

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETYCIRCULAR TO MEMBERS

(1966, No.2, 6th May)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Monday, the 7th of March 1966 in the Geography Lecture Theatre at 8.15 pm.

The following Officers were elected :

President : Dr. E.K. Tratman, O.B.E., M.D., M.D.S., F.S.A.

Vice-Presidents : H. Taylor, M.B., Ch.B.
Dina. P. Dobson-Hinton, Litt.D., F.S.A.
B.A. Crook, M.B., Ch.B.
D.T. Donovan, D.Sc., Ph.D.

Hon. Treasurer : O.C. Lloyd, M.D.

Joint Hon. Secretaries : M.G. Norton, B.Sc.
T.C. Atkinson.

Members of Committee : D. Ingle Smith, M.Sc.
I.J. Standing.
P.A. Standing.
C.J. Gilmore.
J.W. Haldane.
C. Folt.

Section 2(b) of the Constitution was amended by the deletion of the word 'prehistoric' and now reads 'The study of Archaeology'.

The President's address was given on the 4th International Congress of Spelaeology, which he attended in Yugoslavia during September of last year.

Secretary's ReportMeetings

At the beginning of the year, an agreement was made between the Society and the Department of Classics, to hold a series of lectures on Archaeological Topics at the Society's Sessional meetings. These accounted for two of the four lectures on Archaeology, and were well attended. This system of holding lectures in conjunction with the Dept. of Classics seems to have increased attendances at this type of lecture, and is to be continued next year.

One of our Czech visitors, Dr. Lobski, gave a lecture on 'The Caves of Czechoslovakia' in June, and one more talk on Caving brought the number of Sessional Meetings to six.

Caving

Work is going on at the moment in stabilising the concrete pipes at Manor Farm Swallet. During the last year, these have been seriously undermined by the erosive action of the stream, and to stop this a system of glazed pipes has been constructed to carry the stream to the bottom of the dig, thus stopping any more fill from being washed away. A diversionary channel has also been built, for channeling the water while digging.

In G.B., the Ladder Dig extension is still being dug and is now vertically above the end of the Terminal Dig, so it is hoped to get some results soon.

In June, a visit was made to Britain by members of the Czech National Institute of Spelaeology in return for the British party's visit of last year. The U.B.S.S. acted as hosts, and the President showed our guests round the Caving areas of the Mendips and Eire. The party gave an exhibition illustrating Speleology in their country, and this is to be donated to the Society after it has completed its tour of museums over the country.

U.B.S.S. CIRCULARSecretary's Report Cont.,Field Headquarters

The battery connected to the Wind Generator has been replaced by a set of Ni-Fe type alkaline batteries. With the generator now repaired and fitted, it is hoped that a more reliable source of lighting will be with us. The lock on the Hut has been changed in order to stop the unauthorised borrowing of tackle that was beginning to take place.

Tackle and Equipment

Construction of lightweight tackle has progressed through the year, and 360ft of nylon line have been bought to supplement existing stocks.

Archaeology

The new cases bought last year have been installed and a general reorganisation of the exhibits is well under way. The museum catalogues are being brought up to date and a reference system based on a punched cards system is being introduced.

In view of the modern day trends towards the adoption of the metric system in most fields of study, it has been decided that, in future, all work done by the Society shall be in this system. From March 1st 1966, all measurements published by the Society will be in the metric system, with the exception of some work already in hand.

Proceedings

Volume 10, No. 3 was published in December 1965, containing a number of important articles, notably the report by A.M. ApSimon on the Roman Temple at Brean Down. This issue was the largest yet published by the Society, and sales have been considerably better than in previous years.

Acknowledgements

The Society acknowledges with gratitude the grants towards the cost of publishing Proceedings from the Colston Research Society, The University of Bristol, The Council of British Archaeology, The Ministry of Works and for a donation from Vassar College, New York. The Society is also grateful for the many private donations which have been received for Proceedings. The Annual grant from the Union towards the running costs of the Society is also gratefully acknowledged.

M.G.Norton.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Hon. Treasurer presented his accounts a copy of which is enclosed. Expenditure on Proceedings at £692 was a record. So was that on Tools and Equipment (£46) since we had been making a lot more lightweight tackle. Museum expenditure had risen above zero for the second time in five years, due to the energy of our Curator (Tim Pullan) who was revising the catalogues in such a way as to make them useful for research.

Income from members' subscriptions was up by 50% on account of the increased rate of subscription. This rise had been achieved satisfactorily on the whole. Only five old members had resigned, while of the three defaulters, one was not past reclaim. There were now 77 members paying at the rate of £1.10.0. p.a., 16 at £2 and four honorary members. Two ex-student members had been added.

