

SECRETARIES' REPORT

MARCH 2001 - MARCH 2002

Archaeology

Mandy Summerfield's BA dissertation "A taphonomic approach to assess whether the bone accumulation from two caves; Rhinoceros Hole and Hyaena Den can provide information on human subsistence behaviour" gained her a first class degree and top of the class in the University's Archaeology Department. A shortened version of this work is promised for *Proceedings*. By chance, Claire Ingrem, a PhD student at Southampton University, has also chosen to study the Rhinoceros Hole faunal collection. She is still working on this material. All the remaining faunal material from Westbury Sub Mendip quarry fissure collected by UBSS and Mike Bishop has been removed from the tackle store and will be taken to the National History Museum at the earliest opportunity. The collections from Avelines Hole are being re-examined by Rick Schulting and we anticipate a report for *Proceedings*.

Research

The "Carbonate Process and Palaeoenvironments" group has had another productive year. Pete Smart is studying cave geomorphology with specific interest in dissolutional processes. Last summer Sam Smith and Patricia Beddows went on an extended field season to the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico where they continued their study of the chemistry, microbiology and hydrology of the submerged caves. Both are due to finish their PhD studies within the next year. Ed Hodge is in the second year of a PhD in the department of Geography constructing late Quaternary palaeohydrology in the Western Mediterranean. This involves the U-series dating of speleothems from Spain and Morocco in order to determine periods of palaeorecharge. Stable isotopes will then provide high-resolution information on specific pluvial periods.

In January this year Graham Mullan and Linda Wilson continued their research into the Palaeolithic decorated caves of France with visits to sites in both the Dordogne and the Pyrenees. They were privileged to visit the cave of Les Trois Freres in the company of Comte Robert Bégouën, the son of one of the original discoverers. During this visit, the value of the new LED lighting technology was demonstrated and a set has been donated to the Association Louis Bégouën, the organisation responsible for the conservation and management of both Les Trois Freres and Le Tuc d'Audubert. The lamp is now in use aiding research being undertaken in the caves and has been reported to be of far superior quality to ordinary lights, helping particularly in the deciphering of very fine engravings and scrapings which are effectively obliterated by normal lighting techniques.

Caving

This has been another active year since the reopening of the caves after the Foot and Mouth Disease crisis. Freshers' fair was fun and successful and many new members were recruited. At first caving was limited to Mendip and every cave in Burington Combe seemed to be visited several times. A trip to Derbyshire later in the term proved very popular and after the reopening of Wales and Yorkshire, several trips have been made to these areas. SRT training in the Union building has been regular and well attended. The Union recently requested a risk

assessment of this activity which was kindly undertaken by Steve Cottle and Andrew Atkinson. On the social front, Bonfire weekend was a larger gathering than usual, the numbers being swelled by members from Oxford University Caving Club. As a result, the fireworks display was particularly impressive. In January it was decided to celebrate Burn's Night in the traditional manner and much haggis was eaten and beer drunk.

A small group made the annual pilgrimage to County Clare in May/June 2001. Much of the work undertaken consisted of the checking of details on various sites for the revised edition of the Society's book on this area but this did not stop them from recording some new discoveries on the Edenvale Estate, near Ennis. An attempt to dive the terminal sump in Cullaun 2 was less successful owing to the vast tangle of diving line found just underwater. A return to this site will have to be made with bigger bottles and a sharp knife. The revision of the Clare book is nearing completion and it is to be hoped that it will appear during the coming year.

In the summer several club members went caving and canyoning in the Jura region of France, where the caves were very "sporting" and required more than two people to carry all the rope that was needed. Several members also went on a Christmas trip to Spain and then France for some more vertical caving and, by the sound of it, some very good food.

Acknowledgements:

The Society would like to thank all those who support its activities with grant aid, especially the University of Bristol Union for assistance with the day to day running of the Society. Special thanks are due to Stefan Creaser whose donation to the Hut Fund has enabled the purchase of some much needed new mattresses.

Charlotte Hamilton and Morven Beranek-Stanley

LIBRARY REPORT 2002

The Library has continued to grow by exchanges with *Proceedings* and donations. Thanks are due to Pat ApSimon and Desmond Donovan for donations of journals, manuscripts and books.

The Librarian resigned due to pressure of work halfway through the year, and has been replaced by John Williams. Having overseen three moves I felt it was time for a rest. However, I am still keeping responsibility for sales, exchanges and distribution of *Proceedings* to members, and am still happy to answer any research queries if possible.

New additions

Caves of the Thousand Buddhas Chinese Art from the Silk Route 1990 R Whitfield & A Farrer *British Museum Publications*

Berliner Höhlenkundliche Berichte Reports

Band 1 Tanzania 1994 - 2000

Band 2 Mozambique 1998

Band 3 Mozambique 1999