

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY 1912-1919

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper publishes biographical details of twelve of the thirteen known members of the Bristol Speleological Research Society and portraits of five of them. The membership is analysed and comments are made on a dispute over finds from Aveline's Hole and its influence on the foundation of the University of Bristol Speleological Society.

INTRODUCTION

The Bristol Speleological Research Society (BSRS) was formed in the early spring of 1912, by a group of retailers, schoolteachers and others, who wanted to further their interest in caving by introducing elements of scientific research. The society flourished until its activities were interrupted by the outbreak of the war in August 1914, but there is evidence of limited activity later that year which may have continued during the remaining years of the war. When members came together again after the war the BSRS was effectively disbanded when a majority decided to become founder members of the University of Bristol Speleological Society (UBSS), officially inaugurated on 19 March 1919.

The BSRS did not publish a journal and if they did keep a record of their activities or a list of members, these have not survived. In spite of these deficiencies, T. R. Shaw (1993) was able to publish a valuable history of the BSRS using sources which included mention of the society's activities in contemporary literature and elsewhere, the comments of contemporaries and people who knew its members after 1918, and some letters in the Wills family archive at Langford Court. Shaw was able to identify the names and some brief biographical details of thirteen BSRS members, and where some of their portraits appear.

In the main part of this paper more of the named members are positively identified, fuller biographical details are provided, and five of their portraits are published for the first time in speleological literature¹. The full account of BSRS activities provided by Shaw will not be repeated but certain sources he quoted will be enlarged where they have relevance to this paper, which include aspects of the foundation, membership, projects and the background to the dispute over the Aveline's Hole finds which led to the demise of the society when the UBSS was founded in 1919. Unpublished sources are not quoted in the biographical text but are recorded separately in the appendix.

¹ Some of the biographical details and photographs included in this paper were forthcoming from readers of a short article on the BSRS and the Bedminster connection (Williams, 1999) and from an appeal published in the Bristol Evening Post, 6 July 1999.

BSRS FOUNDATION, MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

BSRS, foundation and projects.

Palmer (1958) recalled that: "In 1908, four school boys, Reg. Essery, Leo Palmer, Ted. Perdue² and Reg. Read set out to explore Dundry "Caves" and they were very disappointed when they discovered the "Caves" were only Roman lead mines. It was not until four years later that circumstances brought these four enthusiasts together again. They, with several others, decided to form what was probably the first purely caving society in this country. As a result of their deliberations "The Bristol Spelaeological (sic)³ Research Society" was founded in 1912. The new Society commenced its activities in the early spring of that year, under the Presidency of Professor S. H. Reynolds, Professor of Geology at the University of Bristol. Leo Palmer, who was then a fresher in the University, was elected the first Honorary Secretary."

The "Caves" were in fact the disused Dundry Freestone mines which are grouped around the triangulation pillar on Dundry Down (233 m AOD, at National Grid Reference ST 55346671). Palmer correctly identified the Roman origins of the mines, as stone from Dundry Down was incorporated in the late Roman fort at Cardiff and was used locally at Sea Mills (*Abonae*) and Brislington Roman villa (Bird, 1987, p66). Extensive machine levelling and infilling on Dundry Down in recent years has blocked almost all of the mine entrances. One of the surviving entrances, at ST 552269, is shown in the photograph Figure 1.



Figure 1. *One of the few surviving mine entrances on Dundry Down.*

Palmer recorded that: "The Society started work with four somewhat ambitious projects. One was to make a wooden-runged ladder with which to explore Lamb Lair (sic) Cavern. The second objective was to measure the rate of evaporation of the water in this cavern and also in Eastwater Swallet; the third was to commence excavating 'The Cave' now known as Aveline's Hole, and the fourth was to open up Plumley's Den, later known as Plumley's Hole - a

² The author of this paper was taught by Perdue at the Bristol Technical School (1946-48) and, by coincidence, also did his first caving (c.1945) with school boy friends at Dundry.

³ Shaw (1993) points out that Palmer (1958), in his reminiscences written 45 years later, incorrectly used 'Spelaeological' in the BSRS title which is spelt without the æ diphthong (Fig. 1, BSRS letterhead), and it was noted that the UBSS did not adopt the diphthong until 1921.

vertical shaft situated in the north-east corner of the quarry at the bottom of Burrington Coombe”.

Lamb Leer Cavern; visits, the ladder and evaporation tests.

During the summer of 1913, Barker and other BSRS members, in collaboration with the Mendip Nature Research Committee (MNRC), were engaged in clearing the collapsed timbering from the 1880 entrance shaft of Lamb Leer Cavern. This task was completed in August 1913, when Barker and Mr. Caple, junior, the son of the owner of the surface land around the cave, were the first to reach the bottom of the shaft. A wooden-runged rope ladder, made by specially by the BSRS to explore Lamb Leer Cavern, could then be used to descend the entrance shaft and the drop into the Great Chamber. The BSRS were also able to start their planned evaporation tests in the cave. On 6 September 1913, Barker and Read of the BSRS, joined E. A. Baker, A. H. Blake, R. H. Chandler and J. H. (Harry) Savory, in a descent of Lamb Leer Cavern using the BSRS ladder. Savory noted that the evaporation tests were already underway using several calibrated glass bottles placed in two zinc pans, with covers held above to shelter from drips, which were standing in a recess at the north end of the Great Chamber (Balch 1914, & Savory, 1989, p95-p99, incl. 4 photographs). In 1958, a MNRC member recovered one of the pan covers from Lamb Leer; it was dated ‘August 16th, 1913’ which was probably the date of installation (Palmer, 1958).

