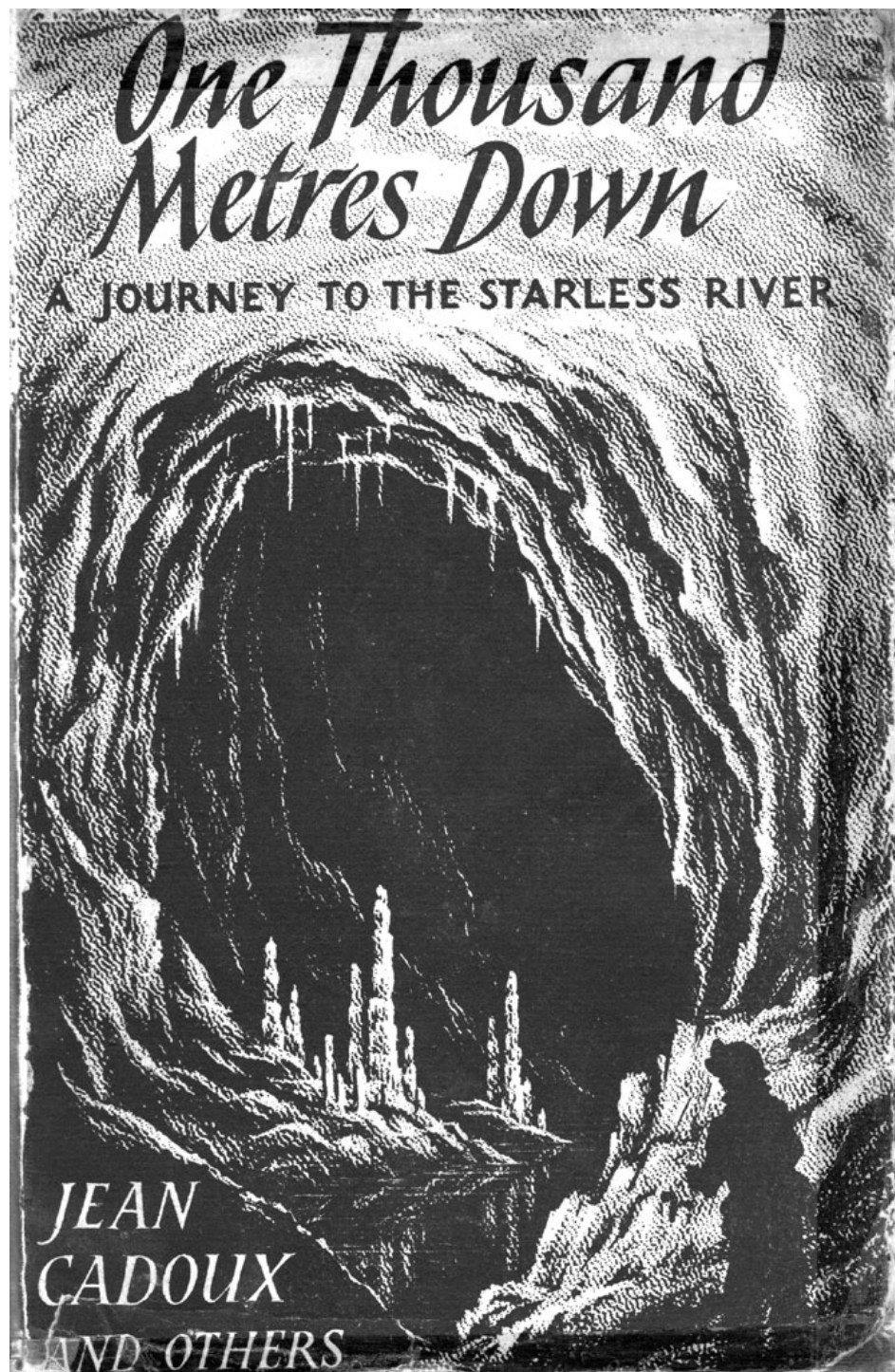
Paddy O'Reilly

Dave Morris

and A N Other

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The book of the original exploration

The 1975 Gouffre Berger Expedition

This is my personal account of the 1975 Berger expedition, with some comments in italics from other team members. I also want to acknowledge the contribution of Paddy O'Reilly for the high quality photographs that he rescued from the past.

In 1975 a group of cavers based in Ireland, Wales and Mendip mounted an expedition to the Gouffre Berger outside Grenoble in France. It was the second deepest cave in the world when we went there.

The trip was mostly funded by the cavers themselves, but a grant of £125 from the Sports Council of Northern Ireland was important in ensuring the expedition's security. Most of the organising was carried out by Hywel Ball (Leader), Jeff Phillips (Treasurer) and Paddy O'Reilly (Secretary) with help from Mick Day and Pete Francis.

We travelled by car to the heights of la Molière on the Sornin Plateau, south of Grenoble, camped in the trees nearby (no longer possible) and based ourselves there for our attempt on the cave.

We were one of the first groups to use SRT for the many pitches. Abseil devices were standard, but a special roller chest box was developed by Maurice Neill of Belfast, to keep the caver vertical and allow him or her to easily climb the rope (Appendix 2). Thus it was possible for us to make the descent and ascent a much easier business.

This was markedly demonstrated by a trip by Jeff Philips and Pete Lord who did the round trip to the sump and back out in 9 hours 15 minutes, knocking over 2 hours off the previous record. I had just qualified as a geologist and had not had time to put in enough training, but I was still able to make the trip to Camp 1 without difficulty using the new techniques.

A previous expedition to the system had used ladders and ropes and had had a drama in the system, so that they had abandoned their equipment, usually in the plunge pools at the bottom of wet shafts! This was retrieved and helped swell the tackle that was auctioned off at the end of the expedition to offset the outstanding bills.

Having achieved our goals, we were also able to visit other caves and show caves in the region, before driving back to catch the ferry to Ireland. We cut it very fine and were the third last and last cars that boarded.

A magnificent expedition. The only fly in the ointment was that another French cave was deepened whilst we were in the cave and the Berger had been relegated to third deepest in the world!!



2nd April 2018

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Expedition Newsletter no. 1

GOUFFRE BERGER 1975 EXPEDITION

Hywel Ball,
81 Kirkliston Park,
Belfast, 5
Northern Ireland.

Phone: 659762

Paddy O'Reilly,
Llethrid,
18 Greenogue Drive,
Rathcoole,
Co. Dublin,
Ireland

Phone: 370101 (Ext.338)
(Work)

Jeff Phillips,
Vaynor,
Rockfield Road,
Kells,
Co. Meath,
Ireland.

Phone: Ceannanas Mor 332

Dear *Garrett*,

Please excuse this circular letter, but in writing to so many people it helps to cut down on effort in organising the Berger trip.

Down to details straight away. The date of the expedition is fast approaching and the first major essential is that we need to know for certain who is coming. We also need to purchase a number of basic items and probably the best way of obtaining both a commitment from people and an expedition fund, is to ask everyone for £30 now to start the ball rolling. Jeff Phillips has agreed to be Treasurer, so cheques etc., should be sent to him at "Vaynor", Rockfield Estate, Kells, Co. Meath, Ireland, and made payable to "Gouffre Berger 1975 Expedition". If you have not paid up by 5 May we will have to assume you are not coming as the Berger authorities need a list of expedition members and we need to get insurance for everyone immediately.

(See enclosed conditions of entry).

Once we have obtained a list of names we can proceed to the next stage in planning food, purchasing gear, obtaining insurance etc.

At this stage it would probably be worth reviewing our objectives, which are:

- (i) To get to sump 1 and back again.
- (ii) To be in a position to pursue anything that may be discovered.
- (iii) To examine Gouffre d'Engins to seek a possible connection with the Berger
- (iv) To have a good caving fortnight.

In the planning stage a number of things have materialised. Probably the most significant of these is that contrary to earlier plans we do not propose to ladder all the pitches down to Camp 1. Ropes only will be used on the big pitches, with ladder on the short 25' and 30' footers.

It turns out that it is not a feasible proposition to have ladders plus lifelines, abseil ropes etc. on the pitches, so the idea has been abandoned in favour of ropes. This means that anyone intending to go must practice their rope techniques well in advance - so far, only the Irish group seems to have been attempting to do this consistently. I am enclosing a few diagrams which may be of interest to you about gear, etc. Pete Lord who has already been to the Berger is planning to give a demonstration weekend at Penwyllt for all those interested in seeing SRT in practice and if you can, try to make it - you may learn one or two things. The date is May 3 - 4. Pete will give a demonstration on Vaynor viaduct (120') but please don't make this late date your first introduction to SRT. N.B. (Figure 8 descenders and clog ascenders will NOT be used as they kink the ropes - abseil racks and jumars only).

There are a vast number of other details to be sorted out and I am making a list of them as they occur to me - excuse the apparently jumbled order.

TRAVEL:

We advise everyone to make their own travel arrangements. It will be possible to pool transport etc. but we will have to ensure that no-one is overloaded with gear. A list of potential members enclosed will allow you to contact each other.

SURFACE CAMP:

As above - make own arrangements.

EQUIPMENT:

Special equipment such as abseil racks, mitchell boxes, harnesses etc., are best made up individually but there is a climbing shop that will provide gear, boots, duvets, sleeping bags, rucksacks, tents, etc. at wholesale prices -

The Mountain Hut, 25 Stevens Street, Dublin, 2
Contact: Bob Richardson.

You may be able to talk your local shop into a similar sponsorship.

ROPES:

We will probably use 12 mm Terylene plaited rope at approximately £23/100 metres, or alternatively, Bluewater 11 mm which we can obtain for approximately £37 per 100 m. We need approximately 600 metres if we plan to do Gouffre d'Engins as well.

(Paddy O'Reilly, Hywel Ball organising)

LADDERS AND OTHER GEAR:

We have requested SWCC to provide:

25 Pack frames
Digging gear assorted

- 3 -

Rescue bag and stretcher
Pulleys - 3
Dinghy
Ladders (10 x 25') plus tethers (40 assorted)
Lump hammer
Toilet tent

(Bob Hall organising)

Telephone gear
3 bolt kits

(Pete Cardy & Brian Jopling)

We shall have to transport paraffin to France because it is not readily available - carbide may be purchased locally as the French use it, but does anyone know an address?

For carrying gear underground the converted 10 gallon jerry can idea is ideal; (see diagram) the pack frames have been requested. You may prefer an ordinary rucksack - special stuff-sacks are being made up for carrying the ropes. In any case, it would be a good idea if everyone bought and converted a jerrycan as detailed in enclosed description.

ASCENDING TECHNIQUE:

Having tried all methods, the one involving the Mitchell chest box is the one we recommend. It works, it's simple and safe (See diagram enclosed). One problem however is lighting. With a carbide light there is the real problem of the possibility of damage to the rope so please ensure an alternative (electric) source for ascending - or fix a lamp bracket to the side of your helmet, all you need is general illumination and by clipping your light on to the side you avoid the need to carry extra lights.

FINANCES:

The fund will need to cover the cost of the following items:

Ropes (£150 - 250); Insurance (£5 each); Karabiners (50); bolts, pitons, paraffin for underground, carbide, rope stuff-sacks, rope protectors, medical, underground food (50 man days) plus maybe extra bits of gear.

We propose to auction-off this gear at the end of the expedition and share out the proceeds.

FOOD:

Surface food: Bring your own, or organise a group larder.

Underground: We intend to provide only a minimum quantity of this and it will be mainly dehydrated food.

(Mick Day, Pete Francis, Hywel Ball organising)

- 4 -

MEDICAL:

Mike Orr organising.

There are some extra lists enclosed - please check them and see if we have missed out anything.

The plan of action is simply to establish Camp 1 rapidly and to use this as base for a push to the bottom. From reports received, Camp 2 may not be an essential campsite and will mainly be used as a carbide and food dump. A telephone is required to Camp 1, and possibly a dinghy for Lake Cadoux, but the section from Camp 1 to sump and back should be accessible to a fit and experienced party using ropes only, without the need of a major camp at Camp 2 unless a discovery is made.

Finally, to end on a slightly philosophical note - the whole idea of this expedition is to go on a superb caving fortnight - its success will be dictated by how fit and competent each person is and how reliable his gear is.

Start training now!

Hywel dda

Hywel Ball
Jeff Phillips

SCNI Grant



Our File No. EV.30

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland

Chairman E D R Shearer CBE TD DL
Vice Chairman J C Lapsley BSc
Director L G Glasgow

49 Malone Road Belfast BT9 6RZ
Telephone Belfast (0232) 663154

Reply To
24 June 1975

Mr Gareth Jones
61 Duncoole Park
Belfast BT14 8JS

Dear Mr Jones

REYFAD GROUP - IRISH/WELSH EXPEDITION TO THE GOUFFRE BERGER, FRANCE:

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland have considered your application for grant towards the above and are prepared to offer grant on the basis of the application at the rate of 50% of approved expenditure on items of group equipment up to a limit of £125 only, subject to the offer of grant being taken up before the end of September 1975.

If your Group proposes to accept any contribution of money or otherwise from any agency assisted directly, or indirectly, from public funds then the Sports Council should be informed.

Subject to the above conditions payment will be made on production of receipts.

Yours sincerely

J M Crabbe
Head of Administration

VK

Expedition Newsletter no. 2

GOUFFRE BERGER NEWSHEET NO. 2

This is just a short note to circulate names and addresses of all those who have paid £30 to the fund. In fact we probably have too much money now that so many are coming along and that we have been given some grants, but any surplus will be refunded.

The ropes have been purchased, 1000 feet of Bluewater and 1000 feet of Terylene. Karabiners and other gear is being collected by the various people who have offered their services so everything should be reasonably well catered for.

A Yorkshire party are laddering the Berger the week prior to our visit and we are asking them to leave ladders etc. in situ on the short pitches which would be an enormous help in rigging the place.

Finally, Mike Orr, the official doctor, has asked that everyone going underground notify him of any unusual medical histories and also the names and addresses of next of kin

Happy planning.

Hywel

NAME

ADDRESS

Hywel Ball	81 Kirkleston Park, Belfast 5
Paddy O'Reilly	18 Greenogue Drive, Rathcoole, Dublin 5
Mike Orr	* 13 ELGIN RD Ballsbridge Dublin 4
Martyn Farr	178 Albany Road, Roath, Cardiff
Pete Francis	64 Capel Isaf Road, Llanelli, Dyfed
* Dave Mullen	B43 County College, Lancaster University, Lancaster, Lancs.
Pete Lord }	c/o Sue Jordan, Flat 9, 20 West Mall, Clifton, Bristol, 8
Sue Jordan)	
Jeff Phillips	44 Rockfield Road, Kells, Co. Meath
Maurice Neill	53 Rosscoole Park, Belfast 14
Dave Underhill	166 Easemore Road, Redditch, Worcs.
Mick Day	152 Roxeth Green Avenue, South Harrow, Middlesex
Nigel Yarwood	27 Ealing Road, Northholt, Middlesex
Gareth Jones	61 Duncoole Park, Cave Hill, Belfast, BT14 8JS
Kevin O'Hagan	33 Mount Street, Ballymena, Co. Antrim
Carl Atkinson	105 Wellesley Avenue, Belfast 9
Bomber Beaumont	178 Albany Road, Roath, Cardiff
Lt. Tony Kealy	Officers Mess, Brompton Barracks, Chatham
Gareth Davies	Air Traffic Control, Newcastle Airport, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
* Chuck Richardson	1 Bristol Avenue, Lansdowne Road, Belfast, 15
* Phil Collett	7 Osterley Grove, Banbury, Oxon
* John Parker	12 Broadway, Pontypool, Gwent, S. Wales
* (Che) Gwyn Jones	8 Plas Islwyn, Northville, Cumbria, Gwent.
Richard Stevenson	Greystones, Priddy Wells, Somerset BA5 3AY
* Dave Drew	87 Railpark, Maynooth, Co. Kildare
Pete Robinson	c/o Bomber Beaumont
* Dave Morris	115 Wynley Road, Witton, Birmingham, B67 BT

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Getting Across France

Gareth Maurice Carl (KO'H)



My Daf en Vercors, St. Nizier plateau behind (GLIJ) Carl Atkinson, Hywel Ball on the road up to la Molière (GLIJ)

Arrival and Camping



Gareth Jones touring in the Vercors



Deirdre and the Alps from the parking place (GLIJ)

