

UBSS

Newsletter

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Manor Farm Dig
Dickon Digs Mendip Cave

Picos 2010
Pushing Spanish Caves with OUCG

Grotte de la Messandrie
A "collector's piece" in France

Spring/Summer 2010



Editor's Piece

Frank

It's a new student year, and I'm hoping that someone will turn one of my pipe dream ideas into a reality:

- A coffee bar at the queue for the ladder pitch in Swildon's on Freshers' weekend. If you don't have any cash then you can pay with krabs.
- A caving computer game to take armchair caving to the next level. Featuring real levels made from 3D survey data, Descent-style monsters and penalties for breaking stals.

- To complement the squeeze machine, a sump machine made out of an old bath tub, gravel and muddy water.

But I'll settle for some nice write-ups of interesting, fun, exhausting or scary caving trips, especially from new members! E-mail newsletter@ubss.org.uk

Dates For New Term

12th October 2010

Free Food Tuesday

An introductory social evening to give new members a chance to meet older ones and talk caving.

16th - 17th October 2010

Freshers' Weekend

An introductory weekend for new new members. Come along and find out how mud and cold water can be really nice!

30th - 31st October 2010

Wales Weekend

A weekend caving in South Wales - home of many of the UK's longest caves.

13th - 14th November 2010

Bonfire Weekend

Bonfire, barbecue, fireworks and even some caving, down at our hut in the Mendips.

26th - 28th November 2010

CHECC

Annual weekend meet of the "Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs". Always good fun and an opportunity to meet cavers from other clubs.

10th - 11th December 2010

Christmas Dinner

Our annual Christmas celebration at the hut with a take-away turkey dinner.