A letter from Barker to Mr. H. W. Seccombe Wills, cousin of George E. Wills (later Sir George, the 1st Baronet), dated 26 November 1914, was mainly concerned with the dispute over the Aveline’s Hole finds (discussed separately), but Barker also invited Seccombe Wills to join in a descent of “Lambs Lair” (sic) that had been arranged for 28 November 1914. Barker and other unidentified members of the BSRS and Mr. C. W. Caple, the owner of the overlying land, had already agreed to make the descent. Seccombe Wills was not able to accept the invitation on this occasion but in a letter, dated 30 November 1914, he asked Barker to let him know in advance of the Society’s next visit to “Lambs Lair” (sic) so that he could make it possible to join the descending party. (Wills correspondence & Shaw, 1993, p17-18). It is not known whether any subsequent visit did take place. It seems that by the end of the 1914-1918 war the 1880 entrance shaft had again become blocked and remained so until being reopened on 15 January 1934.

Eastwater Swallet, evaporation tests and Jack Brownsey’s Passage.

On 26 December 1913, a combined BSRS-MNRC party of eleven men led by Herbert Balch, included Brownsey (who was the only BSRS member to be identified), descended Eastwater Cavern, using the BSRS wooden-runged rope ladder. The main purpose of the trip was to install BSRS evaporation tanks (covered pans) and jars, similar to that used in Lamb Leer Cavern. One set of apparatus was placed in the First Rift Chamber, beyond the Canyon, and another at the bottom of the Boulder Chamber. There was an amusing interlude, when at a meal-break, one of the BSRS men produced “a monstrous Christmas pudding” he had smuggled into the cave. On that day Brownsey, said by Balch to be “a man who possess a body designed expressly for exploring midget passages”, was the first to force a squeeze in the vicinity of the Mud Escalator to enter a tight inclined rift, thereafter called Jack Brownsey’s Passage (Balch, 1914, & Palmer, 1958). Shaw (1993) gives details of the outcome of the evaporation tests

carried out by the BSRS here and in Lamb Leer Cavern, and of similar experiments in Lancaster Hole (Easegill Caverns) in 1948.

Gough's Cave.

Seven BSRS members visited Gough's Cave on 28 February 1914 and their signatures appear in the visitors' book as follows: "Geo. E. Barker, Edward K Perdue, R. F. Read, W. J. Brownsey, J. A. (?or Ja) Kerry, A. G. Edwards, and H. W. Tozer". Barker's assertive role is indicated by him being the first to sign and writing an appreciative comment on behalf of the others (Shaw, 1993, p19 & Fig. 5 [facsimile of the full entry]).

Coral Cave.

Sometime in the period 1912-1914, BSRS members, Barker, Brownsey and Perdue, and MNRC member, Harry Savory, explored Coral Cave, Compton Bishop, using the BSRS wooden-runged rope ladder⁴ (Savory, 1989, p25-p28, incl. 4 photographs).

Aveline's Hole.

Balch (1915) reporting an "important discovery" by the BSRS at Burrington in 1914, notes that: "Barker and another member, digging there [in Aveline's Hole], have found some human remains of great interest and with very special features".

Palmer (1958) noted that the excavations were carried out from 1912 to the outbreak of war in 1914, but it would seem that the important discoveries were made in 1914. The Wills correspondence (Shaw, 1993, p17-p18 & Appendix II) concerning Aveline's Hole (full details provided later in this paper) indicate that Edwards, Essery and Palmer, were involved in the excavations and recording the finds. These important excavations, which were carried on for many years after 1919 by the UBSS, have been fully covered in UBSS papers and other archaeological publications.

Plumley's Hole.

Palmer (1958) reported that: "The raising of stones and rubbish by a bucket cable-way erected over Plumley's Den [later known as Plumley's Hole] was continued from 1912 to 1914 in spite of considerable danger from stones falling from the bucket on to the heads of the two workers below. By the time the War stopped work the depth reached was about 60 feet. Many tons of stones together with a large tree trunk and recent horse bones were the only visible results of much hard labour". The names of individual BSRS members involved are not mentioned. After only a little clearing in 1919 and 1920, the project was abandoned by the UBSS.

BSRS members joining the UBSS, Goatchurch Cavern and Swildon's Hole visits.

Palmer (1958) reported that BSRS members "J. Brownsey, G. Crandon, H. Peet, E. K. Perdue and R. F. Read", joined the UBSS with him in 1919. Essery's membership of the UBSS

⁴This visit was not recorded in the Savory diaries and none of the four photographs were dated. Use of the BSRS ladder dates the visit 1912-1914, and the BSRS members present were identified by contemporaries.

was claimed by other contemporaries (Shaw, 1993), and is confirmed by Perdue's son, J. A. Perdue (*pers. com.* 1999).

On 5 April 1919⁵, new UBSS members Brownsey, Edwards, Palmer, Read and Savory, descended Goatchurch Cavern. Savory recorded that "Read's Chamber was interesting". The only other features mentioned by Savory were The Tunnel (now called the Drainpipe), the Boulder Chamber and the Coal Chute, but he did not provide the location of Read's Chamber (Savory, 1989, p113-p114). No other published description or survey of Goatchurch Cavern mentions Read's Chamber. It could be one of a number of unnamed chambers in the cave. It seems likely that it was either a new discovery by Read or named after him for some other reason, during previous exploration of the cave by the BSRS in the period 1912-14, and that the name went out of use after 1919.

On 9 June 1919, a combined UBSS/MNRC party descended Swildon's Hole including former BSRS members Brownsey, Edwards, Peet and Read (Savory, 1989, p112-p115 & p117, incl. 3 photographs).

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF BSRS MEMBERS

EDGAR GEORGE GREGORY BARKER

Barker was born 8 October 1878 at 10 Dowry Parade, Hotwells, Bristol, the son of a grocer. By 1891 he was living above the family's grocery shop at 15 Ashton Place, North Street, Bedminster. He was later a cycle dealer in Bedminster; at 68 South Street 1906-07, 78 South Street 1908-1912, 16 Cannon Street 1913, and 12 Cannon Street 1914-1919. It has not been established whether Barker married and nothing is known of him after 1919.

