



**Minutes of BCA Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 05 June 2016 at The
Hunters' Lodge Inn, Priddy**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	Chairman / UIS Rep. / Individual Member (non-voting)
Paul Ibberson (PI)	Treasurer / Individual Member
Damian Weare (DW)	Secretary / Individual Member (non-voting)
Les Williams (LW)	Publications & Information Officer / Wessex CC Rep. (<i>from the second part of Item 25</i>) / Individual Member
Nick Williams (NW)	Equipment & Techniques Officer / Insurance Manager / Individual Member
Nigel Ball (NB)	Training Officer / Individual Member
Andrew Hinde (AH)	Conservation & Access Officer / Individual Member
David Cooke (DC)	IT Working Party / Cave-Registry / Webmaster / Web Services / Individual Member
Bob Mehew (BM)	Rope-Testing / Individual Member
Robin Weare (RW)	News Editor / FODCCAG Rep. / Individual Member
Rostam Namaghi (RN)	Youth & Development
Boyd Potts (BP)	Orpheus CC Rep / Individual Member
Martell Baines (MB)	CNCC Rep. / Individual Member
Alan Butcher (AB)	CSCC Rep. / Individual Member
Dave Tyson (DT)	Cambrian CC Rep. / Individual Member
Jenny Potts (JP)	DCA Rep. / Individual Member
Jonathan Williams (JW)	CDG Rep. / Individual Member
Tony 'Badger' Radmall (TR)	ASCT Rep. / Individual Member
Stephan Natynczuk (SN)	ACI Rep. / Individual Member
Chris Binding (CB)	Individual Member
Peter Hall (PH)	Cheddar CC Rep. / Individual Member
Linda Wilson (LW)	UBSS Rep. / Individual Member
Graham Mullan (GM)	Charterhouse CC Ltd Rep. / Individual Member
Dennis Boyd (DB)	Wirral CG Rep. / Individual Member
Andrew McLeod (AM)	EUSS Rep. / Individual Member
Dick Willis (DWi)	Individual Member
Simon Brooks (SB)	Individual Member
Faye Litherland (FL)	Individual Member
Babs Williams (BW)	Individual Member (<i>for the second part of Item 25 only</i>)

The meeting commenced at 10:33.

Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed members to this Annual General Meeting and thanked the organisers of DigFest for hosting us.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Idris Williams, Bernie Woodley, David Gibson, David Jean, John Gunn, Steve Holding, Tim Allen, Ged Campion and Matt Wire.

Applications for Club Membership

There are no new applications since the last Council Meeting.

Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting (previously circulated)

4.1 Proposal: *That the Minutes from 15 June 2015 be confirmed as a true record*

Prop: JP, Sec: RW *agreed unanimously*

BM: It is a shame that there is no discussion shown under the second Motion, but unfortunately is no longer able to recall what was said.

None.

Officers' Reports

Chairman's Report *(written report circulated)*

It's been a busy year in BCA, dominated by CRoW, but also with many other areas of development.

CRoW will be referred to in several other reports within this meeting. However, I should like to comment from the Chairman's point of view.

From a personal stand point, I have never been a great fan of free access onto other people's land. Obviously the concept from a government point of view is, the more they can get the population of Britain out into the hills doing healthy exercise, the better, both for the wellbeing of the community and also saving NHS money. Whether we like it or not, we are stuck with CRoW - it exists and there's not really anything we can do about it.

Starting from the basic principle that CRoW exists to promote good healthy exercise, then there is no reason why caving should be excluded. In fact there is every indication that it would have been included when the Act originally came in, if it had not been for certain vociferous individuals who made their presence felt and consequently the legislation ignored caving. It was neither included nor excluded, but had it not been for that minority voice, it would almost certainly have been included in the same way as it is in Scotland. Bearing all this in mind, it would seem to me that whatever we do, it will ultimately be shown to apply to caves and we should make the best of it. There is a very good, logical argument for people who understand caves to be responsible for their conservation and the access into them.

We should therefore be working hard towards improvements in cave conservation, from every view point, both for caves that might arguably lose an element of protection that they get under CRoW at the moment, but also for all caves generally. There's clearly a lot that can be done: intelligent access control which in some cases could include gates; track marking; a serious amount of training of all cavers at all levels in understanding and helping with cave conservation. We must remember we are exploring the caves and looking after them for our successors.

In this respect it is excellent that we have Andrew Hinde as our Conservation Officer, and he is continuing to do a wonderful job. I thank him for what he is doing and hope we can all help him into the future. I should also like to thank Tim Allen who, in his role as CRoW-Liaison Officer, is seeking clarification of the law, working under the mandate of the majority of our members who voted, that BCA should "campaign for the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground".

Moving on from CRoW, the Training Committee under the guidance of Nigel Ball and Graham Mollard, has been working hard with a view to streamlining the whole of BCA's Training Schemes and introducing some much needed reorganisation between professional and amateur training.