Manor's Muddy End

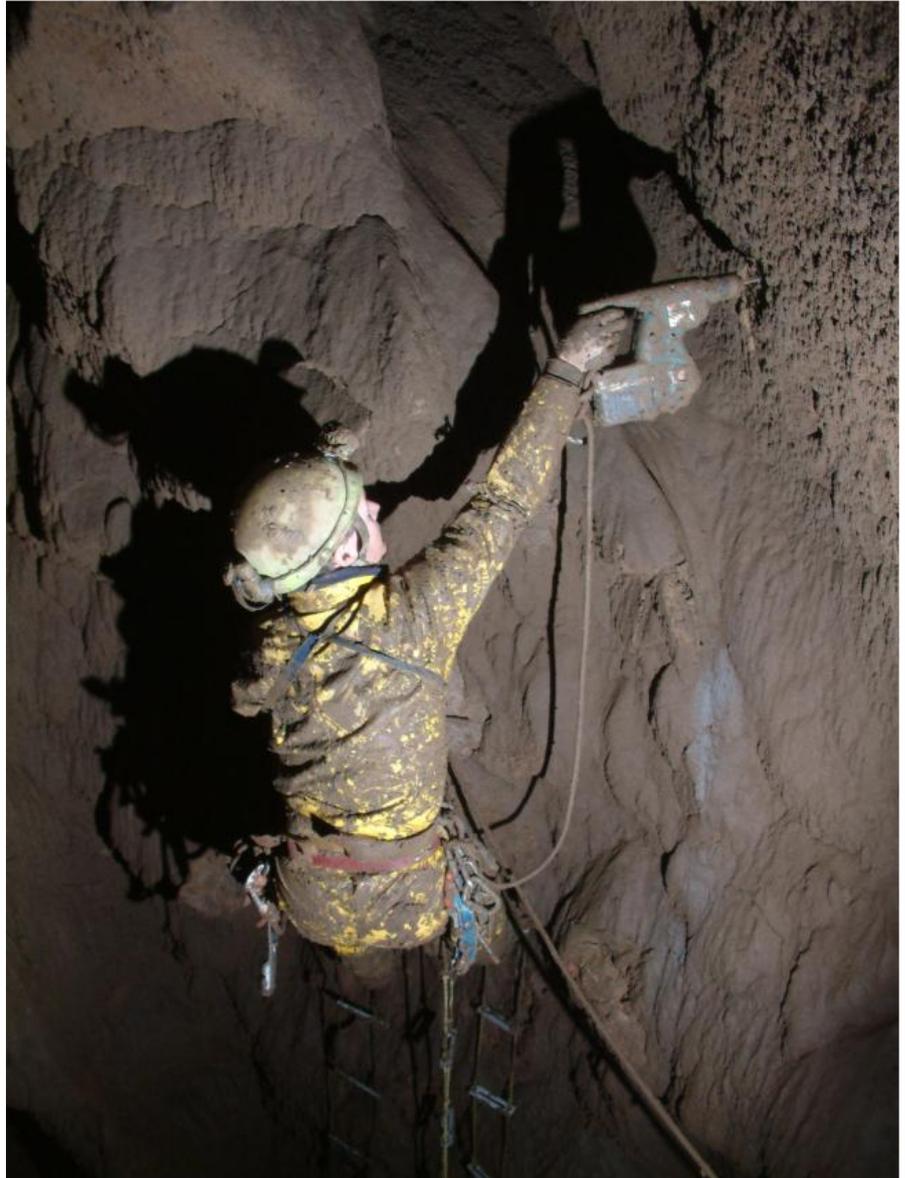


Dickon Morris

The Cheddar cave system is Mendip's largest with 6 major caves explored to a length of greater than 1km each. The resurgence of Gough's cave has the greatest flow of any resurgence on Mendip. This system has enormous potential and digging has or is taking place in all 6 caves. Of late this has been extremely successful with tremendous breakthroughs taking place in Upper Flood Swallet (2006) and Charterhouse Cave (2008/2009 with many open leads still existing).

The swallet at Manor Farm was the last of the major underground streamways to be opened up, a feat which was achieved after extended digging and blasting in 1973. The cave was extended to its modern limit shortly afterwards and despite various attempts by the BEC and other clubs no more southerly passage has been discovered. That said, the cave has significant potential being more than 30m above the probable water table at its lowest point. The lowest passages in the cave consist mainly of large phreatic rifts which it is hard to believe simply close down.

In 2006 'MadPhil' Rowsell (BEC) visited the terminal passage with a view to assessing its potential. What he found was a tight rift with a very strong draft ending in a



loose boulder choke, a strong draft on Mendip is not to be ignored so a squeeze within the rift was widened to allow easy access to the choke. However the project was put on the back burner while other projects in Eastwater Cavern were pursued.

I first met Phil on the 2009 Asopladeru la Texa expedition where we travelled down to underground camp together. I was interested to hear about his extremely tough, prolonged and unfortunately slightly disappointing campaign in Eastwater (50m of passage was

found in the end) and rather naively said that I would be willing to help with Eastwater or indeed any future digs. So it was that sometime in early November I received an e-mail asking if I wanted to go digging at a mystery location on Mendip. The date suggested was the same as CHECC but I had already decided not to go to this and so it was that on 21st November while most other student cavers were waking up in tents with horrendous hangovers I headed down Manor Farm.

The Dig

Over the past few weekends Phil and Tom Clayton (BEC) had been attacking the boulder choke with blasting caps. By capping and removing boulders they had been able to progress around 8m along a solid wall; at some points they had been forced to dig upwards – an extremely dangerous thing to do as the boulders you remove will have nowhere to fall but onto you. On the last trip a black space had been encountered with a single boulder blocking the way on. I was not told about this until we reached the dig face as Phil did not want me coming along simply because there might be a breakthrough but for my interest in digging in general. They had been digging the previous day and were in a state of great excitement when I joined them on Friday evening. Phil later commented that I must have thought them mad as they were continually chuckling and making dramatic noises of impending doom as we drank in the hunters, in fact I had thought nothing of it for you meet plenty of characters in caving.

The problem was that the remaining boulder looked as if it may be propping others up, however further investigation suggested that it might not be and Phil decided to remove it anyway. This was done without the choke collapsing and the breakthrough was made. Unfortunately instead of breaking thorough into a massive trunk passage a small chamber within the choke was gained. It had one solid wall to

the right and a partially solid roof, with a tiny trickle of water entering down a rift in the wall. The chamber was around 5m long and 2m wide and extremely muddy. However the disappointment was short lived for at the far end of the chamber was a considerable drop into what looked like a large rift passage somewhat reminiscent of the drop into preliminary passage in Daren Cilau. The only blockage consisted of 2 small boulders jammed in the gap. These would have yielded rapidly to the capping bar but a massive detached block directly above forced caution and a retreat was wisely called.

