

FOREWORD

With this issue we come to the end of an era. A majority group of the members of the committee has dictated that the Secretary should no longer be the Editor, and that Hawkes of Leicester will act in that capacity.

Up to the end of the war members were sent the usual type of circular, but it became obvious to me that something more ambitious was required, and I conceived the idea of a journal in its current form. The early issues were of a larger format, but I could see that there would be a considerable saving in the cost of stencils if we made each page half foolscap size, as the charges for cutting these were based on the stencil unit and not on the amount of typing on it. At first the cover was a duplicated one, but we soon turned to the colour printed type that is in use today. This is not quite correct, as the more academic types (or should it be in the singular?) called our attention to the fact that the colour of the dragon was wrong by heraldic standards, so the poor old fellow was changed to gold. As Murrell mentioned at the last Dinner, some of us have a sneaking feeling that we preferred him when he was a nice homely red.

The aforementioned group has also insisted that the Hon. Secretary should no longer be responsible for hut bookings and have decided that these should be handled by E. Hanwell of 8 Hooper Avenue, Wells. He is not on the phone.

In the future, although the Foreword will continue to be written by the Hon. Secretary, it will be subject to a censorship.

Under the Club's constitution it is in order to form Groups within the Club (in the past we have had groups in London, South Wales and at Oxford University, etc.) so at a meeting held in Bristol it was decided to form a Bristol Group. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the sole purpose of this move is to give Bristol members an opportunity of meeting each other, and with this in view we are arranging talks on caving and allied subjects. There are about 70 members living in the Bristol district and over half of them have notified their agreement with the formation of the Group. Other Bristol members who could not get to the meeting but who are interested should let me know if they want their name placed on the mailing list.

I am making a new list of members who are willing to help, if required, with cave rescue work. To help me to do this, would members please write and give details of transport, telephone numbers, etc. Even if you do not have these facilities and are willing to help, I would like to hear from you.

FRANK FROST

We welcome the following new Members:-

D.P.W. Goodge, R.F. Millar, W.A. Morris, Flt. Lt. L.M. Teasdale, I.N. Yeo.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

G.B. Guest Days Sun. March 5th, Easter Mon. April 3rd, Sun. May 6th, Sat. June 10th, Sun. July 16th.

(Note: it is reported that 'The Bridge' is showing signs of collapse).

Easter No official plans have been made for a trip to Yorkshire, but it appears likely that there will be one this year. Members interested should send their names to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible.

Hon. Sec. F.Frost, 71 Hazelbury Rd., Knowle, Bristol 4

Telephone: Whitchurch 2022

Hon. Treasurer. Mrs.B.M.Willis, 15 Hooper Ave., Wells

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The A.G.M. of the Wessex Cave Club was held at the County Secondary School, Wells, on Saturday, 22nd October, 1960. The Chair was taken by Mr. Luke Devenish at 4.35 p.m. There were 43 members present. Apologies for absence had been received from a number of members.

The Chairman began by warning us not to take beginners down as far as the sump on their first trip to Swildon's, and asked members to hurl brickbats at the meeting and not at the dinner subsequently.

The Hon. Secretary read the Minutes of the last A.G.M. Arising out of these a discussion took place about the new subscription rates. Letters from Dr. D.M.M. Thomson in Uganda were read criticizing these. He stated that it was particularly unfair that the wives' share of joint subscriptions (which was charity) should have been doubled. He suggested a grading of subscriptions proportional to age and means and inversely proportional to activity. Three other members agreed that the wives' subscription might be reduced, but a member with a most attractive wife was heard to remark that they were worth more than a packet of twenty Players. Mr. C.A.T. Beauchamp suggested that junior members should band themselves together in groups and join as affiliated members. He wished them to receive instruction from a senior member of the club. The Chairman, however, pointed out that Affiliated Membership was not available to wage earners. There was a feeling that it would make administrative difficulties if there were several categories of members, and when Dr. Oliver Lloyd, seconded by Mr. C.H. Kenney, moved that the matter should be considered by the Committee, who should then formulate proposals for the next A.G.M., this was carried. Enquiry was next made into the present state of the Pen Park Hole Survey. Mr. H. Stanbury told

the meeting he had given all his available data to Dr. O.C. Lloyd. The latter had completed the plan, and projections in two planes had been drawn, and this, together with accounts of the survey and exploration had been shown to Prof. L.S. Palmer, who expressed his satisfaction at the results. Brig. E.A. Glennie said that he now had this material and added that he had found the survey rather better than he had expected. Members were pleased at this satisfactory conclusion of the Pen Park incident.

The Hon. Secretary then read his Report for the year 1959/60, implying that it was to be used as a basis for discussion and which is printed on pages 162/8 of this issue. Mr. Kenney proposed a vote of thanks to the Hon. Secretary for his Report, and this was carried. Discussion centred round the following topics:-

1. Nominations. The Hon. Secretary wanted to see Club members taking a more active interest in nominating officers and committee. He was not complaining about last year's committee, which was one of the best he had seen for some time. It was a fact,, as Mr. Kenney pointed out, that the retiring members had to nominate the new officers and committee- but these were the only people who knew who had been doing all the work. It was the general feeling of the Meeting that members did not know who had been doing what on the committee, who was being proposed or what posts were vacant. It was agreed that members should be given more information when requests for nominations were being sent out.

2. Club Functions, such as caving trips, digs, lectures, talks and suppers. Most members were capable of taking themselves on ordinary caving trips, but the Club might arrange visits to places that were not in the ordinary way accessible. Many pointed to the difficulty of getting members to go on these trips, and those planned far in advance usually flopped. The trouble about Club digs was that

as soon as one looked hopeful somebody came and wanted to take it over. Club suppers were regarded as a good thing.

3. The Club's Journal. Mr. Kenney drew attention to the difficulty of announcing any forthcoming engagements in a Journal which only appeared twice in one year. He suggested separating the Newsletter part of the Journal and issuing it more frequently. The Chairman said they had considered this, but that the arm-chair cavers would miss their six-times a year Journal. Mr. M. Hewings suggested keeping the Journal as it was and issuing a Circular only to those interested. Mr. Beauchamp countered that we were all interested in what the Club was doing. The Journal was all right but a separate circular could be issued containing a programme of coming events, such as the G.B. dates. Dr. Lloyd supported the idea of separating the Newsletter from the Magazine side of the Journal, if the latter was to appear so rarely. The frequent appearance of the Newsletter side of the Journal was absolutely essential for the welfare of the Club. It should contain the Hon. Secretary's "Foreword", the names of new members and news of old ones, the G.B. dates, lectures and other meetings, club trips, hot news and the "agony column" about such things as lost sleeping bags. Mr. Kenney complained that he could not find these items in a Journal which was so big. It was wrong to tie down the committee to a definite number, but now that we had made our wishes known he hoped the committee would do its best. Members agreed that they would most like to have six numbers of the Journal a year but that if for any reason it could not appear, then they would like to have a Newsletter instead.