Barker was one of the elder members of the BSRS and the sources indicate that he took a leading role in the society's activities. A BSRS printed letterhead, in use by the end of November 1914, records that the society's official address was 12 Cannon Street, Bedminster, which was Barker's home and business premises, and by that time he had assumed the role of BSRS temporary secretary. He was too old for military service and was actively promoting the society's caving activity in the latter months of 1914, which may have continued in the remaining years of the war. He did not become a UBSS member in 1919.

WALTER JOHN ('JACK') BROWNSEY

Brownsey was born on 10 June 1882 at 1 Allington Road, Southville, Bristol, the youngest son of a house decorator. He lived there with his parents until 1919, when they moved to live at 33 West Street, Bedminster. Following the death of his father, in about 1922, Brownsey and his mother moved to live above a shop at 83 West Street, where they ran a decorators' supplies business. It is known that Brownsey was still living there in the mid-1930's and was then still a bachelor, but it is not known when he died.

⁵ Although there may have been earlier caving done by the UBSS, founded three weeks previously, this is the first recorded cave visit. Harry Savory also recorded that on 19 April 1919, during the first field trip of the UBSS (led by Leo Palmer), he joined a crowd of members for a trip down Goatchurch Cavern (Savory, 1989, p114). One of Savory's unpublished glass slides in Wells Museum shows about twenty five in the UBSS party at the entrance of Goatchurch Cavern on that occasion (D. J. Irwin *pers. com.*).

The sources indicate that Brownsey was an active member of the BSRS, who because he was too old for military service may well have supported limited activities by the society during the 1914-18 war. He joined the UBSS in 1919 but it is not known how long he remained a member.

GEORGE LEONARD CRANDON

Crandon was born on 20 March 1892, at 12 Warwick Road, Paddington, London, the youngest son of an omnibus conductor. By 1901 he was living with his parents at 44 York Road, Bedminster, and probably attended schools in that area. He was a pupil teacher at Windmill Hill Council School, Bedminster, from 1908-12 and then an assistant master at Bishop Road School until the outbreak of war in 1914.



On 15 September 1914 he volunteered to serve as a private in the 12th (Bristol's Own) Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. On 12 May 1915 he was appointed to a commission in the Suffolk Regiment and after officer training, on 23 March 1916 he joined the 8th Battalion, 53rd Infantry Brigade, 18th (Eastern) Division, which was already in France. As a lieutenant he was involved in all the battalion's actions on the Somme between July and November 1916. These included a night attack on 19-20 July in Delville Wood when he took charge of two companies after

Figure 2. *George Leonard Crandon (1892-1962). Circa 1947.*
Reproduced with the permission of John Budd.

their commanders were wounded. It was probably for his gallantry on the Somme and later on the Arras front that he was awarded the Military Cross, gazetted 4 June 1917, but no citation was published. About that time, Crandon was promoted to captain and took charge of a company of the 8th Battalion which was preparing to take part in the Third Battle of Ypres. Unfortunately, on 31 July 1917, he was shot through the left shoulder during the battalion's opening attack from the Pilckem Ridge. After hospitalisation in London, he was eventually appointed as 'D' Company commander of the 7th Battalion, who on 26 March 1918 were the last British troops to leave Albert when it was abandoned to the Germans during their spring offensive. The battalion then took up positions on high ground to the west of the town and prevented further German advance. It was probably here that he was awarded a Bar to his Military Cross, gazetted 26 July 1918. His citation reads: "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He successfully repulsed repeated enemy attacks accompanied by very severe trench mortar fire. His personal example of courage and daring greatly inspired those under him and it was largely due to his capable handling of the company that the position of the battalion was maintained".

Upon demobilisation in 1919 he resumed his teaching career at the newly established South Bristol Central School, Bedminster Down Road. He became well known for encouraging inter-school sporting activities and for several years was manager of Bristol Boys' and the England Boys' soccer teams. He became a director of the Bristol City Football Club and several of his schoolboy prodigies later played for the club and other professional teams. In 1932 he was appointed as headmaster of Wick Road Senior Boys' School, Brislington, where he remained until retirement in 1957. He joined the Bedminster Cricket Club in 1912 and played regularly until being elected chairman in 1933; a position he held until his death on 2 January 1962, aged 69. He had remained a bachelor and in later years he lodged with his married sister at 85 Coldharbour Road, Henleaze. His portrait photograph taken in 1947, is reproduced in Figure 2.

Palmer (1958) said that Crandon was one of the former BSRS members who became founder members of the UBSS in 1919. No record of his caving activities survive. It was no doubt through his family, teaching and sporting connections, that he came to be acquainted with the other Bedminster men who became BSRS members.

ARTHUR GILBERT EDWARDS

Edwards was born on 14 October 1890 at 15 Angers Road, Totterdown, Bedminster, the youngest of seven children of a foreman mason. He was the only male *A. G. Edwards* registered as having been born in the Bristol area in the period 1888-1898. By 1891 the family were living at Worrell House, 19 West Street, Bedminster, and his father was in business there as a general builder until 1930. He served in the army during the 1914-1918 war (unit not known). When he married in Bristol on 11 June 1921, he was living at 19 West Street, Bedminster, and his profession was recorded as a school master. Edwards lived at 10 Windsor Terrace, Clifton 1931-1934; 12 Glenwood Road, Westbury-on-Trym 1935-1938; and 69 Great Broomeridge, Westbury-on-Trym 1939-1964. He then lived at 19 Ash Grove, Strawberry Hill, Clevedon, where he died on 19 March 1974, aged 83; so was the last survivor of the known BSRS members.

Edwards was in the BSRS party who visited Gough's Cave on 28 February 1914 and after August of that year, as BSRS secretary, he was corresponding with G. E. Wills about the

Aveline's Hole finds⁶. Edwards joined the UBSS in 1919 and was involved in its caving activities that year, but it is not known how long he remained a member.

REGINALD ERNEST ESSERY.