BCRA has had a number of successful events over the last year. John Gunn has come in as the new Chairman, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Checkley for all his hard work for BCRA over a number of years.

Under BCRA, the scientific publication Cave and Karst Science continues to be published very reliably and Dave Lowe with John Gunn need thanking most sincerely for keeping up their enormous amount of hard work - it is greatly appreciated.

On the publications front, Robin Weare has been doing very well with the newsletter, which has to some extent replaced the BCA magazine Speleology. Descent magazine has also carried a lot of BCA news and information, and we thank Chris and Judith for that and anticipate closer cooperation between BCA and Descent into the future.

British expeditions continue to explore new caves all around the world, supported by the Ghar Parau Foundation. In that connection, 'MadPhil' Rowsell needs thanking, not only for acting as GPF Secretary, but also bringing in a considerable amount of new finance.

Another event that has taken up a considerable amount of time over the last year has been the build up to the Eurospeleo at Dalesbridge this August. Les Williams and his team continue to put in enormous effort, and currently there are nearly 1,000 registered participants which should guarantee the success of the event. I personally look forward to 13th-20th August immensely.

Finally, there are a number of retiring officers at this AGM. Paul Ibberson, who has been working in conjunction with Robin Weare since last year's AGM, is standing down and I understand Robin Weare is willing to be co-opted as Treasurer until this can be formally ratified at the next AGM. I thank Paul very much for the work he has put in over the years in office. Dave Judson is retiring as Legal and Insurance Officer and I thank him for all his efforts, not only in this role but for all the other work he has done over many, many years for British caving - he is one of the most hard-working British caving officers there has ever been.

Finally, the Secretary, Damian Weare, will be retiring at this AGM. Damian has been an excellent Secretary for many years, he will be a very difficult act to follow and indeed it is hoped that moving forward we will split the Secretary role -

bringing in a clerical assistant to help with some of the BCA administration. I personally am extremely grateful to Damian, without whose assistance I could not possibly have done the job as Chairman. I do hope that he will continue to be available to give me a certain amount of advice going forward into the future.

Finally, I should like to thank all the other officers in the BCA who I have not mentioned individually.

I am sure we are going to have a good weekend at Digfest in Priddy with the AGM on Sunday and thank Faye Litherland and he fellow organisers for agreeing to host us.

Andy Eavis

NW: Would like to recognise the substantial contribution made over the years by David Judson.

AE: Indeed - he has been one of Britain's most hard-working Officers.

Proposal: ***the meeting thanks David Judson for the substantial contribution he has made to British caving over the years.***

Prop: NW Sec: LW agreed unanimously

Secretary's Report (written report previously circulated)

Diving Membership: In January 2015 Council was asked to consider whether or not a Mine Diving club could join and take advantage of our insurance for their diving activities. Although generally supportive of the club's desire to be fully recognised for all its activities, Council accepted them as a Member Club, but only on the understanding that their diving activities were not covered by our insurance scheme. They were encouraged to work with the CDG before returning with suggestions that would be acceptable to our insurers. This is ongoing. Thus the situation remains that insurance through BCA's Scheme for cave-diving activities is only available to CDG members.

CASC Changes: At the end of August I was made aware of some changes to the rules affecting CASCs. To all intents and purposes CASC status gives clubs the majority of the benefits of being a charity without some of the burdens. Naturally there are some rules a club has to meet in order to gain and maintain the status and these were amended in legislation passed at the end of 2014 to take effect from 1 April 2015. There was to be a year's transition period (until 1 April 2016) during which time clubs could decide whether they could, or indeed wanted to, comply with these new rules. If a club decides it cannot, or does not want to, then it can apply to be deregistered as a CASC 'with no financial penalty'. If not, then it will need to be able to prove compliance into the future. To my knowledge at no point had anyone from HMRC (which deals with CASCs) written to a caving CASC or BCA to advise of this change.

BCA liaised with the affected Clubs and most sought deregistration from 1 April 2016. This was generally over concerns relating to a new requirement for more than 50% of the membership to be "active", which was defined as 12 days of activity that year.

Activity in 2016: Although in 2016, and therefore officially not the subject of this AGM, the following points are also included for members' information:

1) Britain's Biggest Adventures: Following discussion by Council, Executive published a statement in response to this TV series. It was as follows:

Caving is an exciting, challenging and rewarding sport suitable for most fitness levels and giving the average person the opportunity to see things that few others have experienced. We are extremely lucky to have world-class caves on our doorstep and anything that might encourage newcomers to try the sport, or that simply improves public awareness of what is beneath our feet, is to be encouraged.

Unfortunately the recent ITV series "Britain's Biggest Adventures" falls badly short of the mark. Not only was Bear Grylls, the show's presenter, very poorly equipped, but he also apparently set off underground knowing that water levels were very high and likely to rise further.