4. Life Lines. A discussion then followed as to the rival merits of hemp and nylon for life lines, the upshot of which was that the Committee was asked to provide both for the use of members.

5. Priddy Green Dig. Mr. J. Hanwell reported progress. This has been slow latterly because of the bad weather. He hoped that all would come and help, but it was preferable that newcomers should find out from the old hands exactly what it was that needed doing. This led to a question on the use of explosives and in reply it was stated that the Explosives Licence permitted the holder to purchase and store explosives but it was assumed that subject to proper supervision it was in order for others to use them.

Finance

The Hon. Treasurer then introduced the Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet (included in this issue). She gave it as her view that there would be more money spent on tackle this year. The surplus in the I. & E. Account of £35. was due to underspending and she did not feel that any of it ought to be transferred to the Hut Sinking Fund: certainly not more than £10. The Hon. Secretary had not claimed for any expenses.

The Hon. Auditor (Mr. Kenney) complimented the Hon. Treasurer on the satisfactory way in which the records had been kept. The Hut Fees were now collected direct by the Treasurer, instead of in a roundabout way as heretofore, and that was much better. The Income side was down in nearly every particular, the decrease totalling £20. He estimated that the increased subscriptions would only bring in an extra £40, so that our recovery next year would only be the difference between these two figures. The lower expenses were fortuitous and were mainly due to under-spending on tackle and on the Journal. The Eastwater Hut was only clearing an average of £1. a year and might need a subsidy from the General Fund for subsequent repairs or replacement. Some of this might come from the Hut Fund, which now stood at £87. He too felt that £10. was the utmost that could be added to this

fund this year. He suggested that the Committee should consider four problems: the Fire Insurance was for £600. and covered both huts with only a nominal sum for fittings and did not cover the tackle hut. The Public Liability Policy should be based on the declared membership, but so far Affiliated Clubs had only been counted as one member. The Property Tax could be reduced if repairs were taken into consideration. The Hut Fund was invested at only 3¾% and he suggested that 5% Defence Bonds were a better proposition.

Dr. Lloyd supported Mr. Kenney on the question of investment and of the Public Liability Policy, but in answer to a point he raised Mr. Kenney said he thought that the latter did cover guests, but that the true number of members had to be declared all the same.

Mr. H. Murrell asked about the money received for Lamb Leer fees. Ought these not to be paid to Dr. Crook as Treasurer for the Trustees? Mr. Kenney replied that Dr. Crook no longer acted as Treasurer. The Wessex Cave Club, the Mendip Nature Research Committee and the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society jointly met all expenses in connection with the cave. In answer to an enquiry he said that the only tax to which the Club was liable was Schedule A.

Mr. D. Farr said that if the Club was registered as a Charity the subscriptions could be paid by covenant and the tax on them recovered by the Club. In reply it was pointed out that this only applied if the subscribers were paying tax at the full standard rate.

Hut Sinking Fund. The Chairman proposed putting £10. into the Fund. Mr. P. Davies, seconded by Mr. M.M. Thompson, moved an amendment that the sum should be £5. This was carried. The Chairman said that the Committee would consider the points raised by Mr. Kenney and would seek his advice as to ways and means.

Officers and Committee The Hon. Secretary read out the list as follows:-

Vice Presidents: M. N.Casteret, Mrs. D.P. Dobson-Hinton,

Dr. E.K. Tratman, Dr. F.S. Wallis, G.H. Williams, Esq.

Chairman: Mr. L.W.E. Devenish.

Hon. Sec: F. Frost

Hon. Treas: Mrs. B.M. Willis.

Gear Curator: H. Stanbury

Committee: P. Davies, E. Hanwell, J. Hanwell , C. Hawkes. M. Holland,

Com. P.B. Lawder, G. Pointing, D. Warburton, D. Willis.

Honorary Member

Dr. Allan F. Rogers of the University of Bristol was elected an Honorary Member. He was well known for the part he had taken in the recent Antarctic Expedition led by Dr. Fuchs. He had taken a great interest in the affairs of the Club and wished to become a member. It was due more to him than to anyone else that the Sumping Apparatus had been successfully made and tested by the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

Alteration to Rule 16

After:- "The subscription shall be" - delete "1/6d" and substitute "2/6d."
The object of this motion (proposed by the Committee) was to raise the affiliation fee for each member of an Affiliated Club. It was passed by a large majority.

The meeting was brought to a close by Mr. Kenney bringing to the notice of members Dr. W.I. Stanton's revised survey of Swildon's Hole which was now available in two sizes.

The Meeting finished at 6.20 p.m.

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Club Dinner was held at the Star Hotel, Wells, at 8.30 p.m. on Saturday, 22nd October, when it celebrated the first quarter of a century of its existence. About 75 members and guests were present.

Grace was given by Dr. Oliver Lloyd, who also toasted the health of the Guests. We had, he said, guests from this club, and from that club, and from the other club, but he had long ago exhausted his stock of stories about them. Rather would he turn to welcome our Founder Members, who were the Guests of Honour. The foundation meeting was held at Ashley House, Croscombe, on September 29th 1934, just 25 plus one years ago. Those present were C.W. Harris, J.W. Duck, H. Murrell, N. Clark and K. Griffin. Of these, two were unable to come but we welcomed J.W. Duck, H. Murrell, K. Griffin and his sister Margaret, now Mrs. Bruce, who joined the Club at its second meeting. The speaker then proceeded to read the minutes of the first meeting, which were refreshingly short. The subscription was only 5/- in those days. C.W. Harris was appointed Hon. Treasurer and H. Murrell Hon. Secretary "pro temp." (Whatever that may mean). Murrell here interposed that it meant a very long time! The object of the Club had been to cater for the needs of the ordinary person who looked upon caving as a sport. It was the first organisation of its kind on Mendip, since of the other two the U.B.S.S. was a closed shop and the M.N.R.C. was then an exclusive research organisation.

Jack Duck was a name well known to members for his cave surveys. Murrell, besides being the Club's first Secretary, had pioneered the opening of Cow Hole, and had done much digging in Lamb Leer. Griffin had done little caving since the war, but

had been one of those active in re-opening Lamb Leer in 1935. His sister had the distinction of having been the first to enter Cow Hole.

Nowadays one frequently met small groups of people belonging to none of the big clubs, who preferred caving on their own. They got a lot of fun out of the sheer sport of it, and he hoped everybody would remember that at its inception the Wessex Cave Club, too, was small, having only five members.