Essery was born on 2 June 1894 at 4 Albemarle Row, Clifton, Bristol, the son of a railway clerk. He lived with his parents at 47 Hamilton Road, Southville 1912-1921. He studied chemistry at the University of Bristol and was awarded a BSc in 1914. He was employed on 'war work' at a chemical plant at Portishead 1914-1918. Following his marriage at Middlesborough in 1921, he lived in Kings Norton, Birmingham, where he was employed by the makers of 'H P' sauce. He was awarded a PhD in the late 1930s, probably after he moved to live and work in the south London area. He lived at Redhill, Surrey, for many years before his death in 1968, aged 73.

Essery was one of the four schoolboy friends who were among the founder members of the BSRS in 1912. He was one of the joint signatures of a report on the Aveline's Hole finds sent to G. E. Wills after August 1914. He joined the UBSS in 1919 but it is not known how long he remained a member.

J. A. [?or Ja=James] KERRY

The only source which identifies Kerry as a BSRS member is his signature in the Gough's Cave visitors' book, following a visit by society members on 28 February 1914. He has not been positively identified but the following leads are being pursued. The only male *J. Kerry* born in wide area around Bristol 1888-1898 is a James Leslie KERRY, born on 27 August 1891, at Chilton House, Oldfield Park, Bath, the son of James Kerry, a company director. The Commonwealth War Grave Commission have a record of a Sapper J. KERRY, service number 545302, 459th Field Company, Royal Engineers, who died on 15 July 1918, and is buried in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery near Poperinge, Belgium. There is no evidence that Kerry joined the UBSS in 1919, so it is possible that he died during the war.

LIONEL STANLEY ('LEO') PALMER.

Palmer was born on 2 August 1891 at 55 Romilly Road, Islington, London, the son of a lithographer. By 1895 his father was in business as a litho-artist at 22 Broad Street, Bristol. The family home was at 'East Lynne', Hill Avenue, Bedminster 1895-1896; 99 Greville Road, Southville 1897-1902; 12 Gathorne Road, Southville 1903-1910; and 6 Clift Road, Ashton Gate 1911-1919. The schools attended by Palmer are not known, but they were probably in the Southville area of Bedminster. He studied physics at the University of Bristol and was awarded a BSc in 1913. His post graduate studies in physics at Bristol were interrupted by the outbreak of war in 1914 when he was commissioned in the Royal Engineers. He held the rank of captain upon demobilisation in 1918, when he resumed his university studies and was awarded MSc 1920, PhD 1921 and DSc 1933. He was living at 48 Somerville Road, St Andrews Park, Bristol, when he married in 1925, and soon after was appointed to the Chair of Physics at the University of Hull. He was elected as an Associate Member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1924, and as a full member in 1928. The I.E.E. Journal and Proceedings contain five papers and

⁶ Edward's signature in the Gough's Cave visitor's book, and in the Wills correspondence, appears identical to that on his will made the 14 November 1959, almost 55 years later.

other contributions by Palmer, including several on geoelectrical surveys. He retired from his academic career in 1954 and was then resident curator at Wells Museum until his death on the 17 March 1962, aged 71.

Palmer was the eldest of the four schoolboys who explored the disused Dundry Freestone mines in 1908, and who with several others formed the BSRS in 1912. Palmer, then an undergraduate, became the first secretary and later became Vice President (it is not known whether there was another Vice President). He was a leading figure in the society and actively involved in all of its projects including taking overall responsibility, as holder of the permit issued by the landowner, for the archaeological excavations in Aveline's Hole.

Palmer and Read were the prime movers in founding the UBSS in March 1919, when Palmer was elected as secretary. He relinquished his post as secretary in 1920 when he was appointed as one of the Vice Presidents. Taylor (1968) commented: "Leo Palmer was with us constantly and kept us up to scratch, though unselfishly placing others in at least nominal charge of excavations", and that he also organised and led the society's caving activities which included trips to Derbyshire and the Dordogne area of France. Whilst Palmer was at Hull University he often visited Bristol during vacations, and he supported the activities of the UBSS and other caving groups. In 1938/39 he carried out a pioneering geoelectric (resistivity) survey



Figure 3. *Henry Benjamin Peet (1890-1960).
Sapper, Royal Engineers, 1914-18.*

Reproduced with the permission of Mrs Janet Vaughan.

on the land surface in the vicinity of Lamb Leer Cavern which suggested a second large void close to the Great Chamber. In 1957, after Palmer had successfully tested improved apparatus the previous year to rediscover Pen Park Hole, he undertook further tests above Lamb Leer

Cavern and confidently positioned the void about 400 feet to the north-west of the Great Chamber (Palmer, 1965). The initial tests motivated digging by Murrell, Glennie and others in the Great Chamber from the late 1940's to the mid 1950's. Following the 1957 tests, attempts were made by Dave Turner and others to explore high-level passages leading in the direction of the now legendary 'Palmer's Chamber', but it has still not been found. Palmer's photograph at the UBSS New Year party at Burrington 1956/57, was reproduced by Shaw (1993, Fig. 7).

HENRY BENJAMIN ('HARRY') PEET

Peet was born on 8 November 1890 at 17 South Place, Redcliffe, Bristol, the son of a cooper. By 1895 he was living with parents at 51 St. John's Road, Bedminster, and probably attended local schools. He then qualified as a science teacher and joined the staff of Merrywood Secondary ('Higher Grade') School, Southville, in about 1910. During the 1914-18 war he served as sapper in the Royal Engineers on the Western Front. Peet's photograph in uniform is reproduced in Figure 3. Upon demobilisation he resumed teaching at Merrywood School, but in about 1937 he was appointed as a science teacher at the Connaught Road Senior Boys' School, Knowle, Bristol. From 1946 until retirement in 1955 he resided at 48 Chessel Street, Bedminster, and then at 25b Cotham Road until he died on the 13 October 1960, aged 69. His funeral was attended by a large group of former pupils. He never married.

