



DAN-YR-OGOF CAVES

SWANSEA VALLEY

Official Guide

The
DAN-YR-OGOF CAVES
(750 yards North of Craig-y-nos Castle)

SWANSEA VALLEY

Telephone : Abercrave 229

TIMES OF OPENING

Weekdays - 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Sundays - 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.

(During the winter months the closing
time will be 7 p.m.)

ADEQUATE PARKING ACCOMMODATION IS PROVIDED
FOR CARS AND BUSES

Guide to
Dan-yr-Ogof Caves
SWANSEA VALLEY

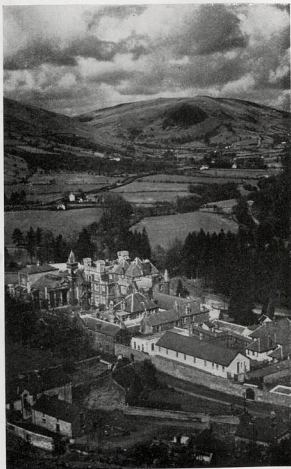
By

LLEW. E. MORGAN

(All photographs except that of the Coracle Pool
by the Author)

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Telephone : Abercrave 13



Craig-y-nos District

THE DISTRICT

In the year 1879 the great *prima donna*, Madame Patti, made her home at Craig-y-nos. She was a woman of the world who had travelled extensively and who had been a welcome visitor at many a beautiful mansion in many a beautiful country. She had been in search of a home—"a home sweet home," and her choice fell on Craig-y-nos. To her the valley was a valley of romance, a valley whose mountain sides would echo and re-echo the notes of her unrivalled voice.

The valley is the same to-day, but the grand voice is still. The great castle has become the centre of healing. The pure air, uncontaminated by the smoke and the grime of the lower industrial areas, is balm to the weakened lungs of the town dweller. Cribarth and the Task, two rugged bastions of grey limestone guarding the entrance, are still there, home of the red fox, the badger, the buzzard, and the raven.

Over the Cribarth in prehistoric times ran a ridgeway, probably a continuation of that on the Drum mountain which is marked with many cairns where the dead of those days lie buried. This ridgeway continued to the Cribarth, then passed along the side of the valley, crossing the river Haffes first, and the river Tawe Fechan next, until it reached the stone circle below the slope of the Van. Here it crossed the Tawe and continued in the direction of Castle Drake and the Castle Mound at Treacastle.

Immediately beyond Cribarth and on the ridgeway, here dotted with cotton grass, lies the Saithmaen, a group of seven stones erected by prehistoric man to point the way. Several standing stones set up for the same purpose mark the track from there onwards. The stone circle is a small one of twenty-one stones, with a big, old red sandstone monolith outside. In its neighbourhood are the remains of hut circles, and a cairn locally called Bedd-y-Cawr (the Giant's Grave).

On the opposite side of the valley to Craig-y-nos, and in the face of the Task, is a peculiar opening which is called Eglwys Caradog (the church of Caractacus), connected, so tradition says, with the beginnings of Christianity in the valley. Some even claim that the Apostle Paul, during that unrecorded period in his life, visited the Christian converts in Britain, came up the Tawe Valley, preached at Craig Pâl, in Glais, and met the local brethren at this cave.

In a gorge on the Cribarth side of the valley, and about 750 yards above Craig-y-nos Castle, lie the Dan-yr-Ogof Caves which are the subject of this brochure. From the lowest issues the river Llynfell, usually cloudy with lime deposits, to join the Tawe near by, and also provide water for one of the fishponds of Craig-y-nos.

The river Haffes, farther up the valley, gashes the mountain side, and when storms are raging, pours through a wound which never heals, its purple discolouration into the bed of the river Tawe. Higher up, on the opposite side, is the smaller Nant Byfre, a series of cascades and pools like an endless chain of overflowing buckets reaching from the Tawe to the moorland at the foot of Fan Gihirych.

