

## SECRETARIES' REPORT

MARCH 2011 – MARCH 2012

### Caving and exploration in the UK

Club trips have been to all the usual areas this year, including Mendip, south Wales and Yorkshire.

In good caving tradition, the students stumbled into difficulty while trying to find the entrance to Pant Mawr, after spending a mere 3 hours on the Welsh hillside the entrance was identified by the fact that only a caver would be walking across the fell in a full yellow bodysuit. Caving in Yorkshire this year seems to have been a predominantly wet affair, with downpours during CHECC and the February weekend. Trips down Lost John's Cave were rather sporting, whilst Boxhead Pot was only feasible for those members with gills. Rescue training in Mendip proved an interesting change from the usual Mendip fare. Saturday's task saw the club rally around Cat who was stretchered out of Goatchurch with a simulated broken leg (otherwise known as a sprained ankle) whilst on Sunday, everyone had the chance to dangle around from trees as they tackled Andrew's fiendish SRT problems.

UBSS exploration and surveying efforts have continued across much of the Mendips and south Wales this year. A complete re-survey of Gough's Cave and many of the smaller caves in the Cheddar catchment was completed by Andrew Atkinson, Graham Mullan, Clive Owen and other members as part of the Charterhouse surveying project. Further explorations in Charterhouse Cave by Ali Moody, Pete Moody and Andrew Atkinson yielded 640 m of newly surveyed passage. Unfortunately, this year's efforts were not enough to retain the J-Rat Digging Trophy for a third year in a row, with the prize going to the Grampian Speleological Group for discoveries in Uamh nam Fìor Iongantais, Scotland. Moving a little closer to home, a determined effort by Dickon Morris at Manorbier Flood Sink, with around 30 working trips, has made good progress to a depth of 3 m, but had to be abandoned for the winter due to constant floods and re-silting.

### Caving Abroad

This year UBSS members have been involved with several international caving expeditions, travelling across Europe to Austria and Spain. Those on their first expedition included Adam Henry, Amy Matthews, Cat Hulse, Jon Hauser and Robert Adams, who travelled to Austria with Chris Smith and the Cambridge University Caving Club. Austrian finds for 2011 totalled more than 4.5 km, with Cat finding more than 1 km in just two weeks! In Spain, Dickon Morris and Ross Hemsley returned to Pozu del Xitu and Cueva del Agua with the Oxford University Caving Club. Whilst little new passage was found, the caves provided some fantastic sport and the chance for Ross to try out his subterranean espresso machine.

### Research

Chris Smith continues to make steady progress towards his Ph.D. researching past landscape change in karst regions via U-Pb dating of speleothems, having presented research at the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> BCRA Cave Science Symposiums, the 7<sup>th</sup> International Karst Records Conference and Hidden Earth 2011. Earlier this year his research was awarded a £50,000 grant by NERC to cover the costs of U-Pb dating at the BGS, in addition to a Postgraduate Grant totalling £740 from the British Society for Geomorphology. In the near future he will be travelling to the caves of Borneo with Dick Willis, Prof. Peter Smart and the Mulu Caves Project to

continue the legacy of work by previous UBSS visitors, including Dr. Gina Moseley and Dr. Andy Farrant.

#### Expedition 2012

And finally, this year the official UBSS student expedition makes a return. Over the summer the students will be travelling to Doolin in County Clare, with the aim of exploration, surveying and writing up new descriptions for the revised edition of *'The Caves of County Clare and South Galway'*.

*Christopher Smith*