Peet was one the BSRs members who joined the UBSS in 1919. Palmer (1958) notes; "The [UBSS] visit to Milton Hill Cave on August 2nd [1919] was a suitable excuse to celebrate the Honorary Secretary's ['Leo' Palmer's] birthday, and in the centre of Weston-super Mare he was solemnly presented with a flue brush (!). After this ceremony H. Peet cycled straight back to Bristol quite forgetful of the fact that he was in camp at Burrington. He decided to 'go straight on', hence the society's [unofficial] motto. He was appropriately greeted on his return to camp in the early hours of the August 3rd". Another contemporary of Peet provided a different version, that: "his bicycle took him into a manure heap on his way home from Burrington" (Shaw, 1993, p20). Peet took an active part in UBSS activities throughout the 1920s, but it is not known when he ceased being a member.

EDWARD KINGWELL PERDUE.

Perdue was born on 27 January 1893 at 25 East Street, Bedminster, the son of a boot and shoe manufacturer. In about 1895-96 he was placed under the guardianship of an elderly relative at 44 Upper Perry Hill, Southville, Bedminster. He attended local schools, including Merrywood Secondary School, until 1909. Following his guardian's advice to become a white-collar worker, he obtained the position of a pupil teacher at Ashton Gate Elementary School. Following the completion of teacher training at the Merchant Venturers' College, Unity Street, he taught at a school in the Horfield area 1912-16. He served as a sapper in the Royal Engineers 1916-1919, being mainly involved with water transportation on canals communicating with the front line in France and Belgium. Perdue's photograph in uniform is reproduced in Figure 4. He married on 1 January 1918 whilst on home leave, having shortly before inherited 44 Upper Perry Hill on the death of his guardian. Upon being discharged from the Army in 1919 he returned to teaching but did not feel it was his vocation. He therefore obtained a grant aided place at the University of Bristol to study engineering and was awarded a BSc in 1922. Owing to the depressed national economy he was unable to gain employment in the engineering indus-

try, so reluctantly he took a teaching post at East Bristol Central School, St George. In 1940 he transferred to the Bristol Technical School (Engineering), Bedminster, where he taught mechanical and electrical engineering until retirement in about 1956. He made large model yachts which he sailed with the aid of a remote-control radio. He had moved with his family from 44 Upper Perry Hill in 1928 to live at 28 Cleeve Hill, Downend, South Gloucestershire, where he died on 27 February 1973, aged 80.

Perdue was one of the founders and an active member of the BSRS. His son, J. A. (Tony) Perdue, recalls that his father spoke earlier caving

with Palmer, Essery and Read before the 1914-18 war, which continued after they all joined the UBSS. One day during a Christmas-New Year holiday period in the late 1930's, Perdue took his son to the UBSS hut at Burrington and they descended a cave in the area. They also visited show caves and Perdue (senior) spoke of his interest the formation of caves and the prehistory of the Mendips. He kept in occasional contact with Essery and Read until the 1950s. At Eastertime 1971, Perdue (then 78 years of age and an angina sufferer) visited his son in Derbyshire, and insisted that they drove to Mam Tor, in a snowstorm (!), in order to descend Treak Cliff Cavern. They made the rather steep descent without too much difficulty but their exit was understandably much slower.

REGINALD FRANCIS READ

Read was born on 11 June 1892 at 'Beaufort House', 72 Victoria Road [now British Road], Bedminster, the youngest son of a metal assayer. He probably attended schools in the area and was later a student in engineering, possibly at the Merchant Venturers' College, Unity



Figure 4. *Edward Kingwell Perdue (1893-1973).*

Sapper, Royal Engineers, 1916-19.

Reproduced with the permission of J. A. Perdue.

Street, Bristol. During the 1914-18 war he served in the Royal Engineers on the Western Front, rising from the ranks to become a company sergeant-major. He emigrated to Chicago, USA, in the late 1920's, or early 1930's where he was employed in the motor car industry. Following retirement in the 1950's, whilst on holiday at his sister's home in Parson Street, Bedminster, Read called to see Perdue at Downend. Read never married and died in the USA on 7 January 1967, aged 74.

It is clear from the sources that Read was a prominent member of the BSRS. He joined the UBSS in 1919, and Herbert Taylor (1968) considered that it was Read and Palmer: "who really formed the society"; also that: "Read was a man of great force of character as well as acute observation and had an instinct for cave openings and sites of interest". Although the name Read's Chamber in Goatchurch Cavern is no longer used, he is still commemorated in Read's Cavern and Read's Grotto. He was a UBSS committee member 1919-1926, and he continued to be driving force in the society's caving and archaeological activities until he emigrated. Read's photograph taken by H. Taylor at Symonds Yat in 1929 or 1932 was reproduced by Shaw (1993, Fig. 6).

MOSES HENRY RENNOLDS.

Rennolds was born in 1866 at Cannon Street, Bedminster, the son of a coal haulier, and was baptised on 1 April 1866 at St John's Church, Bedminster. When married on 17 January 1894 at St Paul's Church, Bedminster, he was described as a gas fitter living at 123 East Street, Bedminster. In 1896 he was recorded as an ironmonger trading as Lion Hardware at this address. By 1920 he had opened branches of Lion Hardware at 2 Warden Road and 219 North Street, Bedminster. He died on the 3 July 1942, aged 76. His ancestors, many of whom were christened Moses, had managed coal mines or associated businesses in the Bedminster area since the early 1700's (Parsley, 1997).

Rennolds was the oldest of the known BSRS members. It is not known whether he was involved in cave exploration or digging, but even though then in his late forties, this cannot be ruled out. However, as an ironmonger with a family connection with mining, he was certainly in a position to supply and assemble equipment required in the society's activities such as the wooden-runged rope ladder constructed to descend Lamb Leer Cavern; the zinc trays and covers and the calibrated glass jars used in the evaporation experiments carried out in Lamb Leer Cavern and Eastwater Cavern; and the bucket trolley-way used to clear debris from Plumbley's Hole. During the 1914-18 war Rennolds supported Barker in the custody dispute over the Aveline's Hole finds. Rennolds did not join the UBSS in 1919.

SIDNEY HUGH REYNOLDS.