That evening there was much discussion over (quite) a few beers, although Phil being a mining engineer I was inclined to agree with whatever he thought would prevent my fragile body becoming strawberry jam. So it was that the next day's trip involved carrying scaffolding bars down to the choke – a most irritating task and probably the only aspect of digging that I really detest.

Two weeks later on the 6th December we were back armed with enough scaffolding to keep a small building site in operation. Thankfully we were assisted by two cavers from New Zealand, Ollie and Mark who as well as making it a whole lot easier to carry the scaffolding had some very entertaining stories about the tourists that they took caving, many of whom discovered that they had a horrible fear of caves after descending a ladder pitch. However Ollie and Mark it

seems had little sympathy and would often force them to complete a through trip so that the other customers were not disappointed. A definite lesson in leading freshers!

Using an obscene amount of bars and clips Phil was able to construct a scaffold cage above the drop so that if one of the boulders were to move it would be supported and unable to drop down with less than desirable consequences for any caver who happened to be below. With mounting excitement the boulder blocking the way was capped and the drop negotiated to enter ... another boulder chamber with no obvious ways on.

'Best trip of my life so far'

The following weekend we were back, this time minus Tom who was busy with the Red Rose in Yorkshire. We had a good look at the second boulder chamber and to be honest it didn't look great. There was a solid wall and mostly solid roof but the floor and all the other walls were boulders. The lowest point of the chamber was a small alcove in the solid wall in the bottom right hand corner. The rock also appeared to be water-worn with evidence of flow into the boulders following the dip of the limestone. It was decided therefore to dig here and Phil proceeded to break up the boulders in the floor with caps. I then stacked these in a variety of convenient holes in the boulders; easiest spoil removal imaginable!

This continued for around 30

minutes until a hole almost a metre deep had been excavated. It was then that we heard the first drop, a boulder falling a considerable distance unhindered. We both grinned and continued to remove boulders. A short while later Phil had opened up a hole looking into darkness. It was no longer necessary to stack boulders in the chamber, they were simply kicked down and the continuing sounds of falling boulders caused a level of excitement that I had thought unthinkable on a digging trip!

10 very entertaining minutes later a hole passable by a caver had been excavated and Phil suggested that I be the first one through, something which I immediately agreed to. It was not a friendly looking hole. About body width with one wall composed of a large slab making up part of the choke it was not what I would have called stable. However there looked to be a large ledge just below the tight top section so I inserted my body into the gap and lowered myself until my feet were touching rock managing to kick out only a single boulder in the process. By twisting my body awkwardly I could see that a muddy boulder climb continued to a steep muddy slope about a metre below and there was space – a lot of space! Heart pounding with excitement I descended to the floor and turned around to see a large steeply descending passage leading off! An older caver may have been more cynical but in my youthful exuberance I could already see this passage boring to cheddar without so much as a

choke or a sump. It's fair to say that I was excited and most of what I then said would be unprintable. The trip is described in my logbook as 'best caving trip of my life so far'. To my mind we were about to walk into several kilometres of passage.

Pushing a Mendip Cave

It is poor digging etiquette to push a discovery with a key team-mate absent so we could do nothing but look at the inviting passage and then return to the surface to contact Tom. Phil managed to get hold of him late that evening and he allowed us to recce the discovery and

ensure it did not close down immediately to another dig. We decided to follow the passage for 20m and if it was still going wait for Tom to join us on another weekend.

It took us 15 minutes to reach the dig face the following day such was the level of pent up energy. We wormed through the choke to the second boulder chamber where Phil suggested that I go first, I didn't need telling twice and lowered myself through the squeeze before setting off along virgin passage! The passage was around 10m high by 2m wide and extremely muddy but I didn't care, I was the first



person to disturb the muddy floor and by god it was a rush. After 20m of intoxicating progress the passage halted at a second choke. It looked easily diggable but that day's romp was certainly over.

