

MUSEUM REPORT, 2012

The last year has been another busy one in the museum.

Chris Kerns and Allison Marcucci completed their work on the material excavated from Read's Cavern. These were catalogued and accessioned to the collection with the agreement of the landowner, Sir David Willis. I'd like to record my thanks to him for his continued support of the society's activities. The paper on the finds in Read's cavern was published in the 2011 issue of *Proceedings*.

No year is complete without its irritations, though. Last year it was a BBC production company wanting to make inappropriate use of the human remains from Aveline's Hole and this year's fun and games was provided by a PhD student from Bradford University who had had a considerable quantity of material from Picken's Hole on loan for several years, predating my time as curator. When it came to returning the material, she completely disregarded my instruction to send them by courier to my home address and instead posted them to the main University address at Senate House, and then compounded this by ignoring my emails for several weeks. By the time I found out what had happened, the trail was well and truly cold and there was no sign of the packages anywhere, despite an extensive search by myself, the porters and numerous other people. All this wasted vast quantities of time and finally after nearly three months of effort, I feared the worst. Then, out of the blue I received an email from someone in the university covering the work of someone on maternity leave, and lo and behold, the specimens that were lost were now found. Fatted calves were duly sacrificed in thanks. However, as a result of that episode, I am now taking an extremely hard line on the subject of loan specimens, and unless the person concerned is known to me personally and trusted by me, any work on the specimens will have to be done here in our museum.

On a happier note, I spent many more interesting hours in the museum with Lucy Flower, from the University of London who continued her work from 2010 into the evolution and palaeoecology of wolves in Britain and North West Europe during the Pliocene and Quaternary periods. Lucy was a delight to work with on her various visits.

The Late Upper Palaeolithic flints on loan to Paul Pettit from the University of Sheffield were returned in person, as agreed, and there are now no outstanding loan specimens.

I have received a steady stream of enquiries over the last month for access to the collection. One person is working on the mythology of place in the British Isles in which the story of Aveline's Hole plays an important part, so that part of the collection is of enduring interest to researchers. They will also be looked at later in the year by someone researching the art and burials of prehistoric Mendip. The project co-ordinator of the Somerset Earth Science Centre would like to see and photograph the mammoth bones from Whatley Quarry. For

anyone else who is interested, these are on display in the Museum. A researcher from Leicester will be visiting as part of her thesis on technology, skill and being in the Late Upper Palaeolithic, and she will also be looking at the Avebury line's material as part of a book for general audiences on the Mesolithic. So no doubt you'll be hearing more about these projects in next year's report.

The sheer range and volume of enquiries and visits the museum receives is a testament to its continuing importance as a collection and it is a pleasure to be able to co-operate with researchers in such a wide variety of fields.

Linda Wilson, Museum Curator