Audit Sub Committee had tried to cut our Union grant again, but this had been restored after representations had been made to the Student Treasurer by Dr. Lloyd. The trouble is that Audit Sub-Committee has no permanent record of the financial affairs of the Student Societies; there is no U.B.S.S. folder in their archives containing past correspondence. The result is that every now and then the Hon. Treasurer has to go over the same arguments again, in order to explain what parts of the Society's money is the concern of Audit Sub-Committee (i.e. that spent on the Students) and what parts are not (e.g. Proceedings). Sales of publications had reached the record figure of £183.

Treasurer's Report - Cont.,

On the Balance Sheet Dr. Lloyd drew attention to two new funds, which the Committee had established: the G.B. Cave Capital Fund and the Equipment Fund. In theory the Society is not supposed to make any money out of the G.B. Cave Tackle Account: income is supposed to balance expenditure but every now and then items of capital expenditure have to be met, for which we are quite unprepared. The outer door to the Cave has been repaired on several occasions, but its useful life is now estimated at only a few years. Its replacement will be expensive. We are therefore proposing to put the balance from the G.B. Cave Tackle Account each year into a capital fund which will go to pay for a new door. The Equipment Fund has a similar rationale. Each year we find that for one reason or another the work done on replacing old tackle or making new falls short of the estimate. This means that Tackle Fund loses the money set aside for its use. This is unsatisfactory, so in future we plan to put the money thus reserved and unspent into the Equipment Fund. This will enable M.I.C.T.F. to budget for things which might have been done in addition to those which ought to be done.

The Brean Down Publications Fund has been wound up. The Printed Publications Fund has been increased by £60. The fantastic figure of £689 for 'Sundry Creditors' is due to the fact that the bill for Proceedings was received too late for payment before January 1st 1966.

On the right hand side of the balance sheet this debt is adequately balanced by 'Sundry Debtors' and the Balance at the Bank.

O.C. Lloyd.
Hon. Treasurer.

LOCKING OF LIBRARY

After the recent disappearance of some valuable books from the Society's Library, it was decided by the Committee that the Library must be locked. In future, anyone wishing to take out books must contact the Librarian, Treasurer or Secretaries. This step is regrettable, but inevitable in view of the steady loss incurred in recent months.

CAVINGEaster in Yorkshire

The U.B.S.S. party this year consisted of Oliver Lloyd, Dave Savage, Keith Hanna, Tim Hill, Pat Corry, Peter Kaye and Carl Holt. The party stayed at the New Inn, Clapham or camped nearby, as in 1965.

On Good Friday, 8th April, a visit was paid to Rowten Pot, just beside the Turbary Road in Kingsdale. It was very wet and cold, so that with lack of local knowledge the party did no more than find out how to do it. For future reference be it noted that no-one does the 230ft pitch from the eyehole except as a stunt. There is no belay and you need a stout stake. It is best to ladder the gully (40ft ladder, 25ft belay), cross the stream and traverse to the right as far as you can. In this way the bridge can be reached and the 110ft pitch. The tackle can then be let down from the eyehole on the surface. This was followed by a brief sortie around the upper passages of Simpson's Pot and a trip down Yorda's Cave.

On Saturday, the party (joined by Francis Saunders) went to Simpson's Pot for what turned out to be the best trip of the weekend. The slit was reached, but there was too much water going through it. Apart from the slit the cave has no difficulties in contrast to the published reports of hair-raising traverses and desperate ducks.

On Easter Sunday, three of the Society and five Oxford boys did Bull Pot. This is a fine piece of potholing, containing a 50ft pitch which is very wet and rather sinister and exciting, and a free climbable 80ft pitch to the end of the Pot. There is an alternative pitch (70ft) to the bottom and seven of the party found time to reach the bottom.

Easter Monday was spent on the surface around Gaping Ghyll with a brief look at Ingleborough Show Cave.

1966

U.B.S.S. CIRCULAR

TACKLE REQUIREMENTS FOR SIMPSON'S POT, BULL POT AND PENYGHENT POT.

Simpson's Pot: Requirements to Slit Pot.

Steps Pot: nothing.

Chandler Pot: 20ft ladder belayed to obvious knob on left is nice for descending. The re-ascent needs no ladder.

Canal Pot: nothing.

Stake Pot: There are two pitches here, one after the other. 40ft ladder, and a short belay to a red eyebolt. There is no stake.

Storm Pot: 30ft ladder, 6ft belay to a flake in the floor, and a travelling lifeline of 60ft.

Carol Pot: This has a horrid takeoff in a narrow, twisting meander trench, so don't hang the ladder too low. 25ft and a 15ft belay (not more).