Phil was on a recce in Burma during January and February so it wasn't until the end of February that we got to go and attack the choke at the end of the extensions. However before this could be done we felt it necessary to do something to the squeeze at the breakthrough point. It was extremely awkward and did not inspire confidence, in fact it gave the impression that it was only a matter of time before one of us would breathe our last in its cold embrace. It was scaffolded and then capped with remarkably good results. While Phil completed the scaffolding Tom and I went to dig the terminal choke.

Amazingly this went after only 20 minutes of excited digging with the final 2 large slabs being kicked down a slope into the enticing black space which Tom then squeezed into, there was open passage on the other side. Once again we were off to Cheddar!

The passage led up gibbering with excitement up a mud slope. At the top there seemed to be two ways on. I scrambled down the lower route and was only slightly disappointed to meet a dead end. Tom had found the way on through a squeeze into a small chamber, by ducking under an arch at the far side of the chamber a large rift was entered, somewhat

similar to the original discovery, this was hardly surprising seeing as the cave is entirely fault controlled in the extensions, this fault is significant enough to be marked on the geological map of the area and we had good hopes that the cave would follow this fault for a reasonable distance and maybe even to the Cheddar master cave. Shortly after entering the rift we were stopped by a very steep muddy slope that would require tackle.

The following weekend we were back with a not insubstantial length of ladders. It's not every day you get to drop an unexplored pitch on the Mendips and despite the relative misery of the passage it was with excitement that I put in a bolt and attached the ladder. The bottom led almost instantly to a drop through a fairly small hole. This was laddered and Tom descended into the unknown, at one point having to call for extra ladder. His news was not good, the large rift terminated in an exceptionally miserable sump which we named the Flytrap.

In an attempt to find a way on we have climbed four avens but found nothing large enough to be entered without chemical persuasion. Despite this I am of the opinion that one of these avens could very well provide a way on as on occasions I have felt a slight draft in the top of the rift. Another theory is that the draft is only present in very low water conditions when the flytrap opens allowing airflow through. The sump itself was dived by Phil in April in virtually zero visibility.

Somewhat unsurprisingly – since his only sensation was touch – no way on was found, however a return is planned and it is hoped that better visibility will be encountered on this second dive.

The surveyed length of the extensions is around 100m and the cave drops 30m from the dig to the sump, this makes Manor Farm one of the deepest caves on Mendip but it has to be said that the chances of further extension are not amazing, for a start all of the potential ways on will require fairly extensive digging operations. It is not obvious where would be the best place to dig anyway. Nevertheless the campaign as a whole does go to show that despite what others may have told you digging is by no means pointless so get out there and get digging!

Treasurer's Report March 2010



Graham Mullan

This has been a poor year for the economy and, sadly, spelaeological societies are not immune from the problems that beset the rest of the world. However, we could be in a far worse state than we actually are. We have not had to cut back on any of our activities and, in fact, have managed to spend quite a lot in some areas.

Looking first at the Receipts and Payments account, we see that income is quite substantially down. Partially that is due to normal fluctuations in various categories, but the drop in investment income from £728.29 to £34.63 shows just how we have been affected by the financial crisis. Expenditure

was up. Ok, in part because we published Proceedings 24.3 late (on a schedule that we shall now, I hope, maintain, of publication in Spring, rather than Autumn) but also because we did not stint on areas such as library purchases. One that I wish to highlight here, is insurances. Overall spending was down, because, we now self-insure the Hut, but PI was up. However, income from members for PI was also up. This is a healthy trend as it demonstrates that we have a lot of active cavers remaining with the Society.

Overall, this lead to a deficit for the year of £661.28. Except it didn't as the printers accidentally charged us VAT on the bill for Proceedings 24.3. This sum, £326.10 has now been reclaimed. Had it arrived

before the end of the year, the bottom line deficit would have been only £335.18.

