

**BCRA Cave Science Symposium, AGM & Field Trips
11th/12th October 2025**



**School of Geographical Sciences
University of Bristol
Field Trips including Pen Park Hole, Bristol**

Symposium - Saturday 11th October 2025

Field trips - Sunday 12th October 2025

School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol

[Register here at eventbrite page](#)

SECOND CIRCULAR

British Cave Research Association (UK registered charity 267828).

Registered Office: Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, BUXTON, SK17 8RG



University of
BRISTOL

School of
Geographical Sciences

The British Cave Research Association are pleased to announce details of the 36th Annual Cave Science Symposium and associated field trips. The symposium will be hosted by Professor David Richards, Linda Wilson and Professor Fiona Whitaker at the University of Bristol's School of Geographical Sciences, University Road Bristol on **Saturday 11th October 2025 from 0930h**. The programme of oral and poster presentations will be of interest to anyone wishing to learn more about cave and karst research and the underground environment.

We welcome everyone with an interest in caves and cave science. This will be a live in-person event but will also be streamed online, where possible. The BCRA AGM will be held in person and online at the end of the morning session. Following the symposium, an informal evening meal will be arranged for those who are interested. Further details below. Field trips will take place on **Sunday 12th October** in the wider Bristol area, including the nearby Mendips.

Keynote lecture

We are pleased to be able to announce that **Prof. Danielle Schreve** (Heather Corrie Chair in Environmental Change, University of Bristol) will give the keynote presentation: **"From Caves to Conservation: the making of the modern fauna in Britain"**.



Zooarchaeological and fossil collections from caves have traditionally supported research and into a diversity of topics, from palaeoenvironmental reconstruction to the interpretation of early human subsistence practices. However, an area of investigation that has been so far less commonly explored concerns the information that these collections can shed on past climate change and biodiversity for future conservation purposes. Data from Quaternary palaeoecological studies are increasingly applied to modern conservation challenges via the emerging field of conservation palaeobiology, a new and integrated approach that draws on fossil and historical records to inform the conservation, management and restoration of species, communities and ecosystems beyond the limited time frame of modern ecological observations. This presentation will illustrate ongoing work at the site of Gully Cave in Somerset, a key archive for our

understanding of faunal responses to abrupt climate change over the last 70,000 years, before reviewing the potential of collections such as this to provide critical new information for guiding nature restoration.

Call for Abstracts

This year's scientific themes will include climate, faunal and archaeological records from caves in addition to karst hydrogeology and geomorphology.

Oral and poster presentations are invited on all areas of cave and karst science, including:

- past climate records from caves
- speleogenesis,
- karst hydrogeology,
- cave archaeology/palaeontology
- cave biology
- cave technology.

Those wishing to present at the Symposium should provide a title and an abstract of up to 300 words and indicate whether an oral presentation or poster presentation would be preferred. This should be sent to David Richards (david.richards@bristol.ac.uk) by **15th August 2025**. Please include "BCRA" in the subject line of your email.

Registration

Entry is free of charge, but donations would be appreciated (£5 for students, £10 for non-students) to help cover the cost of the event. Donations can be made on the day or online at <https://bcra.org.uk/bookshop/donate.html>). Please register using the [Eventbrite link](#).

Student Travel Grants

Support with travel costs will be available for students who provide a talk or poster and, subject to demand, it may be possible to offer travel support to other student attendees.

Further information

Venue: School of Geographical Sciences, University Rd, Bristol, BS3 1SS.
<https://what3words.com/beam.slim.civic>

Parking: Trenchard Street and West End are the closest long-stay car park options (£19.60 daily charge). See [Car parking and Park and Ride](#). On-street parking nearby is expensive and difficult to manage for the whole day (using the 4 hr max options).

Refreshments will be available during the breaks.

Lunch is available at many outlets (*Sainsburys, Pret a Manger, Waitrose, Greggs, Eat-a-Pitta* and others) within a few minutes of the building.

Evening meal: We will pre-book tables at a local restaurant and walk there via the UBSS Museum for a brief tour for those interested. Please indicate interest in the evening meal and dietary restrictions/requirement when registering for the event.

Posters: A0 poster boards in portrait format will be available.

For enquiries concerning oral or poster presentations please contact David Richards (david.richards@bristol.ac.uk).

Field trips (Sunday 12th October).

GB Cave

This field visit, led by Dr Andy Farrant will focus on the geology and geomorphology of GB Cave, near Charterhouse. It will be of interest to anyone who wants to know more about cave formation and what we can discover about palaeo-climate and paleoenvironment from passage geomorphology, and the sediments and speleothems preserved in the cave. The trip is anticipated to last about three hours depending on the group and the level of discussion.

The trip will be limited to the lower part of the cave and will be a relatively easy trip. We are not intending to visit Ladder Dig, so standard caving kit is required.

Participants will need to have an up-to-date Charterhouse Caving Company Permit (see <https://permits.charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk/>) and will need to adhere to the relevant conditions.

Trip numbers are limited to 6 including leader, minimum participants 4 including leader. The trip is not open to novice cavers.

A second trip may be run if there is sufficient demand.

Pen Park Hole

Pen Park Hole is a hypogenic cave located in the Southmead housing estate in Bristol. The cave has an unusual geological history being the site of a former thermal spring. It also has fascinating history. Discovered accidentally during quarrying, the first recorded descent inside occurred in July 1669 by Captain Samuel Sturmy. In 1775, Rev. Thomas Newnham died after falling into the hole while trying to measure its depth. It was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 2016 due to both its unique geology and the presence of rare cave shrimp (*Niphargus kochianus*).

The trip will be led by Wayne Starsmore and will last around 2 hours to the top of the pitch in the main chamber. Standard caving kit is required. The pitch will not be descended.

Trip numbers are limited to 6 including leader, minimum participants 4 including leader. Depending on leader availability a second trip might be possible with sufficient demand.

Fishmonger's Swallet, Almondsbury

Fishmonger's Swallet is a fascinating archaeological site located near Alveston in South Gloucestershire, just north of Bristol. The short cave contains rich assemblages include late Iron Age to Romano-British deposits (circa 200 BC–35 BC). Human remains from at

least four individuals (disarticulated and fragmented), along with various animal bones and pottery have been recovered. In 2023, scientists recovered ancient DNA from a human jawbone in Fishmonger's Swallet—one of four UK samples used to explore the origins and spread of the bacterium *Borrelia recurrentis*, which causes relapsing fever. The cave involves an 11 m shaft into a chamber where most of the archaeological material was found. Beyond lie a series of muddy chambers and a dig. The trip will be led by David Hardwick and Dr. Adelle Bricking (National Museum Cardiff). Part of the visit will involve a surface discussion, with the option of an underground trip. A trip to the end of the cave and back takes around an hour. Standard caving kit is required, but no tackle is required. The further reaches beyond the main 'Bone Idle' Chamber are very muddy.

Trip numbers are limited to 10 including leader, minimum participants 4 including leader.

Mendip walk

In addition, we can also consider an alternative trip – above ground – in the Mendip region, subject to demand (e.g. Ebbor Gorge).

Please sign-up the event and register interest in field trips and Saturday evening meal at our [Eventbrite site](#)