

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Circular to Members - September 1960

Sessional Meetings.

The programme is at present not complete, but this year more emphasis will be laid on caving than has previously been usual. In the Spring term there will again be a film evening, when films on archaeology and caving will be shown.

The meetings will be on Mondays at 8.15 p.m. in the New Geography Lecture Theatre.

The dates are: October 17th.
 November 7th and 28th.
 December 12th.
1961 January 16th
 February 6th and 20th.
 March 6th - A.G.M. and Presidential Address.

Tutorials on the Pre-history of the Bristol Region will be held in the Society's own rooms on Monday at 8.15.p.m.

Dates: October 24th and 31st
 November 14th and 21st

Archaeology.

At Easter sondages were dug in Burrington Camp covering the whole of the interior with a grid of pits. It is clear that the site was never occupied, even as a cattle kraal. After considerable difficulties another site for a trial excavation has been obtained at Charterhouse and work has commenced.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find sites to dig in the face of increasing reluctance of farmers to allow archaeological excavations on their land.

Caving.

A strong party returned to Clare in July but caving activities were severely hampered by bad weather. The water level in all the caves was very high and a record flood occurred on July 17th. It was interesting to see how some of the caves filled up and the water went beyond the usual swallet as a surface stream to the next swallet only to fill that one up too. A large stream, for example, flowed down from near Poll Clabber, Coolagh River Cave, to the School House sink, which in turn filled right up (15ft. or more) and overflowed down the valley below continuing past Ballynalachan Castle, to disappear finally at the swallet near Cragg Lodge.

The connection, predicted from the surveys, between Poll Elva and Pollna gollum (Slieve Elva) was proved underground. The two parties could talk to each other through a small opening. An attempt was made to survey the cave known as C6. It was found that this cave changes from a Westerly to a Southerly direction at the pitch and runs under the shale covered ridge. Survey work was continued in other caves and important information on the effect of dip on passage direction was collected.

In the Mendip region work has continued in the various digs. Considerable progress has been made at Manor Farm despite frequent flooding. The fixed ladder up to the Ladder dig in G.B. has been re-erected and this dig has been re-opened.

Field H.Q.

The main structure of the new Women's quarters has been completed, and it only remains for the interior decorations to be finished. Thanks are due to all those who have assisted financially or with labour, and especially to the University authorities who supplied many of the necessary fittings. Thanks to the various contributions the new accommodation is free from debt.

Ireland 1961.

Several members have suggested that the dates for this trip might be put forward to the end of July and the beginning of August, so that Members other than undergraduates might be able to participate, which they cannot do in most cases if the expedition is set for the first three weeks in July. If there is anyone interested in an expedition that will carry on over the end of July and the first week of August 1961 would they please inform Professor Tratman as soon as possible. Will they please state the dates preferred and also whether they will be bringing their own transport or relying on that of the Society. It may seem absurdly early to raise this matter, but experience has shown that bookings, for car transport at least, on the Fishguard - Rosslare route, are difficult to obtain, for the peak of the holiday rush in July-August, after the middle of January of the year in question. If the expedition period continued into August it is not certain whether the very special low rate of £6-11-6 per week would still be applicable to the whole period.

Overseas Expedition

The Secretary has been informed that a field group has been working in Greece and is due to report back to the Committee shortly. The possibility of work in Portugal is being considered. It has also been suggested that a British attempt on the Gouffre Berger be made if Greece proves unsuitable. Any further information will be passed on as soon as it becomes available.

Proceedings Vol.9 No.1.

The new number of Proceedings is now in the press and we hope to distribute copies early in October.

G.B. Flash Flooding.

It is thought that the members might like to have an account of conditions in the cave during the flooding on August 27th 1960.

Heavy rain began to fall just before noon. A party had been arranged to go down to do some blasting and was to be joined by a 'fauna' collecting party. When the parties met at the entrance at 2.30.p.m. there was still heavy rain and the stream was rising. A little water from the surface was flowing down the entrance as the advance party went down. The second party was delayed for about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an hour, by which time the stream had risen though the swallet was still able to cope with it easily. The trickle down the entrance had increased considerably.

By the time the second party reached the First Grotto there was a fair sized stream coming down the entrance passage and entering the connecting passage to the Mud Passage. It left this passage through a hole in the floor and re-appeared in the Mud Passage from the right as a waterfall. At this point the fauna party turned back as conditions were becoming dangerous. One member went on to contact the first party and tell them to return. From the exit of the Mud Passage into the Gorge there was seen a tremendous rush of red-brown water coming down from the Wet-way. Of the boulders in the floor nothing could be seen and the whole place was full of spray. From the Wet-way emerged a tremendous rush of water which directly hit the far side of the Gorge. This mass was an incredible sight. Rocks could be heard being rolled down and smaller material was coming down with the water from the Mud Passage. The Ooze was not carrying water and the White Way stream had not yet risen. (It was quite large 24 hours later). the usual point of descent of the lower part of the "40 foot" was covered by a considerable flow; the overflow which the three normal channels could not carry. At the bottom water had already flooded the extension and was filling up the terminal passage. It is encouraging to note that the flood did not this time reach as far back and upward as it used to do.

The leading party was encountered at the Bridge and all haste was made outwards. By this time the Mud Passage carried a big stream, about as high as the ordinary winter flow in the Gorge, and it was feared that the opening in the connecting passage to the First Grotto might be blocked. Fortunately this was not so though the flow was now so great that the hole in the floor could not take all the water and a pool was beginning to form. It is here that a sump could develop. Coming up to the squeeze below the entrance the water looked menacing, but the place was passable provided the man kept his head down so that he could breathe. At the trap-door-entrance conditions were worse and one had to feel ones way out as it was quite impossible to look up through the flood of water pouring down. The outer door was closed and here the water had backed up to a depth of 15 inches in spite of the amount that was leaking round and under the door. The cross-section of water flow here was estimated to be not less than 16 inches square. At the swallet the water had filled up completely to less than 2 feet below the flat area alongside and the water was still rising. 24 hours later it had returned to average winter flow.

E.V.Gilbert.(Hon.Sec.)

September 1960