By its nature caving has its hazards, but enjoyed responsibly has a superb safety record. Every week across the UK hundreds of people venture underground for the first time and for some of these a lifelong passion is awoken. The British Caving Association would like to take the opportunity to encourage everyone to experience the unique underground environment themselves, but to do so with due care and common sense.

We also sent letters to the production company, ITV and the Scout Association.

2) Recent Enquiries relating to CRoW: In March I received a number of queries and proposals relating to CRoW, BCA's approach and whether or not BCA is operating according to its Constitution. Council takes the view that the existing CRoW Act includes caving and, therefore, agreed the following:

BCA Council is fully aware of the Guiding Principles as outlined in sections 4.2 to 4.8 of the Constitution and always seeks to act in line with these. However the law of the land takes precedent over a Constitution. Therefore Council is happy that sections 4.2 to 4.8 are no impediment to BCA campaigning to change DEFRA's current interpretation of the

law, which by their own admission is not definitive.

3) Clerk to Executive: *BCA's Executive is made up of its Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and, although the majority of BCA's decisions are taken at Council, much of the legwork associated with putting these into place these falls to Executive. Over the years since BCA's inception Executive's workload has increased considerably and a reasonable chunk is administrative. BCA Council is concerned that BCA is too heavily reliant on a volunteer Executive, with an apparent shortage of volunteers to take on these roles. With this in mind, it was decided to advertise for the paid role of "Clerk to BCA Executive". The deadline for applications is 20 June 2016 and further information is available on the BCA website. It is hoped that this will allow the new Secretary and Treasurer to focus on longer-term strategy, rather than day-to-day administration.*

New Secretary: *I am stepping down from Council at this meeting. I first became involved in 2006 when I agreed to produce the Handbook, wrongly thinking that would mean I did not have to attend meetings. Within 18 months I had failed to say "no" at the key moment and found myself co-opted as Secretary! For a while I had time to devote to the role, but circumstances changed several years ago and I now find myself with very little time for myself or my family. I know the role deserves more time and commitment than I am now able to give it and, therefore, it is time for someone else to take the helm. Hopefully, they will be able to move BCA forward.*

I thank my fellow Council Members for their support over the last 10 years – you are some of the caving world's many unsung heroes – and I wish my successor the very best.

Damian Weare

DW: Apologies, but the deadline for the Clerk to Executive role should read 30th rather than 20th June.

CB: Was there a response to the Bear Grylls' letters?

DW: ITV sent what seemed to be their standard response, broadly saying they did nothing wrong. The Scout Association acknowledged receipt. There was no response from the production company.

AE: The key message from this is that we should all touch the media with great care.

Treasurer's Report

During the 2015 calendar year the picture from a financial point of view was very much a case of trying to keep on top of the day-to-day requirements. Whilst other major issues were beginning to be dealt with by Executive/Council, additional change would probably have been an undesirable distraction in any case. The one significant development from a personal point of view was the appointment of our Assistant Treasurer; it is fair to say this has been the single most significant step forward during my time as Treasurer. There remain a number of things which could be improved from both a process and practice standpoint (the old chestnuts of spreading the deposit risk, improving return and streamlining the accounts software model), but these are still unfortunately "nice-to-haves" rather than showstoppers. They should nonetheless be kept in mind as target improvements as soon as they can be appropriately moved forward. The 2015 Accounts have been prepared and subsequently scrutinised by our Independent Examiner. A draft copy is attached with the Officers' Reports and I expect these to be formally signed off at the AGM.

With respect to the 2015 Accounts, I can report that once more the broad picture is very similar to the previous couple of years. There have been no fundamental departures from the basic setup and operation of the main areas of activity. Certain transactions have impacted on the detail, mostly the impact of several large and non-recurring costs in the prior year, but the overall scenario remains the same. The Association continues to be in the healthy position of being able to comfortably meet its running costs for the time being and the Reserves position is strong in light of the current expectations of foreseeable requirements. Should new funding matters arise, these can be considered accordingly. There still remains the dual objective of squeezing a greater return from the cash reserve whilst at the same time minimising and spreading the investment risk, but, as previously noted, the current investment climate still does not lend itself to that scenario. I do still recommend that to ensure opportunities are not missed Executive should be authorised to transfer deposits as required if suitable products are brought forward.

In terms of the 2015 position, Subscription income was in line with the prior year. Against this, the cost of administering membership fell slightly once more; reduced insurance premiums were the main driver here. General Association running costs reduced with the absence of the costs of the CRoW ballot which was charged in 2014.

Training Services again ran a deficit during the year. The noted cyclical reduction in Training Scheme registration income failed to cycle back into balance and whilst the costs of this area of the Association were constant, income was insufficient to achieve the budgeted breakeven position. Further discussion of the detail of these matters is planned between the Treasurers and the Training Officer and details of any review conclusions will be presented to Council prior to the 2017 Budget process.

