

CIRCULAR TO MEMBERS

December - 1969.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Two members of the society were elected as Honorary Members at the Sessional Meeting on December 1st, 1969. They were

Dr. B.A. Crook

Dr. H. Taylor.

Both of them have served the society over many years in a variety of ways and they are welcomed now in their new capacity.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

We have received two letters recently from Mike Norton in Canada. In the first he bemoans the lack of caves in the area where he is settled, but he is apparently enjoying the life, including the wild life to be seen beside the lakes - moose fighting and bears. In the second letter he has teamed up with Derek Ford and done quite a lot of caving, writing glibly of 180 ft. pitches with ice down one side in an entirely phreatic cave, and of river caves in another area where they keep to the abandoned dry ways because the water is too cold and the river is too big. This one is Nahimn cave, 3 miles long with three entrances, and going to a depth of 900 feet. It used to be a show cave but hardly one of the ordinary tourist type, with stairways that descend at 80 degrees and a tunnel at the bottom to save the climb all the way back.

Cliff Ollier writes about caves in one of the Trobriand Islands. They are full of human bones, pots and other goods, and some are painted, the first such caves to be found in the whole of the territory so far.

"Several new megalithic sites are related to the caves in a peculiar way. The natives believe that their ancestors emerged out of holes in the ground (Obviously the original Hobbits. E.K.T.) and built stone houses (megaliths), although later generations built only of wood. They still divide themselves into "Tosanpula", i.e. the descendents of the original emergers, and the "Luluwa" who are descendants of people who came by sea, and are regarded as inferior types. Each sub-clan can trace their ancestry by a series of names, right back to the original emergers - about 25 generations."

Cliff is moving to the Geology Department at the Canberra College of Advanced Education this September.

E.K.T.

CAVING IN KENYA

The U.B.S.S. sent a one man expedition to Kenya during the summer in the form of Peter Standing. He writes as follows -

"I was fortunate enough to spend 2½ months in Nairobi recently and was able to see something of the Kenyan caves. The Cave Exploration Group of East Africa is centred on Nairobi and they have explored and surveyed quite a large number of lava caves. The best known ones are on Mount Suswa, a volcano in the Rift Valley, some 30 miles N.W. of Nairobi. There are about 20 caves in all, the longest being about 1½ miles long. Some of the entrances are very impressive, measuring up to 50 feet high and 80 feet wide. Indeed one of the delights of caving in East Africa is that one doesn't need all the paraphernalia of British caving kit. A pair of shorts and a cycle lamp are usually quite adequate and some of the caves are so hot that even the shorts may be dispensed with.

The caves are technically very easy and the biggest problem is driving up to them and finding the entrances. Several of the Suswa and the Mount Elgon caves, which I also visited, had extensive bat guano deposits in them, and these are quite common all over East Africa. In fact the secretary of the E.A.C.G. started the country's first guano mine a few years ago and now employs 30 African miners. He sells the guano for £20 a ton to coffee plantations as fertilizer and spends most of his time now prospecting for new caves and guano deposits in

his capacity as managing director. There are a few limestone caves near the coast and there is certainly ample opportunity for original exploration all over Kenya.

The other great feature of caving in Kenya is the beautiful scenery in which the caves are situated. East Africa has a great deal to interest the climber and walker, with a thriving Mountain Club of Kenya, again based on Nairobi. During my last three weeks I managed to visit Mount Kenya and Africa's highest mountain, Kilimanjaro (19,340ft.)."

LITTLE NETH RIVER CAVE

There have been two diving trips to the further reaches of the cave recently. Foot and Mouth Passage (1000ft.) was surveyed on the first of the trips. It is a tributary passage entering the streamway from the west just downstream of Sump 4 and its upper end seems to be situated very close to the surface swallet at Berthlwyd Farm. Radio-location and fluorescein tests are planned.

On the second trip another large tributary, Seventeenth Street, (on the east side of the streamway) was surveyed for about 450 feet. About 1500 feet of side passages were explored, including several high level chambers. The general trend seems to be North-East under the moor.

The total passage length surveyed downstream of Sump 2 is now about 5000 feet with another 2500 feet unsurveyed. Many possibilities have not yet been examined.

The University computer has been harnessed by Bob Taylor to the task of processing all the survey data obtained by the club. Many hours of work with pencil and paper has been saved and the computer even draws out rough maps of the passages surveyed.

Pete Standing.

N. W. CLARE - SUMMER 1969.

The annual expedition to Eire this year numbered 10 people, 2 of them hitching out and the rest travelling courtesy of E.K.T. and A.C. Lloyd. Those present were Colin Thomas, Ted Brown, Bob Taylor, Marianne Last, Mike Roberts, Dick Marsh, E.K.T., Oliver Lloyd, Martin Joyce and Judith.

