

SECRETARIES' REPORT

MARCH 2003 – MARCH 2004

Research

The highlight of the year was the publication of the Society's third book on Irish Caves: *The Caves of County Clare and South Galway*. This was first launched to a warm reception at the annual symposium of the Speleological Union of Ireland in October and a second party was held in the Society's rooms in December which was addressed by our Vice President, John Pitts, to whom the book is dedicated.

Charlie Self's long-term collaboration with European and US colleagues has now yielded a major paper on cave mineralogy, published by the National Speleological Society. This has been the culmination of Charlie's work since his appointment as Chairman of the Mineralogy Commission of the International Union of Speleology. Patricia Beddows and Sam Smith have completed their PhD theses. Sam has now been awarded her degree and Patricia is awaiting her examination. Ed Hodge has finished the fieldwork phase of his project and is now writing up.

Linda Wilson & Graham Mullan have continued their study of Franco-Cantabrian cave art. Highlights of this year's work included a visit to the Grotte du Portel and a rare second trip to Les Trois Freres after their proposed trip to Le Tuc d'Audobert was prevented by flooding.

Caving

Once again UBSS members have been active throughout the major caving regions of the UK and beyond, including a trip to the Lot region of France at New Year which introduced some to the joys of expedition caving.

During May a group once again visited Co. Clare, Ireland where a number of loose ends were tidied up prior to the completion of the new Co. Clare book. In particular it was found that Cullaun Four was over six times as long as had been thought. In December 2003 - January 2004, Sam Smith and Jon Telling mounted a small expedition to Thailand, where they broke new ground in using rebreathing equipment to explore cave passage containing bad air, very much cutting edge exploration..

Freshers' Fair in October yielded another large number of new student members with about 50 joining on the day and several more later. Freshers' weekend then saw the usual increase in traffic through most of the Burrington caves with many enjoying their first taste of caving. The following term was busy with club trips to Wales and Yorkshire. As usual the annual bonfire night at the UBSS HQ was a great success with an entire lamb being roasted for the benefit of the assembled revellers. The rain let up long enough for a rather professionally executed firework display to take place before people retired to the Hut to finish off any stray Butcombe. Throughout the period training in the Student Union has been a great success with many people having been trained in the last year.

Work has restarted at the Society's long term dig in Tynings Great Swallet, Charterhouse. The dig has a strong draught and hopes are high for a breakthrough in the near future.

Library and Museum

The Library Working Group formed last year has made good progress with the re-cataloguing of the Library and much work has also been done in sorting and re-boxing the unbound part of the collection in the stack room. The shelving in the Museum store has been completely replaced allowing the collection to be stored in a much less cramped condition. We are grateful to Wells Museum for the donation of the new shelving.

Acknowledgements:

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Louise Crowe and Jacqui Marshall