Caver Training costs reduced somewhat in the year, although it should be noted that further support of both the

Voluntary Sector and recreational caver training has been occurring in the early part of 2016.

Publications costs were dramatically reduced with no charges for either the Handbook or Speleology, although some costs were incurred for the final paper version of the Newsletter prior to its reinvigoration in electronic format. E&T expenses were increased with notable costs attributable to the anchor programme being charged. Meetings & Conferences costs were much reduced in light of the jointly hosted AGM Party Weekend. The costs associated with the provision of Web Services were higher in the year and this resulted in a small deficit overall in the year.

Funding of Expeditions (via the Ghar Parau Foundation) and the British Caving Library has continued at the same level as previous years and Regional Council funding was in line with the prior year. The 2015 charge again comprises outstanding funding claims for the year as drafted by the regions and accrued accordingly. Further consideration of these claims will be undertaken shortly by Finance Committee and appropriate reimbursement made in due course.

Thanks are once again due to the Regions for providing the necessary information on a timely basis.

Overall, the position for the year is that the Association recorded a surplus of £19,481. With the Training Services deficit exceeding the miscellaneous taxable income there is no tax due and the net addition to reserves is thus £19,481. Of this, £15,000 has been transferred to the Insurance Reserve. The latter is a re-designation of the Sinking Fund which better reflects the true purpose and has initially been funded to the level of approximately two years of premium. This reserve should be kept under periodic review.

The final point of this report is to confirm that having agreed to remain as Treasurer whilst we could integrate an Assistant, I am now at the stage where I need to step down from that position. I will of course provide such interim support to my successor as is needed during a handover period.

Paul Ibberson

Proposal: *that the 2015 Accounts be adopted.*

Prop: LW, Sec: TR agreed unanimously

PI: It is worth noting that the substantial surplus from 2015 probably won't continue into the future. There will, for example, be a reduction in 2016 membership income resulting from the reduced DIM membership fee. However, despite this, we are well placed to deal with the future.

RW: Thanks for the substantial efforts that has been put in by PI over the last few years. It is much appreciated.

DW: As PI gave notice of his resignation after the date for advertising vacant posts in advance of this meeting, the remaining one year of his three-year term will be filled by Council co-opting an Acting Treasurer. This will be completed at the meeting to follow this AGM and it is likely to be Robin Weare.

Conservation & Access Report *(written report previously circulated)*

Here follows a summary of my various reports to Council from Jan 2015 onwards.

Conservation & Access Report to Council: Jan 2015

Publications Review: *At the last council meeting I indicated that I would provide a draft update of BCA publications for this meeting. After discussions at C&A committee (22 Nov 2014) it was discovered that this is going to be a lengthy process involving wide consultation, before coming back to Council. However, one of the main problems is whether or not the BCA is bound by the old NCA policy statements included within the NCA Cave Conservation Handbook.*

The C&A committee is minded to establish a 3 tier set of self-consistent documents to describe BCA's Cave Conservation strategy. These would be:

A Code of less than 6 "rules";

A set of "guidelines" that expand and explain the code;

A Cave Conservation Handbook.

Drafts of these documents will be reviewed at the next C&A meeting.

CRoW Section 26 Direction: *Most regional CC's have presented a list of cave sites which they feel would benefit from Section 26 or Section 25 Directions under the relevant section of the CRoW Act.*

Regional Round Up: *A full list of recent C&A activities across the regions is logged in the C&A meeting minutes on the BCA website.*

C&A Report to Council: March 2015

In view of the Yes vote in the CRoW ballot I have undertaken the following action point. - 4 - Continue to explore ways to effectively protect our more fragile sites.

I have been instructed by the C&A committee to review the many caving codes that are in circulation. The C&A Committee concluded that the current Cave Conservation Code was too long and the Minimal Impact Caving Code was severe in its tone and over prescriptive. With the help of a few committee members I have drafted a shorter and more compact 'Caving Code' and a 'Minimal Impact Caving Guidance' which expands on the themes within the Code. I think

it is important that we have an internationally recognisable MIC Guidance that will be familiar to delegates of the Speleo 2016 event.

The draft documents are included in the appendices.

The documents have been out to consultation with the full C&A committee. There was broad support for the 2nd draft of the Caving Code and the 5th Draft of the MIC Guidance. The script will be part of a pdf with colour photos, illustrations and useful hyperlinks. The photos should support the text and enhance understanding. It is proposed to have flier and poster versions of the Code for caving huts and pubs.

I ask Council to approve these two draft scripts before proceeding to design and print.

I can report that the C&A committee has not met since November 2014 but I feel that it has been working effectively via e-mail on matters that require our attention. I would expect to convene a meeting of C&A before the 12 months are up or as soon as our workload demands.

C&A Report to Council: June 2015

Andrew Hinde declared a conflict of interest between BCA's CRoW campaign and his employer –Natural England. He explained that he is not permitted to campaign against government policy. He asked to be relieved of CRoW responsibilities.