This year's party must hold the record for laziness. Because of the glorious weather in the first week, we only went underground twice in the first eight days. Both trips were mainly of a tourist nature, one in Doolin Cave and the other in Coolagh River Cave. The rest of the time that week was spent in sunbathing, drinking, swimming and walking, (a good day's walking on the Twelve Bens of Connemara being enjoyed by all.) Quite some time was spent on making our accommodation habitable. This year we forsook McCarthy's Cottage and stayed in a derelict hotel right in the centre of Lisdoonvarna opposite Keane's Hotel. Once cleared out and cleaned up it made excellent and free accommodation and could well be used again in future years.

In the second week the weather broke and so we got down to some proper work. Water tracing tests were carried out on West Knockauns and in Doolin Cave, only the latter being successful.

Swallet E.2. on the east side of Slieve Elva, which was explored in 1967, was our main surveying task, and was surveyed for most of its length (about 1500 feet), and there are only a few hundred feet to go to make a connection with the upper end of Branch Passage Gallery in Pollnagollum, which would create the longest through trip in the British Isles, one of nearly four miles.

A connection found last year by S.W.E.T.C. Caving Club between Long Gallery in Upper Pollnagollum, and the surface further along the hillside was surveyed for 2/3 of its length (about 700 feet.), time preventing its completion. Both E.2. and this connection proved to be particularly unpleasant to survey because of their small size and awkwardness. E.2. is liberally covered with large, man-eating scallops.

Two trips took place in Pollnagollum itself. The first was of a tourist nature while the second gave us a chance to try out the newly-made U.B.S.S. maypole underground. Two inlets in the Main Stream Passage were scaled but to no avail as the only find was a small but pretty grotto in a very exposed position. However the maypole was a success, being very easy to carry around and, with practise, easy to use.

In Pollnagollum Pothole itself the entrances both had to be unblocked as large quantities of stones repeatedly piled themselves up against them.

Also visited briefly during the fortnight were Pollapooka 1, Faunarooska and Poll-an-Ionain while some time was spent digging in

U.B.S.S. CIRCULAR

the fill at the end of a 100 ft. cave by the sea at Polsallagh.

After an interesting afternoon studying the effects of a minor flood the party returned to Bristol (half the party stopping in South Wales for a weekends caving) all well satisfied with a very pleasant two weeks.

Bob Taylor.

MANOR FARM DIG

Despite phenomenal support (?) this term progress is slow. There is still no 'Mendip Master Cave', in fact, we still haven't connected the blasted shaft and the one opened by the Great Flood. The gap at present is about eight or nine feet. Until the two shafts are connected so that the flood shaft need not be used for entry we cannot press on down the valley as the flood shaft gets more unstable every week. When the two shafts are connected the U.B.S.S. will have the honour of a new Mendip round trip to their name, every foot of which is artificial.

Adrian Wilkins.

THE 5th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS.

The Fifth International Congress of Speleology held this summer in Stuttgart was attended by a fair number of representatives from Britain. The U.B.S.S. contributed two papers. Apparently the organization of the Congress left much to be desired. The post-congress excursions were enjoyable and stories are going round about epic assaults on the Alps by certain members of the U.B.S.S. 'old guard'.

An account of the Congress will be given in the Presidential address in March 1970.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Westbury - sub - Mendip Quarry. (Cat. No. M38.)

The first notice of a cave in this quarry appears in a Log Book entry about March 1969. The next notice was in a B.B.C. programme near the end of August 1969 when the discovery of remains of the 'Woolly Rhinoceros' was announced and televised. Mr. C. Hawkes of the Wessex Caving Club persuaded E.K.T. to visit the site.

The quarry runs east-west and the east face is 30 metres high at the north end. In the east face parts of a fine phreatic cave system were exposed, and though this has now been destroyed a photographic record was made.

In the north-east corner was a vast conical mass of fill extending from the surface downwards for a minimum of 20 metres. Layering could be distinguished in the face and two or more bone layers were present. Combined operations with the Wessex Caving Club has enabled a fairly representative collection of remains to be made. The main carnivore is bear. There seem to be two varieties, one large and one smaller. The variation seems to be too great to be within the range but detailed study may show otherwise. Other animals so far identified include wolf, an animal about the size of a dog or fox, a very large form of ox, and one or two species of deer. Lion does occur but only a few specimens have been identified.

Somewhat hazardous descents were made down over the face and samples from the different layers collected for study in the Geology Department of the University. The site seems to have been a bears' den rather than just a natural pitfall and there is some evidence of the presence of man. On the surface above the quarry flint implements have been found suggesting a Late Upper Palaeolithic living site or perhaps a Mesolithic one.

Hyena Den.

Work has proceeded steadily and an undisturbed sand layer has been found at the base. It has yielded bear, hyena, ox and deer from the small sample examined. Recently frost and rain has brought down the face and about five tons will have to be moved before the undisturbed levels can be worked again. The emergency work at Westbury Quarry has interfered with progress at the Hyena Den.

