was finally exposed here, spiralling downwards. Ladders threaded through this proved both difficult and awkward to negotiate due to the twisted configuration of the pitch. After a contorted 30 feet, this dropped into a small hole, a crack in the floor about 6 feet deep and a mere 9 inches in width. This was promptly dubbed the 'Letterbox'. About the 30-foot twisted shaft Dennis Brindle wrote(1): 'The drip that descends at the head of this pitch may be caught in a bucket placed on a convenient ledge, but this is not advised. The language and accusations made by a person on whom a full bucket descends have to be heard to be believed.' Such were the aspirations of trying to keep dry in these far off, pre-wetsuit days.

The tight 'Letterbox' led to the even tighter horizontal slot now known infamously as 'the Baptistry Crawl'. This was obviously a longer and more serious proposition, and following a number of attempts at passing this bottleneck, it was finally agreed that the cave would not 'go'. Dennis thought otherwise, however, and the weekend after he returned to Carr Pot with two friends to substantiate his theory. Clearing away some of the shingle floor with his bare hands, he extruded himself into the passage and, wriggling for a distance of some 40 feet, entered a larger passage culminating at another pitch. This was only 25 feet deep. This claustrophobic's paradise is an interference fit even for the slimmest of cavers, but it is not endless, contrary to one's feelings during its passing, but is no more than 50 feet at the most. The confined nature of Baptistry Crawl was summed up by a friend of mine following one trip recently down Carr Pot: 'Once in the crawl, one propels the body by wriggling a shoulder or one's toes.' Good enough reason for not venturing out of daylight unless one is lean and hungry!

The weekend after Brindle's initial success, the same team returned, encouraged by the previous findings and brimming with optimism. The bulky wood and rope ladders would not pass through the tight crawl whilst rolled, so consequently a man had to drag one end of a rope along so that the ladders could be uncoiled and threaded through one by one. This operation took some time, but once at the far side, men and tackle assembled in a small chamber at the head of the drop reached by Dennis. Ladders were lowered down and the drop surpassed – another awkward climb landing on ledges above a deep black rift. This

ledge was named 'the Collection Box' for anything dropped down the shaft came to rest here. Two more drops followed in rapid succession – a 50-footer reached by a short traverse, and another deep shaft estimated at over 100 feet. Six weeks were to pass before someone returned to tackle this.

The final pitch descended in a series of vertical steps, each not exceeding 50 feet, and intruded rather than dropped into a very large passage. The landing was on a wide ledge 10 feet above the floor. The small amount (in dry weather) of water that falls down this shaft disappears into a small sump pool along with an equally diminutive stream flowing from the north branch of the new passage. Immediately behind the landing of the 130 feet (last) pitch a 30-foot-high mud wall barred the way on. Scaling this, a crawl through superb calcite formations along a floor of sand and mud deposits led to the larger South Craven Passage and the blind Glissade Pot. Here the sand and mud gave way to gleaming white amorphous calcite, a treacherously slippy slope leading to the brink. The main passageway beyond this soon became completely blocked, so the explorers retraced their steps to the bottom of the big pitch.

Entering the northern-trending branch of the main passage, an additional 600 feet of sizeable chambers and galleries were eagerly explored to a disappointing choke of mud and boulders. Hereabouts were some magnificent decorations – masses of brilliant white stalactites stood out in the beams of their lamps, and a curtain of pristine translucence hung above two immense and very fine bosses about 4 feet high. No connection with Gaping Gill was apparent, however, despite the proximity of the two.

Exploration and mapping lasted over four months, during which all tackle was left in place. The surveyed depth worked out at 320 feet, 270 feet of which was accounted for by vertical shafts. And of this total length of ladders no less than 210 feet had to be threaded through the Baptistry Crawl. To give some notion of the difficulty encountered in this cave, the de-tackling team were below ground for a total of seventeen hours, no less, on a par with two normal working days!

The account given below, by P. L. Tyas, relates how one evening he was stranded on a ledge (Tyas Ledge) part way down the entrance shaft, by someone carelessly removing the ladders,