Reynolds was born at Brighton in 1867 and educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge. He studied the natural sciences, and, coming under the influence of T. McKenny Hughes⁷ and J. E. Marr, began to specialise in geology. He was awarded an MA and ScD (Cantab.). In 1894 he joined the staff of University College, Bristol, as a lecturer in geology and zoology, and was subsequently appointed Professor in these subjects. He was elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1891 and joined the Geologists' Association in

⁷ Prof. Reynolds may also been drawn towards cave and karst studies by T. McKenny Hughes, who experimented by placing pieces of wood in underground streams to trace their resurgences, theorised about the link between dolines and glacial rocks, and studied solution concurrent with mechanical erosion. (Shaw, 1992, p158, p173 & p261).



Figure 5. (Centre) *Professor Sidney Hugh Reynolds (1867-1949). From group photograph of the staff of University College, Bristol, taken in 1902. Reproduced with the permission of the University of Bristol Library (Special Collections).*

1901. His portrait in Figure 5, is reproduced from a group photograph of the University College staff in 1902. The University of Bristol was founded in 1909 and Reynolds became the first occupant of the Channing Wills Chair of Geology. Upon retirement in 1933 he was made Emeritus Professor and retained rooms in the university where he worked for many years. His geological research over a period of fifty years was wide ranging, but gradually became drawn to the Bristol district, including the limestone succession from the Mendips to Cattybrook, and the lithology of the classic Avon section. His interest in vertebrate zoology is shown by his contribution to the published records of Pleistocene Mammalia. Reynolds is said to have had a modest, kindly and generous manner, and he was highly respected by his professional colleagues and students. The Bristol Naturalists' Society, which has always had a large proportion of amateur members, owed much to Reynolds. He lived with his wife at 13 All Saints Road, Clifton, Bristol, until he died on 20 August 1949, aged 81 (A. E. T., & F. S. Wallis [obituaries], 1950).

Professor Reynolds accepted the Presidency of the BSRS when it was founded in 1914. With his professional expertise and connections, Reynolds was no doubt able to guide the society in its research projects, particularly in the identification of the mammalian bones and other finds from Aveline's Hole. It is apparent in the Wills correspondence that the university connection was a factor in the BSRS obtaining permission to excavate in Aveline's Hole and Plumley's Hole. Reynolds was consulted when Palmer was taking steps to form the UBSS in 1919 (Palmer, 1958), and he was Vice President 1921-1937.

HERMON WILLIAM TOZER

Tozer was born on 27 December 1895 at 12 Hereford Street, Bedminster; he was the only male *H. W. Tozer* born in a wide area around Bristol 1888-1898. He was son of a scale maker who had business premises at Boot Lane, Bedminster 1910-1940. In 1918 the family home was at 25 Willway Street, Bedminster. Hermon was the second of thirteen children and he is believed to have attended local schools. At the outbreak of war in 1914, he volunteered to serve in the army and joined one of the four Tyneside Irish (24-27th) Battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers which made up the full complement of the 103rd Brigade, 34th Division, who went to France in 1916. On 1 July 1916, the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, whilst attacking towards la Bosselle, Tozer was one of the injured among the 2,139 Tyneside Irish casualties, nearly three-quarters of their brigade strength (Middlebrook, 1971, p139-p142 and p167-p168). In the photograph, reproduced in Figure 6, Tozer is wearing the style of uniform issued to wounded troops receiving treatment or convalescing.



Figure 6. *Hermon William Tozer (1895-1918). Fusilier, 'Tyneside Irish' Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, 1914-17. Reproduced with the permission of Peter Bateman.*

Tozer had recovered by May 1917, when he became an air mechanic in the Royal Flying Corp at Reading. In about August 1917 he was accepted for flying training at Denham, near Uxbridge, and after qualifying as Sergeant Pilot, No. 57318, he joined the 110 'Bomber' Squadron, Royal Flying Corp, formed at Rendcombe, Gloucestershire, 1 November 1917. The squadron was later based at Sedgefield, near Kings Lynn, where Tozer escaped unscathed after tipping a Royal Aircraft Factory BEZe aircraft (serial number A2847) on its nose when landing. In the spring of 1918, the squadron were the first to fly the powerful de Havilland DH.9A aircraft. After tactical training at Stonehenge, Tozer flew with the squadron to Bettoncourt in France on Friday, 13 August 1918. They were part of the Independent Force, a Royal Air Force unit based at aerodromes near Nancy in order to conduct strategic bombing of Germany in retaliation for German bombing of the United Kingdom. Tozer's photograph in RAF uniform is reproduced in Figure 7. Sadly, Tozer and his observer/airgunner, Sergeant W. Platt, were killed when their DH.9A aircraft (serial number

E8422) was shot down on 25 September 1918, while on a long-distance daylight bombing raid on factories and rail targets at Frankfurt. They are buried, side by side, in Saarlbe Military Cemetery in the Moselle Département de France, close to the German border (Armstrong, 1952 [a pilot in 110 Sqd], CWGC & PRO, AIR records).

Tozer was with the BSRS party who visited Gough's Cave on the 28 February 1914 and signed the visitors' book. He was a contemporary of the younger group of BSRS members who lived in Bedminster.

MEMBERSHIP REVIEW : THE BEDMINSTER CONNECTION

As previously mentioned no original BSRS records survive. Of the thirteen named members, listed above, only tentative suggestions have been offered for Kerry, but the remaining twelve have been positively identified. Even though there must have been other members, some conclusions can be drawn about the known membership of the society. It is significant that apart from the President, in the active years of the society (1912-14) all eleven of the identified members lived in Bedminster, a southern suburb of Bristol. Of these, six were born in Bedminster and although the remaining four were born elsewhere (two in other parts of Bristol and two in London) they had moved with their families to live in Bedminster before 1900. They were all living within a mile of each other.

The elder grouping of Barker, Brownsey and Rennolds, all had small businesses. The younger grouping of eight, who were born between 1890 and 1896, probably all attended schools in the Bedminster area. Edwards, Crandon, Peet and Perdue became teachers; Essery, Palmer and Perdue obtained degrees at the University and Read trained as an engineer.

