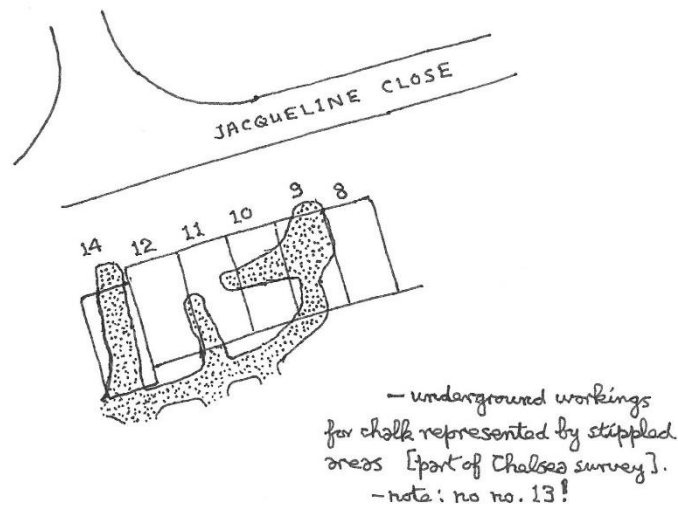


Bury St Edmunds: Jacqueline Close underground Chalk workings

ON December 21st 1968 Lakenheath American High School teacher Gerald McCarthy and his wife Doreen had just left their home at 9 Jacqueline Close, Bury St Edmunds, and were sitting in their car when a subsidence by the front doorstep of the house left a 25 feet deep hole. Six houses, built less than four years previously, had to be evacuated of furniture and other belongings and abandoned. There had been previous subsidences under the road and in gardens, and a survey by the Chelsea Speleological Society in 1969 found disused tunnels in the underlying Chalk, old iron candle-holders (for the men who had worked for Chalk by candle-light) and roof-falls, thought to be associated with subsidences. By August 1969 only three of twenty-eight homes remained occupied.



Chalk had sometimes been extracted by means of tunnels dug into Chalk hillsides, and often extending a considerable distance and branching in different directions. It has been said that this was to allow work in the dry during rain, there was no need to remove overburden, and excavation could take place under someone else's land.