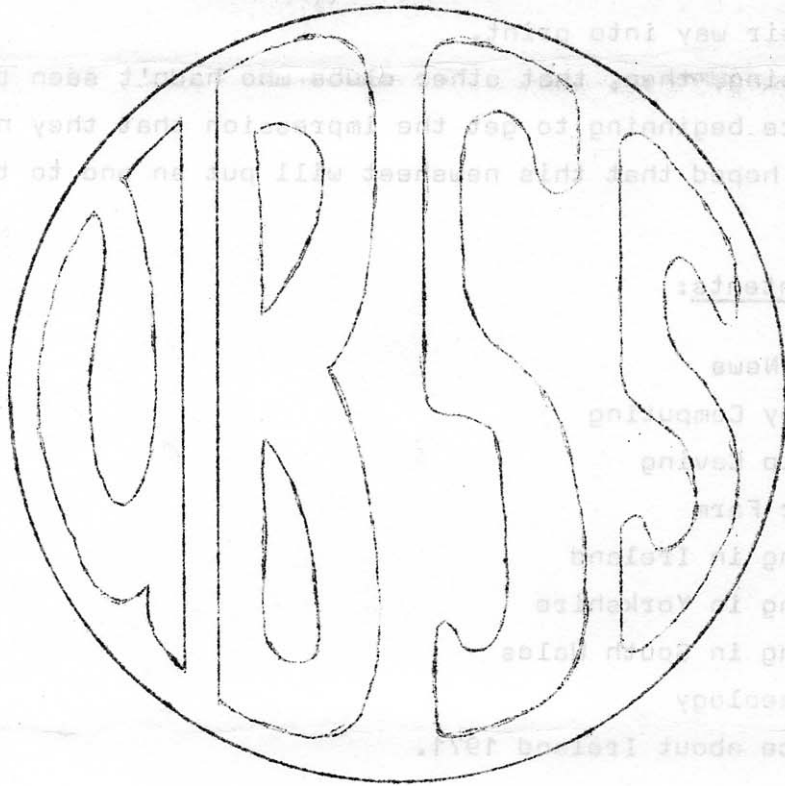


USSS Headquarters, Dec 1970

NEWSLETTER



New Series No 1 Dec 1970

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It is hoped that the newsletter will be published more frequently

UBSS Headquarters, Dec 1970.

This edition is the first of a new series of UBSS newsletters. The old style circular, two sheets of foolscap stapled together in one corner, left much to be desired. Its circulation of 80 - the number of active and past members - at least ensured that news got around to all UBSS members. However it was not in general circulation.

The society's main publication - Proceedings - is an annual collection of scientific papers on Archaeology, Geology, Hydrology, etc & is not a suitable medium for presenting caving trip reports. These therefore never found their way into print.

Not surprising, then, that other clubs who hadn't seen the UBSS "in action" were beginning to get the impression that they never went caving. It is hoped that this newsheet will put an end to that view!

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It is hoped that this newsletter will be produced a little more frequently than before. All members can help in this by contributing a few words. The newsletter could well be used as a medium for publishing minor articles which are unsuited to Proceedings.

CLUB NEWS

Extension to the society's premises;

Bristol University has allocated the UBSS two additional rooms. Previously used as electricians' dumps, they have been completely renovated and painted. The library has been transferred to the larger of the two rooms, while the other is being used as a stack room. Additional furniture is still required, especially large lock-up book cases. We are grateful to the University for providing us with extra space (which conveniently adjoins the existing rooms) and for the cost of renovation.

The old library, now the reading room and committee room, has been repainted an interesting shade of blue.

Proceedings Sales of 1970 proceedings are running at the usual level, although off-print sales (especially of the Porth-yr-Ogof paper) are higher than usual. The increased income will probably pay for the cost of the off-prints, the surplus to help subsidise the original printing.

Printers' charges are ever increasing, and it is likely that the 1971 Proceedings will have to be smaller in order to offset a higher cost. This is a great pity, and in future years a less high class of printing may have to be adopted. Nothing definite has yet been decided.

Sessional meetings Details of these have been sent out to members on separate sheets for convenience.

Mike Norton has returned from Canada and is now living in Teeside.

Congratulations to Chris Gilmore and Eve Wheeler who were married during the summer. Paul Richards also followed suite, though his wife is unfortunately not a speleo. Thus Paul is unlikely to be seen underground again!

In addition to these, Mike Roberts and Alison Smith are engaged, and a few others are in imminent danger of going the same way.

Peter Standing has left us temporarily, having taken a job in Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. He will be back in the Spring.

Bob Taylor has also left us for a job with the civil service in Cheltenham.