Seven members, Crandon, Edwards, Palmer, Peet, Perdue, Read and Tozer, are known to have served in the army during the 1914-18 war (eight if Kerry also joined up); Crandon (twice decorated for bravery) and Palmer were commissioned; Read became a company sergeant-major; Tozer became a pilot and was the only member known to have died in the war (two, if Sapper J. Kerry can be confirmed, as a member). Palmer, Peet, Perdue and Read (and



Figure 7. *Hermon Williams Tozer (1895-1918).
Sergeant Pilot, 110 Squadron, Royal Flying Corp
and Royal Air Force, 1917-18.*

Reproduced with the permission of Peter Bateman.

also J. Kerry if confirmed) served in the Royal Engineers. It is possible that before or at the outbreak of war, they all joined the South Midland Division Royal Engineers, a Volunteer Reserve unit (Territorial Army), based in Park Row, Bristol, close to the main university buildings. They were all caving friends of Harry Savory, an officer in this unit, and one of founder members of the UBSS. (Savory, 1989).

Out of the eleven (including the President) who are known to have survived the war, nine joined and contributed to the success of the UBSS. This is a remarkably high percentage and testifies to the high level of motivation present in this group. As a comparison, it is believed that the Bristol Exploration Club had a pre-1939 membership of approximately fifteen people, of which only about 1/3 rejoined either when it was reconstituted in 1943 or after the war (D.J. Irwin, *pers. comm.*). This level is probably much more typical of such situations.

THE AVELINE'S HOLE FINDS DISPUTE

An unsigned copy of a typewritten letter, dated 1 August 1914, in the Wills papers, addressed to Mr. Walter Day (possibly the Wills estate manager), reads: "Will you kindly see that the Caves in Burrington Combe are not entered by anyone. All permission (including the Archaeological Society under the auspices of the Bristol University) having been cancelled for the present". This was probably a precautionary measure in view of the impending outbreak of war. It is not known when the order was rescinded.

Shaw (1993, p18) reproduced the following extract from an undated report signed: "A. G. Edwards. Hon. Sec. and R. E. Essery. B.Sc.....For Mr. Palmer. B.Sc. and the working members of the Society", which was sent to Mr G. A. Wills (later Sir George Wills, the 1st Baronet). The report, together with a list of some of the Aveline's Hole finds, was probable sent sometime between 1 August and mid-November 1914. The extract reads: "Professor Fawcett of Bristol University took the first skull to Dr. [Arthur] Keith of the Royal College of Surgeons. He pronounced it to be Palaeolithic, and requested Prof. Fawcett to read a paper on it before the Anthropological Institute. At the same time Dr. Andrews of South Kensington [British Museum (Natural History)] pronounced the animal remains as those of an entirely new species. As a result Professor Fawcett requested to become a member. A member who has obtained a prominent position in the Society, announced his intention of opposing his membership, and threatened to whip up non-working members to support him. This member [Barker], who unfortunately has possession of all the remains, is a Socialist of the most pronounced type, and in our judgement, opposed Dr. Fawcett purely on Class Prejudice. Every working member has intimated to me, the Secretary, his intention of resigning from the Society, and I of course, shall do the same. When this happens the remains will therefore be lost to Science, as Dr Fawcett will thus be unable to read his paper."

Feelings were obviously running high and it would appear that Mr George Wills had asked his cousin Mr. H. W. Seccombe Wills to act as a mediator in the dispute. Seccombe Wills must have met Barker and Rennolds before sending a letter to Barker, dated 25 November 1914 (hand-written copy in Wills papers). The letter is headed "Burrington Combe Caves" and reads: "Referring to my recent conversation with you and Mr Rennolds. I shall be glad to know how the relationship of your Society now stand".

A hand-written letter on headed BSRS note paper, from Barker replying to Seccombe Wills, dated the 25 November 1914, includes the following passage: "In compliance [sic] with your instructions I wrote to Mr Edwards re jaw bone [from Aveline's Hole] but as he is away

with the troops was unable to get any reply of a definite character from his parents [at 19 West Street, Bedminster]. They have promised to write to him and have failed. I have however, this morning, by informing them of your letter, succeeded in getting his address and am writing to him by the same post and will immediately let you know results. I am pleased to inform you that at our last meeting arrangements were made to get all past members of the society to rejoin if able, and have been successful in getting all those who have not enlisted back again with one exception and he has now become engaged to be married prefers not to tie himself for the present."

Signed: "Geo. E. Barker. Sec. pro. tem."

Barker's efforts to mend the rift seem genuine enough and he was at least able to persuade some unidentified dissenting members to rejoin the society. As previously mentioned, Barker had arranged for BSRS members to descend Lamb Leer Cavern on 30 November 1914, which suggests limited continuity of the society's activities. It is not known whether Edwards responded to Barker's letter; perhaps he, like Palmer and others, were preoccupied by the demands of their military duties.

Almost two years later Seccombe Wills wrote to Moses Rennolds, and a hand-written copy of his letter, dated the 19 September 1916, reads: "Will you kindly let me know if anything is being done now in the matter of the "Finds" at Burrington Combe, and also where the relicts are being stored, and if anything has been done in regard to removing the same to the Museum?". Next in the file is the undated statement by Barker and Rennolds: "We the undersigned hereby acknowledge the possession of a quantity of remains, human & otherwise, discovered by members of the Bristol Speleological Research Society at the cave known as Aveline's Hole, Burrington Combe now in the possession of Geo. E Barker of 12 Cannon St Bedminster & agree to maintain its safe custody." Signed by Barker and Rennolds (Shaw, 1993, p18).

