

## Secretary's Report, 1960-1961

### Meetings

A series of tutorials was given during the Christmas term by Dr. E. K. Tratman on "The Prehistory of the Bristol Region". A higher proportion than usual of the sessional meetings was devoted to caving topics. Last year's improved attendance at meetings was unfortunately not maintained.

### Caving

Caving on Mendip has been somewhat restricted in the latter parts of the year by the frequent flooding of the major swallet caves. Eastwater Cavern has been "out of bounds" since a fall of rock in the boulder ruckle made access dangerous. A considerable amount of work has been done in G.B. Cave. The Ladder Dig was reopened by our climbing specialists and a fixed iron ladder placed in position. The effort has been amply repaid as during February, 1961, a break-through gave access to a superbly decorated passage leading to a grotto that is unrivalled on Mendip for the glory of its helictites. The Bottom Dig showed great promise till it was flooded out, and now that it has been drained again we have every hope of a major discovery. The Bridge has shown signs of collapse; tell-tales have been placed to see how much it is moving. The opinion has been expressed that it ought to be demolished to avoid it collapsing while a party is on or under it. A dig has also been started in Milliar's Quarry Cave at the bottom of Burrington Combe.

In July, 1960, a party returned to Co. Clare with an ambitious programme mapped out. The weather was very unkind and a great deal remains to be done. The major achievement of the party was the establishment of the long-suspected link between Pollnagollum and Poll Elva. Two parties were able to speak to each other through a small opening but no passable route was found. Both Cullaun VI and Poll Cahir Cloggaun West-1 were deemed unsurveyable. The former was found to trend south and not west as had been previously reported. Further fluorescein tests from Cullauns II and V to Killeany and St. Brendan's risings were inconclusive.

Away meets have been held in Yorkshire (Easter), South Wales (October), and Derbyshire (December). The Welsh trip, when Agen Alwedd was visited, was memorable as it coincided with the great October floods.

### Archæology

The past year has not been a very fruitful one. The excavations at the Priddy Circles have now been closed down as no more information was being obtained. The central area of the southern circle was found to be devoid of structures of any kind. This part of the excavation was extended by stripping, with a bulldozer, an extensive area radially to the bank. Only one large hole was found filled with dark earth and looking suspiciously modern. During the winter this hole collapsed and was seen to be a mine shaft. At Gough's Old Cave digging was continued at the back of the outer chamber but no further material of archæological importance was found. Trial trenches have been started in the Long Hole, Cheddar, but the evidence so far is that the whole of the upper layers have been hopelessly disturbed and the lower material is barren.

The Bone Fissure at Olveston, near Almondsbury in Gloucestershire, is being excavated under the direction of Dr. Taylor. This long-reserved site is now being tackled because of the risk that local development arising from the Severn Bridge proposal might bring about the destruction of the site. This limestone fissure contains a cone of dejection formed of yellowish silt and stones, which has been truncated at the present rock surface and covered, together with the surrounding rock, by a sharp, archæologically barren, limestone breccia. Bones, mostly shattered, are abundant in the stony silt; *Rhinoceros hemitæchus*, Bison or *Bos* sp., deer, bear and hyæna have been identified. A fragment probably of an elephant's tusk was found here in 1932 (Davy, 1933). Similar deposits in the Mendips and in the Wye Valley have yielded a cold fauna. That at Olveston differs from these by having a warm fauna rhinoceros present and the horse apparently absent. In this it resembles the Joint Mitnor Cave in South Devon (Sutcliffe, 1960) where the deposits are believed to have been laid down during the last interglacial period.

Efforts were made during the year to find a site that could be profitably excavated. An Easter field camp was held at Burrington and trial excavations made in Burrington Camp, which was shown to have never been occupied. Requests for permission to dig at Dolebury Camp and in Townfield, Charterhouse, were refused. But Mr. George White, of Paywell Farm, kindly gave permission for excavations to be made in the field immediately east of Townfield. Excavations were commenced during the long vacation. Pottery and other objects were found and it seems reasonably certain that the trial trench is close to a building. Persistent flooding made it necessary to fill in the trench but work is to be started again in the coming season.

### Field Headquarters

The caravan has been demolished and its place taken by a new women's quarters. This hut was made possible by donations from friends of the

Society and from members. The University assisted with the provision of some materials. The new hut has its own water supply, using the roof as a catchment, and electric lighting is supplied from the batteries at the main hut. Work has been started on an extension of the main hut to increase the living space. This will also enable overdue repairs to be made.

### **Library**

The librarian, Mr. J. A. Worley, reports that the library has continued to expand. A number of books on caving have been added. Among the other purchases are the five volumes of General Pitt Rivers' excavations, replacing the copies destroyed in the war, and *Prehistoric Art* by Forman Poulik. A substantial amount of binding of periodicals has been taken in hand. A comprehensive library list is being prepared.

### **Museum**

The curator, Miss J. H. West, reports that the material found by the Sidcot School Caving Club at Bos Swallet has been sent on permanent loan to the Society. The material has been catalogued. The Pleistocene fauna case has been rearranged and an exhibition of the finds from the Kings Weston Down barrows is being prepared.

### **Equipment**

Mr. B. L. M. Chapman reports that the ladder at the Ooze Passage in G.B. Cave has been removed for replacement by a fixed one. The old one had become unsafe. A stock of strip steel has been purchased for jobs of this kind. The chain at the top of the 40-ft. drop in G.B. Cave was found to be in a dangerous condition and has been replaced by a new one of heavier gauge. Since the dig in the East Passage has been abandoned the railway there has been dismantled and the parts left ready for use in other parts of the cave. A semi-rotary force pump which the Society acquired has now been put into working order and should prove useful in wet digs.

### **Photography**

Mr. R. A. Shuter reports that the 2×2 in. slide collection has been reclassified by sites and a large number of new slides have been added. The collection now includes slides of the new parts of G.B. Cave. Two new tripods have been acquired, one by gift and the other by purchase.

### **Research on Formation of Caves**

As a result of the stimulus provided by a lecture by Mr. D. Ingle Smith, of the Department of Geography, at the beginning of the Christmas term, certain members of the Society are now carrying out research on cave formation in collaboration with him. The focus of the work is, at present,

on the calcium carbonate content of waters in the caves at various points from sinks to risings. It is hoped that eventually a paper will be forthcoming that will throw some light on the part that solution plays in cave formation.

### **Acknowledgements**

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E. V. GILBERT,  
*Hon. Secretary.*

### REFERENCES

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