Higher up the valley the Twyni joins the Tawe, flowing down a gentle slope from the neighbourhood of the Bwlch. At the confluence the valley bifurcates as the result of the intrusion of Cefn Cul, a hog back hill which acts as a watershed.

From here onwards towards the source, the Tawe relies for its main volume of water on two streams—the Tawe Fechan, a turbulent little brook running down at the foot of Fan Hir, and Nant-y-llyn which cascades down the slope from Llyn-y-fan Fawr. The Tawe itself, full of mountain trout, rises below Llyn-y-fan Fawr, and varying in its appeal between pool and waterfall flows jerkily along parallel with the Old Trecastle Road.

The Van Pools are quickly reached from this road if a start is made where the river Tawe bends away towards



Y Saithmaen



Llyn-y-Fan Fawr

the mountains. A thirty minutes' easy walk brings one to Llyn-y-fan Fawr. This lake sustains no fish life. Even as far back as 1687 there were no fish in it. It was in this year that a huge overhanging rock fell into the pool, flooding both the Usk and the Tawe valleys and doing considerable damage.

The lake is surmounted by Fan Foel, 2,603 feet. A wonderful sight awaits the person who climbs the path leading from the lake to the heights above. On clear days the Bristol Channel and the coasts of Somerset and Devon are easily seen, and a panorama of flat country, and of hills and mountains stretching north to Plynlimon and Cader Idris delights the eye. About a mile and a half away Llyn-y-fan Fach can be seen. This lake is renowned for the legend, "The Lady of Llyn-y-fan." It is the story of a lake maiden who was enticed from the lake by a mortal, he having promised her father that he would not strike her thrice without cause. Unfortunately he unwittingly failed to keep to his promise and she returned to the lake. Her descendants, so tradition states, were the Meddygon Myddfai, who were well-known physicians.

In a MS. on Breconshire at the British Museum a writer writing about 1695 and mentioning Fan Hir, the mountain culminating in Fan Foel, adds: "There is also a greate Poole on each side of 't which makes it most dreadfull presenting Death on all sides . . . which Pools are worth ones noting, the one called Llynllwch Sawthey for its abundance of fish of all-sorts especially for its troutes which are dayly taken in greate store, but the poole is in Carmardenshire; the other of a contrary nature in this county called of the Hill Llyn-y-fan-hir hathe no fish attalle in't nither will any fish being put into it live, but as soon as they have tasted of this water turne up there Silver Bellies and dey."

Another reservoir lies east of these pools over Cefn Cul, and on the Brecon road. This is Cray and it supplies Swansea with fresh water. This pool is well stocked with trout, and fishing is possible there.



Old Entrance to Cave



Falls on the Llynfell



The Coracle Pool

Photo : T. A. Morgan

THE CAVES

The river Llynfell had been flowing for many hundreds of thousands of years through its present subterranean channel before man probed its inner secrets. It was in 1912 that the great caverns first echoed and re-echoed the tramp of human feet and the sound of voices. Two brothers, Mr. T. Ashwell Morgan and Mr. Jeff Morgan, of Tymawr, Abercrave, had considered the possibility of crossing the pools, these pools apparently being the barriers which had kept man out for so long. Mr. Ashwell Morgan was plumbing the depth of one of these pools when Mr. Jeff Morgan, who was carefully searching the roof and sides, discovered on the right-hand wall of the channel and at a fair height an opening only just big enough for him to squeeze through. Soon his voice announced the momentous discovery of a series of passages well above the present water course, so his brother soon joined him. They continued along these passages until they found their path blocked by a pool which filled the floor from wall to wall. Realizing their inability to cross this without the aid of boat or raft they retraced their steps, and made preparations to re-enter the cave the following day equipped with means to cross.

On this occasion they took with them Mr. Edwin Morgan (another brother) and Mr. Morgan Richard Williams, their young gamekeeper. A hastily constructed raft enabled them to cross the lake, and traverse the cavern for more than 600 yards. They depended on candles for illumination, and to ensure a safe return they made arrow signs on the sandy floor. No human mark marred the virgin walls or roof—only the foot-prints of an otter had disturbed the smooth sand on the floor.