Over two years later, after Palmer and others had returned from war service, the dispute over the finds came to a head. Palmer (1958) states: "After several vain attempts to get the remains removed to the University, appeal had to be made to the rightful owner Mr. George Wills. As a result of his decision, Mr. Seccombe Wills, Professor E. Fawcett and L. S. Palmer called on the temporary secretary [Barker] at his home and made him hand over the relics. These he brought up from a well in his back garden where they had been hidden. It is believed that the surprise nature of this visit saved the bones from being destroyed". The remains were exhibited at the meeting at the University, on the 19 March 1919⁸, when the UBSS was formally inaugurated. Palmer (1958) notes that: "At the end of the meeting it was decided by a large majority [the dissenters were not identified, though there must obviously have been some] to form a caving society and call it the 'University of Bristol Spelaeological⁹ Society'. L. S. Palmer then suggested that members of the BSRS who had taken his side in the difficult negotiations with the war-time secretary [Barker] should be admitted as members whether or not they were members of the Guild of Undergraduates. This was unanimously agreed with the result that the new Society had a nucleus of experienced cavers". Barker and Rennolds probably did not attend the meeting and they did not join the UBSS. Professor Fawcett was elected as President and Professor Reynolds was appointed as a Vice President in 1921.

⁸ Before the UBSS was formally founded, there was a preliminary meeting of staff and pupils of the University held on 11 March 1919. Professor Fawcett presided and Palmer gave a brief account of the former explorations of the BSRS, and outlined a scheme for future operations (Anon., 1919, & Shaw, 1993).

⁹ See footnote 2. The UBSS did not use the diphthong æ until 1921.

DISCUSSION

Apart from the President, all of the known BSRS members lived in Bedminster, and for about two and a half years they successfully carried out innovative and challenging projects in line with the society's aim of encompassing scientific research in its caving activities. The society's archaeological excavation in Aveline's Hole, enthusiastically followed up by the UBSS for many years after 1919, proved to be particularly important, but unfortunately it also led to the acrimonious custody dispute over the finds. The original sources are by no means complete but they do provide some indication of the views of those involved in the dispute and how it developed.

Seccombe Wills, in his role as mediator, attempted to heal the rift and at one stage it appears that several members who had resigned over the dispute did rejoin. Palmer provides the only first hand account of the dispute and, unfortunately, Barker's reasoning behind his objection to Professor Fawcett's membership of the BSRS is not adequately explained in any of the surviving sources. His retention of the finds during the war was in one respect justifiable, for as Shaw(1993, p18) says: "Barker and Rennolds were perhaps the natural people to keep the specimens safe, as they were not called up for military service like the others". It is understandable that Palmer and his supporters might feel aggrieved by Barker's conduct. G. E. Wills and H. W. Seccombe Wills took a conciliatory approach throughout the war, but afterwards they agreed to be involved in the recovery of the finds from Barker and they supported the move to form the UBSS.

Professor Reynolds, the BSRS President, seems to have kept a low profile in the dispute, although he was consulted shortly before the finds were recovered. It is not known whether he attended the meetings of 11 and 19 March 1919, and it may or may not be significant that he was not invited to become a Vice President of the UBSS until 1921. Herbert Taylor (1968), an early and respected UBSS member, who was not involved in the dispute, commented; "I always thought that he [Barker] should have been given the opportunity to join the society when the first hard feelings had died down. The finds might well have been lost without him".

The historical importance of this dispute was that the BSRS was effectively disbanded when nine out of the eleven of their members who are known to have survived the war decided to join the newly formed UBSS. The BSRS had the distinction of being one the earliest caving groups in the country, and only the second which was devoted to scientific research. The experienced and enthusiastic members from the earlier society had a major influence on the objectives and success of the UBSS; the first university caving society, who to this day accept suitable non-university members.

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APPENDIX : ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS
(other than published references already quoted)

BARKER, E. G. G. Birth Certificate; 1891 Census; and Bristol directories.

BROWNSEY, W. J. Birth certificate; 1891 Census, Bristol directories; and the late F. H. North, MBE, knew Brownsey when they both lived at West Street in 1920s-30s.

CRANDON, G. L. Birth certificate; Bristol directories; Probate Registry; Mrs. Joyce Marsh, Weston-super-Mare, great niece; John Budd, JP, Chairman of the Bedminster Cricket Club (& photo.); Taff Gillingham, The Suffolk Regiment Old Comrades Association; Public Record Office, Kew, WO 339 officers records, and London Gazette, Supplements.

EDWARDS, A. G. Birth and marriage certificates; 1891 census; Bristol directories; voters' lists; and Probate Registry.

ESSERY, R. E. Birth certificate; Bristol directories; Clive Essery, Guild of One Name Studies (Essery lineage); and J. A. Perdue.

KERRY, J. A. (or Ja.). Birth certificate (J. L. Kerry); and Commonwealth War Graves Commission (J. Kerry).

PALMER, L. S. Birth certificate; Bristol directories; Mrs Anne Locker, Archivist, Institution of Electrical Engineers; Probate Registry; and Public Record Office, Kew, WO 338 index of army officers (full record not in WO 339).

PEET, H. B. Birth certificate; 1891 census, Bristol directories; the late F. H. North, MBE, was headmaster Connaught Road School when Peet was a teacher there in 1940's-50's; and Mrs Janet Vaughan, Whitchurch, great niece (& photo.).

PERDUE, E. K. Birth certificate; Bristol directories; Probate Registry; and J. A. Perdue, Derbyshire, son (& photo.).

READ, R. F. Birth certificate; 1891 census; Bristol directories; and J. A. Perdue.

RENNOLDS, M. H. Bristol Record Office, copies of church registers, St. John and St. Paul churches, Bedminster; 1891 census; Bristol directories; and Probate Registry.

REYNOLDS, S. H. Bristol directories; University of Bristol Library, Special Collections, (photo); and Probate Registry.

TOZER, H. W. Birth certificate; Bristol directories; Peter Bateman, Bedminster Down, nephew (& photos.); Andrew Whitmarsh, RAF Museum, Hendon; the Public Record Office, Kew, AIR 76 (personal records), and AIR 1/1772 (110 Sqd. records) and the Commonwealth War Graves commission.

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