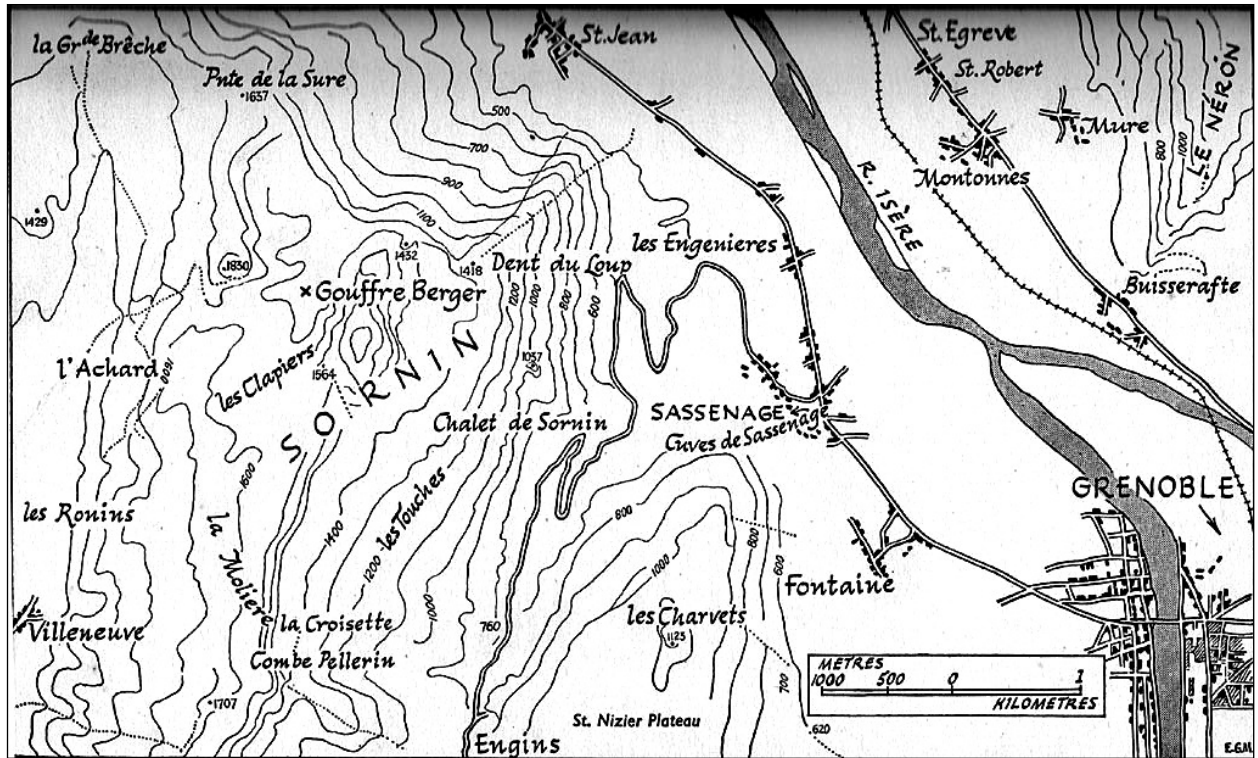


Car Park. Gareth's Daf, Maurice's Citroen, Kevin's Cortina, The Alps (KO'H)



Paddy O'Reilly unloading his Opel (MO)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Area map



Early morning tea – Mike Orr and the Irish Flag (PO'R) Mike, Susan O'Reilly, Dave Drew (PO'R)



Pete Lord cooks up on the road side (PO'R)



Mike Orr keeps clean shaven (PO'R)



© Paddy O'Reilly 1975-2018

Main camp at La Moliere (PO'R)



Beef in the camp (GLIJ)



Kevin O'Hagan & Carl cooking (GLIJ)



Ablutions (GLIJ)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Carl & Gareth at the camp site (KO'H)



Pete, Nigel, Chuck, Tish, Kevin, Carl (GLIJ)



Dave, Pete, xx, xx, Maurice, Martin, Gareth D, Tish, Nigel, Tony, Chris, Mike, Dave Underhill, Chuck, Nerys, Hywel (GLIJ)



Carl, Gareth, Maurice Neill, Hywel, xx, Kevin, (GLIJ)



Kevin, Bomber, Dave, Pete (GLIJ)



Bomber, Pete Francis, Martyn Farr, Martin Bishopp, Dave.



Mike, Chuck Richardson, Carl (GLIJ)



Camp fire (KO'H)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Martyn, Martin, Tony, Dave, Carl, Chuck, Chris (GLIJ)



xx, Gareth Davies, Hywel, Tish, Bomber (GLIJ)



Storm approaching (GLIJ)



Multiple lightning strikes (GLIJ)

The Walk-In to the Gouffre Berger Entrance, across the Sornin Plateau



© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018

Trail to Gouffre Berger entrance (PO'R)



Carl, Kevin on the hot walk-in across Berger Polje (GLIJ)
(KO'H)



Dave, Pete Francis, Martyn Farr, Bomber Beaumont on the walk-in to the Berger (PO'R)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Maurice at the Berger entrance (GLIJ)

Official Permission

With regard to your request of June 18th 1974 for permission to explore the Berger Cave, I have pleasure in granting you that permission for August 1st - 15th 1975.

Kindly send me in advance

- your undertaking to respect the local laws currently in force
- a list of the members of your expedition
- the name of the doctor accompanying you (it is compulsory for one to be part of the team)
- a certificate from the insurance company covering you for unlimited risks in case of a possible rescue operation
- Please note that you must have telephone communication with the surface

And you are expressly forbidden to dive in the terminal sump

Yours respectfully

the Mayor of Engins, Sept 21st 1974

Suite à votre demande en date du 18 Juin 1974
d'autorisation d'exploration au Gouffre Berger
j'ai le plaisir de vous accorder cette

permission du 1 au 15 août 1975.

- Vous voudrez bien auparavant m'adresser
 - l'engagement de respecter les lieux en vertu des arrêtés en vigueur
 - La liste des membres de votre expédition
 - le nom du docteur vous accompagnant (présence obligatoire de celui-ci dans l'équipe)
 - l'attestation d'une compagnie d'assurances vous couvrant en risques illimités en cas d'éventuel sauvetage
 - Vous devrez dans le gouffre être relié par téléphone avec la surface
- Et il vous sera formellement interdit de plonger dans le syphon terminal

Veuillez agréer ,Monsieur , mes salutations respectueuses?

A ENGINS le 21 septembre 1974

Le Maire

Local Press

Des Irlandais descendent aujourd'hui dans le Gouffre Berger

Grenoble. — L'été constitue incontestablement un atout pour la pratique de la spéléologie. Rien finalement n'est plus agréable que d'aller se mettre au frais dans quelques galeries. Notre région a la chance de pouvoir offrir aux adeptes de ce sport des kilomètres et des kilomètres de méandres à explorer.

Le gouffre Berger constitue une attraction pour les spéléologues. Chaque année voit arriver son contingent d'explorateurs.

A partir de demain, c'est une équipe de spéléologues irlandais qui descendra au fond du plus célèbre des gouffres.

Avec le désir d'aller peut-être encore plus loin, encore plus bas.

Les spéléologues irlandais en profiteront aussi pour se livrer à des expériences scientifiques. Il y a notamment parmi eux un professeur de biologie.

C'est ce qu'il y a d'extraordinaire avec des sports comme l'alpi-

nisme, la spéléologie. Ils permettent à l'homme d'aller plus loin en lui, de mieux se connaître, de savoir quelles sont ses limites. Et cela peut lui permettre un jour de survivre.

Les Irlandais ne seront pas seuls dans le gouffre. Une équipe de spéléologues anglais, le Hywell

Bull de Londres, va lui aussi descendre dans le gouffre Berger. Dans la deuxième quinzaine d'août, ce sont des spéléologues de Carpentras qui viendront explorer l'une des plus belles richesses souterraines.

A tous nous ne pouvons que leur souhaiter bonne chance.

A Villard-de-Lans un jeune spéléo fait une chute sans gravité

Villard-de-Lans. — Hier, à 23 h. 30, un jeune spéléo, âgé de 17 ans, de Manosque, a fait une chute d'une trentaine de mètres à la cote — 140, dans le gouffre du Trisou, à Herbouilly. Sitôt l'accident donné, le capitaine Moynat, commandant la compagnie de gendarmerie de Grenoble, les gendarmes Janvier et Bernaudon, de Villard-de-Lans, les sapeurs-pompiers de Villard-de-Lans et l'Ecole Française de spéléo-

de Font-d'Urle se rendirent sur les lieux pour procéder au sauvetage.

D'après les premières constatations, le gouffre aurait été équipé par de réels amateurs et l'imprudence serait sans nul doute la cause de l'accident.

Le blessé qui ne semble souffrir d'aucune fracture, mais qui était très choqué, ne sera remonté que vers 5 ou 6 heures du matin.

"Le Dauphine Libéré" Isère 4th August 1975

Today a team of Irishmen will descend into the Berger Cave.

Grenoble - Summer is irrefutably the best season for caving. After all nothing is more pleasant than cooling off in a few caverns. Our region has the good fortune to offer enthusiasts of this sport kilometre upon kilometre of meanders to explore.

The Berger Cave forms an attraction for speleologists. Every year a group of explorers arrives. From tomorrow it is a team of Irish cavers that will descend into the most famous cave of all - with the desire of possibly going even deeper, even further.

The Irish cavers will also take the opportunity to be part of scientific experiments since there will be a professor of biology amongst them.

This is what is different about sports such as climbing and caving; they allow people to push themselves further, to have a deeper knowledge of themselves. And that may one day be a matter of survival.

The Irishmen will not be alone in the cave. An English caving-team, Hywell Bull (sic) of London will also descend into it. (*Confused journalist!*)

In the second two weeks of August it will be cavers from Carpentras who will come and explore one of the most beautiful underground treasures.

We can only wish all involved the best of luck.

isère

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MARDI 5 AOUT 1975

SPÉLÉOLOGIE

Une trentaine d'Anglais et d'Irlandais à la découverte du gouffre Berger

Grenoble — Une trentaine de spéléologues anglais et irlandais sont à pied d'œuvre depuis le premier août au plateau de la Molière. Le but de cette expédition est bien sûr le célèbre gouffre Berger.

Venus d'un peu toute l'Angleterre, du Pays de Galles, de Belfast, de Dublin, tous sont liés par cette même envie de découverte.

Nous les avons retrouvés tout d'abord à leur camp de base au plateau de la Molière. Le chef de l'expédition, M. Hywell Ball, professeur de biologie à Belfast, est installé là avec son équipe jusqu'au 15 août.

Durant tous ces jours, à tour de rôle les spéléologues descendront dans le gouffre. Lors de notre visite sept d'entre eux étaient déjà au fond depuis la veille, tandis que huit autres prenaient le chemin pour aller les rejoindre.

Ces premières descentes ont pour but d'installer dans le gouffre les différents points relais où sera entreposé le ravitaillement et le matériel nécessaire.

Pour réaliser leur expédition, les Anglais et les Irlandais ont emporté 300 kg de vivres, 200 kg de carburant et au total près de deux tonnes de matériel.

Cependant, l'un des membres de l'équipe nous indiquait qu'il s'agissait-là de matériel « léger » pour une expédition préparatoire.

En effet, le responsable du groupe nous indiquait qu'une expédition plus importante serait organisée sans doute l'an prochain.

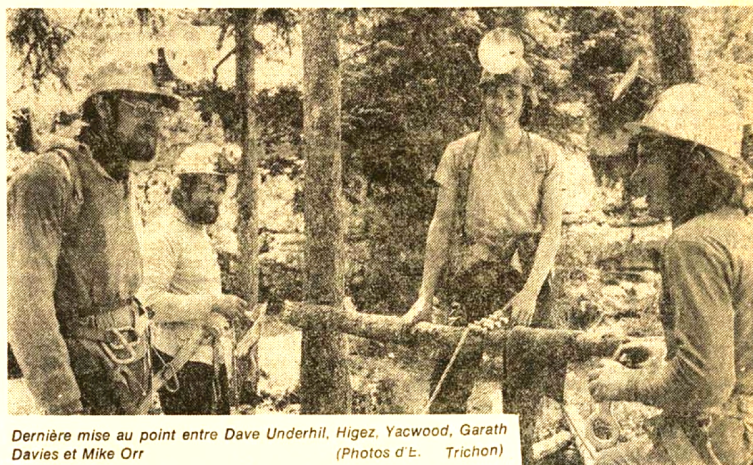
Les Anglais et les Irlandais profiteront de cette occasion pour tester un nouveau matériel notamment un harnais pour la descente, équipé d'un nouveau système de blocage automatique en cas de chute.

A notre arrivée, nous avons trouvé le groupe en pleine préparation au plateau de la Molière, et notamment Dave Underhill, Nigel Yarwood, Garath Davies, Paddy O'Reilly et Mike Orr qui devaient quelques heures plus tard, rejoindre leurs camarades partis la veille.

Les spéléologues irlandais et britanniques ont pour objectif le siphon terminal du gouffre à moins 1 122 mètres.



Le camp de base a été dressé à proximité du plateau de La Molière



Dernière mise au point entre Dave Underhill, Higez, Yacwood, Garath Davies et Mike Orr

(Photos d'E. Trichon)



La descente dans le gouffre commence



Hywell Ball chef de l'expédition prépare son matériel

Le Dauphiné Libéré, 5th August 1975.

Isère

SPÉLÉOLOGIE

Some Thirty English and Irish are exploring the Gouffre Berger

Grenoble – 30 English and Irish speleologists have been established on the Molière Plateau since the start of August. The goal of this expedition is of course the famous gouffre Berger.

Coming from all over England, from Wales, from Belfast and from Dublin they are all linked by a wish to explore.

We found them first at their camp on the Molière Plateau. The Expedition leader, Mr. Hywell Ball, a professor of biology from Belfast, is based there, with his team, until the 15th August.

During this time, in turns, the cavers will descend into the cave. At the time of our visit seven of them had already been underground since the previous day, while eight others were taking the path to join them.

The aim of these preliminary descents was to install the different depots for refueling and necessary equipment.

To run their expedition, the English and the Irish have brought 300kg of food, 200kg of carbide and almost two tonnes of materials.

However, one of the team members told us that this “light” equipment was needed for a preparatory expedition.

The group leader told us that a bigger expedition would undoubtedly be organised next year

The English and the Irish will take advantage of this opportunity to test a new piece of equipment, i.e. a new harness for the descent, which has a new automatic stop system in case of a fall.

On our arrival, we found a group fully ready on the Molière Plateau, namely Dave Underhill, Nigel Yarwood, Garath Davies (sic), Paddy O'Reilly and Mike Orr who in a few hours would join their friends who had left the previous day.

The Irish and British speleologists' objective is to reach the terminal sump of the cave at minus 1,122 metres.

Figure captions:

Base camp is sited on the edge of the La Molière Plateau

Last deliberations between Dave Underhill, Higez Yacwood (Nigel Yarwood), Garath Davies and Mike Orr (Martyn Farr)

The descent into the cave begins (Martyn Farr)

Expedition Leader Hywell Ball gets his equipment ready

Thanks to Bethan Harrison for assistance with the translations, all faults are mine!