On the third day another visit was made, and the party on this occasion consisted of Messrs. T. Ashwell Morgan, Jeff Morgan, Edwin Morgan, R. Williams and William Lewis. Night-lights were now used to mark the way and the beauty of the cave was now examined. On

this visit a thermos flask and a bottle containing the names of the party were deposited on a shelf of rock.

Following the discovery of more lakes a coracle was brought from Carmarthen and transported through the rough and difficult passages. Placed on the lake, it appeared a frail craft to be entrusted with the mission of carrying a human being into the stygian darkness in which the lake disappeared. A deafening roar of water could be heard in the distance. Was it a waterfall pouring water into the lake, or was it a waterfall caused by surplus water leaving the lake? This was important to the intrepid adventurers. Would the coracle be washed over the brink of such a waterfall or would it be swamped? Would it be sucked down by a whirlpool or carried away by the stream through low passages?

What would happen if a heavy fall of rain on the surface made the underground river swell suddenly and abnormally? All these considerations would make the bravest hesitate. Yet Mr. T. Ashwell Morgan ventured into the coracle and with a rope attached to one end and paid out by his younger brother he manœuvred the boat along the lake into the gloom. In this manner he crossed the waterway, passing along a narrow channel and discovering that not one lake but three lakes, 80 yards in length, had to be thus negotiated. He finally reached a mighty waterfall whose awe-inspiring roar, confined in such small space, was almost overpowering. He gave the signal for the return and he was steadily pulled back to safety.

For twenty-five years nothing more was done. It was in 1937 that further exploration work was carried out; this time by trained cave explorers equipped with caving tackle, which included rubber boats, ladders, and powerful acetylene lamps.

The first party consisted of Mr. E. E. Roberts and Mr. G. S. Gowing of the Yorkshire Ramblers Club, and Mr. G. Platten of the Mendip Exploration Society.

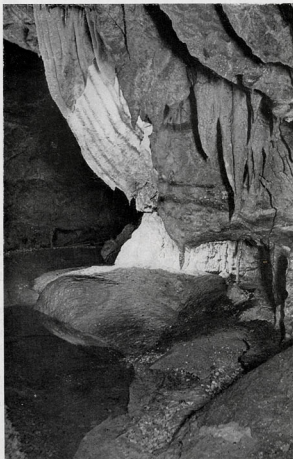


Relics of the 1912 Visit

Since then more than a mile and a half of caverns has been explored. Beyond the lakes and waterfalls are passages and chambers more beautiful even than those discovered in 1912.

It would be invidious to name all the people who have helped in the exploration work. Many of the chambers have been named after some of these helpers so that their connection with the work will be perpetuated in this way.

Further work must be done, for it is hoped eventually to discover a passage to by-pass the lakes and waterfall so that the public may have the opportunity of seeing the wonders that lie beyond.



Flitch of Bacon Curtain

THE CAVE TO-DAY

The present day visitor to the cave will not experience any of the difficulties and dangers of the intrepid cavers who first entered it. The cave is now rendered accessible to all. The debris, accumulated through the ages, has been removed. Cement or sand renders the floor easy to walk on, and neither the shoes nor the clothes of visitors need be soiled. Electric light, generated by turbines turned by the issuing water, illuminates the passages and vast chambers and displays the wonders these contain.