Murrell, in his reply, recounted some of his skatological stories of the members in those early days: what happens when you drink too much rough cider; strawberries and kippers before caving, and the like. He relinquished the Secretaryship of the Club during the War, when he was obliged to go elsewhere, and had been succeeded by the "Caretaker Government", which had been in power ever since.

Dr. Allan Rogers proposed the health of the Club. He would be brief, he said. He thanked the Club for the compliment they had paid him by making him an Honorary Member.

The reply was given by E. Hensler. He told us of the first time he went down the 40 ft. pot in Swildon's. He and his friends had made rope ladders with rope rungs, which were not too difficult to descend when dry. On their return from the sump, however, they found the ladders had twisted and had the appearance of a stout spiral with loops sticking out here and there. The twenty was hard enough to climb, but the forty was very hard indeed. He, in his position as leader of the party, naturally insisted that the others climb the "ladder" first, but in the end he was forced to make the first climb himself as the others had failed in their attempts. He was then

able to help the others by pulling on the life line, but even so the whole trip took twelve hours. Realizing that his approach to caving was faulty he contacted our President, the late Mr. H.E. Balch at Wells Museum, Mr. Balch suggested that he joined the Wessex Cave Club and he therefore promptly applied for membership.

After remembering "Absent Friends" those that felt so inclined moved into the Bar, swapped stories, or made plans for the future. All agreed that the evening had been most enjoyable and it was particularly gratifying to see such a good cross-section of the membership, which struck a balance between active and "arm-chair" cavers.

HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 1959/60

The report will be followed by a discussion on Club affairs in general and in view of the fact that notices of motions must be circulated to members before the annual meeting the item A.O.B. is not included in the Agenda.

On the other hand there is no reason why members may not take advantage of the discussion on the report to express their views on Club and other caving subjects, and I will, therefore, try to write the report to cover as wide a field as possible.

For the first time since the war the Club membership has shown a reduction from that of the previous year. In 1958/59 we had, apart from affiliated members, 252 members. At the end of last year the figure was 232, including 22 joint members. The number of affiliated clubs went down from 8 to 7. Perhaps I may be permitted to mention here that some members of the committee were in favour of doing away with the affiliation scheme - they may care to express their views and reasons to this meeting. I am strongly against such a step as I feel that it would not be in the best interest of these boys or, in the long run, the Club.

I can suggest two reasons for the reduction in our membership, one the coming increase in the subscription, and the adverse impression created by last year's Annual Dinner. There may be other reasons - and it will be interesting to hear what members think.

Due in the main to the efforts of Oliver Lloyd, we resumed the Easter Club Trip to Yorkshire, and as some of the committee were on holiday at the time in the north the attendance was very good. On the other hand it has to be stated that we rather fell down over two other Club trips - one to South Wales

and the other to Cornwall, There is no doubt that the failure to proceed with the arrangements for the latter was a disappointment to some members. I can only apologise to those to whom I tried to sell the trip, and state that the cancellation was due to circumstances outside of my control. If we are to hold members together we must have more Club events of every sort - your committee is well aware of this - but you may care to express your views on this subject.

It was found possible to produce only two issues of the Journal during the year, but we tried to make up for this by greatly increasing the size of each. In the past when discussing the future of the Journal we have wondered if it would not have been better to aim at a lower target than six, but it is now quite clear that members are keen to receive the Journal more than twice a year. Perhaps I should make it clear that it was not a deliberate policy to issue only the two copies, but resulted from a lack of time and opportunity to get down to the job of producing an issue, plus the lack of articles early in the year. Steps are now being taken to ease my load when producing the Journal, and if all goes well these arrangements should show a welcome reduction in the cost of each issue. It is not possible to give a firm promise to produce a definite number of issues during the coming year as so much depends on your help in supplying suitable material for publication, so I hope members who can will take this hint and play their part by sending me their contributions in the form of articles or even letters, etc.

In an effort to reduce the cost of producing the Journal we investigated the possibility of including advertisements, but came to the firm conclusion that by the time we had paid for the necessary professional printing we would have been well out of pocket, and in fact it would have cost more than producing it without advertisements. We are still

actively engaged in trying to find some firms who will be willing to pay us for including loose inserts, provided of course, that they supply us with the copy. I am certain members will want to say something on the subject of the Journal and I look forward to hearing their views.

The rate of deterioration of the ladders has set us a serious problem, and at the moment we have about reached rock bottom. At the moment as far as I can see we have only about 75 ft. of ladder fit for use, but things are on the upgrade now as we are in the process of remaking all the damaged ladders and we hope to have at least 200 ft. available before many weeks are past. We are certain that the short life of the ladders is due in part to the lack of care in handling and hanging them in caves, and perhaps also due to the ever expanding popularity of the two main caves of Mendip. A trip to, say, Swildons, by members can result in the tackle being used by large numbers of cavers with or without permission. There is little or nothing that can be done to prevent this - it is a sort of occupational risk when caving on Mendip at weekends. We have recently purchased 200ft. of hemp rope for life lines, but we hear that some members would prefer nylon, so we hope they will take this opportunity to speak on this and other points in connection with tackle.

The response to the request for nominations for the committee was rather disappointing, and there was no necessity for a postal vote. One of the (unwritten) duties of the secretary should be to encourage members to take an active part in running the Club, and in past years I have been greatly helped by being kept in close touch with the activities and interests of members

who stayed at H.Q. but that has not been the case for a greater part of last year. Fortunately for the Club and members, during the last month or so, and due to the good offices of a Bristol member who regularly stays at Hillgrove, it has been possible to get a picture of how members are faring and some idea of their views etc. This information is essential to me if I am to keep the committee in touch with the trend of members' opinions. One sometimes had the feeling that what happened at Hillgrove was not altogether the Club's business. It is obvious that this outlook is not in the best interest of the Club or members. In my view it is rather a pity that we do not have representatives of our more distant groups on the committee, and I was very sorry that someone did not see that there was one of them nominated. Looking through the minutes of the early committee meetings of the Club brought to mind the fact that at one time the committee, consisting of five members, was made up with representatives from Bristol, Wells and Winscombe, plus two ordinary committee members. This certainly must have resulted in a broader outlook on the committee, and members may care to express their views on the whole subject.