ELEVATION
(along the major routes)

Scroll down for a Plan view

with thanks to caving io and after
"Spéleo dans le Vercors" édition Edsud

A-B:

Entrance 8	Garby 38
Ruiz 27	Gontard 30
Holiday Pitches 10	Aldo drops 10 + 10
Carin 8 + 25	Aldo drop 5
Meanders	Aldo Pitch 42

B-C:

Go downstream at base of Aldo
Grande Galerie
Lake Cadoux (unless dry)
Little General 10
Fil de fer 12
Cascade de la Tyrolienne 4
Grand Eboulis
Camp 1 (Nicola phone)
Salle des 13

C-D:

Balcony Pitch 15
Traverse
Salle St Mathieu
(rope down & back up)
1st Ramp 15
2nd Ramp 15
Vestiaire - Traverse + 5m

D-E:

Canals ("Les Couffinades")
Cascade Abelle 5
Cascade Claudine 17
Pitch 4
Cascade des Topographes 5
Grand Canyon (2 roped mudslides)
Camp 2

E-F:

Gaché 20
Mât 10
Singe 10
Grande Cascade 27
Basin Pitch 4
Baignoire (short crawl to bypass sump)
Pseudo Siphon

Little Monkey (Vire-Tu-Oses) & Pendulum 15
Hurricane approach 10
Hurricane 44 ("Ouragan")
Camp des Etrangers
~1000m Inlet
Pseudo Siphon

PLAN

1000 m

Starting Down The Entrance Pitches



The well-dressed Berger caver in 1975



Paddy O'Reilly starts down (KO'H)



Paddy O'Reilly on the Berger entrance pitch



Carl starts down the entrance pitch (GLIJ)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Carl abseiling down the entrance pitch (GLIJ)



The entrance pitches (ANOther)



Gareth Davies rappelling
into Cairn Hall (MF)



Gareth Davies, Hywel Ball, Chuck
Richardson, Mike Orr in Cairn Hall (MF)

Hywel Ball, Mike Orr in rift passage
off Cairn Hall (MF)

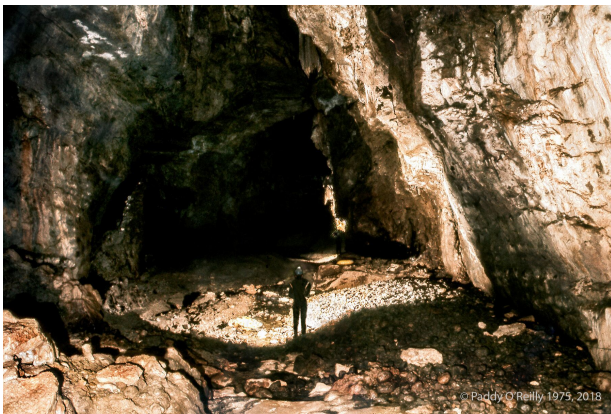


1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Rivière sans Étoiles - Starless River passage



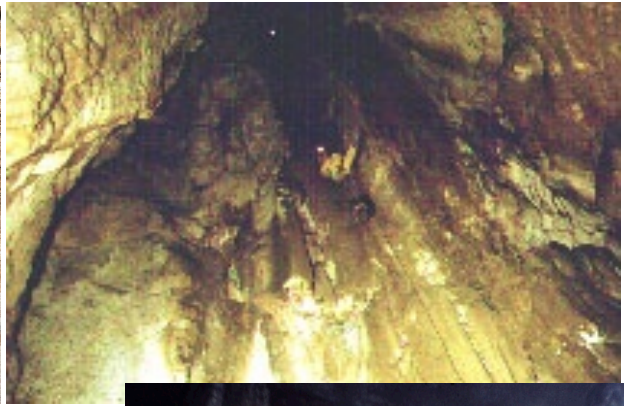
Rivière sans Étoiles - Starless River passage (PO'R)



© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018

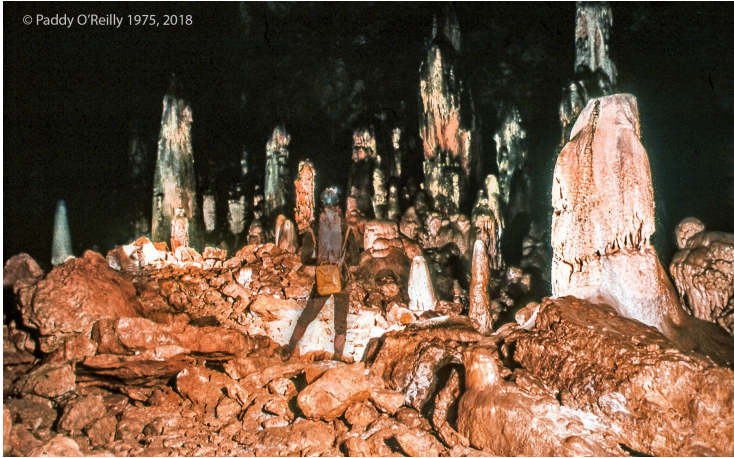


Mike Orr at the top of Puit Aldo (PO'R).



Aldo's Pitch (?DM)

Maurice in Bourgin Hall (?DM)



Mike in Bourgin Hall (PO'R)



Paddy O'Reilly silhouetted in Bourgin Hall (PO'R)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Handline Traverses Past Deep Pools



Mike Orr traversing the pool at a small cascade (PO'R)



The Tyrolienne handline traverse (PO'R)

Le Grand Éboulis



© Martyn Farr 1975, 2018

The Great Boulder Heap (MF)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

The Hall Of The Thirteen



Edge of Hall of 13 (KO'H)



Drunken Forest (MF)



Mike
Orr
admires
the
Drunken
Forest
(PO'R)



Carl in the Hall of the 13 (GLIJ)



Hall of the 13 (MF)



Hall of 13 Stalagmite cluster (MF)



Paddy O'Reilly selfie in Hall of the Thirteen (PO'R)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Salle Germain, Site of Camp 1



Che (Gwyn Jones) at Camp 1. (MF)



Near Salle Germain (MF)



Salle Germain (ANOther)



Mike Orr getting ready to crawl into his sleeping bag at Camp 1 near Germain Hall (PO'R)

Descent of the Lower Pitches to the Terminal Sump



Descent from The Balcony (PO'R)



Balcony Pitch (?DM)



Maurice Neill at The Enormous Cascade (?DM)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Traverse along Canals leading to Claudine's Cascade (MF)



Claudine's Cascade (MF)



Maurice in a plunge pool (?DM)



Smoke and Steam near Little Monkey Traverse (MF)



Headlights trace the path of a team descending the Great Canyon heading towards Camp II bivouac site (PO'R)

Exit From The Gouffre Berger



Bottoming party returning from the sump to Puits de l'Ouragan (Hurricane Pitch) (PO'R)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018



Bottoming Party - Tony Jarrett, John Parker, Richard Stevenson. - Brew up at Camp II bivouac site (PO'R)

© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018



Bottoming Party - John Parker, Paddy O'Reilly, Richard Stevenson (PO'R)



© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018

Last man's view of Puits de l'Ouragan (Hurricane Pitch) (PO'R)



© Martyn Farr 1975, 2018

Prussiking up Claudine's Cascade (MF)



© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018

Mike Orr starts rope-walking up the long ascent of Puits Aldo (PO'R)

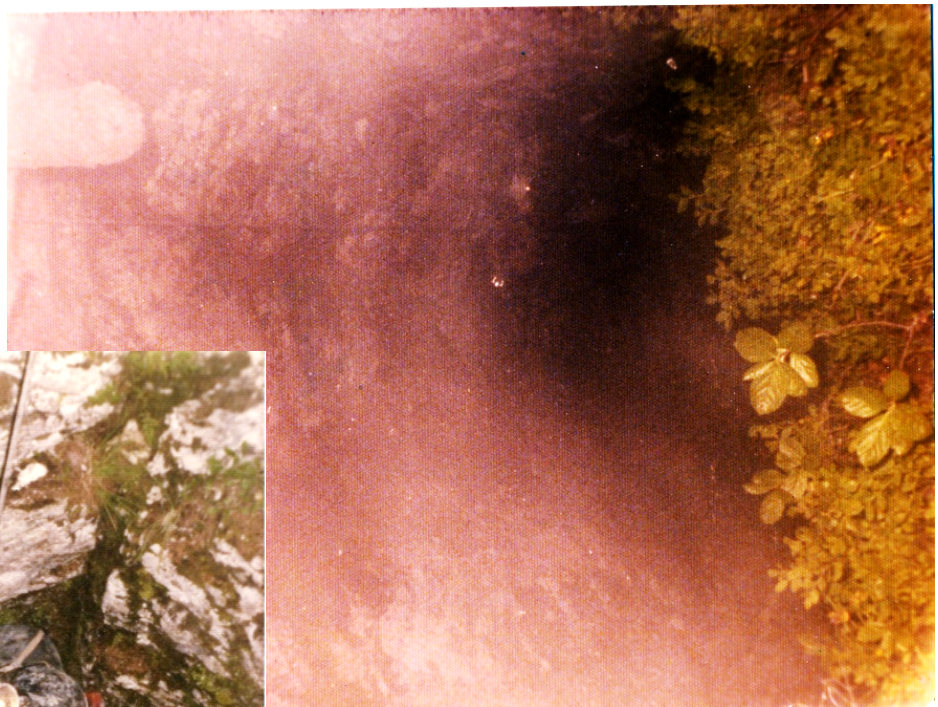


© Paddy O'Reilly 1975, 2018

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Mike Orr approaches the mid-point on his final prussik ascent of Puits Aldo (PO'R)



Carl jumaring the top pitch (GLIJ)



Kevin rope-walking up the top pitch, see the rope passing through the runners of his Neill chest box. (GLIJ)



Jeff Philips, Pete Lord back from record 9hr 15min sump round trip (GLIJ)



Ponies on the plateau (KO'H)

Post trip Dave, Pete Francis in French caving undersuit (GLIJ)



1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

My Log

Transcribed from my written log, *with various contributions.*

See Appendix IV for Pete Francis report to the South Wales Caving Club

Paddy O'Reilly maintained a detailed personal log of his own experiences on the expedition (Appendix V).

Thursday 31st July 1975

Visited Engins, did first 2 "pitches"

Went to Grenoble with Carl.

Couldn't shop 'cos of heat, but got 2 spark plugs and window winder (lève-vitre) from Daf garage.

Shopped (later) in big Hypermarket.

Paddy & Mike arrived to camp at the shakehole with their beer cooler and descended to the Hall of the Thirteen the next day.

Mike Orr: Paddy and I arrived a day before the rest of you, camping at the shakehole with the beer cooler and descending to the Hall of the Thirteen the next day. I think the pitches were then re-rigged on your 1st August.

Paddy O'Reilly: Did we really look that grubby and hairy? Paddy O'Reilly, Mike Orr, John Parker, Martin Bishop, Tony Jarrett set off to finish rigging to the bottom. They camped at the Balcony, then continued to the top of the Little Monkey pitch, where they realised that they didn't have enough rope to rig all the way to the bottom, so they headed back out. (PO'R log).

Dave Drew: I was in the second party going down beyond base camp - the team ahead (including Paddy and Jeff I think) was supposed to rig the cave to the bottom but for some reason could not get further than the Little Monkey pitch so we rigged that and the Hurricane. I was mainly with Sue Jordan and can't remember who else was in the party.

Jeff Phillips: We camped high up and one day we were in the middle of a thunderstorm and all our hair (We had lots in those days) stood on end. And there was a plug of snow in a doline on the way to the Berger. Plus cleaning my teeth in Cotes du Rhone wine which was easier to get than water.

Friday 1st August

Paddy & Mike & Hywel started rigging, got to Camp 1.

Followed by J. Parkins crowd – Camp 1,

and then by Maurice, Carl & Chuck who got to top of Aldo's

I went over to show Parkin's crowd path to Berger. They took half of the South Wales gear. I moved rest from cattle grid to Paddy's camp.

Then went shopping with Kevin, Tish & Deirdre in Autrans & Villard de Lans.

Saturday 2nd

Kevin, Carl & I set off to go to Camp 1, persuaded to go in dry grots.

Hywel lost jumars from previous day (hidden in a grike), but caught us up.

Big pitches follow one after another: Ruiz, Cairn Hall, Garby's, Gouchards. Relay Pits, Aldo's. All 30m or more.

Finally racked down, along a short passage & suddenly out into a big passage. Hywel went on to try & catch Martyn and crowd (Peter, Dave & Bomber)

1975 Irish / Welsh / Mendip Expedition Gouffre Berger, France

Kevin, Carl & I trogged on along a BIG passage, climbing over boulder piles and through “Lake Cadoux”, luckily not present.

Then a short bit and out into Bourgin Hall with lots of stalagmites.

On & On with the Little Generals Cascade with a foot in the water. & Cascade of the Tyrolean where Kevin’s light went out.

Then the Big Rubble Heap, what a wilderness, what a size, what huge boulders, what a steep slope! Thought our lights were going out, cos we couldn’t see walls or roof.

Down & Down, then start of red and orange formations and Camp 1 with its trickle onto a stalagmite.

Here met Hywel, down into Hall of 13. Saw big stalagmites and gour pools. Kevin’s photo.

Had yet another drink.

Cooked “Chicken Orientale” - great, needed it too. Hywel’s pegs for spoons. Spent a cold, damp miserable night on a “shelf” of rock.

4 hours to Camp 1.

Sunday 3rd

Back out & that climb up the Great Rubble Heap incredible, just on & on & on ...

Back, Hywel caught us up after chatting to Martyn at Camp 1 – who had been to Claudine’s and found ladder and diving tackle.

Back to pitches drinking as often as possible.

Organised foot loops, everything else OK. Kevin up first, then I went, things worked great. Steady small steps, no stops.

Relay Pits OK

Gonchards OK

Bit of Meanders with stemples and drops – pics

Garby’s. Pitch great but

a) Hywel had lit fire – what a fog

b) Kevin left rope in narrows, only got up by using spare perlon as tail.

Cairn Hall a bastard, wet and awkward, also needed a tail

Holiday Pitches OK

Ruiz very long, but beautifully engineered

Top

Walked back in 50 minutes to Food & Bar.

Paddy O’Reilly: with John Parker and friends finally completed the bottoming trip. (PO’R log).

August 9th. Jeff Philips and Pete Lord completed a record 9hr 15 min surface to sump to surface round trip. This knocked over 2 hours off the previous record and showed the benefit of abseiling and prussiking on already rigged pitches.

Jeff Phillips: One day I asked Pete if he would come down again. I was fed up hanging around on the surface. When we got to camp we just kept going til we got to the sump. Without gear it was so much easier.

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

POSTSCRIPT

We also did a detackling trip and were impressed with the amount of wear that a smooth rock surface could inflict on the rope where it wasn't protected. Nearly through the sheath.

We had an end of trip sale of our own tackle and of that recovered from sump pools by Martyn.

Other Trips to Gouffre Engins, Cuves de Sassenage, Grotte de Choranche, Grotte de la Luire
also the Vercors Plateau and on the drive back stopped at Chartres Cathedral

Geological

Bedding plane readings

Right wall of Great Boulder Heap 015° - 28°E

Germain Hall – right wall 040° – 30°SE

Surface Horizontal

Fossils

Crinoids, bivalves, gastropod indet.

Glaciated lapiaz

Rt wall of Gt Bubble Hoop
15 - 28 E
German Hall - Rt Wall
40 - 30 SE
Surface +
fossil limonite, breccia, ? gyp int.,
glauconitic layer.

Friday, Dec 17.
Robby & Rick & Kym and sister right
get to Camp 1.
talked to J. Paul's crew - Camp 1
and then by train back to Ch.
also got to top of Allos.

I went over to show J. Paul's crew and
to Robby. They had 1 day off 51 shots
gone, 1 more for cattle on 6
Friday & Sunday.

The next day with Kim told & Dunc
in Austin & V. back to

Thanks 31st
Visited ~~home~~ this time 2 jobs
1 at a friend's land.
Couldn't sleep coz of hard hat got
2 plugs & window washer from Doug group.
Laffer & big Reynolds

Saturday 2nd

Kearns & I set off to go to Long
mountain & go in day party.
Hazel left house for previous day but
caught up with us on previous day also
Big pitch fallen on after lunch
Rug, Linnell, Gatz, Greenback,
Rely Pitt, Hobb. At 3 PM or more
family reached down, along a steep
passage & supply and a long
passage. Hazel went up to the top
of the mountain & was (Hobb, the first)
Kearns & I together on along a B/R
passage, with our backs to the
the back of the mountain, but not
down.
The first fire, with George Hunt
with lots of Saltpetre.
On 2nd with the Little Quad
Came with a couple of the
& Linnell & Linnell who have things
with us

The El Big Rattle Knap, with a
cathedral, with a sign, with huge
brackets, with a steep slope
though no lights going out we could see
water and.

Down & down the edge of red &
orange powder & Capt. T. still in
trunk at a stall.

Here our Royal down is Hall of 13
See big shape in the front.
Now you will feel.

Like "Black Diamond" - good
needed in the Hall's people you
of 4 km & 1/2 m.

Back - the side of G. R. 11
inhabit, just as a n.a.