Turning now to the Balance Sheet. There is more red there than ever before, during my tenure as Treasurer and I think this is the first time that our total cash holding has dropped during that time. All of the spending can be justified, however - and more is due as the hut roof needs urgent work. One bright note is that sales of Caves of Co. Clare and South Galway are holding up. We shall need to update and reprint quite soon now. Finally, at the top of that page, assets. If someone can tell me a safe way of investing much of that money and getting a better return than the current 0.10% I would be interested to hear of it.

Receipts and Payments Account Year Ending Jan 31st 2010

2008/09		2008/09		2008/09		2008/09	
£	£	£	£	Assets	£	£	£
Receipts				Investments:			
Members subscriptions	2,346.00	2,335.00	22,897.92	Current Bank Account	AMC Bank		21,207.88
Student member subscriptions	867.00	612.00	1,323.10	Cash in Hand	Hon. Secretaries		2,088.16
<u>Union Grants:</u>	245.14	0.00	16.80		Hon Treasurer		16.80
		<u>165.06</u>	45.91				6.87
Treatman Grant	900.00	750.00	<u>24,283.73</u>	Total Assets			<u>23,319.71</u>
Interest on investments	728.29	34.63					
Sales of Publications (not C.of CC)	677.53	551.88		Represented by:			
Donations	566.00	351.00		Reserves			
Tax refund on Covenants	542.81	548.03		Hut Fund -	brought forward	3,064.79	
Sales of Charterhouse Permits	1.00	0.00		add/(subtract) year result	(43.47)		3,021.32
Personal contributions to PI Insurance	399.00	555.00		Printed Publications			
Miscellaneous	0.00	0.00			brought forward	4,830.00	
		<u>5,902.60</u>		Library & Museum Fund			
Total Receipts	<u>7,272.77</u>				brought forward	981.69	
					Tfr from CoCC Res.	52.26	
Payments					OCL Fund Grant		465.82
Printing	0.00	2,500.10			add/(subtract) year result	(568.13)	
Postage	0.00	381.97		Equipment Hire Fund			
Capital	596.85	165.06			brought forward	486.47	
Current	134.66	0.00			add/(subtract) year result	(217.40)	269.07
	62.00			Caves of County Clare Reserve			
Library Acquisitions	0.00	401.35			brought forward	10,203.87	
Sessional Meetings	0.00	25.00			Tfr to Lib & Mus	(52.26)	
Other Postages	127.91	95.99			add/(subtract) year result	526.26	10,677.87
Hon Sec's Petty Cash	0.00	0.00		Receipts & Payment Reserve			
Stationery & Duplicating	60.43	50.42			brought forward	4,716.91	
Insurances	1,160.00				Tfr to PP Fund		
	908.95	1,347.50			Tfr to Lib & Mus		4,055.63
	152.00	503.40		Total Reserves			<u>23,319.71</u>
Travel Money	40.30						
Donation to Mendip Rescue Organisation	0.00	1,850.90					
(Surplus) /Deficit on Annual Dinner	20.57	154.00					
IT expenses	334.43	0.00					
Fresh	0.00	50.00					
Miscellaneous	20.00	103.50					
Treatman Grant	900.00	15.59					
		20.00					
		750.00					
Total Payments	<u>4,518.10</u>						
		<u>6,563.88</u>					
	<u>2,754.67</u>						
		<u>(661.28)</u>					

HONORARY AUDITOR'S REPORT: I have examined the above Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31st January 2010, and the attached Balance Sheet as at that date, and certify that they are in accordance with the Society's accounting records and explanations provided.

D.J.Allen honorary auditor

Picos 2010



Ross Hemsley

This summer saw the 49th year of caving in the Picos de Europa, Spain, by Oxford University Caving Club. As in many previous years, UBSS made its presence felt, this time with me and Dickon Morris being the Bristol contingents. The purpose of this expedition was to explore Sima de la Chapa, a small but promising cave located near Texa; a cave which had previously been explored to a depth of over 1,000 m.

Camp was established at around 1,600 metres, with a stunning panoramic view of the Cares Gorge – around seven kilometres horizontally and six hundred metres vertically from the nearest road. Plenty of

entertainment was provided whilst trying to see how quickly this could be hiked up when doing a carry. The fastest time was achieved by Dickon, although I am sure he would say it wasn't worth it in retrospect.