Shuffle Pot: 20ft belay and a 15ft ladder from a stalagmite column.

Lake Pot: 20ft ladder, 10ft belay to a rock in the floor.

Aven Pot: 40ft ladder and a 5ft belay to a cemented boulder over the pitch. A travelling lifeline is also needed.

Slit Pot: 80ft ladder and a 30ft belay to a large rock in the floor. 100ft lifeline. and a handline for the return. We couldn't find the high level flood passage. Climbing the Slit is a difficult lay-back, as there are no hand-holds, foot-holds or pressure-holds. If you do so then you need an extra 25ft of ladder. The Slit is 6" wide at the base, widening to 7" (knees) and 8" (hips). At about 4 to 5 ft above the bottom it is 9" wide and then narrows again.

Bull Pot, Kingsdale

First Pitch (dry): 40ft ladder, 10ft belay to a rock. 60ft lifeline, best belayed in line with ladder belay- you need something to catch hold of on the way up.

Second Pitch (wet): 20ft ladder and a short belay to iron bar. Travelling line for tackle is needed.

Third Pitch (dry): 60ft ladder and a short belay to an iron bar. 80ft lifeline.

Fourth Pitch (very wet): 50ft ladder and 10ft belay on the right wall above the narrow part of the passage. 80ft lifeline.

Fifth Pitch (wet), down the left hand rift. 60ft ladder and 5ft belay high on to right, 100ft lifeline. Don't hang the ladder too low, otherwise returning up the rift is a real thrutch.

Final Pitch (along right hand passage) is 80ft in a series of steps; a difficult free-climb with a sump at the end.

Penyghent Pot.

The following notes are taken partly from Jim Giles, partly from observation on a trip with the Eldon P.C. on 20.3.66. and partly after a check up on my data by Clive Westlake.

Tackle Requirements

In the first place it is to be understood that only the lightest of lightweight tackle is suitable for this cave. The U.B.S.S. has made about 100ft of this, so far, with narrow rungs and 12" spacing. Life lines should (in my opinion) be of extra full weight Ulstron.

In the second, a note about the canal is not amiss. This can be negotiated comfortably as follows: Tie a 10ft waist line to your belt and and on the end of it, trailing behind you, the tackle; a bag of ladders with a lifeline in front - the lifelines are lighter than water and float keeping the tackle bag free from obstructions.

U.B.S.S. CIRCULARPenyghent Pot Tackle Notes Cont.,

Third, you are better off if several members of the party know the cave. Move continuously in twos or threes. The party for pitch x is overtaken at that pitch by the party for pitch x+1 and x+2, and is in turn overtaken by the party for x+3. Nothing saps the strength like hold-ups and delays, which can thus be prevented.

These notes should be memorised by all those taking part.

First Pitch. Wet. 20ft ladder and short belay on the left. The further out over the pitch head you go, the freer and drier the pitch is. There are several good belays.

Second Pitch. Wet, 20ft ladder, 20ft belay to peg on right wall.

Third Pitch: best done as two-a and b.

3a: Spray, 40ft ladder, short belay to a wooden bar. A double lifeline of 120ft may be fixed to a pulley on the wooden bar, or there are rock belays to the right. The further out you go, the drier it is. Don't go too far, or you won't land on the next ledge.

3b: 20ft ladder, dry and a 20ft belay to a rocking boulder. Use the same lifeline as for 3a.

Fourth Pitch: Dry, 70ft ladder, 5ft belay to a flake. A double lifeline of 150ft and a pulley have to be belayed to the same flake, but it is quite solid.

Fifth Pitch: Dry, 20ft ladder and 10ft belay to a flake.

Sixth Pitch : Nothing. Don't descend, or you will get into a tight wet crawl. The obvious way is to traverse over the top.

Seventh Pitch : Dry, very awkward rift, 35ft ladder, 20ft belay.

Eighth Pitch : Dry, 25ft ladder, vaguely nasty pitch head, sitting with a leg either side of a flake. Short belay is required to this flake.

Ninth Pitch: Dry, 30ft ladder and short belay to obvious knob on right of passage. Easy take-off.

Pitch 9a : Cascades. Only go a third of the way down, then traverse out until just above Pool Chamber. Step over to the left wall and put a 30ft ladder down the face to land just to the left of the final cascade into Pool Chamber. Short belay.

Boulder Chamber : It's a good idea to have something to eat.

Tenth Pitch: Very wet and exposed. 25ft ladder and a 4ft belay on the left. A double lifeline of 50ft is advised, but not essential if you have a traveller.

