

SECRETARIES' REPORT

MARCH 1985 – MARCH 1986

As in the past, this report generally covers the period from one Annual General Meeting to the next; only in acknowledging grants and donations is the latter limit exceeded.

Research

Work by Chris Hawkes, Bruce Levitan, Peter Smart and others is in progress at the Beaker site in Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet. The 'bone chamber' was surveyed at a large scale, and the visible bones have been identified wherever possible. Dating of the sediments and bones, analysis of the sediments, and survey work continue.

Steve Hobbs is conducting research on the hydrology of recharge and storage in the Carboniferous Limestone aquifer of the Mendip Hills, in conjunction with Wessex Water Authority and Bristol Waterworks Ltd. Instrumentation has been installed in Banwell Spring, Mangle Hole and several wells in the area. The study is also examining the effects of quarrying on the hydrology of the eastern Mendips.

Mick McHale and Rob Palmer were leaders of biological and geological projects respectively for the Bahamas phase of Operation Raleigh (the international youth scientific and exploring project). They concentrated on Cat Island where studies of the bat populations and cave geomorphology were carried out. Palmer also led an expedition to Andros Island, examining the biology and geology of the Blue Holes.

A major filming project on the cave ecology of the tropical caves of Malaysia has recently been completed by Phil Chapman in co-operation with the BBC Natural History Unit. Several fascinating new discoveries were made during the filming, including the observation that cave shrews echo-locate. A short radio programme on Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet has also been made for 'The Natural World'.

Expeditions and Cave Visits

Several U.B.S.S. members have been active on recent expeditions including the one by the Lancaster University Speleological Society to Treviso in the Picos de Europa, Northern Spain. Two members also took part in the China Caves expedition. As a result of contacts made there, Dick Willis is to lead a further expedition to Guizhou in 1987. Willis also organized a meeting on Planning Caving Expeditions hosted by the Royal Geographical Society, and he and several other members have contributed to the resulting handbook.

The Easter 1985 visit to Yorkshire was hindered by bad weather, and at Whitsun a small group in Co. Clare was able to achieve little except observe cave entrances in flood. There was also the traditional, mostly student, summer visit to Co. Clare. In the autumn, Mendip trips saw an increase with the arrival of an enthusiastic batch of students, many of whom are still active. There were also visits to some of the classic caves in Yorkshire and South Wales.

Headquarters

The Society's move to new headquarters in the Student's Union Building was completed in 1985. The new tackle room and the dark room are in full use. The library continues to be heavily used, though the publications bequeathed by Professor Tratman have not yet been fully assimilated. The museum reorganization is still in progress.

The Hut at Burrington is being renovated, with new bunks and the installation of a new gas system and lighting, plus improvements to the water supply system.

Meetings

Sessional meetings have included talks on the 1976 Papua New Guinea cave expedition (by Dick Willis), Mendip caves and possible digging sites (by Phil Hendy), and the hydrology of the Llangattock area of South Wales in the light of new discoveries in Daren Cilau (by Bill Gascoyne). There was also a 'hands on' demonstration of flint knapping by James Knight.

Other News

Cliff Ollier is now Professor of Geography in the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales. Peter J. Fowler has taken up the chair of Archaeology at the University of Newcastle.

Trevor Shaw was given the Peter Hauer Award for Spelean History by the National Speleological Society, the first non-American to receive it. He was also invited to Australia to present the opening paper at the Seminar on Australian Cave History, held at Jenolan Caves. Peter Smart lectured on Electron Spin Resonance (ESR) dating of cave deposits at the First International ESR Conference in Japan, and also on karst subjects in China. In U.K. his lecture to the British Hydrological Society was on recharge and storage in the Carboniferous Limestone of Mendip.

Acknowledgements

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The University of Bristol again made a grant towards the cost of publishing *Proceedings*. A grant from the Students' Union assisted the daily running of the Society, and money from the Tratman Fund was used in support of expeditions abroad.

For all these we are grateful; without them research and publication could not continue at their present level.

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