Once base camp was set, the first task to be undertaken was to de-rig the rope from Texa, which involved bouncing to around 400m with plenty of tackle sacks. This provided a fine introduction to Picos caving with its series of tight meanders spread between numerous impressive pitches. It also provided an introduction to hauling hundreds of metres of wet rope up seemingly endless metres of pitches - certainly an unnatural experience for the seasoned Mendip caver.

The expedition proceeded with a series of pushing trips, the first being led by Gavin Lowe and Dickon. In this trip rigging was established to around half way down the first undescended pitch where they ran out of rope. The next day Nick Edwards and I returned with more rope and reached the bottom, which appeared to lead straight to an impassable meander. The only other way on was a small and decorated fossil passage which I eventually decided to push. Fortunately for the team, and unfortunately for cave conservationists, the passage proceeded around a corner to a tight but obvious descent. This I down-climbed until I realised that there was no floor, only a black space too deep for my headlight to penetrate. After (somewhat more carefully) climbing back



up we rigged a series of naturals and descended. This was my first time pushing new passage and I patiently hung above the pitch placing three bolts by hand before descending the 30m pitch below. Shortly after this we ran out of rope, but I was already looking forward to the next opportunity to explore further into the cave.

A few days passed and several more pitches were were pushed until a depth of around 200 m was reached. Unfortunately, this is where the expedition ran into problems with permits. It became apparent that permission had been denied by the park authorities after a recent change in leadership. Thus, despite having an open and un-descended lead, all caving was stopped whilst we waited for the decision to be appealed. This gave a welcome opportunity for a few days relaxing in the sun. Of course, no relaxing actually took place; most of the members having hiked to the summit of the nearest peak on the first day, and the others having hiked down to the bottom of the 1,000 m deep Cares Gorge on the second.

Sadly, the original decision was upheld and it was decided that the expedition would be ended early. A final de-rigging trip was undertaken to recover all the tackle used in the expedition so far. Whilst de-rigging the final pitch, Dickon and I discovered another lead which lead away from the obvious way on. Having had so few opportunities to push new passage, we decided to see if it



developed significantly. As it turned out, it did develop significantly. It started with around ten metres that could be passed on hands and knees, before becoming an unpleasant flat out crawl.

Of course, Dickon not being one to turn away from unexplored horizontal passage, we continued along this arduous tube through a series of tight (and sharp!) squeezes for around 50 m. Finally, we reached a point where Dickon said he could see that it opened out 'just ahead'. Before this point, however, was a particularly tight squeeze that appeared to be roughly person-sized. Dickon pushed this for several minutes before deciding he was stuck and asking for me to pull him out. I never got to see through this gap as there was no space to look past, though Dickon assured me at the time that there was standing room 'just ahead'. I dare-say that his assessment of space required for standing is a little over-optimistic.

Once the mountains of tackle had been prussicked out and

hiked back down to the car, it was time to head home. Dickon decided that he would use his new found spare time to go and join the near-by Matienzo expedition along with some other members of OUCC. This apparently involved a lot less work and a lot more cheap alcohol than the Picos expedition. I decided instead to take the opportunity to get a cheap lift home and helped out with the driving of the expedition vehicle.

Ultimately the Expedition was deemed to be a success, with a vertical depth of 200m having been explored down to an open and obvious lead. It was unfortunate that the expedition had to be ended early, though it is generally thought that the permit will be granted once the layers of bureaucracy have been cleared. So now the fiftieth anniversary of OUCC in Picos is already in the planning stages, and it will no doubt be another excellent trip in an area still full of potential for new and unexplored caves.

'Twas a Night to Remember...

and for those who don't here's a report of the 2010 AGM and annual dinner!



Ruth Briggs

We held our AGM this in much grander surroundings than usual, in the Wills Memorial building. A fitting location for Arthur's final AGM as president before handed the reigns over to Bob Churcher. We were lucky enough to receive a fantastic talk from Dr Alistair Pike, who spoke about isotopes in Archaeology; from cave dating to reconstructing past diet. Alistair very kindly took some of our members on a small field trip down into the basement of the Wills Memorial Building to have a look at some of the sophisticated machinery that is kept there.