E.K.T.

M5 Rescue Dig

In the first couple of weeks of term a total of about 10 members

U. B. S. S. CIRCULAR.

helped the M5 Research Committee with a rescue dig near Clapton - in - Gordano. The site was in the path of a future approach road to the motorway. The walls of a building, mediaeval in date, were traced and much information was gained.

Stokeleigh Camp, Bristol.

Excavation continues each weekend and attendance is quite good. We have now all but finished last year's trench, and no new features have been found. We have also opened a new trench well to the south, in an effort to trace a 'floor' found by a member of the public. This is very near the surface and at the moment looks suspiciously natural, though there is more work to be done on it. The washing of the finds is now up to date, though the cataloguing is still far behind.

Marianne Last.

REVIEW

'Caving' by James Lovelock, 144 pps., 37 plates. Published by Batsford. Price . . 25/-.

The 1950s were often described as the golden age of potholing. The 1960s might well be remembered as the golden age of caving textbooks, for a large number of introductory manuals have appeared. James Lovelock starts with an advantage over many of his rivals because he is a journalist. His style is certainly fluent and easy to read and his photographs are all very good. The text covers most of the subjects that the novice should know about.

The book begins with an account of early British caving including descriptions of John Lloyd's descent of Eldon Hole in 1777 and Martel's bottoming of Gaping Gill in 1895. Chapters 2 and 3 give a good survey of personal and group equipment but the latter does contain one error. The author talks about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch diameter rope when in fact he means $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch circumference. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with horizontal, vertical and other techniques and contain a lot of good sense.

Chapter 7 describes 'that esoteric aspect of speleology', cave diving. I would recommend any cave diver who needs his ego boosting to read Lovelock's opening paragraph on the qualities necessary to embark on this 'most difficult and hazardous aspect of cave science'. There is one serious error concerning equipment. On p. 72 we are told that the Cave Diving Group recommends the re-breathing system using oxygen. In fact virtually all British cave divers have been using air over the last seven years and the excellent photograph opposite p. 72 shows an example of modern diving apparatus which is clearly not a re-breathing set.

Chapter 8 (food and survival) advises the caver to include in his equipment a full water bottle, salt tablets and a short length of rubber tubing which can reach otherwise inaccessible sources of water supply. I have yet to see a caver using any of these aids. Chapter 9 gives a sound review of the problems of cave photography whilst Chapter 10 is entitled 'here to Cave'. With the exception of Derbyshire, the descriptions of the caving areas are sadly out of date and also abound in spelling mistakes e.g. p. 102 Pwll Dwfin and Glentawe. The final chapter on emergencies is followed by appendices on safety and preservation codes, cave rescue organizations, glossary and a list of caving clubs. Item 19 of the Preservation Code is entirely original and deserves mention - 'Be courteous and helpful when dealing with newspaper, television and broadcasting reporters. Remember they have a job to do and require only the facts for their reports.'

In summary then, this book is very readable but not always strictly accurate. The novice will enjoy it but the experienced caver will probably find little of interest in it other than the mistakes.

Peter Standing.

MEMBERSHIP

This year the intake of 'Freshers' into the club has been unusually large, especially on the Archaeological side. The number of 'diggers' is larger than it has been for some years and in the capable hands of E.K.T. and Marianne Last, the Curator, a large amount of work should be possible in the future.

On the caving side a great number of trips have been run to cope with the influx and the considerable number of cars that have appeared

U.B.S.S. CIRCULAR

from time to time have been put to good use.

REGISTER of ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

The December, 1969 issue of the 'Register of Environmental Research on Mendip' will be ready for circulation at the end of the year. Copies are obtainable from -

S. Trudgill or F.M. Courtney,

Dept. of Geography, Univ. of Bristol.

Please enclose a stamped, addressed, foolscap envelope.

NEW YEAR DINNER

As usual, the New Year Dinner will be held at the hut on Dec. 31 st. at about 9.30 pm. Anyone wishing to come please contact Miss Eve Wheeler, who is in charge of the 'catering'.

SESSIONAL MEETINGS

So far this year there have been three sessional meetings at which the speakers were Tony Priddy, Chris Gilmore and Alan Coase. They gave excellent talks on general Archaeology, Rumanian Caving and Dan-yr-Ogof Gave respectively.

There will be sessional meetings next term as follows -

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| January 19th. | Derek Appleing . . 'Cave Rescue'. |
| February 2nd. | Peter Fowler . . 'Some Dark Age Problems
of the Severn Basin'. |
| March 2nd. | Annual General Meeting,
Addressed by E.K. Tratman. |

Dave Waddington + MARIANNE LAST
(Joint Hon. Sec.)
BOB TAYLOR.