Last year the Charterhouse Caving Committee was very much to the fore, but I have to report that we have heard nothing since. The position is that the Guest Day method of entry to G.B. is unchanged and Longwood Swallet has not been gated. As we are covered by an insurance policy, members can visit these caves, but it will be as well to mention that the U.B.S.S. intend to change the system of allocating a weekend to each club (leaving it open to the club to choose the most suitable day) to one whereby the clubs will be given an actual day on a particular weekend. In my view members would be better served by the rota system being dropped and those bodies listed as "Guest Clubs" being given the privilege of being in a position of asking for a trip on any day suitable to themselves, subject to the rights

of refusal by the U.B.S.S. if there was a clash of interest with other people. This would, of course, mean a lot more work for Dr. Tratman, and there seems to be no doubt that this scheme would not be acceptable.

We were all grieved to hear of the death of another caver on Mendip. This resulted from a fall of rock, and there can be no suggestion that there was any blame attached to anyone. From reports received, the cave of Eastwater appears to be still dangerous, not only at the bottom of the Ruckle but in other parts as well. It is a great pity that the cave has had to be closed for the time being as we can ill afford to lose a major Mendip cave in this way.

The dig at Priddy Green still goes on, in fact we now have a cave which is completely man made. We wish all the diggers, and they are legion, luck in the future. Derek Ford visited England during his long vac and put in some very intensive work investigating the geology of Mendip caves. Although a lot of the information he gained will be mainly of academic interest, nevertheless the ordinary caver will profit greatly from all the tremendous work he did during the summer. We also had the pleasure of the company of Willie Stanton for a short while, and he took the opportunity of completing, or should I say, adding to, his survey of Swildons Hole. Here I should call your attention to the last item on the Agenda when Howard Kenney will have a few words to say about this survey.

The committee has considered the question of a President and feel very sorry that Dr. Wallis was unable to accept that position. They feel the best interest of the Club would be served by having as a President someone of like standing to Dr. Wallis and who is completely above the politics of the Club and caving. They suggest the position be left vacant until we can find such a person, who would be willing to serve.

It was with great sadness that I heard of the death of Eva Waller. The shock was even greater as she had visited me a couple of days "before. From the newspaper reports we gathered that she in fact fell to her death whilst helping her climbing companion. How very like her this was. After her return from abroad she had many plans to continue her Mendip caving, but this was not to be. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Recently Mendip suffered another grievous loss by the death of Wing Com. Hodgkinson. His interest and helpfulness towards the Mendip caving fraternity was very well known and his kindness in allowing the Cave Diving Group full access at almost any time to Wookey Hole Caves was continued over a period of 24 years.

The Wessex Cave Club has a very scattered membership, each one of whom is as important as the others. In our approach to club matters this point must be uppermost in our minds, we must not act as if we and our friends are the only people that matter, because if we do so the end will not be far off. Like any other club of a similar nature we must include in our membership some people we could well do without. To be active is not necessarily the hall mark of a good or even a desirable member, and sometimes I feel that those people who spend so much time finding things to complain about in the way the Club is run would be much happier outside the Club. For some time now members have refused to stay at the hut overnight owing to their dislike of the, and I quote, "bickering". Others who stay there regularly have also complained about this sort of thing, and your committee has tried to stop it. There must and can be a change of spirit and I hope steps are taken to enable a return to a healthy club outlook.

My grateful thanks to the members who have contributed articles and material for the Journal, and to the Chairman, David and Mrs. Willis, Jim and Edward Hanwell (and the latter's mother) for their help in making up and sending out the two issues of

the Journal. To Phillip Davies for his work on the surveys we published in the Journals, as without this I would have been quite unable to make reasonable photographic copies of the originals, and to Harry Stanbury for all his work on behalf of the Club.

The Club is particularly indebted to George Pointing, who has been so very helpful over hut and tackle matters. He and his friends have often, off their own bat, undertaken some of the long outstanding maintenance items at Hillgrove, and the present state of the hut is in no small measure due to George's efforts. He has just the right outlook and the Club has in him a first-class member. He has, during the last few months, kept me well informed with the position at Hillgrove and has acted as transport officer whenever his help was needed. Not only has he been such an asset over Hillgrove matters but he and David Causer offered to do the work on the job of remaking the ladders. They, with the help of Dave Berry, have recovered all the rungs from the damaged ladders and with their help we hope to soon get a reasonable amount of tackle back in circulation on Mendip.

The other two members who deserve special mention are the Chairman, Luke Devenish, who has forever been keeping me up to scratch, and Oliver Lloyd, who, while not being quite so prominent in Club matters as in some past years, has always been more than willing to do all he could to help things along.

SWILDONS HOLE SURVEY

The survey of Swildons Hole has been completed by William Stanton, although the task was very much of a last minute rush as a result of the discovery of the "Trouble Series". William had bottled up his enthusiasm for digging just beyond the head of the Blue Pencil Passage during his last three years in Angola, and on his leave in this country he conscripted anyone (from any club) who was rash enough to show interest. Several marathon trips followed and the first of the "Troubles" was passed in one day, but the diggers were disappointed to find a further choke after about 70 ft. The first dig soon became partly filled with water and in the present weather conditions (December) is a sump. It will probably be just a duck in the summer. The second "Trouble" was passed in two days digging. This dig will probably sump in any weather as there is a small flow of water into it, but it can be baled or siphoned into a hole at the side of the passage just above Trouble 1 without (fortunately) reappearing in the first Trouble. Care should be taken in passing Trouble 2 to return before it fills up, although in dry weather the flow may cease. The third trouble was a stalagmite barrier which needed two "bangs". The Series ended in a further choke quite close to Duck 2 in Swildons 2.

This is an interesting series, for it went in exactly the direction our geologist friend William Stanton predicted, which is not exactly what one would expect! There is every possibility that it will connect with the Black Hole Series and the writer, along with others, is digging at the 11 foot drop in the Black Hole series. If a connection is found, there will be an interesting survey closure and William's reputation will be at stake!

The survey is "believed to include all known passages with the exception of the Maypole Series in Swildons 4. It has been reproduced in two sizes: 1/1500 at 3/6d. or 1/2000 at 2/6d. and is available from Howard Kenney, Tudor Cottage, Beryl Lane, Wells. The Hon. Sec. holds a stock of the larger size. If application is by post, the prices are increased by 6d. to cover postage and the survey will be sent folded. If a member requires an unfolded copy, a tube should be sent to Howard, with 1/- above the basic price for postage (i.e. 4-/6 and 3/6).

C.H. KENNEY

HELMETS AND CARBIDE LAMPS

Messrs. Casswells have opened a small shop in Priory Road, Wells, for decorating materials only, but, at the request of a member, have agreed to carry a small stock of caving helmets, carbide lamps and spares. It is hoped that members will take advantage of this facility so that Casswells may be encouraged to continue this arrangement.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE SWILDONS RESCUE OPERATIONS
27th - 28th AUGUST
WHICH MIGHT BE SUB-TITLED (IN MY CASE, ANYWAY)
"PHEW!!