The dinner this year was again held at the Muset, and was attended by 36 People.

The meal was as well received as last year, with no complaints. During the course of the meal the year's awards were presented to their deserving recipients. They were as follows:



Manliest Man Award

The evening followed its usual and unsurprising outcome, when the after party began. The party was surprisingly uneventful, with few drunken misdemeanours. Caving games were played with great gusto, with the squeeze machine yet again being adapted to provide a real caving experience, with water being



The budget cabaret act recieved a mixed reaction

poured or dribbled upon the trapped caver. The saucepan and sling game made an appearance with the pairings of Alice and Cat, and Alex Crow and Dickon both of which produced some good results. Body traversing was attempting but failed with a rather spectacular crash. The evening revellers dispersed and the sleeping bags were unfurled well into the morning.

Rose-tinted Specs Award

Mike Salter – for taking 2m less ladder than needed for the cave.

Bag in Hand Award

Dickon Morris – for pooing in a bag and trying to return it.

Golden Boot Award

Ryan Warwick – for breaking two fingers on a social.

Damsel in Distress Award

James MacFarlane – for frequent cross dressing and falling out of a boat.

Manliest Man Award

Katie Monk – for not realising her ankle was broken for two months.

Keenest Fresher Award

Alice Whale – for unwavering enthusiasm.

UBSS Ambassadors Award

Frank Doherty and Debs Mann – for caving (sort of) in Nepal.

Honorary Award

Cat's Mum – for providing fantastic accommodation on an UBSS weekend in Yorkshire.

Grotte de la Messandrie

A French Collector's Piece



Graham Mullan

This one had been lurking on Linda's "to do" list for a long time, probably ten years or more, so when Bob and Rosemary Jones came to visit and were looking for something new to see, the time came for us to try to find it.

Finding it was, of course the key. We have the description and survey in Vidal's *Cavernes en Périgord* and a brief mention in a Wessex report from 20 years back, but no good description on how to locate it. All Vidal says is that it is located "on the side of a valley, close to the houses at Messandrie". Still, not to be put off, we loaded caving kit into the car and off we went. Messandrie was easily located, being not far from the show cave at Rouffignac, and is a farm at the end of a single track road, with valleys on three sides. Hum. Fortunately we located the farmer, who was relaxing just inside his barn and Linda asked him for help, having better French than the rest of us. Sure he knew where it was and, pointing, said "it's about 300 m that way, but you'll never find it from here!" He did tell us how to find it however, if we didn't mind a bit of a walk and for the benefit of posterity here are the instructions: Return back along the track and take the track towards le Cluzeau, from that track take a track to the right. Follow this track down into the valley and along, passing a field

gate on the way. After about 800 m (measured from where I'm not sure) you will see a concrete cistern by the side of the track. The cave is just above this. Sure enough we located the cistern and a small track led up the side of the valley. At the end of this, under a cliff, was the cave entrance, draughting nicely. Bob took a GPS reading, UTM 31T 0338481 4986454 (alt 181 m) and when we put this back on the map, we were, indeed, 280 m from where we had been talking to the farmer. Sensibly, however, we had not got changed before looking for it and, as the walk back to the car took 45 minutes, we called it a day at this point.

Two days later, we were back at the parking space nice and early and an hour later we were entering the cave. The slot at the entrance drops down into a roomy enough passage, a bit muddy and with copious

quantities of flies in the first few metres. In general, the cave was a tall canyon passage, but divided into more than one level by meanders and by stal blockages. As we progressed through the cave it steadily became both muddier and better decorated, though the stal also became muddier, too. For those who know Co. Clare, imagine the meander section of Poll Cragreagh but with added stal and mud.

However, time was passing, we wanted some photos and as some of the awkward little climbs and traverses had rather tired Rosemary, we turned back without knowing for sure whether we had actually reached the "Galerie d'Argile" but muttering that if we hadn't, we didn't really want to! The passage lengths given by Vidal are a little difficult to follow, but I think we had done about two thirds of the cave shown on



his survey. We are told that a few years back the cave was pushed further and reaches some “big stuff” but that is a wetsuit trip.