New Members. At the beginning of the present academic year several interested parties (about 40) attended the slide show. Their numbers rapidly reduced, however, in successive weeks, and the net intake of new members is only about 8.

However the UBSS is as strong as ever, mainly because of the nucleus of hard cavers already in the society (what will happen when most of them leave next summer?), and because of the many hours put in by the president EKT.

Cave Diving; The UBSS now has several members active in the Somerset section of the CDG, including Peter Standing, Chris Gilmore, Maire Urwin, Adrian Wilkins, and of course Oliver Lloyd. These members have taken part in the explorations at Wookey Hole, Little Heath River Cave, Hepste River Caves, and elsewhere. In addition there are four members in process of training - Julian Walford, Bob Churcher, Tony Boycott, and Dave Waddington. Marianne Last also shows interest.

Commiserations go to Bob Churcher, who wrecked his car (£140) in a tiffle with a land rover at Pen-y-Cae a few weeks ago. Transport is the weak link in UBSS efficiency, and it is aggravating when bad luck of this nature strikes.

Ham Green Resistivity Survey The proposed resistivity survey of a large acreage of field-land at Ham Green, in an attempt to locate the theoretical (but often referred-to) pottery kilns, has been postponed for several months as the fields in question are at present supporting growth of kale. This should be a well worthwhile project, and anyone with bright ideas please contact Brian Ottway.

SURVEY COMPUTING Adrian Wilkins and Bob Taylor report that the large and sophisticated programs they have together devised for calculation of cave survey data are functioning well. There are several different programs, all accepting exactly the same data, which apart from just printing out cumulative co-ordinates, also draw out maps on the computer graph plotter unit. Stereoscopic surveys may be produced by this method, and there are several of these decorating the HQ. And they work! They have also managed to draw out elevations of cave systems, projected onto any bearing or true length section. Yet another program calculates and draws out Rose diagrams; but alas, Adrian and Bob are running out of ideas as to what to do next!

MENDIP CAVING

There have been caving trips to the Mendips nearly every week of term-time, but especially in October when the new members were being "shown the ropes". Trips in GB, Longwood-August, Lamb Lair, and Swildons have been far too numerous to mention individually. Three parties of small members have ventured to Primrose Pot in Eastwater, and some of the larger members are planning to try it soon - just for the sheer H. The number of round-trips accomplished in Swildons just runs into double figures for the year. The last two (end of Nov) report that a hairy new duck has developed just beyond bang squeeze in the troubles series. Several members have now been to Swildons 6 by free-diving the streamway sumps direct. This is reported separately below.

Swildons 6 or bust.

The party comprised Bob Taylor, Julian Walford, Bob Churcher, Pete Godfrey, Adrian Wilkins, and a tape-measure. Because Bob T had been through sump 3 the previous week-end, all decided to follow suite rather than use the Blue Pencil route. All the streamway sumps were measured as we dived through. The lengths are quite revealing:

- Sump 1: 2 ft 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in
- Sump 2: 27 ft 4 in.
- Sump 3: 38 ft 0 in.
- Sump 4: 21 ft minimum and it's tight through silting.
- Sump 5: was found to be non-existent (low water conditions),
although a diving line did pass a submerged route.

So let the controversy over the length of sumps 2 and 3 be settled once and for all. And shame to all mendip cavers who declare that sump 1 is 10 ft long since the great flood. It's no more than a duck.

G.B.Cave; Bat Passage Dig.

Tim Atkinson and Ian Statham have been going to the dig nearly every week. Their second effort was rewarded by the find of twenty feet of low-level passage to one side of the dig. However the way-on is straight ahead, digging mud and small stones which after the summer had dried out, but have since become water-logged again.

Manor Farm.

A fantastic amount of effort has been put in here by some members over the course of the year, but, as is usually the case at this JINX dig, with precious little to show for it. The entrance connection is STILL being blasted to bypass the (now very unsafe) natural shaft, and it is reckoned that there are still 5 feet to go (despite having said that 14 feet back!). Adrian Wilkins has been working there every few weeks, joined occasionally by Pete Matthieson or Julian Walford. A few others have also been out to help occasionally, but some faces haven't been seen there for 2 years. This is very disappointing considering that Manor Farm is the official club dig. Mike Norton recently returned from Canada and put in a couple of cheerful week-ends before moving off to live in Teeside. Many thanks, too, to the president E K Tratman for the superb job he has made out of building the blockhouse. (Adrian really is very sorry he blew the roof to smithereens the very first bang after its completion!).