Back, Royal cap of 1/2 m
duty to the 1st of 1 - 1/2 m to
Charles - how good & big he

[illegible]

Expedition Celebration Dinner



Clockwise: Martyn Farr, Mike Orr, Susan & Paddy O'Reilly, Deirdre & Maurice Neill, Gareth Ll. Jones (KO'H)



1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Touring The Region



Cliffs at north edge of Vercors plateau (GLIJ)



Bourne Gorge (GLIJ)



Bourne Gorge (KO'H)



Bourne Gorge (GLIJ)



Tish, Nerys, Kevin (GLIJ)



Bourne Gorge (GLIJ)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Carl in the Bourne Gorge (GLIJ)



The River Bourne at Pont en Royans (PO'R)



Pont en Royans (GLIJ)



above Pont en Royans to Grand Goulets (GLIJ)



Grand Goulets, Carl (GLIJ)



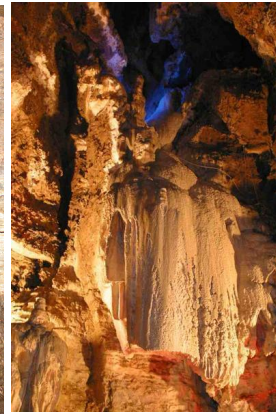
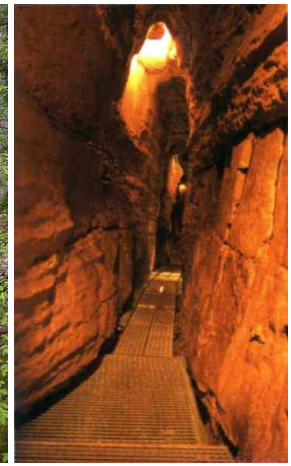
Grand Goulets (GLIJ)



Panoramas (GLIJ)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Cuves de Sassenage



Grotte de Choranche

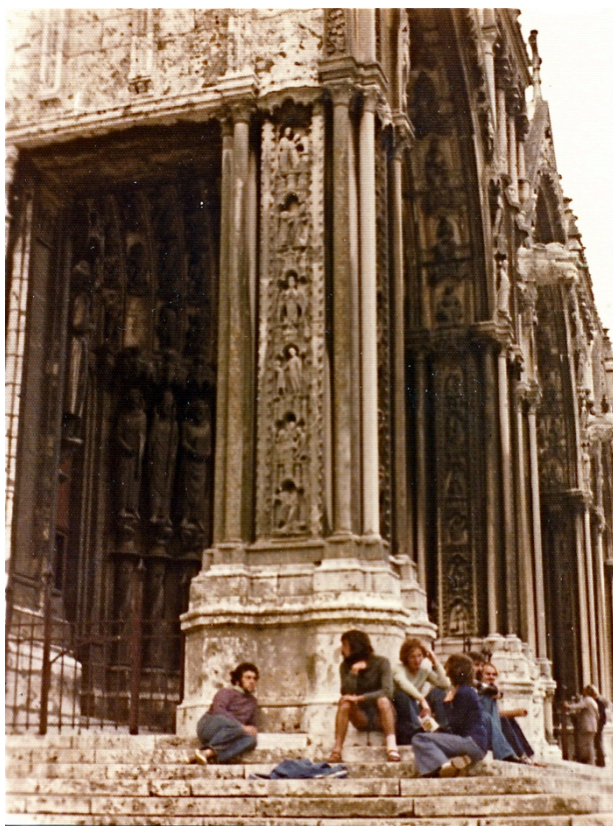




Chartreuse (GLIJ)



Hywel and the sunflowers (GLIJ)



Chartres Cathedral group (GLIJ)



Detail (GLIJ)

1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France



Chartres Cathedral (GLIJ)

'BELFAST ROPE TRICK' BREAKTHROUGH

A GROUP of Ulster cavers have solved the Indian rope trick — and used a 3,750-foot deep pothole in France to prove it.

And today one of the team, Belfast geologist Mr. Gareth Jones, came to the surface to show how it was done.

"It keeps you vertical while going up the rope and is quite a revolutionary idea. Usually we use ladders for caving, but on this expedition decided to go up and down by ropes alone," he said.

The expedition has just returned after two weeks in the Gouffre Berger — Europe's second deepest cave — where they sliced 24 hours off the record speed of 12 hours for making a complete descent

and ascent between top and bottom.

"It was this new equipment we made that did it. It means we can go up a rope in only a few minutes instead of half an hour and it speeded our underground work considerably," said Mr. Jones.

The device was invented by a Belfast draughtsman, Mr. Maurice Neill, and was practised in the Fermanagh caves before the 22-strong joint Irish-Welsh expedition set out for France. Six of them were from Northern Ireland, and included a psychologist, a biologist and a taxman.

They used the specially adapted "jumar" climbing clamps and nylon footslings to go both down and up the various verticle pitches — up to 150 feet

— in the cave system in France's Massif Central.

"We've really used mountaineering equipment, but gone a step further. It means we can go up a vertical rope at about four times the speed it would normally take.

"It almost amounts to walking vertically, using feet to do the work and the hand to manipulate the clamps," said Mr. Jones. "Maurice Neill invented the equipment and we tested it out in Fermanagh before the trip, and we like to think we've revolutionised techniques a bit."

The device is especially useful for energy saving on such long expeditions, and involves the use of a harness — described by the cavers as "a sort of a bra" — to secure them to the rope.



On our return, we appeared in the Belfast Telegraph August 1975 (above and left)

The Evening Press

Evening Press July 22nd 1975.

Irish cavers attempt deepest descent

A GROUP of Ireland's top cavers will attempt to reach the bottom of the Gouffre Berger, which at 3,750 feet is the second deepest cave in the world, near the French city of Grenoble.

The undertaking is described as akin to climbing a Himalayan peak in reverse. Leading the expedition, due to take place during the first two weeks of August, will be Mr. Brian Phillips, a caver from Belfast, who is living in Belfast.

T.C.D. MAN

Other members of the expedition are David Drew (38),

lecturer in geography at T.C.D.; Michael Orr (38), of the Adelaide Hospital, who will act as team doctor; Jeff Phillips, from Ceanannas Mor; Gareth Hanes (32), a geologist, of Queen's University; and Paddy O'Reilly (30), a Dublin engineer.

The object of the Irish expedition is to reach the bottom of the cave and equip it is possible to extend it to the top of the cave, as well as this a number of scientific experiments will be carried out on the hydrology and geology of the area.

The cave is rarely visited and to reach the syphon that

marks the end of the cave the team will have to use special nylon ropes and flexible wire ladders to descend the vertical shafts.

150-FOOT SHAFTS

Many of the shafts are over 150 feet deep and often have waterfalls cascading through them.

The expedition will be a dangerous one, and the team will be asked to enter the cave at their own risk.

The members will have to camp underground for the duration of their adventure.

Whilst Maurice and I were interviewed on Ulster Television about the expedition.

APPENDIX I

BERGER WATERPROOF CONTAINERS

Kevin O'Hagan

The can was probably originally a container for some sort of oil, perhaps vegetable oil. A hole was cut in the front centre (180mm x 155mm). A metal inner plate (220mm x 160mm) with lugs welded on, drilled to take a short bolt at each end, also welded, was sized to cover the hole on the inside but capable of being removed through the hole. A rectangle of inner car tube was set over this plate, with the bolts going through it, so that it was between the metal and the plastic can. Hope that's clear.

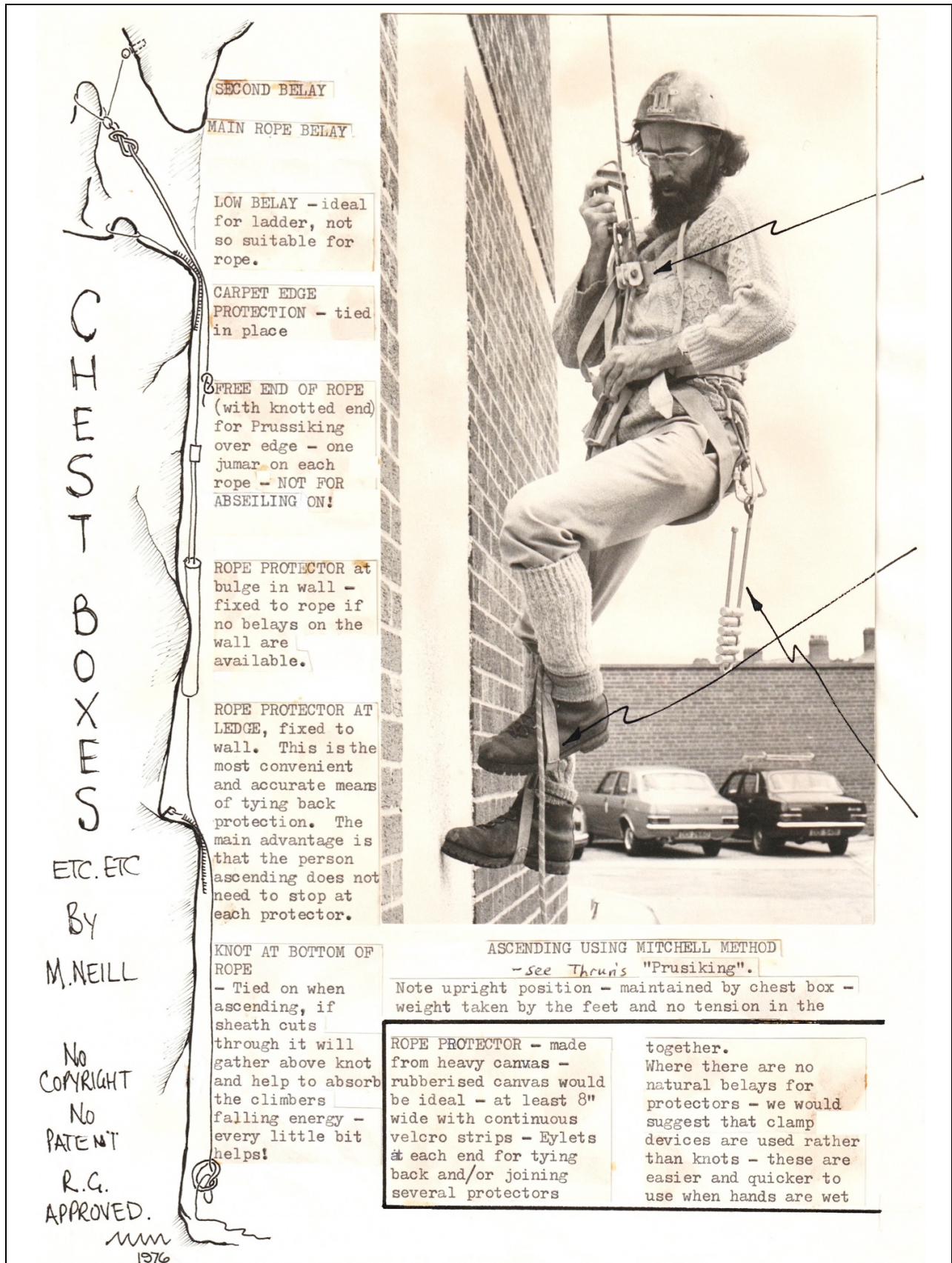
The outer plate, aluminium, (240mm x 200mm) obviously had to be larger than the hole. Holes were drilled to accommodate the bolts on the inner plate. Neoprene was stuck round the edges of this plate and round the boltholes to make watertight.



Instructions: - insert inner plate and rubber seal into the aforesaid hole in the can and align correctly (portrait mode). It will be necessary to grip one of the short bolts between finger and thumb while lining up the holes in the outer plate with the bolts. Attach one wing nut (only one wing on these – easier to turn when hands are cold or wearing gloves or can be given a sharp knock) to keep inner plate from falling and with a bit of juggling get the second bolt into its hole. Attach other wing nut and tighten up well to ensure Neoprene creates watertight seal. Throw into the river and see if it floats and there are no leaks, but before you do attach rope to the built-in handle so you don't lose it. Simple!!

APPENDIX II NEILL BOX Maurice Neill

Maurice Neill developed a double roller chest box to keep the prussiker vertical whilst climbing the rope. Here are his explanations and designs. The Neill Box was used successfully on the Berger expedition, though it had occasional problems exiting the awkward tops of pitches (GLIJ).



TOP CLAMP (JUMAR)
To right foot through
right side of chest box
- if left foot, then
left side of box.

CHEST BOX (Mk. VI)
With main climbing rope
through other side of
box.

Note! Safety sling
attached from clamp to
sit harness. This is
why it is preferable,
when negotiating an edge
to change over the
bottom clamp to the
'free end' of the rope.
('Free end' of rope may
have a small weight
attached to remove the
problem of having to
"feed" the rope through
as the clamp is raised,
e.g. the climbers' rack)

FOOT LOOPS - Made from
tape as rope tends to
'cut' into the feet.

CHICKEN LOOPS (not shown
in photo.) these are
non-structural ankle
loops which keep the
foot loops in place on
the instep. A sewn
tape loop can be placed
around the ankle before
the boots are put on and
is therefore a permanent
fixture whilst in the
cave - alternatively a
tied loop can be used
and removed to suit.

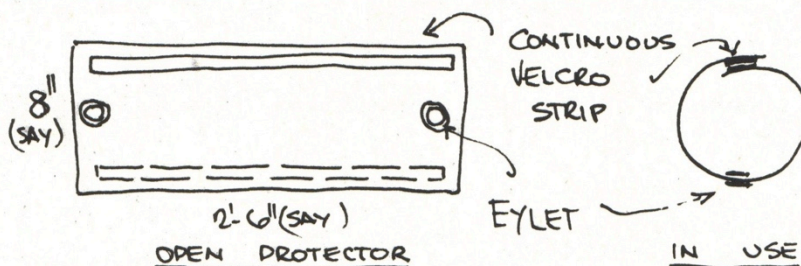
DESCENDEUR - ALWAYS
CARRY SUFFICIENT GEAR SO
THAT YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR
DIRECTION OF TRAVEL ON
THE ROPE!!

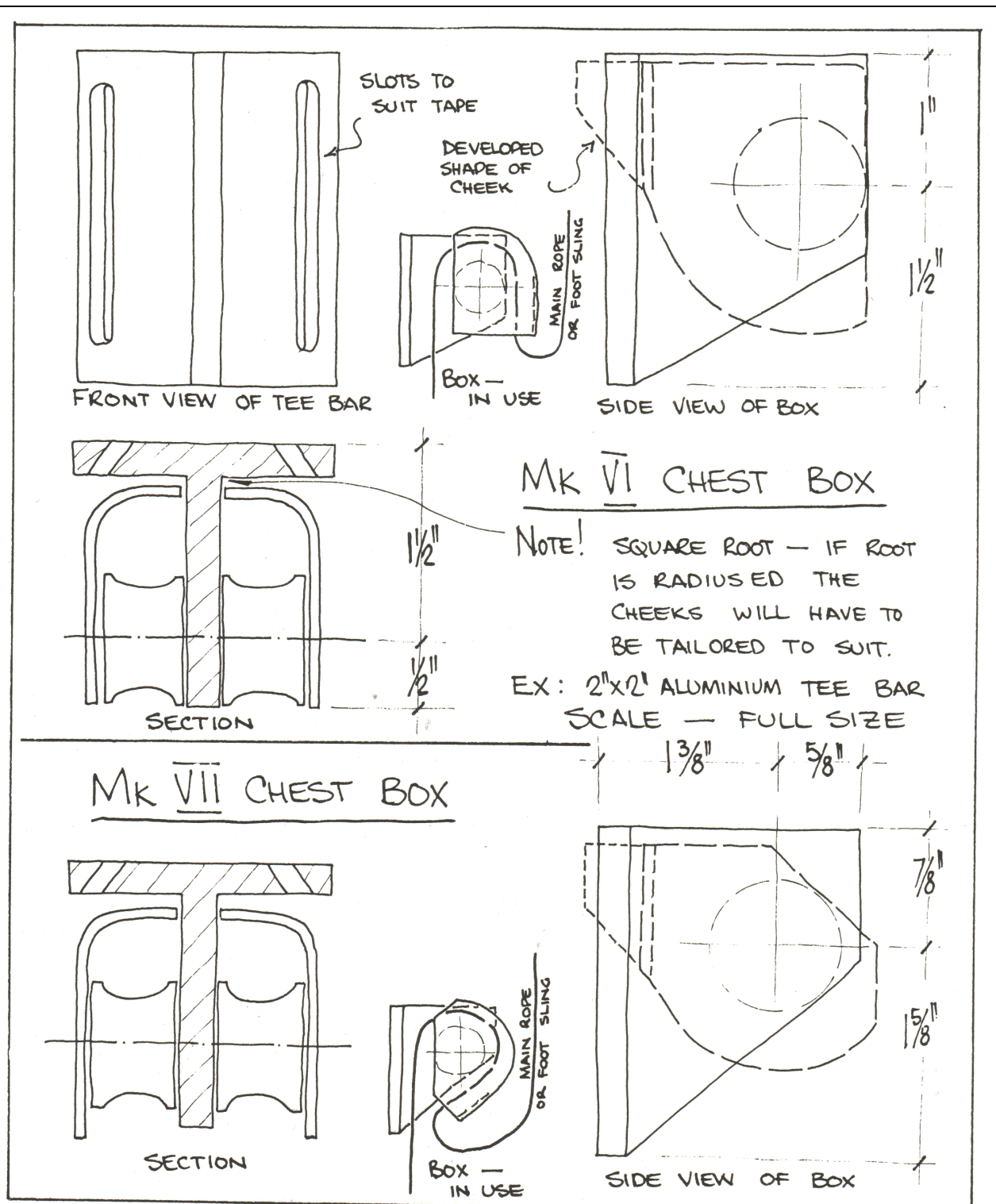


STANDING AT EASE WITH MITCHELL METHOD -

To work at (say) rope protectors - for resting simply sit in sit harness which is fixed to upper Jumar. (A safety sling may also be fixed to lower Jumar - thereby allowing top Jumar to be used safely for 'transfer' to 'free end' at the edge of a pitch.)

and cold. Mini Clog-
type Clamps could be
made up from 12 gauge
alloy plate with Marine
Plywood Cams and would
be quite suitable.
Bulldog type paper
clips are apt to
disintegrate!