The affair, for myself, falls into three acts, so:

Prelude. It has been an exceptionally wet summer on Mendip since the end of June, with water conditions underground often at or above winter norm. But the week preceding the events to be described was probably the wettest of the lot. For example, on the Wednesday, which was Priddy Fair day, 0.83" of rain fell between 6 and 10 a.m., thus ensuring an excellent attendance because it was far too wet for haymaking.

So by the weekend the ground was thoroughly wetted and underground streams were running high, but not at levels that were abnormally dangerous.

Act I. Though overcast, the weather was dry on Friday night and early Saturday. Several parties had made plans to visit parts of Swildons. First into the cave was a Wessex group, David Berry, Vic Bennett, Anthony Dewey ? and ? who were going to the Mud Sump and possibly on towards IV. They laddered the 40' and 20' pitches. All were wearing exposure suits. A little later (about 11.30 a.m.) four others followed on a trip to the First Sump. Only the leader had any appreciable previous experience. Two of the party, schoolboys, were very poorly clad, one being without proper boots or helmet. Close behind them came Anne and Bob Lawder bound for IV and wearing exposure suits. I watched Bob and his wife leave Priddy Green at noon, when it was just beginning to rain. They were the last people to be able to descend the Forty for eleven hours. All parties below the pitch carried out their planned descents. It was only on returning that they found themselves trapped by high water.

At about 12.30, truly torrential rains began to fall and did not slacken appreciably until 3.30 at the earliest. One of those storms that occur only once or twice a year. It was accompanied by violent thunder overhead. Michael Boon of S.M.C.C. proposed to go maypoling in Paradise Regained with four others without exposure suits in the early afternoon. At 3.0 p.m. Howard and Richard Kenney and Oliver Lloyd were to rendezvous to work in that series also. I had geological work of my own to complete there and so intended to descend with Boon's party and join up with Oliver's later. David Farr appeared with a friend who had not caved before and took him down for a look at the upper series at 1.30. Boon's party reached the cave three-quarters of an hour later. The stream was running very high and would obviously be going higher in the near future, but the entrance pipe was, at the time, still able to take it, and the thunder seemed to have moved away to the East. I thought that the storm was passing over. Because of water conditions I suggested that the Forty be approached with caution and, if it was very wet, the party wait in the Old Grotto for a while for things to improve. The others went on underground. My carbide jet had blocked and it was, of course, the one occasion of the year that no spare was available. So I set off back to Hillgrove for a replacement, intending to catch the others up. Re-crossing the fields I met Frank Darbon (B.E.C.) taking two friends, and a beginner, to the Upper Series for a short trip. Driving to Hillgrove the roads were awash and the windscreen wipers could hardly cope. The storm quite evidently was not passing, but getting even heavier. At the hut I met George Pointing and Norman Tuck. They had abandoned plans to visit Stoke Lane and were preparing to go to Swildons to help Dave Berry's party who would, if they had only gone as far as the Mud Sump, be returning by this time (2.45 p.m.) and might well run into trouble at the Forty. I think that we were all

concerned about a possible repetition of the Wallington accident. So I joined forces with Norman and George. Plodding through lashing rain we met David Farr and his friend returning from the cave. David joined us also, entering Swildons for the second time that day. At the entrance now (about 3 p.m.) the pipe had quite ceased to cope, and the water was within an inch of pouring down the entrance grid. We took the Middle Dry route and met Darbon's party there, warning them to leave quickly if they didn't want to be trapped for a while. In the Old Grotto we found Michael Boon and two of his group. They had decided that the Forty was too wet without exposure suits. With Michael we hurried to it. Water conditions were obviously going to get worse shortly. My idea was that the others might be able to get David and I (with exposure suits and a supply of food) below the Forty to warn all parties there to hole up for a while and augment their food supplies for their wait.

For the purposes of this account the Water Rift can be said to contain three "Over-Unders" (see sketch), an Upper, where it is first entered, the Middle, classic, Over-Under of Balch, and a Lower, being the keyhole to the Forty and Suicides' Leap above it. When we entered the Rift the Upper Under was water filled to 2 feet and a duck. The Middle Under was already a sump. At the forty we found the two remaining members of Boon's party. The pitch was already obviously impassable to anyone on a ladder, exposure suit or no. We all started back, George, Norman and I bringing up the rear. Last through the Middle Over I found it beginning to take a stream. As I came through someone shouted that the Upper Under was impassable. Two got out over the Upper Over, then it sumped, the time between the two crawls closing being no more than three or four minutes at most. I launched myself at the Middle Over, thinking that we might retreat over

Suicides' Leap. Having cleared away the foam I found that it, too, had sumped. George, Norman and I were trapped. Working in this area last year I found copious evidence that the entire Water Rift floods to the roof on occasion. Later Norman told me that he was also aware of this; for the time being we kept our reflections to ourselves. The water continued to rise. Above the Upper Over there is a small stalagmited hole, through which we maintained contact with David. He and I attacked it from either side with a hammer; I stripped off boiler- suit, exposure suit and boots to test it, but there was never a chance that it could be enlarged sufficiently to let us out. However, the chipping gave us something hopeful. David ducked to send a line through the Upper Under, it being our intention if the worst came to the worst to try a desperate sumping bid out that way. I made a couple of preliminary probes to test this notion and my body was swept out downstream as I let it into the water. I think that our chances of surviving such an attempt would have been negligible. But we did not intend such until our trap filled to the roof. The water rose to a height of 13' up the 16' high upstream end of the passage in the first half hour that we were there. The downstream end was fully submerged. Then from somewhere below, probably the Middle Under, we heard a dull clanging sound; an obstruction being swept away or rammed home by the water. We lit cigarettes but put them out after the first draw because the air was fouled. A couple of minutes after this unhappy gesture of abstinence the air was sweet again. This could only mean that some draught had been created, and the only reasonable supposition, that it passed through a tiny hole in the top of the Middle obstruction, which George had reported under water ten minutes before. The water was evidently dropping. Trying not to hope too much we watched it drop indeed, until approximately 20 minutes later we were able to

make a dampish exit via the Upper Over into safety. I was groping along over the two feet deep stream when my lamp suddenly failed. It was out of water!

