

GAPING GHYLL MEET

ERIC BYNE

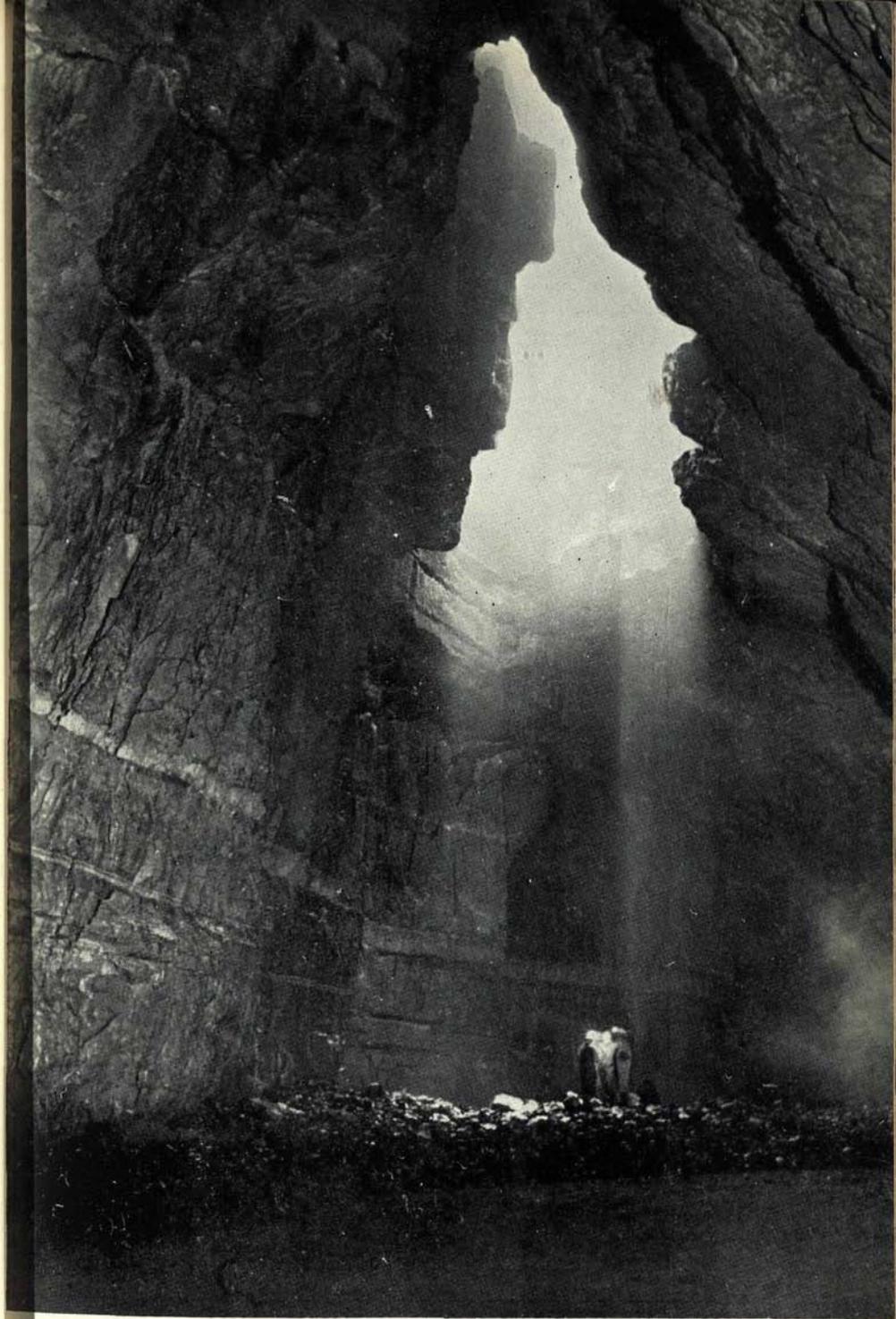
The Meet was my idea and its success was highly gratifying. But all the credit goes to Bill Little for a grand piece of organisation.

Those who took part are unlikely to forget the thrill of the descent of the two great "Avens" in the Barr Pot entrance, one of them dropping 110 feet sheer—a veritable Mouth of the Pit. The effort of descending those swinging ladder rungs made one wonder, when at last one reached the bottom, how on earth (or under it) the return ascent was to be managed.

An underground journey of some two miles followed, along the labyrinth of passages connecting Barr Pot with the main shaft of Gaping Ghyll. This tunnel was mostly dry, and high enough to stand erect in, only one passage requiring a stoop. Here the indefatigable Little and his party had placed night-lights.

The emergence into the tremendous Main Chamber was quite unforgettable. This huge shaft is 365 feet high, and so vast that it would contain St. Paul's Cathedral and our biggest battleship side by side. From its remote apex a waterfall, and a shaft of light from the surface, fall to the spacious floor. It is, indeed, itself a natural cathedral, and quite beggars description.

The re-ascent proved less trying than anticipated—mainly by reason of Larry Lambe and his team of haulers, who heaved on our lifelines with a will to the tune of various sea-shanties. I never climbed so fast in my life. Even when my feet missed a rung or two I kept floating up. All the same, my glasses were so fogged with perspiration at the end of the ascent that it was twenty minutes before our hosts of the Birmingham Cave and Crag Club took proper shape before me, and I was able to express my thanks for a memorable experience.



"THE CHOIRBOYS"
(Main Chamber, Gaping Ghyll)

Kenneth Oldham