Council co-opted Tim Allen as CRoW Liaison Officer to undertake the CRoW work.

C&A Report to Council: Sept 2015

Drws Cefn: I have been able to mediate at 2 meetings between CCC and PDCMG over the future access to Drws Cefn. Both sides have made commitments to work together more closely in the future. Progress towards an amicable agreement looks favourable if we can keep focused on the future possibilities and opportunities. All agreed that raking over the history at this point is counterproductive. The negotiators for both bodies will require trust and support from their membership to secure an outcome acceptable to all parties and in particular, the landowner.

Cave Conservation Codes: The final draft of the Cave Conservation Code and the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines are included in Appendix 1. My sincere thanks go out to all the cavers who have corresponded with me on this matter. There are many "Caving Elders" beyond the BCA Council who have immense experience which is invaluable to Officers such as myself. They are an incredible resource which BCA and the RCCs should be grateful for and take full advantage of when their services are offered. You do not have to agree with them, but it does no harm to listen.

The Codes have gone to Natural England where their content has been approved. It may be helpful to get approval from the other National Conservation Agencies where rules allow.

Assistance with graphic design is required and a call for suitable photos to form posters etc will follow.

C&A Committee:

It is hoped that a web based meeting of the C&A Committee can be organised at 3 or 4 hubs simultaneously (Mendip, Wales, Peak and Dales) to test out the new communications technology. This will be in November if all goes to plan.

Proposal for England's First Cave National Nature Reserve:

At Hidden Earth I outlined a proposal that Scoska Cave,

Littondale should be designated as an NNR. This is an idea which I am pitching to Natural England and the cavingbodies simultaneously. So far NE has agreed to consider the proposal and has opened initial consultation with the landowner.

The C&A committee will have an opportunity to discuss the matter at its next meeting. I believe that caves should be represented at the highest level of designations in order to be respected fully by the public and Statutory Conservation Bodies. Geological NNRs make up only 5 of the 224 NNR designations in England; none of these are caves.

C&A Report to Council: January 2016

Conservation Codes: The text of the revised documents remains unchanged since the last council meeting. I hope to have a professional quality pdf/poster available before the next meeting.

CRoW: I would like to congratulate our CRoW-Liaison Officer for delivering a successful Caving PR visit to GG Main Chamber via Bar Pot. The difficulty of safely escorting three novice politicians on a serious caving expedition was probably less difficult than actually getting the event in their diaries on an agreed date. Quite a remarkable achievement

Funding Cave Conservation: *The CNCC have joined forces with Natural England and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to undertake cave conservation tasks as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (a Heritage Lottery Funded project with a budget of £2million). In effect the CNCC contributed £2000.00 and secured total funding equivalent to £30 000.00 for cave conservation projects. The CNCC can now tackle jobs that had previously been too costly. <http://www.ydmt.org/idlps-about>*

Natural England can no longer be relied upon to finance this work directly, so partnership work on a "Landscape Scale" is a productive way forward.

Drws Cefn Access Mediation: *I have lost the confidence of the CCC representative. I await official written confirmation that my services as a mediator are no longer required by CCC.*

C&A Report to Council: April 2016

Meeting of the C&A Committee: A meeting of the C&A Committee was held via Webex on Friday evening 19th February. A total of 11 members took part (including 6 from the constituent bodies).

The meeting was very successful despite technical problems caused by a power cut at one of the "hub" venues 10 minutes into the proceedings. The constraints of Webex actually make for a very disciplined meeting.

The main topics discussed were:

Bats and the perceived conflict with cavers;

Statements to ACB's and Landowners from BCA on Section 26 Directions and other CRoW matters;

Appropriate use of conservation signage in and around caves;

Funding cave conservation projects;

Regional round up – including "difficult case" reviews.

The draft minutes can be found on the BCA website.

Concluding statement to the BCA AGM and the BCA Membership: I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the work of the Conservation and Access Committee in the last 12 months or so. It has a crucial role and it is establishing a good working relationship involving all of the talent and experience available to it. We work voluntarily in what we believe to be the best interests of the membership. You do not have to be a member of the C&A committee to make valuable contributions.

I can be contacted at conservation@british-caving.org.uk

Andrew Hinde

AH: The Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines have now been published online along with 2,000 paper copies in the form of a leaflet. Half of these will be distributed at EuroSpeleo and the remainder will be sent for distribution around the Regions. The Caving Code has been reduced to just 6 points and is currently with the printer. The intention is for the finished product to be something that cavers can keep. Would like to thank the C&A Committee members who have worked really well on these projects as well as many others. It is also pleasing to note that people beyond the C&A Committee are also offering advice and help and this is very valued.

AE: Since AH took over the Conservation & Access Committee there has been a noticeable increase in the quantity of meetings and resulting work.

AH: The key difference is that what we do is now public.

FL: There was very good feedback at DigFest last night for the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines.