On the way back, we met the farmer again, so were able to thank him for directions, which were both perfect and wholly necessary.

The photos, courtesy of Bob Jones, do not do justice to quite how muddy this place is, colour is needed for that, but do give a flavour of how well decorated it is.



Hut News



Tony Boycott

About two years ago we noticed that the back wall of the hut was permanently damp, so much so that the fireside seat was rotting, as was the wood by the small window. The window was duly replaced and waterproof bitumen painted on the wall – result: no change and unfortunately the newly upholstered seat carried on getting damaged.

The front shutters were also seen to be rotting and falling apart, presenting a security risk. We're not sure if these were the original 1919 shutters, but they could have been, so wood was cut and treated to make new ones.

Then lethargy set in and nothing happened. Finally in July after much cajoling, Chris Pepper and I built and fitted the new shutters over three weekends. They should prove stronger than the originals, being glued tongue and groove with an added cross brace. Charlie Self and Clive Owen sorted out the ponding on the roof in front of the chimney, there are now two lead pans draining either side of the chimney, grouted into the brickwork, with new felting in the area and a barrier to disperse sideways any water that might flow under the wriggly tin in heavy rainfall. There have been several downpours since the roof was done, with no obvious leaks and the whole area is drying out

nicely.

The inside of the hut could now do with painting – any volunteers? The channels at the back also need clearing of branches and leaf mould.

Many thanks to all those involved.

A word of warning - our neighbour on the left just down the track, had his generator stolen (again) recently. As far as I know the main hut has never been broken into, the Child contains nothing valuable and we leave the Grandchild unlocked, but you have been warned.

Notes from the New President



Bob Churcher

It seems very strange writing this, it seems only yesterday that I was the club secretary, and out buying a silver salver and sherry glasses for Trat's (Prof Tratman, our then president and very much hands on leader for years) retirement AGM. Then, much later, my memories are of having sherry with Bob Savage, geography professor, and also UBSS President for many years. Time moves on... Still, my first job in the newsletter is of course to thank my predecessor, Arthur ApSimon, for all the work he put in over the years. Arthur finally put his foot down last year, and retired, after 14 years as President (1996 to 2010). He had served the club well, since he was a Vice President for years before that, being elected in 1973, and was the deserved recipient of heartfelt thanks from all of us at the last AGM.

I should at this point also mention Johnny Pitts, who resigned from being a Vice President this year, (also being in his 80s, so he had a

reasonable excuse) after 15 years as a Vice President. John was elected VP at Arthur's behest not long after his own elevation. They met for the first time in many years at the Clare 50th Anniversary Party in 1998 and he was elected in 1999. His most notable caving with UBSS was in the early years in Co. Clare. he was one of the first to go out in 1948 and was responsible, with others, for the high quality work in the Coolagh River Cave, pre-dating even Trat's many years there.

UBSS is a slightly odd student club, since it is one of the few university clubs which keeps its members on, and has always used older members on the committee, but its worth remembering that we were all student members once! UBSS is probably the second oldest caving club in the world, at least which is still going, and it has been the older members that have helped keep up both the training and publications. That having been said it is, and always will be, primarily a student club, for students and run by students. Clearly, from everything I see and hear, its still a very vibrant club, but I

would make a plea that everyone works hard to make the freshers welcome this year, as every year, since the club depends on getting enough members to maintain several groups of cavers at differing levels. Without enough new students some years can get very thin, so do your best to keep as many as we can next year.

Lastly a note on expeditions. We do have some fairly limited funds to help with expeditions, but since they are controlled by the University we need applications to be made in plenty of time to be able to use the money each year, (and to tell the Union that you are going)! Over the last few years a lot of club members have been to a lot of places, but there is certainly more room for "official" club expeditions, but they need planning and discussion to start early - so get talking and planning if you can. Meanwhile, I know that training has already started, and I wish you all the very best of luck with caving this coming year. I will hopefully see you in the pub.