With Michael Boon's party we retreated to the top of Jacob's Ladder. There was a stream much larger than the normal main stream passing through the Old Grotto and another at the top of the Middle Dry Way. Michael Boon probed the exit via the Zig Zag and Showerbath Aven and found it impassable. David Farr tried the Kenney's Dig route and reached the same conclusion. Half an hour later Michael tried Kenney's Dig with our best electric and did not return; we assumed that he had got out. George Pointing and I made a probe with the only other electric that hadn't got lost or carried away and reached the little chamber 30' downstream of the entrance. Frank Darbon's party were there, having failed to get right out three hours earlier. Frank told us that the entrance was still a vertical sump and he was waiting for things to ease further, but that Michael had managed it. Frank and another with good electrics went off to bring the rest of our party up to the chamber. I went to the entrance and spied Howard Kenney peering in through a crack. He told me that, at the height of the flood, water stood three to four feet deep over the grating - probably the worst since 1956. The M.R.O. was called out. With a hand from him I ducked out with nothing worse than a mouthful of water by way of a parting shot and paddled bootless across the fields, hoping to get a dry set of kit from somewhere and stand by. At Mains Barn I found that it was 6.30 p.n. Definitely my hardest "Top Swildons"!

Act II. The rest of those caught between the 40' pot and the entrance got out within half an hour or so. The first, George, gave his elbow a nasty bang whilst doing so. The lump that appeared immediately suggested that it was dislocated. Luke Devenish, who had arrived to control at the

surface, arranged for him to go to the Wells Cottage Hospital and I ran him down. Fortunately an X-ray revealed nothing more than a bruise of great medical rarity and George was released, strapped up, at 8.15.

Meanwhile, a first M.R.O. party had been raised. The Kenneys, Oliver Lloyd, Mike Thompson and Fred Davies, Michael Boon and five others took hauling equipment, emergency food and supplies in at about 7.0 p.m. The water was still falling but more slowly. They were able to reach the 40' but found it quite impassable up or down. An Axbridge party with a telephone followed them and stood by in the Old Grotto. At about 10 p.m. the pitch was still impassable and the first party (excepting the telephone team) withdrew. A second party had been formed under the leadership of David Willis. I had been loaned fresh kit and joined it with David Farr, David Causer, Brenda Willis, Ebb Hanwe11, Norman Tuck and George Pointing of W.C.C. and a team from the U.B.S.S.

Act III. When the first party came out, Willis's was to take over the vigil at the 40'. Upon reaching the cave we found Fred Davies just out, and he gave it as his opinion that, whilst it was still impracticable to use the ladder at the 40' or to haul anyone up it, a team might be dropped down on the hauling line to make contact with the trapped parties. He invited David Causer and me to join him in this attempt. We agreed and all descended at about 11 p.m. Back in the Water Rift even the Middle Under was open, but the pitch looked, to me, very unpleasant. Hanging from a "Bosun's Chair" modified for extra-rapid exit, Fred swung out over the falls and then dropped rapidly into them, in an explosion of water. The hauling line quickly came up empty and it was evidently practicable. I think it was a very good lead. I went next,

then David. We must all have been at the bottom shortly after midnight.

Fred had made contact with those below. At the first bend below the Forty we found Berry, Dewey and Bob Lawder just arrived and gasping for cigarettes. They told us the story of events below. The weak schoolboy party had been first to try to get out. They must have reached Barnes Loop at a time when the flood was nearing its peak, and rather foolishly decided to try to get higher. The leader and one other apparently got as far as the top of the Double Pots. A third member lost his light and sat on a rock a little below them. The fourth was swept off at the Pots or a bit below and carried 20-30 yards downstream before coming to rest against jammed boulders at the approach climb to the Loop. His head was cut. He, too, climbed out of the water in total darkness and sat waiting.

David Berry's party reached the stream from Tratman's Temple at about the same time and managed to reach the Loop where they waited for a period until the water began to drop. Bob and Anne Lawder waited at Trat's Temple until things eased and then moved up to discover the others in the Loop. Some of the Loop party then went on to come upon the two lost in darkness just above. They brought them down, gave them more clothing and cheered them up. Anne and Vic Bennett were left to look after them whilst the others tried again to go higher. These events, chiefly waiting, must have occupied 7-8 hours from around 3 to 11 p.m.

The remaining half of the schoolboy party was found at the Double Pots and two of Berry's party stayed with them. Bob Lawder, Berry and Dewey were able to pass the narrow crawl below the 20' Pot (Although it had evidently sumped at the height of the flood) and the Pot itself, to reach the waiting point below the Forty shortly before we did. After three-quarters of an hour or so a telephone was rigged

and we regained contact with the party above the 40'. Food, cooking equipment and medical supplies were lowered; we ordered exposure suits, hoods and helmets for the trapped men. Then, leaving David in charge of the phone and cooking, Fred and I set off with emergency supplies to find the remainder of the party and bring them up to the 40'. The 20' was perfectly practicable although the water was still high. It was noticeable during this period that there was no further apparent drop of water level: thus it was still impracticable for anyone, rescued or rescuer, to get up the 40' by any means. I anticipated a long wait.

We found the four at the Double Pots looking rather inert with the waiting, but otherwise perfectly able. They were asked to move up to the foot of the 20' and await our return there. We joined the last group in Barnes Loop. Anne Lawder (who, in my opinion, behaved quite splendidly throughout) and Vic Bennett, were in excellent spirits. The two boys whom they were looking after were whoosy (drowsy and listless) with exposure. We got them into spare clothing. A shirt was sacrificed to bind the feet of the one without boots. Then we moved out, Fred and I assisting one each. They needed a fair amount of help (placing feet in holds, pulling and lifting) until above the Double Pots, when they picked up very well and got along with nominal assistance. We rejoined the other six and life lined the whole party up the 20'. They came up quickly and well and we all gathered at the cooking base.

The water was now dropping rapidly again, after little or no fall for 3-4 hours. This second drop, we afterwards learned, was due to Wells Fire Brigade pumping at the entrance. It was an effective piece of work, for within 20 minutes of our return to base, David Willis climbed down the 40' ladder and pronounced it practicable for re-ascent. So the next hour was spent sending

the trapped party up. None needed hauling, but three were given heart stimulants beforehand. Davies, Causer and I were last to leave, having packed the equipment for collection later. I went straight out from the 40' carrying a telephone. It was 5 a.m. when I emerged, and I was in bed within the hour.

I consider that the M.R.O. operation, Acts II and III worked smoothly and well and would not query any of the decisions made. The M.R.O. stove needs replacing with something more modern and the correct fuel should be supplied. It would save much time and trouble in the future if a permanent telephone line could be hung at the Forty. It could easily be placed well out of the way of ordinary parties.

A NOTE ON BEING TRAPPED IN THE WATER RIFT

Clearly, we who were caught owe it to foolishness. Far too large a party rushed into the Water Rift bent upon rescuing at a time when the water was rising very rapidly. In defence it may be said that we were caught by something quite exceptional; in my opinion probably the biggest flood in four years. Build-up on this scale hitherto seems only to have happened in winter. Further, we did not anticipate quite such a rapid rise. It took only five minutes at most to change the Upper and Middle Overs from dry crawls to impassable sumps.

