

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MARCH 2023–MARCH 2024

The society has enjoyed another splendid year. As a group we have achieved much, yet thankfully our degeneracy has not changed. Thanks to the efforts of Mia Jacobs and Jake Reich, we gained Silver Accreditation from Bristol SU, particular thanks are also due to Jess Brock for her successful SRT training programme and for her work as tackle officer.

The year got off to a flying start with a very full itinerary, starting with the customary freshers' trips to Mendip and Wales trips. We saw a strong retention rate, with many returning to cave more and more, securing the future of the society for the upcoming year. Other trips took place to Yorkshire and Derbyshire, with Mendip remaining a popular destination for mid-week caving.

There have been a number of very successful social events this year, starting with the chilli night to introduce new members to the club, followed by with the traditional Tuesday pub nights which have remained popular throughout the year, rotating around different venues in the city. In this regard, WhatsApp has proved an efficient means of communication and decision making. There have also been film nights and a wide range of well-received evening talks. UBSS Members also came together at a fun run in Ashton Court and raised the sum of £669 for the Cave Rescue Organisation in thanks for their assistance in a surface incident involving one of our members.

Work has continued on the project in Kent's Cavern, Torquay to document the historic graffiti in the cave.

The Society remains grateful to the Oliver Lloyd Memorial Fund and the Tratman Fund of the University of Bristol for their continued support.

Stanley Lewis, Hon. Secretary

MUSEUM REPORT 2023–2024

In May 2023, after almost 18 months, the long awaited restoration work was completed in the old coach house known to the UBSS as The Stables. The rotten floor joists beneath the library stack room had been cut out and removed, the damp in the side wall was dealt with and two new windows were installed at the back of the building. Work parties were hastily convened and the job of internal redecoration was started. The walls were repainted white, and our magnificent staircase installed in 2020 was finally treated to several coats of wood stain.

The museum displays were returned relatively quickly to their cabinets and now await the next phase of work, a major redisplay of the collection. Upstairs, work to restore the library stack room and its contents has taken longer, but is progressing, thanks to the efforts of our Librarian, Nathan Cubitt. With the removal of various bookshelves and piles of books, the museum stack room is now mostly accessible.

Dr Adelle Bricking has finally been able to obtain the sample she needed from the Backwell Cave material to complete work funded by the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. Nick Fitzgerald, a PhD candidate at the University of Bristol researching burnt mounds in British prehistory was given access to the material from Bos Swallet in Burrington to undertake organic residue analysis of pot lipids from ceramics found in burnt mounds to

allow him to uncover the use and function of these pots as well as understanding the wider role of burnt mounds in British prehistoric societies. He has examined the material and a formal analysis request is awaited.

Many years after their excavation in 1957/8 by Arthur ApSimon as part of his work on the Brean Down Roman temple, the collection of coins from there has been re-examined by Susan Walker, a current PhD candidate at the University of Warwick, researching the use and deposition of Roman coins on Romano-British sanctuaries. Susan is particularly interested in imitations, including the *Fel Temp Reparatio* (FH3) minim issues that seem particularly common at Uley, Brean Down and Lydney Park and it seems likely that the Brean Down collection will facilitate further insights into the coinage of the period.

January brought good news when Professor David Richards found, in the Department of Geographical Sciences, a collection of original section drawings of the excavations at Picken's Hole on Crook Peak, Somerset carried out in the 1960s. These drawings, long believed lost, have now been scanned and will contribute significantly to our understanding of the site.

Work on the material from Fishmonger's Swallet in South Gloucester has continued. The results of further ¹⁴C dates are now known and clarify the time period during which the site was in use. We are grateful to the British Cave Research Association for underwriting the work.

The Society's collection continues to play a significant part in research conducted in other institutions. A sampling request was received from Dr William Marsh from the Natural History Museum in connection with a project focused on ascertaining the genetic signature of wolf (*Canis lupus*) samples from Upper Palaeolithic Britain. This aims to identify whether samples from across the UK that have previously determined to be wolves are in fact early examples of domesticated dogs, aiding interpretation of the complexity of human society in Britain during the late Upper Palaeolithic. The sample taken was from Sun Hole in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset.

I am grateful to Charlotte Harman who has worked with me during the past year as student museum curator, focusing on our long-held aim to see the museum achieve Arts Council Accreditation. We also owe very grateful thanks to Kate Iles of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery who has agreed to act as our Museum Mentor and has very generously given both time and expertise in this regard. We have to demonstrate an acceptable governance structure and have had to put in place a Collections Development Policy and a Forward Plan. The bulk of the work on this has been carried out by Charlotte and I am extremely grateful to the Oliver Lloyd Memorial Fund for funding her time on this project.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has helped in the Museum over the past year.

Linda Wilson, Museum Curator.