The "tough rock problem" seems to be solvable by using multiple arrays of charges on delay dets, although the size of the bangs has been of some consternation to Farmer Jeffries who has suffered 20 cracked windows and "tea-cups jumping off the table". However, when the entrance is completed, hopefully within another couple of months, we shall be able to make reparation. The completed entrance will also mean that work can continue at the real digging face, the end of the rift widened by MGN (see his paper in Proceedings 1969). Adrian's railway will then be in use for the first time. It was installed in the lower dig back at easter, at which time the entrance break-through was "imminent". The truck has flanged wheels with nylon bearings, runs on joined lengths of angle-iron fencing, and should be able to cope with 2 cwt of spoil at a time. It is to be christened "OL SLO POKE". Meanwhile, EKT's hauling sledge "NELLIE Mk 1A" is still going strong.

UBSS Field HQ (alias "the Hut").

Regular occupation of this unique piece of Mendip furniture is slowly and regrettably tailing off, probably due to the greater attraction of a week-end in S Wales or Yorkshire. However, it was packed to capacity by members on a few occasions, notably the New Year Dinner last January, and the "Freshers meets" in October. The Hut has also been let

on occasions to other clubs who in general leave it clean and tidy. The Hut does require maintenance, though, especially as regards the functioning of the roof and walls to keep the water out. Very many thanks go to Don Newton, Nigel Wallace, and other ex-members who travelled down in the summer to wield the tar-brush. A considerable expense has been the loss of several cylinders of calor gas, caused by the supply being left on for weeks and the gas leaking out. Members are reminded to turn it off on their departure.

The generator has been recovered from one of the University workshops where it had been sent for repair. Needless to say it was in precisely the same condition as when we last saw it 18 months ago! There are plans to re-connect it to the wind propellor sometime in the summer, thus providing a free 12-volt source (at least if the wind is blowing and if the propellor hasn't snapped the generator drive-shaft!).

CAVING IN IRELAND.

The main summer party went over to Co Clare for the period July 10 to July 24th. Other UBSS parties went on their own in August.

The July party enjoyed the usual "fantastic holiday", with swimming in Doolin Harbour, walking on the Burren, haymaking in Mr Keane's meadows, and of course tourist trips down the Doolin, Codaugh River, and Poulmagollum/Pollelva caves.

In addition, Dick Marsh and band of masochistic helpers completed the survey of E2 swallet, the tight crawly passage which eventually connects (hydrologically, not physically) to Branch Passage Gallery in Poulmagollum. The 2000 feet of E2 have taken three years to survey, and a report is to appear in next Proceedings.

Also, much work was accomplished in Doolin Cave, especially surveying the roof-level passages around the echo-pot series, and a dig in horrible mud at a tributary which joins the mainstream further down on the left-hand side.

Several days' digging were done on the south side of the dry Coolagh river valley, opposite Ballynalackan castle. Good progress was made at one swallet but it had to be abandoned due to lack of time.

However there were two outstandingly successful events during the July stay. The first was when a small team of three (Adrian Wilkins, Tony Boycott, and Julian Walford) descended the pothole in the depress-

ion known as B11, and in 2 days dug through a mud obstruction to enter the biggest and deepest pothole in Co Clare. The report appearing in the next Proceedings omits one adjective from the list of superlatives: the cave is also the ghastlyest! It has a magnificent streamway, choc-a-bloc full of loose boulders (which nearly broke a few legs on the exploration), and the whole cave is coated in thick mud. An upstream sump and a downstream boulder-choke halted exploration.

The second event of note was the discovery of the resurgence to the Coolagh River. By using the search criterion of "abnormal sea-water" (i.e. peaty, frothy, and fresh) the resurgence was located a little way south of Pollsallagh. Again a report is to appear in Proceedings.

In the Coolagh River Cave itself an attempt was made half-heartedly to bottom Balcombe's Pot using a human plumb line. The team stood on each others shoulders, but the only conclusion reached was that the bottom is at least 16 ft deep.

The August party were blessed with wet weather and a minor flood. "Blessed" rather than hindered, as they were occupied with water tracing. Callaun 5 was successfully traced to the Fergus River, but the resurgence is complex as dye was picked up in tributaries as well as the main river.

Note: Will all members considering joining the Easter 1971 party in Ireland please consult the last page of this newsletter.