CB: WebEx has allowed CB to participate in meetings and this is much appreciated. Would like to see Clubs encouraging members to think more about Conservation. We might also like to consider independent cavers who are often highly-motivated and very active but are outside the traditional club structure. These are probably best accessed via forums, including Urbex. We need to ensure caves are not treated as badly as many mines have been. We also need to avoid the graffiti we have seen in the United States. We need to consider that some of those cavers from non-traditional backgrounds may now be some of our most active.

NB: Is it possible for some of the pamphlets to be sent to Mary Wilde to be distributed among those who register for the Award Schemes?

AH: May be better added to the CD of documents that is sent out. It would be nice to see the pdf available on club websites too.

BM: CB has done some research on the frequency of conservation on club websites. It appears that virtually no club mentions it.

CB: Indeed - nearly 90% of clubs do not have conservation on their websites. Really it should be right at the top of what people find when they search. Webmasters probably need to be given a bit more of a nudge to promote conservation and the new BCA pdf.

LWi: Some clubs may well promote conservation to their members, but may use methods other than their websites to do it. As such clubs shouldn't necessarily be judged by what is on their website as that isn't always the main interface with the membership. No criticism is intended of AH here, but it is incredibly unfortunate that statements to Access-Controlling Bodies were not issued before the campaign for greater access. This should have been in place before anybody from BCA began going to the press. The cart was definitely put before the horse on this matter and we should seek to redress this, putting the horse back in front. Landowners have been asking for this advice and it is good to see it is almost ready.

AE: We are where we are and cannot change this. Unfortunately we were forced into reacting by others outside of BCA and we are trying to limit any damage.

CB: There is a real impasse to do with the concepts of conservation and access. There are some cavers who really like caving, and there are other cavers who like caves. There is some overlap, of course, but there is no escaping the fact

that many favour one side or the other.

AE: The recent damage to Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink is extraordinary.

8a. **CRoW Working Party** (*written report previously circulated*)

It has been a busy year for me since I took up the role of CRoW liaison last June. Campaigning to confirm the legal access that the CRoW Act offers is an emotive issue within British Caving and it has taken up much time and discussion in BCA Council meetings and beyond.

The basis of the campaign has been to seek clarification, to gather wide support and to lobby the authorities. I have reported all my work in detail to BCA council meetings and this is available with the meeting minutes. My reports have also appeared in full on UKcaving and summarised in the BCA newsletter so that the membership can see exactly what is being done in their name.

In addition to the main campaign there are already some fringe benefits for the future. There is a new invigorated emphasis on cave conservation both from the BCA and other groups and it should be no surprise that conservation has developed alongside the campaign for open access. The campaign has encouraged new contact with all levels of authorities, landowners and other outdoor organisations which has generally been very positive and demonstrated a willingness to look outwardly from our own organisation.

I have spoken with a number of landowners and landowner representatives mainly in the north of England, some of whom control access to over 100km of caves on their land. Most have been accepting of any potential change to cave access and none have suggested any recriminations. However in contrast, and on Mendip in particular, I am told that the BCA campaign is likely to cause untold problems with local landowners, so this is a very difficult circle to square across the north/south divide. I hope that through BCA's continuing discussions we can find a solution which is acceptable to all interests.

Across the country some landowners already allow open access including on SSSIs, others require systems of control and a few permit no official access at all. The present situation relies on hundreds of voluntary access arrangements which can be subject to regular renegotiation as the situation and land ownership changes and are quite a burden on our Access Controlling Bodies and Regional Caving Councils. A legal right will guarantee future access to at least some of our caves and relieve some of the effort required to maintain agreements. That effort could then be channelled into other areas such as conservation.

I have also looked at how the BCA Public Liability Insurance impacts the majority of our access agreements. In nearly all cases access agreements are reliant on the landowner indemnity cover it provides. Should this become too expensive or unavailable to us then we could lose access to hundreds of our popular caves. Under CRoW, even if we lost insurance cover, we could still enjoy the access freedoms to those caves provided for by the Act – food for future thought.

There are many indications that active caving is on the decline, and has been for a decade or more. There is a view that unnecessary access restrictions send out an unwelcome message and this contributes to the decline. Whilst fewer cavers may well be good for conservation in the short term, it is not good for the long term health of British Caving. Many of our councils, committees, conservationist groups, etc – the people who make British Caving happen - rely too heavily on an aging population of retiring cavers. At some point numbers become critical and we need to work hard to make caving more attractive to the new generations of British Cavers.

I am confident that the correct path for British Caving is to seek a legal right of access to caves where that is possible. Other outdoor organisations such as ramblers, climbers and paddlers have all determined to follow this route with some notable successes. The freedoms we enjoy in the countryside today would not have happened without groups campaigning for those rights against strong oppositions as the Kinder Scout trespass demonstrated all those years ago. The improvements to access that cavers enjoy today can be directly attributed to the atmosphere created by other campaigns and the principles, such as the Right to Roam, that enshrine them in law.