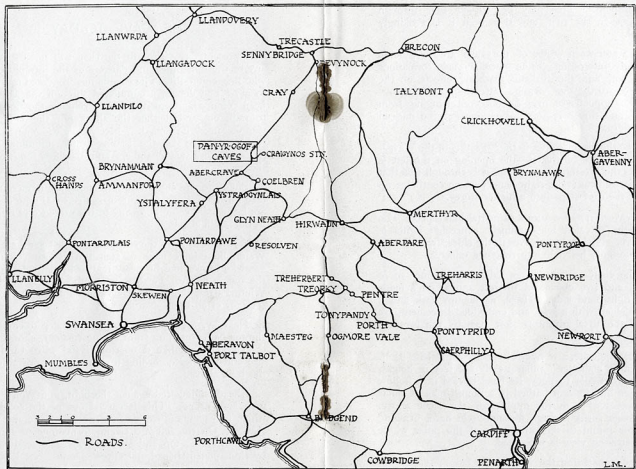
Stalactite and stalagmite formations are numerous and take on interesting and grotesque shapes. Some of these are beautifully coloured owing to the presence of minerals in the strata above.

A few yards from the entrance may be seen the Frozen Waterfall, a huge mass of stalactite deposit coloured a vandyke brown hue by peaty matter brought down from the moors above. Farther in, on the left, is perched a White Parrot, the result of ages of effort by the greatest sculptor of all time—Nature.

Near by, a continuous stream of water resembling a shower bath, reaching from ceiling to floor, shows up in the electric light like dozens of crystal wires varying in size and number according to the weather prevailing on the hills above.

Ahead, silhouetted against the light, is a Wolf's Head with jaws agape. This is carved out of the solid rock which hereabouts is fretted into most fantastic and weird shapes. On the left are calcite formations of flint-like appearance, the top and bottom masses joined together by thin, pencil-shaped stalactites.

Farther in, this time in the roof, may be observed a large cluster of straw stalactites appropriately called



Road Map of Neighbouring Counties

the Pincushion. This may be viewed first through an opening in the roof, and thus seen it is strikingly beautiful.

The water-worn walls of the cave are hereabouts exceedingly interesting. The peculiar rock formations in the roof, and the realistic marbling effects on the sides are worth the visitor's attention. Numerous carrot-like appendages may be observed hanging from the roof, and tiny stag-horn formations may be noticed on the sides.

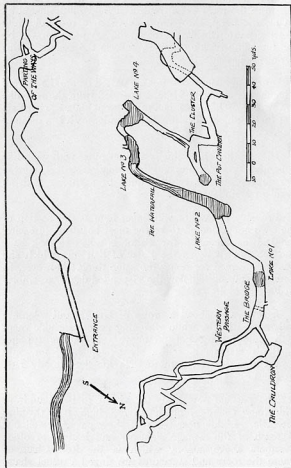
And so the visitor comes to the "Parting of the Ways." Here the passage bifurcates—the opening on the left is known as the Western Passage and it is through this that the visitor returns; the right-hand passage continues up a double flight of steps into a higher storey.

The cavern now assumes a cathedral-like aspect. The vast height revealed by cunningly concealed lights is impressive. Niches and alcoves in the sides, fringed with Gothic designs, heighten the religious effect.

As the visitor proceeds, normal height is once more restored, and two objects of interest appear on a ledge on the right-hand side. These, a vacuum flask and a bottle shielded with a grid, and embedded in cement, are relics of the 1912 adventure, left here by the brothers Morgan.

Almost opposite, a wonderful spectacle presents itself. This is an "alabaster" pillar nearly six feet in height, reaching from roof to floor, its head buried in a hollow in the roof and its foot bathed in a limpid pool of water which serves as a mirror duplicating the scene above. The passage turns through a semi-circle here, bringing the visitor round to the other side of the pillar where another striking view is presented.

A few steps bring the visitor to a frozen cascade on the right-hand side, and by its side is another striking structure.



Here a snowy-white formation oozes, as it were, from a hole in the rock. The translucent folds, illuminated by an electric lamp, show alternate veins of red and white like the pattern in a slice of bacon. A pool, formed by the unending trickle of water, reflects the beauty of this curious stalactite.

Dozens of lesser structures are passed before the Dagger Chamber is reached. Here, suspended from the roof like the sword of Damocles, is a magnificent stalactite over six feet in length, while immediately underneath is a peculiar stalagmite of irregular shape.