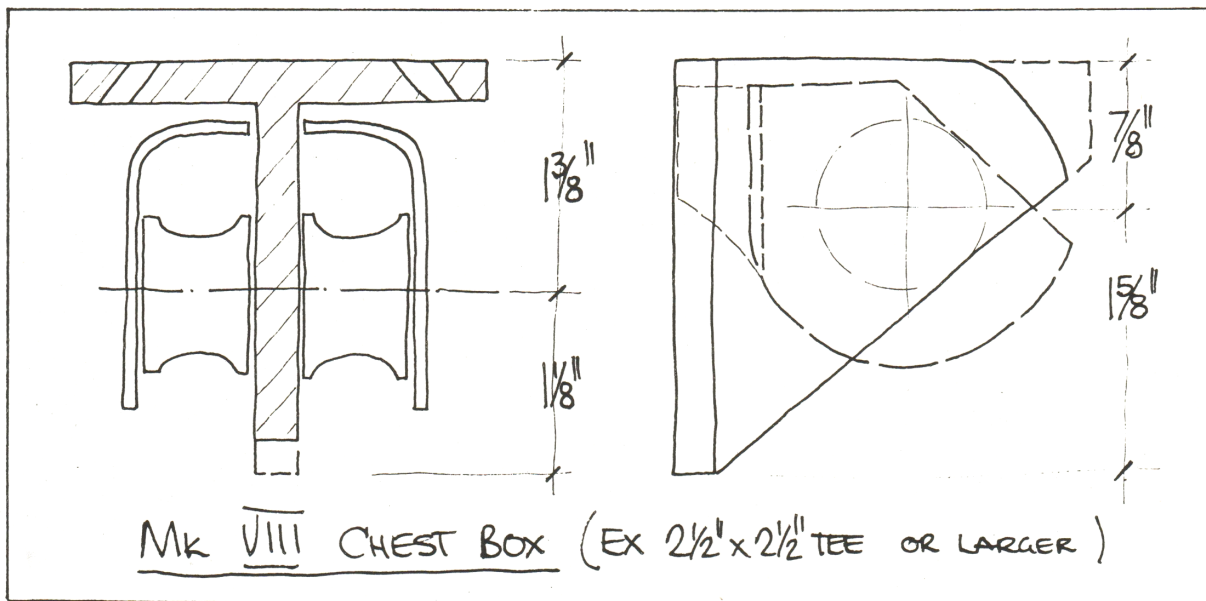




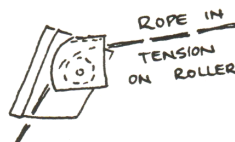
MATERIALS - CHEST BOX MATERIALS

Aluminium Tee Bar - 2" x 2" - is easier to obtain, 3" x 3" or 2½" x 2½" would give a more generously proportioned chest box i.e. the back plate would be larger, of course the whole would be more bulky.

The rollers are ex. 1" dia. nylon bar - machined to suit bolt and rope. The side cheeks are 12 gauge aluminium. The axle is a $\frac{3}{8}"$ stainless steel bolt with a lock nut. It is most important that the hole through the tee bar is a tight fit for the bolt (the bolt can be deformed slightly with a punch and forced into place) and that the bolt does not turn or move. (Alternatively the rollers can be "Sleeved!")



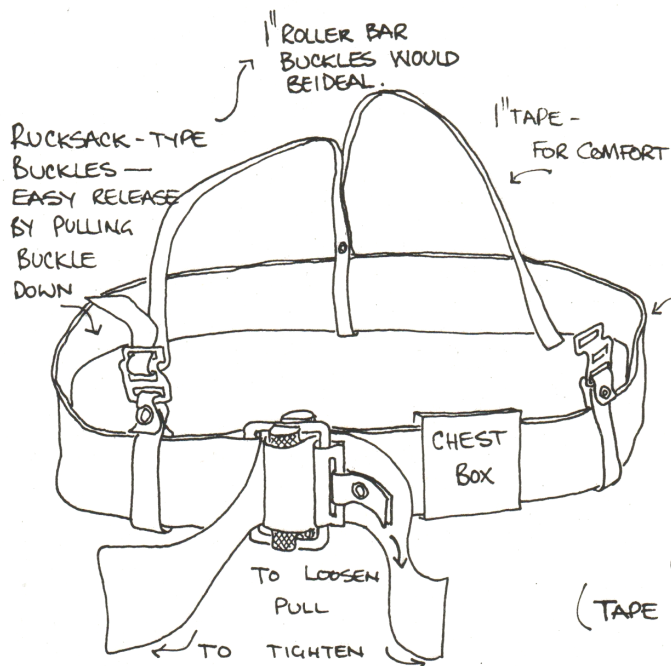
THE Mk. VI - Simple to use and quick; rope or foot sling could jump out on a slow slope - but not both together!



The Mk. VII - More tedious to use and therefore not so quick, - rope and foot sling cannot 'jump out'.

The Mk. VIII - would be an ideal case as safe as the VII, more comfortable, and **earier** to use.

CHEST HARNESS



ALTERNATIVE STRAP ARRANGEMENT

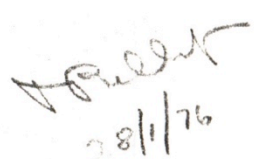
2" WIDE TAPE USED DOUBLE-- THIS REMOVES THE NECESSITY FOR 'STRUCTURAL' SEWING, AND ALLOWS THE WEARER TO TIGHTEN & ADJUST HIS OWN HARNESS.

(TAPE MAY BE 'TACKED' FOR NEATNESS)

APPENDIX III

ACCOUNTS

Jeff Phillips

GOUFFRE BERGER 1975 EXPEDITION					
<u>INCOME</u>			<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Subscriptions £30	29	£870.00	Rope		£201.21
Profit on foreign exchange					
Francs taken to France			other equipment		£313.71
		£1.03	Insurance		£151.67
Donations £5	5	£25.00	Food packs		£168.96
Sale of equipment		£175.90	First Aid Kit		£14.77
Sports Council NI Grant		£125.00	Transport food & equipment to France		£50.00
Insurance claim on stolen rope		£16.00	Bank charges, postage, etc.		£7.50
			Refund to Nick Day		£24.77
			Refund £10	28	£280.00
			Balance to ICRO		£0.34
		-----			-----
Total Income		£1,212.93	Total Expenditure		£1,212.93
<div style="text-align: right;">  J. Phillips 28/01/76 </div>					

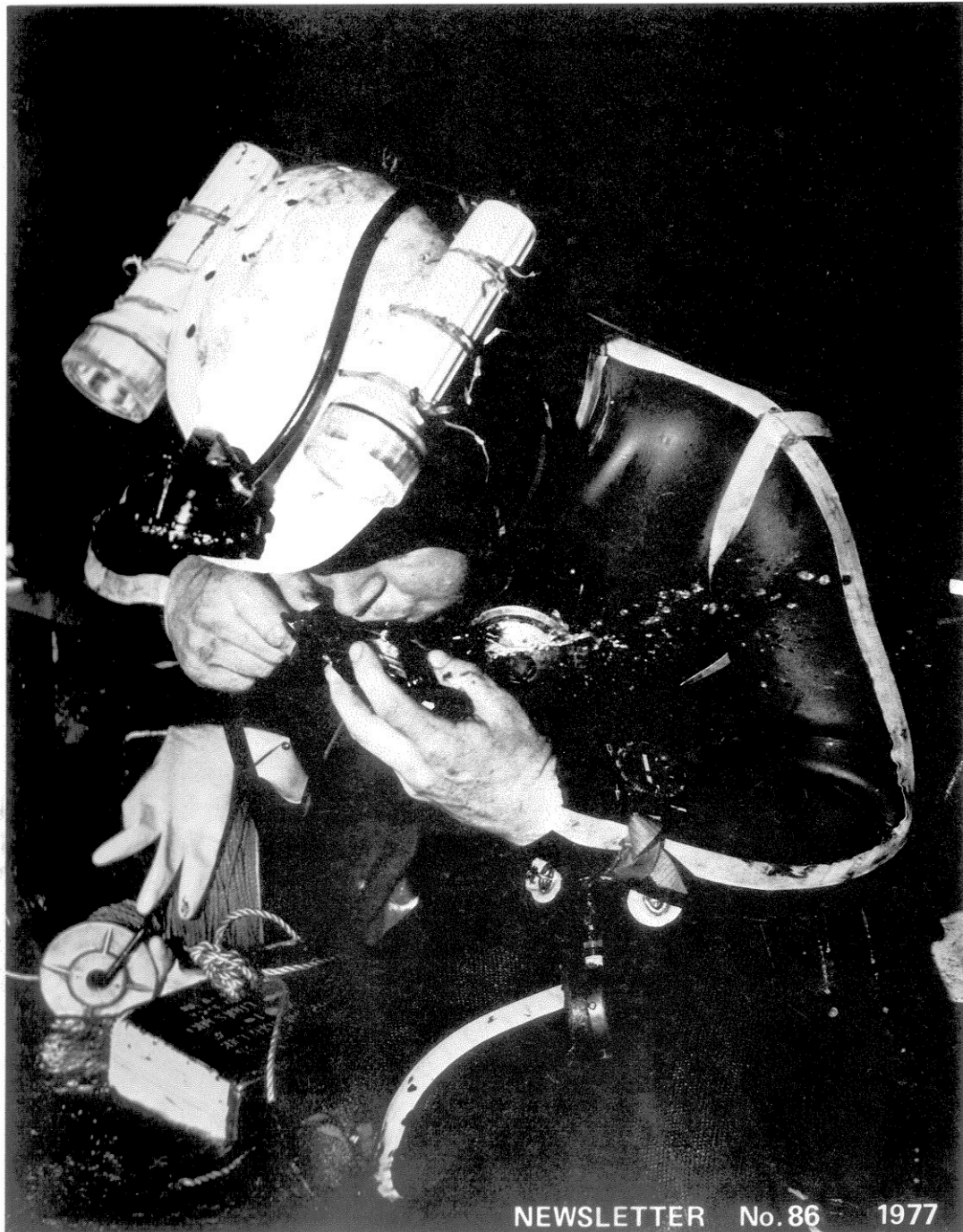
1975 Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France

Appendix IV

Pete Francis report carried in

South Wales Caving Club Newsletter no. 86, 1977

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB



NEWSLETTER No. 86 1977

BERGER '75

The Gouffre Berger is a 4,000 ft. deep pot in the Grenoble area of France and is one of the three deepest caves in the world.

Hywel Ball had booked the cave for the first two weeks in August with everyone finding their own way there, which varied from thumbing to regular service jet for the more affluent. Some had been in the area sometime before the official start of the 'expedition' and were firmly ensconced in the local palais de vin by the time most had arrived, whilst others only managed to be there for a short time. We were all based on the Sornin plateau near the end of a dramatic mountain road and one of the few surface water supplies. Unfortunately that was not too near the cave, resulting in delightful games of hide and seek with an elusive path after emerging from long trips in the middle of the night. Deep clints and grykes also added to that particular sport; indeed route finding underground was far easier than on the surface.

It had been agreed to use S.R.T. for all the big pitches, using ladders only on the smaller ones. This worked well in practice and no problems arose from it.

The Irish cavers were in charge of equipment for the cave and did the job admirably, even setting up an open-air workshop at the camp site. Racks, Michell and Niel Boxes were readily available as a result, as well as commercially made stuff bags and rope protectors. These stuff bags turned out to be the most popular in use over the large adapted jerry cans and S.W.C.C. frame packs which were bulky and clumsy to use. A mixture of racks and figure of eights were used for descending, though boxes were the most popular method used for prussiking, other methods were employed. The rope came from Venturegear - 1,000 ft. of Bluewater and 1,000 ft. of Terylene, plus other odds and ends, other equipment being purchased in Ireland. Each member of the party contributed £30 to cover the purchase of equipment and food, but with its resale to members afterwards, the actual cost per person worked out to be only £20. Considering the amount of good caving done and the amount of abandoned equipment found by members, this was good value for money.

From the pre-set entry conditions we had to have an underground doctor; this was Mick Orr who brought all the necessary first-aid equipment. S.W.C.C. provided a Neil Robinson stretcher which would have been very heavy and unwieldy underground. They also provided telephone wire and field telephones, as the conditions of entry also asked for a telephone link between camp one and the surface to be set up. Somehow we never got round to actually completing this task, although the entrance pitch was admirably rigged. Group insurance had also to be provided.

Avon provided a dingy, but as we had another smaller one only that was taken underground. Lake Cadoux was non-existent for most of the time and the dingy only had to be used on one day. Unfortunately the bolting kits did not materialise, so any exploratory work requiring bolting could not be carried out. Carbide provided the main source of light being more versatile for long trips, and there being no charging facilities available. For wet pitches small dry-cell torches were used strapped to helmets, although often the pitches were done in the dark, which can be very interesting, especially if you're first man up. Relighting a wet carbide at the top of a big pitch is a novelty not to be missed!

Hywel, Martyn and I were responsible for underground food. We followed a recent Everest S.W. Face expedition menu which we split into half and one day, two-men packs (see Appendix 1). This was slightly modified to suit our

requirements after Martyn and I had tried out the original menu at the Far North and had difficulty in sleeping, due to over-eating. It proved most satisfactory, though most people were apt to cheat and eat the food in the wrong order and at the wrong time - one party while at Camp One prior to bottoming had a breakfast consisting of porridge with apple flakes, chicken supreme, beef goulash, farmhouse stew à la beef goulash, beef stroganoff, and Birds Angel Whirl à la beef goulash. This was a fairly common occurrence, especially for that particular party!

Everyone carried sleeping bags and dry clothing if they intended to stay at Camp one. A large food dump was set up there with gas stoves for heating. Food dumps were also established at Camp 2 (the Great Canyon) and Camp 3 (Joly Hall) where previous parties had also left dumps. No one slept there, although the food provided welcome snack meals. Had the cave flooded these would have been essential for any party caught in those areas. On arriving at Camp 1 (Hall of the Thirteen), the usual procedure was to take off your wet suit, lay it on the ground with a polythene sheet or space blanket over it, get into dry clothing and then into your sleeping bag and do all your cooking from it. This was extremely comfortable, but reversing the process and donning a cold, wet, wet suit again was far less pleasant.

The bulk of the equipment - ropes, food, telephone wire, pack frames, stretcher etc. - were taken out in my grossly overladen Land Rover, also carrying six cavers and which gave no trouble at all after a quick engine rebuild on the morning of the ferry crossing. On its arrival, most of the equipment was transported by human packhorse to the cave entrance, roughly two kilometres away. The following day (August 1st) the tackling of the cave was begun.

THE TRIP

Hywel, Paddy, Mike Orr and the Cwmbran boys rigged all the entrance pitches as far as Camp 1, where food was also deposited on the first day. Bolts were used wherever possible at the head of the pitches, with the aim of letting the rope hang freely. This was not possible on some pitches and good rope protectors were essential then. The usual method of rope carrying and pitch rigging was for an 'endless' coil to be carried in a stuff bag, and on reaching the pitch a generous amount was lowered and adjusted according to need after the first man had descended. There were many bolt holes at the top of each pitch, each successive party not seeming to trust their predecessors' judgement. Many were too small to take the standard British bolt, and they also varied in condition.

The following day Pete Robinson, Bomber, Dave Mullins, Martyn Farr and I continued tackling the pitches below Camp 1, getting as far as Tlaudines Cascade and re-surfacing after a mind blowing twelve hour trip. The Irish lads also took more supplies to Camp 1 that day.