The BCA poll showed that the majority of its members want CRoW rights to apply to them too. The 63% who voted in favour of a campaign is a majority that the Scottish and European referendums would die for. Many in BCA who voted against in the poll support the democratic nature of the organisation and accept the result. Unfortunately others do not and a vocal minority continue to campaign against CRoW with some vigour as evidenced by their relationships, in letters, PMQs and the media, all designed to undermine the BCA majority position.

None of this reflects well on British Caving. The law is unclear, as caving is not excluded under the CRoW Act and whilst there are differing opinions of the interpretation of the law this position is likely to persist. It may be that, as DEFRA have stated, in the end only a court can decide. Should this route be something that the BCA consider? It would settle the matter once and for all and prevent, in the meantime, other cavers taking matters into their own hands, especially in the midst of acrimonious access disputes.

Whatever the eventual outcome we would get to where we are going in much better shape if we pulled together rather than working against the majority view of the membership.

AE: The positive side of all this is that it has raised the importance of Conservation.

GMu: The second paragraph of the report says that the remit was to seek clarification. It is surprising, therefore, that no mention has been made of the clarification that has been received. A Parliamentary question from James Heapey, a local MP, on 18 March 2016 said "To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, what her policy is on the extension of the definition of mapped open countryside to cavers". George Eustice, the DEFRA Minister, replied to say "Section 2 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides for a right of access on foot for the purposes of open-air recreation to land which has been mapped as open country (mountain, moor, heath and down) and registered common land. The Government has no plans to extend the definition of mapped land under that Act to apply to caves".

CB: Wrote to DW yesterday to point out the factual inaccuracy in TA's report. It states that "The BCA poll showed that the majority of its members want CRoW rights to apply to them too." What it should actually say is "the majority of members *who voted* want CRoW rights to apply". In reality the majority of cavers did not vote and unless this is altered, it will appear in official BCA documents and we run the risk of misinforming.

GMu: The turnout for the poll was 37%.

Equipment & Techniques Report *(written report previously circulated)*

The Committee held two meetings in 2015, one face to face and the other by video link using the BCA WebEx account. The video meeting was organised with people attending at specified locations rather than in their own homes due in part to a need to pass over some kit. The meeting went well despite a few glitches and was found to enhance the orderliness of the meeting. (A cost analysis indicated that the savings on mileage for this one meeting just about balanced out the annual cost of the Webex account.)

Among the business undertaken during 2015 was adopting a new resin within the anchor scheme. A piece of work was presented to the Committee which showed the potential for expansion anchors to meet the E&T criteria. A report was received by the Committee on the funded work into anchors in slate. As a consequence, the Bolt Products anchor was adopted for use in slate. The work also showed that the both Petzl Collinox and 12mm Goujon anchors would meet the EN standard for mountaineering anchors. The slate work was the subject of a lecture at Hidden Earth.

Work on anchor testing in Devon shows the suitability of the limestone as well as granite rock, variable results had been obtaining for testing anchors in killas. In addition, some special High Corrosion Resistant steel Bolt Products anchors had been tested with good results. The desire was to place these in sea cliffs where 316 stainless steel was considered to not be adequate. One titanium anchor had been placed and pulled with a very poor result due to a metal failure.

However subsequent examination of the failure suggested the anchor was defective.

Following extensive work by Simon Wilson, the committee adopted the IC Anchor within the scheme. One point highlighted by this work was that anchors can be too strong. Thus the successful Bolt Product anchors do give rise to a problem for extraction and reuse of the anchor location. E&T have recognised that extraction must be included in the acceptability criteria for designated anchors and work is needed to demonstrate the ease of extraction of Bolt Product anchors.

Following somewhat fruitless discussion, E&T have agreed to not pursue the topic of fixed aids.

In 2013, E&T supported the purchase of a static test rig capable of providing a 45kN force using a hand pumped hydraulic ram. Detailed work was started late on in the year to design some improvements. These have now been completed and we now have an almost new rig capable of taking a much larger range of specimens coupled with an electric pumped hydraulic system.

Nick Williams

a. **Rope-Test Report**

Only 12 samples of rope were tested during the year. This very low number was in part due to the fact that the rig was not taken to Hidden Earth in 2015 owing to a family emergency. Work on the instrumented rope test rig was also slow during the year. However the development work on an instrument to measure extension was complete and work in the first part of 2016 has demonstrated it operational ability. (This will be reported in some detail at EuroSpelo 2016.)

Bob Mehew

AE: Why is WebEx better than Skype?

NW: It copes better with multiple participants.

CB: It is worth pointing out that it cannot replace a meeting such as this.

FL: DC should be recognised for the considerable work he has put into getting WebEx up and running.

AH: Why has E&T agreed not to pursue Fixed Aids.

