

SECRETARIES' REPORT

MARCH 2016 – MARCH 2017

Caving

The student cavers within the UBSS have seen many successful weekend trips throughout the past year. Both Freshers' weekends proved popular with over 20 new cavers joining us for these. Our annual bonfire weekend saw us back in the Mendips for lamb and more caving, with a contingent from Cambridge University Caving Club (CUCC) joining us for the weekend. A small group went to represent UBSS at the CHECC forum, this year held on Mendip. On top of this, recent trips to Yorkshire and Derbyshire and two trips to South Wales have kept us underground on a regular basis. Andrew Atkinson, in conjunction with Mendip Cave Rescue, organised a rescue training weekend in June, in which we learned about what is involved when caving doesn't go to plan! Various members of the UBSS, both students and non-students, made use of Eurospeleo 2016 being in the UK to carry out a lot of SRT trips.

Caving abroad

Further afield, several members of the Society have taken part in a variety of expeditions, including the CUCC's Austrian expedition to the Loser plateau, the Bristol Exploration Club's expedition to the Philippines and our own expedition to Co. Clare, Ireland. In Austria, exploration was focussed on Tunnocks and Balkonhöhle, involving a camp at -600m, and resulting in over 7 km of newly surveyed passage.

In Ireland, wet weather limited our options, but a decent amount of work was carried out, resulting in a half-complete re-survey of Cullaun One, and fully complete surveys for some smaller caves; Cullaun Zero, Cullaun Zero-One and Carran Mine Cave. Progress towards updating *Caves of County Clare and South Galway* for a new edition is well on its way, however there is still plenty of work to be done. The society is very grateful for the grant from the Tratman Fund which enables continued expeditions to Ireland.

Research

Overground, Graham Mullan has been busy unearthing the stories behind some long-forgotten finds of human remains in caves. Work on tracking down finds from Bone Hole in Cheddar Gorge has brought to light a remarkably large assemblage of material, spread across four museums. In addition, Graham has uncovered the background to a single human mandible from a cave below Stokeleigh Camp, near the Avon Gorge. At the time of writing, the radiocarbon dates from both sites are still awaited. Thanks are due to the Oliver Lloyd Memorial Fund and the National Trust for funding the dating work.

Other

The long process of having Pen Park Hole scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest by Natural England was completed earlier this year. This has attracted a degree of publicity and has led to much work with the BBC. On the day that the schedule was announced in August, Laura Rawlings from BBC Radio Bristol was taken to the head of the pitch, a trip that she reprised on camera in February. On the latter occasion, Linda Wilson was interviewed by Laura, underground. Further filming with the BBC will take place later this month and this piece will be broadcast nationwide on 'The One Show' later this year. Thanks are due to

Andrew Atkinson, Tony Boycott and Clive Owen for doing all of the heavy lifting but getting almost no screen time.

On the behalf of the students, I give our thanks to the Bristol Students' Union for allowing us to recommence SRT training in the Richmond building, and to all of those who have worked to reinstate this facility for us over recent years. Since our return to the stairwell of the Union, Jacob Podesta has been teaching (and re-teaching!) new and old cavers in preparation for the trips to Yorkshire and Derbyshire; many thanks to him for this.

Appointments over the past year include Andrew Atkinson being elected as a warden of Mendip Cave Rescue. Clive Owen was appointed UBSS Tween Twins leader, following the breakthrough in this cave by the Wessex Cave Club. Linda Wilson was elected to the post within the University of Deputy Chair of Convocation and the Alumni Association.

The club has also been granted keys for Ogof Craig a Fynnon and Agen Allwedd which expands the opportunities for trips. Also, the long running Wilderness Lectures have seen continued success this year, with Dick Willis continuing his work highlighting the expeditions of others. Finally, the Librarian wishes to thank the following for donations of books: Brian Collingridge, Alan Gray, Dr. Gina Moseley, the family of the late Tony Philpott, Galina Self and Dr. Martin Crossley-Evans.

Ashley Gregg and Helen Frawley