Eleventh Pitch: Not really wet, 25ft ladder with a 5ft belay on the left of the cascade attached to a flake.

Twelfth Pitch: Very wet, 15ft ladder on the extreme left with a 15ft belay.

Lifelines: Doubles are essential on three and four. Two or three travelling lines of 40 to 60ft are recommended. At least one is essential to help with tackle up pitches.

The bottom of the fourth is a cold place. On return it is best to lifeline from the bottom to keep the men warm. The gear should be hauled from the top, as the men need to be there to handle it above on the third.

O.C.Lloyd.

MANOR FARM SWALLET

After the completion of the glazed pipes carrying the stream some weeks ago, two days' digging reached the -50ft mark, about the lowest previously reached. Since then, during the flood conditions following the snow fall in April, the stream was too large for the 9" pipes to take, and a considerable amount was flowing in the old stream bed. The result of this was that some filling in of the bottom of the dig occurred with a mixture of farmyard muck, straw and clay. However, even during this heavy discharge the water still flowed away without difficulty. Last week another digging party removed 160 buckets, and the dig is now, once again at the lowest level reached. With this good start, it is hoped that the usual effort during Union Week will be enough to break through.

G.B. Ladder Dig

The Ladder Dig has been pushed a lot during the past few weeks and some 200 buckets removed, equivalent to 3-4 ft. of actual progress in the passage. Here again, it is unlikely that we have more than around 10 ft. to go before some sort of breakthrough is made. Explosives are being used, this time in expanding the passage upwards through boulders and stream fill, in the hope of reaching the underside of a stal floor, perhaps with an airspace above it.

During the summer term it would be nice if we could concentrate our efforts while there is a possibility of good weather; but unfortunately most of our student members are obliged to work for tedious things such as exams. However, one of the Hon. Secs. and others are free from this scourge, and if any of the more active of our ex-student members could spare a Saturday afternoon, they would be most welcome, and will (weather permitting) certainly find some digging to be done (or even some exploration!).

Discovery of North-West Aven, Swildons Hole Mike Norton

Earlier this year, the S.W.E.T. Caving Club discovered North-West Stream Passage, which includes a 26 ft. pitch in its extent of 1200 ft. or so. On 19th March 1966 three U.B.S.S. members (Pete Standing, Chris Gilmore, and Peter Kaye) visited the new passage and added a bit more to it by traversing across the top of the 26 ft. pitch. A small chamber was entered and this led to a free climbable aven some 65 ft. high, going up in two stages. There was practically no horizontal development and there is little chance of further extension.

Pete Standing

Wookey Hole

On Saturday 30th April Oliver Lloyd and Dave Savage dived at Wookey Hole with Don Hazell, chairman of the Cave Diving Group, as controller. O.C.L. led to the ninth chamber with D.S. following after 4 minutes. D.S. then dived from the ninth chamber carrying a reel holding 250ft. of coullene line. Arriving at the end of the old line he tied his own line onto this and proceeded through the "slot" into the fifteenth chamber, the floor of which is at a depth of 70 ft. The way on from here was unexplored and led off to the right along an ascending passage. About 200 ft. along this passage the line ran out. His depth guage read 20 ft., and thus further prospects look bright. The total length of the dive was about 460 ft. from base in the ninth chamber.

Dave Savage

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

In the last year, the M.R.O. had three major call-outs, two of them at Swildons Hole and resulting in extensive use of police and fire services, causing much inconvenience and expense (over £300 of public money) and a considerable outcry by some sections of the press at the time. It is probably very fortunate that no more calls were made on these services for the remainder of the year. Although no actual call-outs were made during the autumn, there were frequent "incidents" on the Forty in Swildons, caused by inexperienced cavers having great difficulty in climbing the ladder against the force of the water. The call-outs were avoided by the action of experienced parties, who helped the cavers up the ladder, or, as on two occasions, hauled the offending party up. The value of these "on the spot rescues" having been demonstrated, the M.R.O. has installed a permanent pulley on the bar across Suicides' Leap, so that any party with a 100 ft. full weight nylon line can haul a body up the pitch. This, coupled with the fact that novices are learning the hard way that Swildons has been greatly upgraded by the removal of the pipe on the Forty, should help to reduce the number of rescues from this cave.

Fortunately, relations between the organization and the Police

remain very good, the Police having every facility likely to be needed on call.

The Organization now has a sump rescue apparatus capable of being used in long sumps, operated by two cave divers. It is thus possible to rescue someone through the streamway from Swildons Six.

In accordance with M.R.O. policy, the U.B.S.S. held two practice rescues during last term, one for the older members to keep their hands in, and the other to instruct the newer student members.