In a grotto behind this is another pillar with wing-like appendages. The grotto and the formation strongly convey the impression of a Biblical tomb or sepulchre with an angel in attendance.

Probably the visitor will linger here as this section of the cave is considered to be the most beautiful. Leaving the Dagger Chamber, the visitor is asked to look back and see Lot's wife as the Pillar of Salt into which she was transformed for doing the same thing. However, to some the stalagmite below the suspended dagger resembles an Eastern idol.

A few yards ahead a group of Nuns stand solemnly with bowed heads, while glistening fingers sprinkle them with hallowed water from above. From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a short step here, for only a yard away is seen a more than life-size Broody Hen on her nest.

The passage now leads the visitor to the Cauldron. This huge chamber, nearly 40 feet high, is a thrilling spectacle. Lights near the roof show passages well out of reach of the average sightseer and leading to other chambers above, among which is the Red Chamber where the rocks and stalactites are tinged a pastel shade of red.



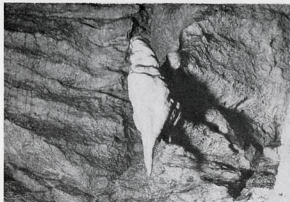
The Frozen Waterfall

Suspended from the roof of the Cauldron is a stalactite curtain or blanket, as big and as beautiful as any in the country. It is about 18 feet long and must have taken thousands of years to form. It seems a fragile structure to withstand the severe earth tremors which must have taken place while it was in course of being formed.

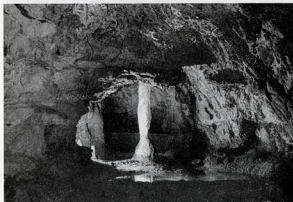
From the Cauldron, steps lead down to the Bridge Chamber. Here is seen a natural bridge of stone above a turbulent stream which varies in strength according to the weather prevailing outside. Immediately ahead is the first of several lakes which bar the way to the mile or more of passages beyond. The roar of a mighty waterfall adds to the awesomeness of these last chambers.

Turning his back on the Bridge Chamber the visitor now starts the return journey. He enters here the Western Passage which brings him back to the "Parting of the Ways," having seen on the way the wonderful Elephant's Head and the stone Tortoise.

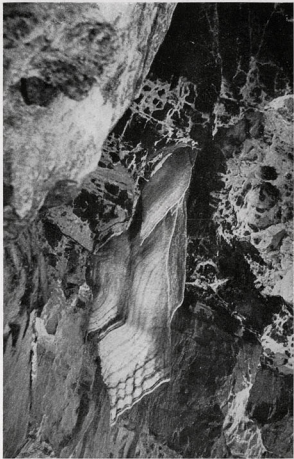
Although now retracing his footsteps many new formations missed on the inward journey will be discovered. One of these should be the Owl which, peeping at the departing visitor from a crevice in the roof, seems to wonder whether he fully appreciates the uniqueness and the beauty of the sights which he has seen.



The Parrot



"Alabaster" Pillar



Curtain (18 ft.), Cauldron Chamber



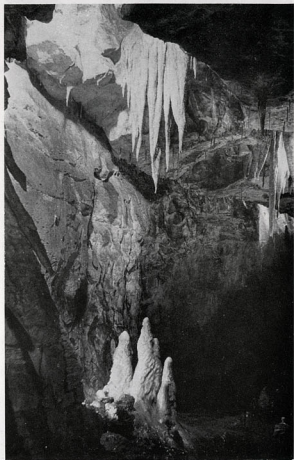
The Sepulchre and Angel



The Elephant's Head



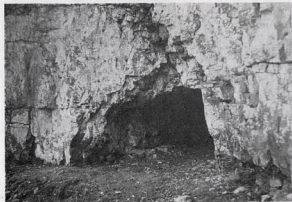
The Dagger Chamber



The Nuns



The Pincushion



Ogof-yr-Esgyrn

OGOF-YR-ESGYRN

(The Bone Cave)

About 140 feet above the river cave is a large cavern now known as Ogof-yr-Esgyrn. It is about 60 feet long by 40 feet wide and was probably the cave which gave the neighbouring farm its name—Dan-yr-ogof Farm, i.e. the farm below the cave. In 1923 Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, of the National Museum of Wales, together with some students of the University College, Cardiff, came down to make trial excavations. They worked under the direction of Mr. R. H. D'Elboux, and made some interesting finds.