For the future, should a rescue or succour party set out in rising water and find either the Upper or Middle Unders sumped, they should return without attempting to pass them. The Forty will be impracticable.

Any party below the Middle blockage in rising water and finding the Middle Under sumped, should avoid allowing more than two men at a time to concentrate in the Upper and Middle Overs and the passage between. If the Upper and Middle Overs

begin to fill, it would be safer to stay downstream and straddle over Suicides' Leap until the water drops again.

D.G. FORD

NOTE FROM OLIVER LLOYD:-

"I have made notes of the times at which the various things happened. It would appear that the maximum flood was almost simultaneous in different parts of the cave; about 3.35 p.m. in the Water Rift and just before 4 p.m. at Trat's Temple - well within observational error. The rapid subsiding of the flood is also notable.

"Other times; 4.30 p.m. Howard Kenney and I sent Fred Davies & Co., to Devenish's for tackle and goon suits, just in case.

6.15 Devenish asked to notify Police, etc. (this from his log, but it must have been earlier, because we had time to get back to the entrance and help out the Upper Swildons party, who were all out by 6.30 p.m.)

6.30 p.m. (about). Kenney and I and others went to the Forty and fitted the hauling gear.

7.0 p.m. Devenish sent down the soup kitchen.

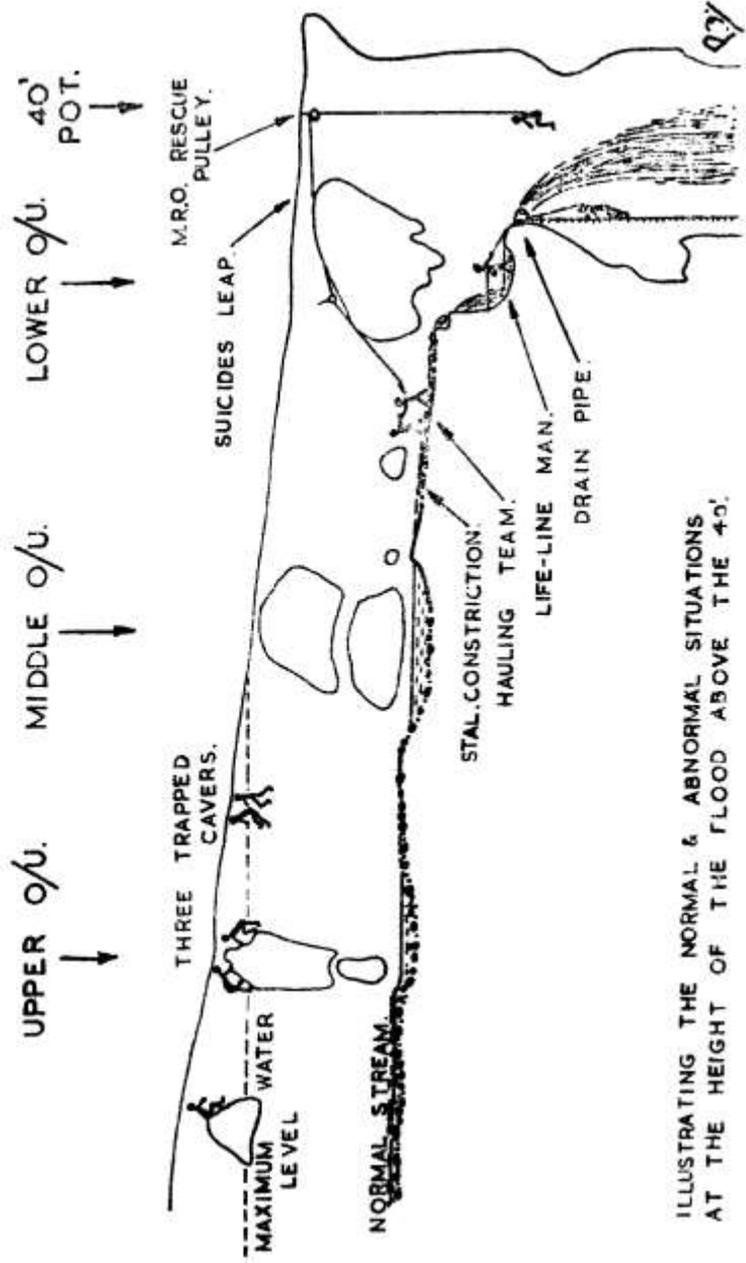
9.15 p.m. Chapman and telephone party went down.

10.0 p.m. Lloyd-Kenney party came out and handed over to Willis.

The rest of the times are in Ford's Act II."

SWILDONS HOLE

WATER RIFT. SKETCH OF THE OVER UNDERS. (NOT TO SCALE)



ILLUSTRATING THE NORMAL & ABNORMAL SITUATIONS
AT THE HEIGHT OF THE FLOOD ABOVE THE 40'.

THE SWILDONS FLOOD 27th – 28th AUGUST 1960

The Farnham Group (Adrian Dewey and three others led by David Berry, entered the cave at about 11 a.m. and my wife and I followed at about noon; the weather was light rain. The two parties travelled independently and we did not meet until 2.15 p.m. when the Farnham group were just leaving Base Camp and Anne and I were just approaching it. After a short rest the two of us started for the surface.

I first realised that the cave was in flood when I saw and heard water in abnormal places in Paradise Regained. Our return to the streamway was uneventful, but the main stream seemed dangerously high so we retreated up into Tratman's Temple, inflated our exposure suits and waited from about 4 to 5.30 p.m. (Adrian told me that they had gone up to Barnes Loop, waited 30 minutes for us, started back to look for us, found the stream to be very high, gone back to the Loop and waited some more and had only found Patrick Buckley because they had gone upstream for a bit of exercise. As they had about 30 minutes start on us, the height of the flood probably occurred soon after we abandoned our first attempt to move on from Tratman's Temple.)

At about 5.30 p.m. I judged that the stream was negotiable and we moved up to the Loop. The only difficult part was the "sluice" at the head of the waterfall that flows into the "Big Pool". I had expected to find the others at the Loop; not finding them there I carried on and found most of the party, with Patrick, perched on ledges just above the Loop, the rest having gone up to the Double Pots. The time was about 6 p.m. This was the first I knew of the existence of the Bristol party.

