



# DIGITAL LANDSLIDE

"PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE" IS AN OLD ADAGE THAT RINGS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO ADVANCE WARNING OF POTENTIAL LAND SUBSIDENCE.

If the potential disaster has not been anticipated, and the worst happens, the cost of the cure will far outweigh the cost of prevention. It has happened several times in Britain, often with spectacular results.

## History

Prominent among these was the Holbeck Hall Hotel incident of June 1993, when a landslide near Scarborough took virtually an entire hotel to an unexpected demise on the seashore below (Fig. 1).

Old mine shafts can be similarly dangerous, as was witnessed in November 1994 when a drilling rig carrying out site investigation work in Glasgow suddenly toppled into a long disused mine shaft. Fortunately, not all the incidences are as dramatic as these, and loss of life is extremely rare. However, the costs and inconvenience caused when these hazards are not identified can be considerable.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) has been working hard at identifying many of these hazards and hence helping to prevent similar occurrences in the future. As part of this work it has been creating a digital archive of more than a million and a half irreplaceable documents, including deep mine records and original geologists maps and field slips, that are up to 140 years old. This has two purposes; firstly for the security of the data, and secondly to make it more readily accessible.

The intention is to make these documents quickly and easily available to all enquirers, via the BGS's GeoSure ground stability information service, whether they are geoscientists, property developers, consultants or the general public. Soon, the days of geologists or