The next day Paddy and the Cwmbran boys went in intending to rig to the bottom. Unfortunately they ran out of rope at the Little Monkey pitch and had to return. This upset the timetable somewhat as, on the surface, groups had made arrangements for following them, bottoming the cave at intervals of a few hours to avoid congestion. Martyn, Dave Underhill, Nigel Yarwood and Gareth Davies went in at mid-day on the 4th of August, but the latter three returned to the surface after taking photographs around the Camp 1 area. Dave Mullins and I followed them in getting to Camp 1 by midnight to find Martyn and Che (Cwmbran) firmly ensconced in a plastic palace supported by effluent bins. Paddy and the Cwmbran lads woke us to report that more rope

was needed and proceeded out to tell the next party in to bring rope with them. As it was pointless going on, the party at Camp 1 stayed in bed until the next party arrived and gave them a couple of hours start to rig the pitches. This second party consisted of Hywel, Pete Lord, Sue Jordan, Phil Collett and Dave Drew. Unfortunately the Little Monkey took longer to rig than anticipated, resulting in a very cold couple of hours wait in Joly Hall at it's head. However Hurricane was quickly rigged after that and all nine people were soon at the end of the cave. Following the customary group poses for photographs etc. all returned uneventfully to Camp 1 after being away from there for eighteen hours. The Australian party led by Julia James plus Chuck and Maurice, found us there, and after a quick tin of corned beef each went straight on down and then out in one attempt. We again tried to stagger the parties exiting, but again got caught up in a bottleneck and eventually took ten hours to surface, having been underground for two and a half days.

The next few days saw all members bottoming the cave except Gareth Davies, Carl Atkinson, Bomber, Pete Robinson and Tony Kealey who were prevented from doing so by rising flood water. Pete Lord bottomed twice, the second time with Jeff Phillips, the round trip only taking nine and a quarter hours.

Hywel, Chuck, Maurice, Martyn and Gareth then did a mammoth de-tackling trip to get all the equipment out of the bottom part of the cave before the two inches of rain we'd had that day came through the cave. Chuck went down the Little Monkey and took two and a quarter hours to get the rope up Hurricane due to it snagging all the time. The party then proceeded to go out, meeting Gareth at the top of Gauches. Maurice unfortunately unhooked the ladder from it's belay on Topographers Cascade and fell back down tearing his ankle ligament in the process, but he was able to carry on out. Hywel, Chuck and he finally made it back to camp at 8.00 a.m. the next day after a nineteen hour trip, the last two hours taken up in walking back from the cave entrance. This was the only accident we had, and interestingly happening on a ladder and not a rope pitch. Dave Mullins had a near escape when starting to abseil down from the top of Aldoes when a wooden stemple, used to keep the rope out of a crack, broke, dropping him five feet and showering another party member at the bottom with large chunks of wood! One of two other members also suffered slightly from exposure and exhaustion - due in some cases to their inability to shed any of the goodies they had found on the way!

Three other parties went in and brought tackle up to Camp 1 and then to the bottom of Aldoes, with a final trip taking four hours to bring all the equipment out. The easiest method found for bringing all the rope out was to tie one rope onto the tail of another and then haul an endless line up. Although this may sound awkward it worked extremely well in practice; multiple, simultaneous pitch hauls taking place on occasions. It was far less tiring than hauling one heavy sack up after another. Unfortunately on the last day of de-tackling we found that the local Froggie cavers had stolen the entrance pitch rope, field telephone and a caving helmet. Other things also went missing, but were returned after a 'heavy gang' visited their nearest camp. With an extremely large local caving population we discovered that no gear should be left lying around.

THE CAVE

A casual glance at the survey shows a relatively unimposing entrance series. On inspection this however does not prove to be so, and this series alone would quite easily freak out a caver not used to long pitches. The entrance itself lies towards the edge of a shallow, thickly wooded

valley which abruptly drops away in some spectacular thousand foot cliffs to the Grenoble valley. The first pitch, a mere thirty five, leaves one still in daylight, but on entering a narrow rift one soon comes to the first big cave pitch. This is Ruiz's, needing 100 foot of rope, although we used more to get down some small scrambles at the bottom.

Immediately you are impressed by it's depth. For the first 'entrance pitch' it seems to go down and down interminable. A scramble down a 25 foot ladder leads you to the Cairn Hallpitch, which although it is 100 foot deep is broken in half by a large sloping ledge making it seem shorter. When prussiking back up, it seems far longer as the angle of the rock continually throws you off balance, making it rather awkward. Then comes Cairn Hall, a high, cold, draughty place with, as it's name suggests, a cairn of stones in it's middle. The first of the meanders comes next which is a deep rift one has to traverse across, often on rotten wooden boards. After being used to the O.F.D. rifts, it was quite easy, being neither as high or as wide as it's Welsh counterparts.

The next two pitches - Garby's (130 foot) and Gontards (85 foot)-the first drop into high, spacious halls, the latter from a very tight awkward take off from a large flake, and then followed by three short 25 foot ladder pitches in close succession, leading to the longest entrance pitch - Aldoos (150 foot). This is one of the really impressive pitches of the cave - fortunately dry. Another 35 foot pitch leaves one in a narrow low passage, which makes the arrival at the Great Gallery more of a shock. Squeezing through a narrow constriction, one suddenly senses a feeling of roominess about you, and at first your eyes cannot adjust properly. When they do so it is to see a large canyon stretching away from you giving the feeling of having stumbled out of a cave at night into a large surface gorge. Continuing downwards increases this feeling until Lake Cadoux is reached. This was non-existent when we were there, revealing low muddy banks. At it's far side the first large group of formations in the cave are seen in the Bourgin Hall, similar to those in the Hall of the Thirteen, but not so impressive. A scramble down a fixed rope beyond then leads to the Little General Cascade, where a further 30 foot of ladder is needed. Shortly after comes the incredible Big Rubble Heap where you have to pick your way downhill for a quarter of a mile, sometimes over small, loose boulders, sometimes around ones as big as houses. Finding a set of pram wheels here does much to relieve the tension such impressive places gives. So to Camp 1 at it's foot. Finding so homely a site is very welcome and it's cleanliness and lack of smell is a pleasant surprise. Although there is rubbish there, it is in neat piles and not half as bad as we had been led to believe. Water is a problem there though, the best method of collecting it is to place billy cans on top of the flat topped stals, although the constant loud dripping into them is apt to keep you awake.

Immediately below Camp 1 is the Hall of the Thirteen which has probably the most impressive formations in the cave. Against a background resembling a high Gothic cathedral rise splendid flat topped stalagmites, themselves making the trip worthwhile, even if you get no lower. You have to pick your way through a maze of deep gourd pools to approach them and on passing, then go over a steep calcited floor to the Balcony pitch. This is 60 foot but quite pleasant. On descending your ears pick out a deep thundering sound of water and it is a surprise to find the sound being produced by a small flow travelling down a hollow stal (the enormous cascade!). The cave is much smaller here and well decorated, staying like this through St. Matthews Halls, the Calcite Walls (where a hundred foot handline is needed), the twenty five foot pitch into the Cloakroom and on to Abelle's Cascade. Then follows a series of small cascades joined by canals, which would involve some

swimming had not a fixed handline been installed permanently along most of them.

At the end comes Claudine's Cascade (80 foot), the first really wet pitch in the cave, but by using the maypole at it's head to rig the rope to the left of the pitch, much of the water can be avoided. The passage continues to drop steeply after that with 30 foot of ladder needed on Topographers Cascade. A little extra ladder is useful here for one or two other short drops. This part is similar to many British caves but at Eymas Hall it starts to open out to suddenly reveal and stagger you with the Great Canyon. By keeping to the right wall one can descend (a handline is useful as there is a 200 foot drop to the left) to it's floor. It is so large that cavers standing on the bottom appear minute to those above. Camp 2 is here. It immediately closes down again to the head of Gouche's Shaft (60 foot), a dry, pleasant pitch when we were there with no water except for the spot where two French cavers died a month later during a flood. Pitch rigging should therefore be done carefully here. The stream is met below here again and the passage size varies considerably. The next large obstacle is the Grand Cascade, which is probably the worst pitch in the cave. The top part we rigged with two ladders from separate points, necessitating a changeover from one to the other half-way down and in the water, which was most unsatisfactory. The pitch below needed 100 foot of rope. We originally hung this in the water which was very uncomfortable, if not positively dangerous, the water hitting you as you came over a lip half way up with great force, making upward progress and breathing, hard. This was further complicated by having to do it in the dark due to carbides being extinguished by the water. It was re-rigged later making it much dryer, but even so the force of the water on the rope, hitting it against the wall caused it to be frayed almost half way through after only being in place a few days.

Below this was Joly Hall, a most unjolly place, being cold and draughty and the place where Camp 3, looking like the neolithic remains of a peasant hut, was situated. The cave then constricts again, the stream actually sumping, but there is a sump bypass which leads to the Little Monkey Shaft (100 foot) where you have to be a monkey to traverse along the ledges over it, to rig it clear of a deep plunge pool a short way down. This drops you over the lip of that plunge pool, through the water to a place where you can swing off onto a ledge to get to the head of Hurricane shaft (170 foot) and rig it dry. Due to the depth and the water crashing down alongside you this impressed itself most on my mind of all the pitches. Unfortunately it is not freehanging, and many small ledges break your descent. At the foot you have to traverse round a wide, deep, evil looking lake while shielding your carbide from the draught and spray, the passage roof once more soaring out of sight. Clambering over large, clean washed boulders one descends to where the river pours over a waterfall to join the stream you have been following. The cave then constricts again into a narrow, high rift and after finding the dry oxbow where divers' old bottles and containers have been left, you join the stream once more to find a canal section in which you have to swim, taking you to a small waterfall and the terminal sump pool. This has been passed by divers, but by then you feel you are deep enough and so turn round for the long climb out again.

An so after a few large, wet dinner parties, amid torrential rain and hail showers, ended a superb fortnights caving.

TEAM MEMBERS

Hywel Ball (leader, S.W.C.C., Reyfad Group); Paddy O'Reilly (S.W.C.C., R.G.); Mike Orr (R.G.); Martyn Farr (S.W.C.C., C.D.G.); Peter Francis (S.W.C.C.); Dave Mullin (S.W.C.C.); Pete Lord (Cwmbran C.C.); Sue Jordan (C.C.C.);

Jeff Phillips (R.G.); Maurice Neill (R.G.); Dave Underhill (B.U.S.S.); Nigel Yarwood (B.U.S.S.); Chuck (R.G.); Gareth Jones (R.G.); Gareth Davies (S.W.C.C.); Kevin O'Hagan (R.G.); Carl Atkinson (R.G.); R.F. (Bomber) Beaumont; Pete Robinson; Tony Kealy; John Parker (C.C.C., C.D.G.); Martyn Bishop (Wessex C.C. C.D.G.); Tony Jarratt (Wessex C.C.); Richard Stephenson (Wessex C.C., C.D.G.); Gwyn Jones (Che) (C.C.C.).

APPENDIX I

Underground Food

The food prepared proved more than adequate, much being left over. It was bought in the following quantities.

1 tin Welsh Fruit Humbugs (5½ lbs)
1 tin Fox's Glacier Mints (5 lbs)
Soups: Oxtail 24 pts. (dehydrated)
Minestrone " "
Chicken " "
Garden Veg. " "
Complement 250 sachets.
Snappies polythene bags - 720 small, 300 large.
Batchelors dehydrated dishes (main meal):
Chicken curry 4 catering packs
Chicken Oriental " "
Bolognese Sauce 2 catering packs
Beef Goulash 4 " "
Beef Curry 5 " "
Savoury Mince 2 " "
Beef Stroganoff 2 " "
Farmhouse Stew 2 " "
Chicken Supreme 1 " "
Veg. Savoury Rice 7 " "
Beef " " 4 " "
Golden " " 7 " "
Mild Curry " " 2 " "

Curry powder - 1 large tin
Scouring pads - 2 packs
Mash potatoes - (128 servings)
Birds Angel Whirl - 2 packs
Tea bags - 1,000
Apple Dice - 2 packs (dehydrated)
Sliced Onions - 2 packs "
Peas - 2 packs "
Coffee bags - 128 three cup bags
Currants - 14 lbs
Sultanas - 14 lbs
Porridge - 14 lbs
Sugar - 40 lbs (sachets)
Milk powder - 840 tablespoons
Salt - 3 lbs
Springlow one man meals - ad finitum.
Oxo cubes - 70
Dextrosol - 140 packets
Mars Bars - 280
Chocolate - 420
Toilet Rolls - 70
Matches - 140 boxes
Peanuts - 140 packets

These were split up and used as follows:

Two man one day rations

3 oz porridge oats
6 oz sugar
9 tablespoons milk powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz salt
Springlow pack
4 tea bags
2 coffee bags
oxo
chocolate extras
1 packet Dextrosol
2 Mars bars
2 bars chocolate
Sweets. 2 packets peanuts
Tissues (toilet roll)
8 oz. mixed dried fruit
1 packet soup
1 main meal (dehydrated) + rice
or Smash.

Two man $\frac{1}{2}$ day rations

2 teabags
2 cubes oxo
2 coffee bags
3 oz sugar
3 tablespoons milk powder
1 packet Dextrosol
2 Mars bars
4 bars other chocolate
Sweets
1 tin sardines
1 packet soup

This gave an estimated 70 x 2 man day rations and 60 x 2 man $\frac{1}{2}$ day rations, giving 260 caving days (10 days x 25 people).

APPENDIX II

Pitch/Tackle List

1. Rope 35 ft.)
2. Rope 100 ft. (Ruiz)) - These are approximate lengths
- 3.) only.
- 4.)-Ladder 25 ft.
- 5.)
6. Rope 100 ft. (Cairn Hall
7. Rope 130 ft. (Garby's)
8. Rope 85 ft. (Gonthard's)
9. Ladder 25 ft.
10. Ladder 25 ft.
11. Ladder 25 ft.
12. Rope 150 ft. (Aldo's)
13. Ladder 35 ft.
14. Ladder 30 ft. (Lirtle General)

Camp 1

15. Rope 60 ft. (Balcony)
16. Ladder 25 ft.
17. Rope 200 ft. for calcite walls
18. Rope 80 ft. (Claudine's)
19. Ladder 30 ft.
20. Rope 60 ft. (Gauches)
21. Rope 100 ft. (Grand Cascades)
22. Rope 100 ft. (Little Monkey)
23. Rope 170 ft. (Hurricane)

REFERENCES

Berger newsheets etc.
Martyn Farr's diary
Pete Francis' diary.

P. FRANCIS.

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P. O'REILLY'S GOUFFRE BERGER LOGBOOK

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GOUFFRE BERGER
AUGUST 1975.

PM O'Reilly
18 Greenogue Drive
Rathcoole
Co Dublin

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Evening Press July 22nd 1975.

Irish cavers attempt deepest descent

A GROUP of Ireland's top cavers will attempt to reach the bottom of the Gouffre Berger, which at 3,750 feet is the second deepest cave in the world, near the French city of Grenoble.

The undertaking is described as akin to climbing a Himalayan peak in reverse.

Leading the expedition, due to take place during the first two weeks of August, will be Dr. Michael Orr (28), a lecturer in geography at T.C.D., Michael Orr (28), of the Adelaide Hospital, who will act as team doctor. Jeff Phillips, from Cranmanus Mor, Gareth Hane (32), a geologist, of Queen's University and Paddy O'Reilly (30), a Dublin engineer.

T.G.D. MAN

Other members of the expedition are David Drew (38),

lecturer in geography at T.C.D.; Michael Orr (28), of the Adelaide Hospital, who will act as team doctor. Jeff Phillips, from Cranmanus Mor, Gareth Hane (32), a geologist, of Queen's University and Paddy O'Reilly (30), a Dublin engineer.

The object of the Irish expedition is to reach the bottom of the cave and see if it is possible to extend it. It is hoped that a number of scientific experiments will be carried out on the hydrology and geology of the area.

The cave is rarely visited and to reach the syphon that

marks the end of the cave the team will have to use special nylon ropes and flexible wire ladders to descend the vertical shafts.

150-FOOT SHAFTS

Many of the shafts are over 150 feet deep and often have waterfalls cascading through them.

The expedition will use a new method of descending the ropes that it hopes will be safer and faster than conventional methods.

The members will have to camp underground for the duration of their adventure.

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It was the appearance of these news items that really convinced us all that we were actually going to go to the Berger. Well there it was in the newspapers so it must be true! Even though I had sent it to them, to actually see it meant that we had to go through with it.

Dave was suitably 'indignant' about his 'age' when I phoned him on Friday to see if he could take some of the gear from me. For try as I could it seemed to be mounting up and up and up.

And my trip to UK this week didn't exactly help this either for on my return there seemed to be 1000 and 1 things to do. I spent all of Friday and most of Saturday at work but I was still left with a whole pile of stuff to do. And I hadn't even sorted my gear out. Late Friday afternoon I went to Bob's and we collected stuff sacks, rope protectors and a whole pile of bits and pieces, Karabiners, tape, rope, primuses etc etc. Then after chopping and irate (or hen pecked?) (or both?) Bob back to his wife we went to Dunne's stores and spent £35 in a blitzkrieg of shopping - back to Bob + Leshe's for warmed up Stroganoff - and very welcome too. Bed finally at 2.00 a.m. Sat.