The cave, carved out of the limestone by the river Llynfell, which has now found a lower course, was left high and almost dry, and so like most caves of this nature became the home of man and wild animals. The floor consisted of cave earth, blocks of stone and stalagmite formations.

To the right of the entrance a trial pit was dug and two hearths discovered. The thickness of the charcoal layers showed that occupation had been of but short duration. Human bones were discovered between the hearths and these proved to be the remains of two adult men, one adult woman, and one child. Mixed with them were bones of domestic animals, some apparently split to get at the marrow.

Traces of human occupation were also shown by the discovery of pottery, an iron ring, two bronze rings, ring of twisted silver, some bone pins and a third brass of Constantinopolis. These relics seem to point to the dates of occupation as being during the second and fourth centuries.

RECENT EXCAVATION

In 1938 further excavation work was begun by parties under the direction of Mr. Edmund J. Mason, a member of the Mendip Exploration Society. Other experts who

have associated themselves with the work are Mr. W. F. Grimes, late of the National Museum of Wales, Dr. Savory of the National Museum of Wales, and Mrs. Audrey Williams of Swansea Museum. Systematic digging in one small area has already unearthed a large collection of human bones.

In addition to these a beautiful bronze dirk or dagger, 13½ ins. long, of the middle Bronze Age period (1500-1000 B.C.) was discovered, together with coarse pottery of about the same period. Most of the relics discovered during this new excavation have, however, been Roman-British objects and include bronze brooches, finger rings, grey ware, and a Roman coin—a sestertius of Trajan (98-117 A.D.).

As the work will take several years to complete, any attempt to explain the presence of so many human bones would just now be premature.



Old Craig-y-nos

CRAIG-Y-NOS CASTLE

In the narrow defile between the Task and Cribarth stands Craig-y-nos Castle, the erstwhile home of Madame Adelina Patti. It is situated between the main road and the river Tawe, its terraced front facing the rising sun.

Architecturally it is a hybrid. The older portion was built in 1842 by Rhys Davies Powell, J.P., of the Glynllech family. This portion is described as being Gothic in style with four pyramidal roofs.

Following the death of the original owner the castle became the property of his unlucky son Brychan, who, when only twenty-three years of age, met his death in the hunting field. The property, now in chancery, was put up for sale and acquired by Mr. Llewelyn Powell, who later owned Glynllech Isaf and Caeclas Farms. A hitch having occurred, the property was once again in the market. This time, round about 1875-1876, it was bought by Mr. Morgan Morgan, the grandfather of the brothers Morgan (Tymawr), who went to live there. Madame Patti, who was staying at Cadoxton Lodge, Neath, paid several visits of inspection to the Castle and in 1879 bought it from Mr. Morgan, and later acquired from him in addition all of Pentrecribarth Farm except Coedcae Canol, where rotten stone was being worked.

Soon Madame Patti added north and south wings, a clock tower, a theatre and a conservatory. A suite of rooms in the castle was set apart for the use of the Prince and Princess of Wales—the late King Edward VII and his consort.

The theatre is still kept in its original form, but the conservatory was given by Madame Patti to Swansea shortly before her death and now stands, though modified, as the Patti Pavilion, in Victoria Park, Swansea.

Madame Patti, who in 1899 had become Baroness Cederstrom, died at Craig-y-nos on September 27th, 1919, at the age of seventy-six.

Baron Cederstrom later disposed of the castle to King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association, and it now functions as the Adelina Patti Hospital.