CAVING IN YORKSHIRE

There were two Yorkshire week-ends organised during the year. The first was held over Easter (27 Mar to 30 Mar). An enormous party comprising Dave Waddington, Julian Walford, Adrian Wilkins, Marianne Last, Carol Thomas, Bob Taylor, Oliver Lloyd, Pete Standing, Mike Roberts, Alison Smith, Maire Urwin, John Trendall, Chris Gilmore, Colin Burbidge, Tony Boycott, Pete Godfrey, and, believe it or not, several friends and twin brothers, all stayed at the Craven HQ. Lancaster/Easegill, Swinsto/Kingsdale, and Dowber Gill through trips were enjoyed by all. A harder party bottomed Juniper Gulf - although Mendip cavers are not keyed up to long pitches like the terminal 200 footer, most of the party were able to romp up without stopping and then ask what all the fuss is about. Anyway, what is all the fuss about?

The second trip was organised on the 27-29th Nov. The party was only

half the size of the easter one, and hired a minibus for the week-end. This was found to be a very economical method of travel (provided there are enough drivers and provided everyone wants to go to the same place). There were trips down Grange Rigg/Christmas Pot, Tatham Wife, Quaking Pot. Again use was made of Ivy Cottage, and we are grateful to the Craven for accomodating us.

CAVING IN SOUTH WALES

This fine area has caused a slump in UBSS caving on Mendip, and quite rightly too! There have been no fewer than 22 week-ends spent out there during the year.

The Little Neath River Cave has obviously occupied most of the time. Practically all the surveying has now been completed (with the exception of some minor passages beyond sump 4). The new report on the cave is due out in Proceedings in the spring. The outstanding event of the year occurred in February when 5 members of UBSS were trapped in the cave for 18 hours owing to flooding. Adrian Wilkins, Dick Marsh, Julian Walford, Martin Grinstead and Bob Churcher entered the cave on a miserable looking day to explore further in Genesis Gallery. After several hours intensive searching in a boulder choke a fossil stream passage was discovered, 1000 ft being added in all. On returning to the main-stream it was noticed that there was a full flood raging. The party briefly tried to get out, but when they realised this just was not on (Flood Entrance was four feet under water!) they retired to Genesis Gallery. After many long hours of dozing, nibbling, and singing whistles were heard. This was the SWCRO arriving, having worked through the night to dam up the river. We had plenty of provisions, and had been hoping that the SWCRO would not be called out. But that's the way it went, and weren't they annoyed (at the time).

Peter Standing and Adrian Wilkins, the only active members left in Bristol over the summer vac, put in some remarkably long diving trips in LNRC. Usually we found sherpas for the bottles going in (thankyou WSG!) but after twelve hours' surveying "on the other side" the pair invariably had to carry out themselves. Remarks after a 13½ hour diving trip included: "This is too much!" or "Ridiculously exhausting!"

Several more dives are planned for 1971.

A new dig has been started on the moor above the cave at a large stream sink. It will be a spasmodic dig, but holds considerable promise.

Hepste River Caves These rather unique caves were tackled during the summer. Unfortunately the only days that one can get down them also happen to be sun-bathing days, so surveying was not quite as serious as wished. Oliver Lloyd has been supervising operations and is drawing up the survey. These caves are absolute barren of any formations except the occasional pool of soft blue calcite. Moreover, they are a "divers only" area. Much original exploration remains to be done, especially for cave divers confident of 750 ft sumps!

Ogof Agen Allwedd There were a couple of visits paid during 1970, but trips here are usually restrained to two types: breaking the record for the marathon, and getting fit quick. It is not recommended that both be attempted at once! Since the UBSS holds the record anyway, there doesn't seem much point in trying to improve on it. Yet.

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu A dozen or so tourist trips were organised to this beautiful system. All the club leaders for OFD 1 have become inactive, and applications are in for others. OFD 2 seems to have had more appeal, the through-trip from Cwmdwr to the Top Entrance being popular. Julian Walford and Bob Churcher accomplished this in high flood in Nov. They also discovered it was possible to free-climb the maypole pitch, thus saving the fag of carrying ladder around the place. Four members have so far managed to find the way to OFD 3; Martin Grinstead, Tony Boycott, Julian Walford and Adrian Wilkins successfully got to Smiths Armoury after the through trip from Cwmdwr.

ARCHAEOLOGY

A close watch has been kept on the bone fissure in Westbury-sub-Mendip quarry. It continues to provide most interesting problems of dating and origins of the fill. The quarry face has now receded so far east that the bone-bearing layers are at the present a little disappointing.

At Rhinoceros Hole (near Wookey Hole) work has been going on steadily, mainly by EKT. The bone deposits seem to be of limited extent. The fauna is rhinoceros, hyena, bear, horse, ox and deer. There is no mammoth.

The major excavation at Stokeleigh Camp (Bristol) has been filled in, and a report of the work done is being prepared. One small area is still open, with an as yet undated stone building with an interesting array of finds.