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Saturday afternoon spent in a daze of packing. this in this box, soups in that one, dried veg here. Soap separate from food. pack pack pack. By 11.00 I was all in but nearly everything was ready and when Mike arrived next morning I looked efficiently organised. It took us till 9.00 to load the car - poor car - full to the roof and down on the springs so much that the mudflaps dragged along the ground. While Mike departed (with Dave - who took, carbide, stovetop and dinghy) I tidied up the house + ate chicken and chips in the Porteen still - bed at 2.00 am again.

Mon 28 July. Departure day. Into work-quick round to spread the work out - then rush into town to collect odds and sods - film, lens, ladders, and of course, Mike. Then off at 1.30 towards Bosslone without a four belt - arriving there at 4.15 - so did everyone else all within 10 minutes of each other. It was all really clicking into place! It wasn't long before we were on board the St Patrick - a wonderful boat. Not enough berths for everyone, not enough chairs for those who didn't have berths and you're not allowed to take your sleeping bag on deck Sir - rules of the ship.

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I immersed myself in a frenzy of sewing and wet suit repairing to occupy myself and slept soundly through a millpond crossing.

Tues 29 July 75

The St Patrick did have one good feature that we discovered almost by accident - and that was the Smorgasbord restaurant - where for £1 I consumed 4 smoked rashers, 3 Sausages, sliced ham, luncheon meat, 2 Eggs fried, 4 rolls, 4 glasses fruit juice, 3 cups tea. A good start to any holiday!

We passed through French Customs unhindered despite our enormous load and sagging vehicle and we were soon belting along the chaussée deformed to the west of Paris and into Chartres. Here we stopped to admire the Cathedral - outstandingly majestic and drove on till nightfall. We had passed through Orleans and Gien and we spent the night in a field near Briare - an undistinguished French field as usual.

Wed 30 July 75.

Up early and on our way at 5 to 6. Despite the early hour the road was busy and by the time we got to Nevers we were glad

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to stop for breakfast of Cheese + tomatoes beside an ugly dirty tributary of the Loire where some locals were rather optimistically fishing. We had lunch somewhere between Moulins and Lyons and for a while we gave up the struggle with the juggernauts to lay in the shade of a tree.

Outside Lyons we saw our first sign for Grenoble and after a rapid cross-Lyons dash we were heading into more interesting territory. Suddenly over the top of a hill we could see steep sharp cliffs which were obviously in the right area.

We had our route to the camp site well planned. Straight on from Rives to Tullins to San Quentin and virtually straight up the hillside to Ambass and from there to La Motte. The poor overloaded Opel ground up and up the steep D218 and when we got to the top with the engine boiling we saw a sign saying road 'FERME'. Imagine our frustration. Having driven up only to find that 10 mins away from destination we couldn't get through!

So 15 hours later, having descended and driven round to Sasseuge, we were driving along the most hair-raising roadway. Most of it was only wide enough for 1 car and

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at several places there was a good 200' drop! Our only altercation was 500 yards from La Motte when a bus didn't give way and then we were there. On top of the mountain with superb views of the alps in the misty distance.

Our first priority was to locate water and a suitable campsite - not that there was any shortage of places to camp. La Motte is a huge meadow, flat, and bordered by trees. We exchanged a few sounds with a cowherd who convinced us we should sleep on a sloping site near the car park but we were none too happy about that when there was a superb spot 200 yds away in the trees near the meadow.

We wandered along the path to search for the Buys entrance before it got dark. We located a hole about 15' deep with a short wooden ladder down it. We thought this must be it and so we decided to establish a camp reasonably near here - in the meadows beyond La Motte - despite the fact that water would have to be carried all the way from the car park.

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Thursday 31 July 75.

Well, water shortage or none, we were going to camp as far away from the car park as possible — the reason? LowBells. Thousands of the bloody things tied to donkeys + cows waking us up as we slept in the open beside the car.

So when we discovered that it was possible to drive to the far end of the meadow by removing one of the stakes round the car park, I did two ferry trips chumping all our gear at the far end.

Gareth + the others arrived having reached the end of the 'narrow road' and camped there at 9.00 last night — some 3½ hours behind us. After reviewing the situation he decided to camp — on the sloping site!

Mike + I established ourselves in the heat of the afternoon sun — after about 5 ferryloads each we had the whole lot down and we took the 1000' of bluewater and some ladders down to the entrance. It was late afternoon and there was no sign of the others so we drove (via Outrans to see the cause of the road blockage — blasting) and found them just beginning to move from their site beside the restaurant. The Yorkshire Cavers were there too and

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John Parker and the Womban crew were yobbing about drunkenly as usual. We had beer and cheese at the restaurant and then chatted for a while with John — I managed to elicit one useful piece of information from one of the Yorkshire blokes. Our 'entrance' was that to Gouffre d'Enfer not the Berger — that was some ¾ of a mile further on.

A camp looked by Mike and to Bed.

Friday August 1st.

I will have to admit to being competitive. Not only do I get an inveterate pleasure out of being first up in the mornings but today I wanted to be first to actually see the entrance and then first down and then first to camp!

Well I actually achieved the first up bit — then we greeted Huzel who came into camp lugging a reel of terylene rope 1000' long. While he returned to move his Compotists from their beds we moved on towards the entrance carrying our personal gear.

I picked up the bluewater at Enfers and we flogged on down the path. A row of Cairns on the LHS caused a diversion of some 50 minutes — they led in a circuit of the cwm — but not to the Berger.

We finally found it. A low wall had been

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built across the main path and a subsidiary one led off down to the entrance some 500 yds further on. I was just about to give up when I spotted it!

We rushed back and chumped all our gear to the entrance — Huzel met us half way but so far no sign of any of the others — Good!

With no messing about we put a rope down the entrance pitch and we were actually ~~at~~ down the Berger. It was 11.40 — Mike + I had been ferrying loads since 8.00 and I, for one, didn't intend to go very far today.

The bottom of the first pitch is a dirty smelly damp place and we didn't dwell there for very long. Almost immediately the second pitch (Ruiz Shaft) came — bridged across the top by a log bridge. This had the effect of making it free all the way. Our plan was to lower my rucksack with the rope and abseil down, cutting it off at just the right length.

At Ruiz however we had our first (and only) mishap when lowering rope became entangled with the main rope, the rucksack jammed and I had to abseil down to free it. This was only a minor hitch and we were soon at the bottom where a short fixed ladder greeted us. This was the first of the three 'holiday slides' — short steps and we put a ladder down the lower two

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We were then greeted by a shortish pitch — after some debate as to whether we should rope or ladder if we roped it and found it to be about 30' to a big ledge which then gave way to a pitch of about 70 or 80 into Cwm Hall.

From here a short length of rift passage some 3' wide led into 'The Meanders' — a traversy rift varying between 3 and 30+ deep in places. However it was made relatively simple by a whole host of wooden stumps all ~~at~~ along the walls!

At the end, a beautiful pitch, all of 150' or so (Garby's), dropped into a circular chamber. This was followed by further meanders, yet another pitch (Gentlands) depth? and we were losing track of our pitches! A ladder of 35', a rope of 50 or so down the relay pits and we were at the top of a big one. By now J. Parker and associates were noisily following on behind but we descended this superb pitch (Aldo's 160') in our own good time. A really great place.

A short little grotty bit, but it wasn't so bad now my — 60' lbs load was down to about 15 by now — and suddenly we were in the most enormous passage about 50 wide and 100' high! Stupendous.

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We went a short distance upstream but hastily followed on down once Mike had joined us. The stream was small and we passed where Lake Cadoux should have been without even noticing. We decided to leave all our ^{vertical} gear as we rushed downstream - and soon we were joined by the Gwmbrian crew.

All off together then towards Camp 1 for they had brought some food with them and we could at least eat before returning.

How can you describe one of the most impressive cave passages. Like Rylfab, like Fiod's, like OFD like DYO only bigger - about 10 times bigger - in places the roof was way out of sight and it was a job to see across the passage. Huge Stals of all shapes & sizes - and all the time an active stream.

There were two obstacles - little General pike (25 ladders) and the Tyrolenne traverse - (the latter rigged with handline) - and then we were in an even more enormous passage with boulders of all sizes from 10' across to 100' across! Down down, down at 45° till suddenly the sordid mess of Camp 1 greeted us. While the Gwmbrian crew descended like vultures on the rubbish

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discovery, and devouring, bits of Keweenaw Mutt Cake, I went down to the very bottom and admired the stals in the Hall of the Thirteen. Despite all the traffic and all the photos - they really are worth seeing.

Back at the camp we devoured the edible contents of one of Martyn Fatts ration packs and after this sustenance, I for one felt better. I had been bothered all the time by blisters on my heels from all the running to and fro early on, but the sheer joy of being down so deep was well worth the "suffering". But it was nothing to the sheer joy of coming out unloaded. Back we came from Camp 1 leaving at 6.50.

I was standing on the surface again at 9.50 - three hours to come out. We had caught up with Maurice Neill's party - they had taken gear to Alder. What a trip -

What a trip indeed. I had gotten my ambition - first to the entrance, first to Camp 1 - and I guess, first back out. Technically everything went without a hitch. Smooth as could be - great caving.

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We staggered back to camp - I made tea for Mike who was following on a bit knackered. Collapse into bed.

Sat 2nd Aug 75.

A rest day. Woken up by dog of herdsman passing by + couldn't go back to sleep. So commenced by writing. Breakfast of spam + tomatoes + coffee. Then I carried a muck sack of food down to the Entrance. Joined Hugel in search of clints for our hunt - he'd hidden his gear and forgotten where!

Back to camp - stinking hot. drank ice cold beer from our fridge - that's one great thing we boast - a freezer/cooler. In Suallet d'Engins - a big sink hole about 100 yds away there is a snow plug ideal for storage of butter, beer etc.

Went over to ^{the} Camp in the woods very homely of a tuffe sloping. Dave Drew had just arrived + we chatted. Drank coffee. Drove to Autrans & did some shopping for veg and Gaz. On return convinced Dave (& Mike) that tomorrow is really the day to go for the bottom.

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Martyn is down today & with luck he'll reach the end in one go. Hugel too is down so at least it will be rigged most of the way.

So tomorrow we go in with personal gear only + food + keep going as far as we can go. On the basis of it being rigged that could be all the way - possibly sleeping at Camp 1 on exit - so I'll pack sleeping bag etc.

All gear is packed now all except sleeping bag etc. I still have to put a zip in my wet suit, stitch + tape socks and pack the flag which now adorns the flagpole above our tents.

We've just eaten a super meal of meat rice, fresh green beans, fried courgettes, tomatoes + green pepper - all washed down with beer.

Super. Mike couldn't finish it all. I helped him. It's quite damp outside so I've closed the tent door as I write this by Carbid light. I've got an odd sense of foreboding about tomorrow's trip but I expect it will go once we get underground.

I've just chased a dog away from the food. 10 pm Sunday 2nd

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Sun 3rd August 75.

Yet another completely clear morning.

All the others passed by in the dark. Pete Francis stopped off + woke me up so I took the opportunity of finding out how they'd got on. They had rigged it to (clandine) and gave up because they were knackered. They recommend bivouacs from now on. There seems to be plenty of gear + food, so we'll go in and hope to get at least to hurricane today tomorrow. Mark got up now. 7.00 am approx.

Date: 5th August 75 Tuesday night.

Well my sense of foreboding was unjustified.

Not that the beginning of our trip would have given any indication otherwise. Mike was sleepy and a bit disinterested so after making a cup of tea I went over to the sleeping campsite to see all the others and to make arrangements etc. Jeff + Sue + Pete had just arrived so I chatted to them - Jeff had my flpsheet.

Dave Drew who had arranged tentatively to come with us was in two minds - perhaps he would go with Jeff, perhaps he would come with me - he'd make up his mind after a cup of coffee.

In the end he said he'd come with me as Jeff + Pete were only planning to go photographing - so I returned to our campsite and finished our gear by putting a new zip in my wetsuit.

When Dave finally arrived he was with Jeff + Pete and he said he would go on with them and join us below when we came down - which seemed a bit strange as our plan had altered from yesterday - it was now intended to go to Camp 1, sleep, push to the end and return to Camp, sleep then come out - in which case Dave would be hanging around a lot - it was then about midday and what he proposed to do until bedtime I don't know.

Anyway we got finished sorting out soon afterwards and had lunch which consisted to a large extent of fruit and vegetables as we had rather a surplus of them.

When we reached the entrance there was a family of French tourists watching us kit up and descend - within a very short time the number of spectators had risen to about thirty - amongst them a party of Bradford Pothole Club who were walking

In the area on their return from somewhere else - one of them said "hello Paddy - I know you - you took me + Dave here on a great trip into OFD a few years ago!" It was Brian Smith and Dave - ? who had helped me on a water sampling trip!

As we exchanged greetings who should arrive on the scene but John Parker + crew. "We've come to camp and go for the bottom" they loudly announced - "Join the party" I invited and amidst a great clacking of shutters descended down the entrance pitch.

We soon left the hordes of tourists behind and began the long serious task of humping our gear down the entrance series. It proved to be every bit as awkward as carrying the 1000' of rope the other day, and every narrow bit caused problems with taking the sack off one's back and manhandling - and all the time Parker's team breathing down our necks.

"We'll let them pass" I said at the Boudoir; and as we sat down they too stopped to make an adjustment to Tony Jarrett's light - next thing was a loud explosion and great shouting "Put it out - get it off - stop jumping around - for fuck sake put it out - I'm burning - shut up - get it off - ----"

They had opened the gas generator tied to his waist and John, unthinkingly, had looked in - of course he was wearing a carbide lamp too - and Tony was worried about his nylon boiler suit going up.

Well John's attempts at blowing it out and throwing sand on it were unsuccessful, but it was eventually extinguished and a very agitated Jarrett calmed down. While they satated themselves out we pressed on to the top of Garby's. Here I had my fracas - for in an attempt to be clever I put my rucksack on my back and on launching off into space I promptly started turning upside down. In the nick of time I bridged across the pitch and got my rescue jummar into place but I couldn't get the sack off. John leaned down and lowered a karabinken to which I was able to attach the bag and subsequently tie it onto my waist - as I normally did anyway. Off I went then.

Not such an auspicious start to a prolonged trip!

By this time we were beginning to function as a 5 man team, John Parker, Martin Bishop, Tony Jarrett, Mike + I.

At Camp 1 we met a whole pile of people, including Dave Drew who still didn't commit himself to joining Mike + I. I reckoned he wouldn't and said so to Mike. I was right, perhaps I hauled him into it too much. Jeff + Pete bond + Sue were photographic at the Hall of the Thinker as we passed and we exchanged a few words. Jeff looked a bit unhappy but then he had just dropped his camera so it was hardly surprising.

Beyond the Hall the gours + slabs dropped down very steeply at about 45°, down, down down till we were stopped by a 50' drop - the Balcony. We decided to call a halt here and so we located some 'flat' spots and made our respective beds. Then we had a mega-cook-up, sharing cocoa, tea and soup. Off to sleep at about 9.00 or so, to the noise of Tony Jarrett cracking jokes.

Next morning - after a reasonably good night - I managed to curl myself about the knobs of Calate - I had some superb dreams too - we got up at 8.15. I was up first as usual

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and made tea and orange juice for everyone.

After breakfast we all got kitted up - I went up to Camp 1 for the peg hammer - and we were just setting off when an WCC party came in looking for bits of their gear that they had left there last week. One of them was particularly disturbed to discover his wetsuit trousers missing - we later found that Martyn had pinched it on the justification that anything they had left was fair game since they had derigged the cave and left it behind!

Off we set anyway following the others. Initially the way was over more stalactites and down Calate Cascades. There was a handline in situ here and we descended rapidly to stream level. From here on the cave really came alive. We were in the stream wading along, climbing down cascades, wading through pools, jumping across splash pools. Superb. Clandines Cascade, 60' or so, was exciting, wet and quite exposed - just like in the photographs!

We caught up with the others shortly

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after Gach's shaft. Here the stream had started to descend very steeply and everything looked very "floodable".

I forgot to mention the Grand Canyon - a huge incredibly steep chamber with a shipping path down on the Ets - and a sheer drop into the river at the bottom. We rigged our Tompkins handline down part of the slope.