Mike Norton

The first rescue practice was held on Sunday 13th February, in G.B.Cave. In order to give the newer members experience the operation was not carried out in too great haste, but we succeeded in carrying the body from the top of the ladder dig to the entrance via the Dry Way, in two hours. This included lowering the body down from the Ladder Dig and hauling it up the Forty Foot Drop, as well as time spent in instructing members in tying the carrying sheet. Whilst the party was perhaps one or two men short at eight members, the operation went quite smoothly, and the body found little cause for complaint.

The second practice was held in Rod's Pot the following Sunday. This cave presents a rather tricky problem, especially if the body is helpless; however, with the growing numbers of inexperienced cavers in the Burrington area, this cave must be considered as a likely spot for a rescue by the Society. After a somewhat late start, the rescue team (a little short of manpower) began to rescue the body from the bottom of the pitch. This proved to be a slow job and the succeeding narrow passages made the exercise more difficult. However, much was learnt by those taking part. The rescue was abandoned at the chamber below the entrance series, as a number of members, including the medical warden, had pressing dinner engagements.

Phil Davies and Oliver Lloyd acted as medical wardens on the 13th and 20th February respectively. Miss Simmons and Miss Donoghue were foolish enough to act as victims, but despite odd remarks in the log book, offered no serious complaint about their treatment.

In general, the practices proved to be useful, especially to new members. It was obvious at times that we were undermanned, this being due to some of the more experienced members not turning up as promised. Rescue practices are important exercises and much can be learnt by them; They should therefore be regarded seriously by all members.

Colin High

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

The Council celebrated its first birthday last January, and is now firmly established as a body representative of all but a few of the Southern Clubs. The Council is keeping in close touch with the Northern Council over matters of common interest, such as training, access to caves, providing delegates to the Union Internationale de Speleologie, and many other matters. It is hoped to increase the liaison and co-operation between Southern and Northern Councils, and frequent meetings and exchange of minutes are steps towards this goal.

FUTURE EVENTS

The Hyaena Den, Wookey Hole

Arrangements have been made with the Paper Company, the owners of this cave, for excavations during September. The object of the excavations is to establish the stratification and the associated fauna and human remains.

Boyd Dawkins accounts are far from satisfactory and though he has

stated, though long after the excavations were done, that all the flint implements were found together it is quite clear from the study of the extant ones by Professor Donovan that two distinct cultures are represented, Solutrean and Mousterian. It is the latter that are most interesting. Dawkins' diary seems to indicate that all the implements were not found together. It is not known if Dawkins dug down to rock anywhere in the main part of the cave but inspection suggests that he did not go below the present floor level which could be many feet above the real floor. There is also an untouched deposit covered by recent roof fall.

The intention is to dig two trial trenches in the floor where it is thought deposits may be present. The third area to be tackled will be the untouched passage leading back to the valley face. It is hoped to employ some paid labour for removing the overburden in the area of collapse. The whole programme is expected to cover about three weeks. If anyone is interested or knows anyone interested would they please write to :

E.K.Tratman, U.B.S.S., or to Penrose Cottage, Burrington, Bristol.

E.K.Tratman

Trip to Agen Allwedd

Weekend 2nd/3rd July. Would any members interested please contact I.J.Standing. It seems likely that the main trip will be on the Sunday.

GENERAL NOTES AND NOTES

Professor D.T.Donovan has been appointed to the Chair of Geology at University College, London. He takes up his new post in October.

The annual conference of the B.S.A. is being held this year at the Union Building, Queen's Road, Clifton, on September 9th-12th. The U.B.S.S. are acting as hosts, and Ian Standing is the Conference's Centre Secretary.

Anyone caving in Ireland this summer is requested to inform Mr. John Childs, 26, St. James Drive, Harrowgate, Yorks., of their number, equipment, dates of visit and whereabouts, for the purpose of organizing a rescue, just in case.

While our President was stranded by the snow in April, his thoughts turned to poetry of all things, and this seems to have been the result!

ODE TO APRIL 1966

April showers are here once more.
Is it not a ruddy bore?
Even while the country slept
April, like a man bereft,
Covered all with snow in depth.
Yet poet Browning far abroad
Bewailed his lack of England's shore
Neath April's springing light.
But did he know what England's like
In teeth of April's bitter bite?
Oh, April is a wanton wight.

Ireland

The Society is visiting Ireland as usual, leaving Bristol on 15th July. The party is one of the strongest in recent years, numbering over a dozen from Bristol alone.

Membership List

It is proposed to issue a membership list with the next circular (circa next October), so the Hon. Secs. would be grateful if members would communicate any changes of address to them before that date.