I first escorted Patrick to the Loop, the water having dropped enough for this to be safe,

and then went off with Adrian to contact the others. We found one boy perched on a rock by himself; Adrian stayed with him while I went up to the Pots. Alan Nash, the leader of the Bristol Party, was there with, I think, three others. Alan told me that he had explored upstream and had found that the area of the "Shrine" was impracticable. He and his companions elected to stay where they were because they had managed to dry off a bit, so Adrian and I helped the solitary boy back to the Loop.

The party was therefore divided into seven at the Loop and four at the Pots. The distribution of exposure suits being five and two.

We got Patrick and the other boy to strip off and we wrung their clothes out; also we gave them some of our comparatively dry clothes. Adrian suggested that we put the boys' feet down the fronts of our exposure suits and this proved very effective. Patrick had no footwear and the other boy only had shoes. Both boys kept remarkably cheerful and co-operative although they must have been cold in their inadequate clothes. We then settled down to wait and were reasonably comfortable in our inflated suits - some people even managed to doze off for a bit. We had ample carbide, but economised by only burning one or two lamps at a time. We had no food or cigarettes left; one of the boys told me that he had left an ammunition box containing chocolate, etc., in the streamway, and in the course of a recce and liaison trip to the Pots with Adrian at about 10 p.m., I looked for it without success. Adrian joined the Pots party and, noting that the stream had gone down considerably since my last visit, I decided to make a bid to get to the 40' in about an hour's time.

At 11.30 p.m. an advance party, composed of David Berry, Adrian and myself, set out for the 40'. The "Shrine" section was quite passable and we were lucky enough to find at the foot of the 20' a

rope that had been swept down from further up the cave. As David had the only powerful electric light he went up first and life-lined Adrian and myself. We proceeded without incident to the 40' where we met Fred Davies, who had just been lowered down. Fred told us of the narrow escape of Derek Ford and party in the Water Rift.

After repeated trials with our strikers, Adrian got his acetylene light going (they had been put out at the 20') and on the arrival of Derek Ford, Dave Causer and supplies we set to work to establish the telephone link and to get some soup heated. We could not get the stove to work on methylated spirits, but improvised an effective, if uneconomical, stove by cutting food tins in half and filling them with fuel.

When the "food point" had been established Derek and Fred went off to the rest of the party with an ammunition box of chocolate, etc., returning with them at about 2.30 a.m. The boots, helmets and exposure suits that had been sent down were fitted and we waited for David Willis's clearance of the drainpipe at the 40', the Fire Brigade's pump and the course of time to have their combined effect on the flow of water.

Once the ladder was negotiable we were life-lined up in fairly quick succession by David Willis and the others at the head of the pitch. I was, I think, the last but one of the trapped party to ascend and I was out of the cave at about 4 a.m.

The severity of our experience was greatly reduced by the fact that most of us had exposure suits and also that the water was not too cold. It was very fortunate that the members without suits stood up so well, particularly Patrick, who might well have been in a state of collapse after his ordeal. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our friends who were put in such danger by their efforts to help us and to the equipment and planning

of the M.R.O. which "brought us moral support and physical aid just when it was needed most.

Although there were many abnormal streams in Paradise Regained, the Mud Sump did not fill; a sizeable streamlet was flowing into the hole into which the sump is bailed.

Foam markings showed that for a time the passage near "The Shrine" was flooded to a depth of eight or nine feet. It was possible to pass the Double Pots by a high-level climb, but I think that the water-chute above the "Big Pool Waterfall" was impassable for a time as one is forced to go on hands and knees there. The water had probably not reached its peak when I first reached the streamway; the stream was knee deep and very fast-flowing, but could be negotiated with care. In general, most parts of the streamway were passable by straddling, but it would have been very risky to attempt a down-stream journey due to the difficulty of keeping control.

The Farnham party reported that when they reached Patrick the stream was waist deep; as the passage immediately upstream from the Loop is quite wide I think that this extreme depth may have been because the water was backing up from the Inclined Rift; if the water was not backing up, the equivalent depth in the narrower passage at Tratman's Temple would have been five to six feet and although I only looked at the stream from well above it, I think that I would have noticed a two-fold increase in depth. Another report was that at one time the knob of rock on the South side of the upstream edge of the Upper Double Pot was awash.

In retrospect, I should have passed on to the others the appreciation that I had made of how long we would have to wait for the stream to subside and when the M.R.O. could be expected to be able to enter the cave, given them a summary of

the distance we had to go, why we were waiting in Barnes Loop, the hazards and landmarks ahead, and so on. I think that I was the only person with experience of Swildons in flood, and that was limited to the occasion when Wallington died.

At the time I decided not to give the boys our exposure suits since this would have weakened the members of the party who were in the best position to make possibly decisive efforts in the hours to come. They were not actually shivering and I think that this decision was justified.

R.E. LAWDER

BOOK REVIEW

University of Bristol:

Proc. of the Speleological Society Vol. 9 No. 1 1960

(8vo., 58pp., illus., maps, plans. 10s.0d. from:

The Hon. Librarian, Speleological Society, The University, Queens Road, Bristol 8.)

Nearly two-thirds of this issue is devoted to caves, as distinct from purely archaeological matters; a larger proportion than in recent years. The standard of material and production remains as high as always - so, unavoidably, does the price.

Professor Tratman describes the excavations made in Gough's Old Cave within the last decade. The site has not been fruitful, considering the vast amount of work done there, but Roman and Iron Age remains have been found. The deposits had been extensively disturbed and in many places there were encroachments of what the author calls a Goughsian fill.

The two papers on Irish caves are of more than local interest. By considering the solubility of limestone and hence the probable rate of its

removal by the cave stream, Perratt shows Cullaun III to be entirely post-glacial. The local climate in the past cannot be known with certainty, but even with an annual rainfall of 20 inches, a very moderate estimate for western Ireland, the cave could have been formed, he says, in as little as 10,000 years. Perratt's calculations are based on the assumption that 60% of all the rainwater falling on what is now the basin of Cullaun III has passed through the cave and carried away its share of dissolved limestone. He makes no allowance for the early stage in the formation of the cave when it was too small to accept all the water which was available.

Perratt's conclusion that Cullaun III is postglacial and almost entirely of vadose formation is applicable to many other similar caves in County Clare. There are others, however, notably Pol-an-Ionain and Faunarooska, where a large part of the system is phreatic and probably pre-glacial. Collingridge examines Pol-an-Ionain in detail and concludes that almost the whole cave was formed in pre-glacial times and that the varved fill was deposited immediately after the retreat of the ice. His survey includes a new series discovered in 1959. Unfortunately Collingridge has proposed an alternative name for the cave, which I shall not propagate. It is probably a better choice than the original, and certainly easier to spell, but inevitably more names lead to more confusion in the future.

T.R.SHAW

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