The others had just descended Grand Cascade when we caught them up. They rigged it in the straightest fashion, but we got down - the fun was going to be getting back up. Beyond, the stream went through Joly Hall where we left our cooking gear and then it went through a low duck. Mike + I bypassed this on the right to find the others at the head of a series of very wet pitches - obviously the beginning of Little Monkey. John rigged two ladders and descended the very wet second step. It was obviously not the "voic normale" but he was only 25' from the bottom. A desperate traverse at the head of the second first stage would lead to the "normal" take off point but I for one didn't fancy the blue carbonate handline belayed to bits of

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stal. John rebated and we took stock, we would have to rope down from the end of that traverse to avoid the Cascade. That would need at least 120' of rope - and strong nerves for the traverse. We measured our ropes - we had two lengths of Bluewater one 150', the other 100'. Suddenly the truth dawned - we didn't have enough gear to get to the bottom!!! In frustration we returned to Joly hall and had a brew up in the little circle of staves built for that purpose. As we drank our soups and shivered and talked we realised there was little prospect of doing any more. Everyone was a bit concerned with the very wet Grand Cascade and now that hopes of actually bottoming it were to be frustrated we didn't feel up to that traverse to rig Little Monkey. I went back and collected the spare 100' rope, now useless, and we left 150' at the top of the pitch, plus, gas, some food, peg hammer, karabiners, leathers, at Joly Hall.

Back then along that superb streamway. The Grand Cascade was daunting. Mike went up first with his wife - I followed last with mine. Without these we should have been

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in real trouble for the carbides only lasted a few seconds in the torrents. It really was breathtaking. Water pouring down on top of you as you climbed - cold, wet, heavy - the full force hitting you just as you come over the edge at the top. We all made it.

And then back along the pools and canals to our camp - to change and cook and savour the day.

Despite our frustration at not getting to the bottom (and it was only the shortage of rope that prevented us - for if we'd had enough there is no doubt in my mind that we would have pushed on) - despite that it was one of the best caving trips I'd ever been on. Parker's push, Mike's calmness, Martin's solidness, Tony's wit. All these - qualities not obvious individually (what would I normally think of a bloke who put his Gibbs on upside down!) - seemed to make our random party of 5 into a really Super team.

Our dinner that night was cooked communally not separately as previously - tea, pamplemousse juice, coffee, cocoa, stew, tinned fruit (Mike's speciality) bread & cheese (mine), sweets etc etc. All shared willingly - a superb moment.

We all slept well. Even Mike who is fussy than most about lumps etc.

I was first up again at 6.15 a.m. after spending a while looking for my boots which I'd lost in the revelry of the previous night. I brewed some tea and we made our way out after a leisurely breakfast.

At Camp 1 we met a whole host of others. Martin, Pete Francis & several more all still asleep. We woke them & told them the news. They stayed abed saying said down 200' more rope.

We were very tired on our way out. At Alder we had a saga of sack hauling. One of the bags broke away and dropped to the bottom. Then when Mike went up wearing his he found the rope through the small hole & he couldn't pass up. He was almost all in. I was frozen below. In the end all he could do was tie his sack to the rope and hope I could jumar past. I did with not too much trouble but it was tiring.

Slowly, slowly we edged on up and out

To make things easier for Mike who was very tired I took some of his load and we progressed a bit smoother. We met Pete Lord & Sue on their way in; at Cairn Hall we met Hywel and Dave Drew on their way in; they were waiting for John Parker to drop the 200' rope to them. I went back down the passage to help Mike with his load - he was doing much better now and before long we were at the entrance eating fruit salad that we had carefully stored in the thermos. Pears, tomatoes and lemon juice slaked our thirst as we savoured the hot sun and the green trees. Only two hours previously I had been shivering violently at the bottom of Alder as cold as ever I'd been in a cave praying that Mike would sort himself out. Now we were sweating in the afternoon sun. It was 2.00 p.m. Tuesday 5th August and we had been exactly 48 hours underground.

Back at our campsite we guzzled our chilled beer - was it delicious - and savoured our trip again. We went through it all over again at the sloping campsite amidst general cries of disbelief "didn't you get to the bottom?"

It was galling to have to admit to failure, but satisfying to know that nonetheless we could have made it fairly enough.....

I drove the three boys to their campsite over on the col - we had coffee & cheese at the hotel and later joined Julia James and her 3 Aussie cavers who had just returned from Italy and hoped to be allowed into the Beres by us. They look very fit and will probably go in tomorrow morning with Gareth & Co.

It must be near midnight now. For the last two hours it's been raining heavily and there has been some thunder. I've kept on writing to see whether it would clear - if it didn't then it would be necessary for someone to go down in the middle of the night to warn the others. In fact it's just stopped and despite the rain - which will probably make it wetter underground I think it's OK now. Even so we'll get the Australians to take the dinghy down just in case.

A final joke from Tony Jarrett, one of the many that he cracked that kept us all in

shakes throughout our sojourn. As he returned down the calate slope after relieving himself behind the stall:

"Mister Frenchman, I'd like to buy your cave - I like it very much."

"Oui. But it is rather expensive you know"

"Oh that's all right - I've just left a little deposit - the rest will come later..."

=====

Wed 6 August 75

I didn't sleep for more than 2 hours all told last night. Over-tiredness and worry about floods I think! Anyway I got up quite early and sorted out stuff for drying. Then I went across to the campsite in the trees and chatted to a few people - mostly grinning because we didn't have enough gear - it seemed to strike a lot of people as funny. I wonder why.

At about 10.30 I loaded the car up with a pile of women who had been left behind by their menfolk and set off to Grenoble to collect Sue who was returning from San Francisco. We went via Autrans to drop Neri + Tish and who should we spot wandering around but Sue herself. Instead of arriving at 4.00 or so as I'd expected, she'd caught the train straight to Grenoble and arrived at an ungodly hour and caught the bus to Autrans. Some coincidence that would not!

After a beer in the pub we drove to Grenoble to collect baggage - had a meal, drove around (and walked) to the Post Office and returned to camp. Hot and sticky. Everyone underground presumably bottoming the cave.

A group of Australians led by Julia James turned up and said they wanted to go down if well

let them. I said OK but felt sure it would lead to problems.

Thursday 7 Aug. 75.

A fastidious day. During the night everyone came out. Pete Hana, Hynd, Martyn and several others. All got to the bottom. Pete Lord, Sue too. Everyone looked a little bit tired next day when I went to talk to them. Talk of cold canals and wet pitches. Pete Lord had rigged the little Monkey traverse but by all accounts it was still gripping.

We decided to spend the day show-caving and looking at Gorges so we set off around 11.00

We drove first down to Autrans and bought a few things including some food for lunch. Everything is expensive so we are satisfied with fruit which is soon gobbled in the heat of the day.

The gorges were spectacular. Very deep very impressive. Bought loaf of bread for 50c. in old shop. Bargain.

Drove up to impressive show cave of Choranche

all the others had been there and had told us of its fab. shows. Well worth the visit.



[The rest of this is written in retrospect but is nonetheless accurate.]

after our dive to Choranche we continued on our round trip of the area, Mike navigating and me driving. We drove right over the high road south of Engins through the woods noting that the map showed many cave entrances. However we saw none of them as they were obviously deep in the woods.

We got back to camp late and I started preparing for the next day when I planned to go down. Mike was in two minds about it and eventually decided he would probably not go in. This surprised me - I thought he would be still keen on bottoming. Thinking about it later he probably felt he'd virtually achieved the bottom - and he had had a nasty experience at the top of Grand Cascade so probably didn't want a repeat performance of that sort of thing. Anyway I wandered around camp and made provisional arrangements to go in with John Parker and his party next day. Back to my tent late that night and not much sleep. I went down that cave three times at least in my sleep!

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Friday 28th August.

Got up early, breakfasted and went across to the main camp to talk to the others. Parker and Co were far from ready and things eventually evolved and we got moving. A last check on gear and down to the entrance where half of my stuff had been stashed (yesterday?). Getting ready seemed to take a long time but at last I was kitted up, Sues took photos and away off underground we went.

It all seemed very familiar and before long we were zooming down the pitches effortlessly, passing the Boudoir where we had the human torch bit last time and on down Aldo's into the big stuff. I had my camera box along this time, but I decided not to do any photography in this part of the cave - so we just went straight down to our camp site. I think it was afternoon time - I may be wrong - yes I am - it was late morning - around lunchtime in fact that we got to camp! - It was empty - there were no other people in the cave - the mad rush was over and we were even toying with the idea

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of digging the bottom - in the end we didn't because we knew there would be others in after us - but it was great to be in that vast cave alone.

We had a brew up at the Balcony where our gear was stowed from earlier this week. As the food cooked we got into our wet wetsuits which wasn't as bad as it sounded and off we went.

To be perfectly honest I don't really remember very much of the trip. It all seemed to go so smoothly. Parker as usual blazed away in front and I seemed to be at the rear. However he wasn't feeling too good and at one stage he stopped for a crap and Tony and I got to the bottom of the Grand Gallery in time to set up a photo (that didn't come out). It was an impressive sight to see the two pinpoints of light away above us making patterns for ten minutes before they reached us. It is a vast place. Pitch seemed to follow pitch and it wasn't long before we got to our previous limit the head of Little Monkey. Here the traverse out to the belay point had been rigged with

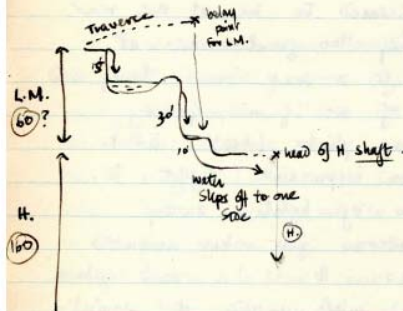
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a multitude of ropes. It was still as daunting as before with the immense roar of water and the black depths below. Traversing out on the sloping catwalk was easier than it looked however and it gave a nice free pitch.

I had my Nife cell on now and I was glad of it for here there was an enormous amount of spray - as well as this Pele lord had ~~been~~ loaned me his hood and it made a big difference. The little Monkey pitch and Hurricane are really one enormous pitch. Where John Parker had descended to last time was just 10' or so above the belay point for Hurricane.

From the new L.M. belay it was possible to abseil diagonally across the pools and falls to the low traverse



at the head of Hurricane. The water slips off to the right and into Hurricane shaft, but the belay is 'around the corner' on the left. The shaft is dry but half way down

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you hit the spray and the bottom is very wet. But what a pitch! absolutely superb. The sheer size and noise and wetness make it a classic - The classic.

Below the pitch the overwhelming impression is one of sheer water power. There is not a single mud deposit, every rock and boulder is rounded no matter how big they are - all the walls are polished clean, smooth and rounded not sharp and fretted. The amount of water is greater, for there are a number of inlets below Hurricane shaft, and as the gradient is steeper it is really impressive.

Here too the passage gets bigger than it had been for quite a while and it is probably as big as the camp 1 area at least. A short waterfall has to be bypassed by a climb up on the left. This is a small abandoned oxbow and there were the remains of a camp site - obviously a divers site because there was an old bottle and lots of bits of furniture.

And then came the canal. Another change of character - the cave levelled off and narrowed down into it was necessary to swim.

Before the unbelieving gaze of the rest of the party I put on my kiddie waterwings and blew them up. With confidence I waded into the freezing water and splashed along after the others doing a desperate O'Reilly paddle. I managed to push myself along from wall to wall and from corner to corner. It was bitterly cold - and the water was "thick" - so it was quite hard work. The far side came quite quickly and then before we knew it the end - the Sump. The Bottom. We'd done it. We all stood round and shook hands. I felt really pleased. We added our names to the thousand others on the muddy wall - but ours were only scraped in the mud compared to the elaborate painting of some previous visitors. We collected some souvenir pebbles. I took out my flag which I'd collected from Joly Hall and placed it on a ledge high up above the sump.

I'd left the camera at Joly Hall and was sorry not to have had it here, but we were all bitterly cold and I doubt if we'd have lingered very long even if I'd had it.

The sump itself was quite fine - a circular pool about 10' dia with the stream whistling under the roof at a fair lick. We stood into the pool just for the record, and then shivering, headed back upstream.

I can't remember feeling any fear of having to come up 4000+ feet - it all seemed so relatively straightforward - but here it was cold with a capital C. The canal on the return was purgatory. I could hardly swim along and John Parker came to my assistance as I floundered in the middle of the widest bit. I literally ran to Hurricane ahead of the others, and having the wife, I went up first. The climbing warmed me and I waited for the others to join at the top before going on.

I'm not sure but I think we met Dick Tringham and one other on their way to the bottom, at the top of Little Monkey. I seem to recall lending him a my head, but I can't be sure. What I do know is that we went up to Joly Hall and had a fine brew up - tea, coffee &

some sort of dehydrated mess. John Parker even produced his own personal vegetarian mess and brewed up afterwards. I took one or two photos of the place while the cooking went on - and these proved to be the lowest photos I took.

We then set off upwards - I took one or two pics on the way - we felt good and we were going fast - so much so that I thought it reasonable that we might keep on going and not bivouac at all at the Balcony.

However we got progressively more and more tired as we ascended - I can recall the terrible slog back up from Camp 2 to the top of the Grand Gallery. Claudine came at last and we felt we were getting places but by the Balcony I was going very slowly.

All I wanted to do was sleep. Getting out of the wetsuit, cooking a superb meal of all sorts of goodies and then sleep blessed sleep.

I was first awake and up and the ritual of coffee and tea followed by Berger breakfast of apple flakes and raisins, was adhered to. We spent an awful long time in packing up our belongings and in deciding what to bring out with us. Brew followed brew, joke followed joke and at last we were ready to go.

As I recall it Duck + his fiancé had passed by as we had gone to bed so we were alone - but then a light appeared followed by ~~another~~ another moving at high speed. Then two bodies hurtled down. Jeff and Pete landed going like hell. Jeff (who yesterday wouldn't come down) was psyched up enough to make an attempt for the bottom and he and Pete were planning a run down + out non stop. We passed a few words with each other, and off they disappeared moving very fast. We left a bottle full of Rise and Shine for them at the top of the Balcony.

And off we set, taking pics on the way. It was a slow business, coming out. At Aldo's we hauled all the rucksacks up together and they got jammed; John Parker pulled like hell and one hurtled down and landed

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square on my back! I could easily have been hurt but it was a lucky drop + I was only shaken. John was very poorly - he had been squinting earlier and now he was beginning to flake out so he went on ahead alone. We hauled gear up singly after Aldo's. It seemed a slow, slow process - the traversing repeated over and over - carrying bags of gear but suddenly we were on the surface again and evening was near. We were out - safe after getting to the bottom of the Berger! I can't really remember how I felt. Not tired anyway. I changed, dumped gear for the return trip and returned to camp to arrive just before a rain storm.

As we sheltered, drank tea and lemon juice we wondered how the storm would change the water levels. What about Jeff + Pete? "If it goes on all night they'll be in trouble" and then: they arrived: 9 1/4 hours after going in!

We could hardly believe it but they'd done a record breaking speed trip and were they chuffed!

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Sunday 10th

Testering day. Everybody languishing about. Weather hot, humid and close. Nobody caring. Gear strewn all around sorting out in progress. People leaving camp.

That afternoon arranged official camp dinner in the Hotel - everybody got stuffed + a bit drunk. Highlight was the Expedition Song composed by Richard:

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Monday 11th

Today I was supposed to take Sue down to camp 1 but she got sick. Puking all morning and looking very green. After a long wait Mike + I descended to camp 1 to collect our gear and take it out. By now I was beginning to feel as if I knew the cave well. We took a good few photos on the way out. Once again Mike very slow and tired on the pitches. Time underground 6-8 hrs probably.

Tuesday 12th Packing up camp. Transporting everything over across the meadow to the main campsite. Left late that afternoon with Sue who was catching the train to Paris - + Southampton, while I went Eastwards to Budapest. The ~~digging~~ derigging was carried out over the next week by Mannie, Huryel, Chuck + the others.

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APPENDI
V VI
BERGER '75

Richard
Staverson

Hywel led our Berger trip
A massive expedition

O'Reilly got his balls cut off
Ag'in a rock projection

Now Mike Orr was our doctor
with tons of medication

With pills for diarrhoea
And pills for constipation

Jeff and Pete they bottomed fast
It was their one ambition

The rest of us we can't compete
through alcoholic condition

The South Wales lads they left their 'ome
Against their best tradition

On pitches deep and passage steep
They meet some competition

The Mendip lads they took their time
Their muscles to improve upon

They said this cave was bloody great
But not as good as Swildions

De Irish boys in rubble heap
They met a great obstruction

The boulders they surmounted
with scaffolding construction

A load of Aussies they turned up
All filled with expectation

A whaletail jammed in rope
It causes castration

The wine and food and French women
Gave thoughts of fornication

The rest of this I cannot read
Thro' constant masturbation

Jumaring up Claudine's Cascade
photo Martyn Farr



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