NW: It had been thought that we might provide guidelines on the ongoing maintenance of handlines, fixed ladders and other fixed aids. This was a nice idea but in reality the Committee has never really got anywhere with it. It has decided that rather than continue to have it on the meeting agenda without actually doing anything about it, it will instead remove it. If advice is specifically requested in the future, then it will be looked at. However general advice will not be produced.

BM: A new website www.roperesearch.co.uk shows the fruits of much of the research completed so far.

DT: Will there be a link from the main BCA website?

BM: Will ask DC to do so.

Training Report (written report previously circulated)

When looking at the role of the Training Committee and analysing training that has taken place within the recreational caving world and the professional world, far more training has taken place within the BCA award schemes since the AGM of 2015.

Attempts have been made on numerous occasions to get feedback from Regional Councils and caving clubs regarding their desire for caver training courses. Most feedback received has stated that they do not want formal training courses, but they want people to learn from other cavers whilst underground. From the Training Officer's point of view, I can understand that approach but my only worry is the uncertainty of the standard of techniques viewed.

Within the last year, the criteria for caving clubs and Regional Councils to apply for training grants has changed and from a positive point of view, more applications are now being received than previous. Training Committee would like to receive far more applications throughout the year.

There has always been a problem in certain regions regarding access to cave systems for the training and assessment of the BCA award schemes. The Training Committee has always had the feeling that the Award Schemes should be supported through access to caves systems that provide the correct environment for training and assessment. In recent months, this has improved in certain areas and it does appear that it may continue in the future. This is a very pleasing situation and as Training Officer, I would like to offer thanks to the people and organisations who are improving access for the Award Schemes.

Training Committee meetings have traditionally been held in locations where some members have had to travel long distances to attend. I have always thought that the time involved with this and the travelling expenses incurred have been excessive. The Cave Instructor Panel started using Internet hosted meeting through Skype and this proved to be very useful and productive. The only issue that occurred was the quality and bandwidth of people's Internet connections. When few people were connecting to the meeting it was very good but as more joined, the quality deteriorated. This method of holding meetings was taken on board by the National Co-ordinating Panel (NCP) but the same issues developed. Now, we are using WebEx and it has improved considerably. I still feel that it is important for committees to physically meet at least once a year.

A recent proposal to Council, that the administration and general organisation of the BCA award schemes should be removed from the responsibility of the Training Committee, was discussed at BCA Council and once more details were discussed, Council accepted in principle, the action. The Award Scheme administrators felt strongly that links should still be maintained with Council and that is why we have asked for links with Equipment and Techniques Committee and Access and Conservation Committee. We want those Committees to send a representative, to the new Qualification Management Committee (QMC) meetings.

The BCA Awards Schemes are still developing. People are still enrolling within the schemes of Local Cave Leader and Cave Instructor. Assessments are still taking place and many people are revalidating on time.

This is the data for the Local Cave and Mine Leader scheme from June 2015 to April 2016:

	Registrations	Assessments	Revalidations	Core-Skills Revalidations
LCMLA Level 1	119	40	31	5
LCMLA Level 2		16	13	1
CIC	13	5	0	0

Award holders up to April 2016

Local Cave and Mine Leader Level 1: 474

Local Cave and Mine Leader Level 2: 268

Cave Instructor Certificate: 81

Nigel Ball

NB: People travel for hours and hours and receive expenses for meetings. WebEx has been fantastic in avoiding this. Unfortunately NB was unable to attend the last Council Meeting, but it was attended instead by Graham Mollard,

the Chair of the Qualifications Management Committee.

The meeting approved the principle that professional side may separate itself from the recreational side. In this respect things have already moved forward. NB has spoken to quite a few Regional Council and Clubs about their requirements for training. It seems they want to train internally but would like resources to assist with this. The LCMLA and CIC schemes have now been broken down into modules and members of the QMC are now working on various projects, such as geology at Level 1 and Tyroleans at Level 2. On the professional side this will facilitate moderation across the country, and recreational cavers will be able to download electronic versions for use by the general membership.

- CB: You state that clubs not wanting training. While club committees seem quite happy to continue as they always have done, when asked, new cavers are very excited by the principle of receiving training via BCA Training Grants. Four such events are being run in the Mendips, so we mustn't lose hope with Recreational Training Grants.
- NB: Unfortunately Grants can only go through clubs at present. Individuals are not able to apply, but this is something that could be looked at in the future.
- BM: There has been roughly a £5k loss both last year and the previous year. Is there an understanding of why?
- NB: This is being looked at.
- PI: There has certainly been a drop off in numbers, but more analysis is needed. In 2014 we were told numbers registering were cyclical and would change in 2015. They haven't, so we may need to look at pricing.
- NB: Revalidations are due in 5-yearly intervals and consequently these do come in chunks.
- RW: According to figures from the Training Administrator, LCMLA registrations have dropped from a high of 225 in 2010 to 119 in 2015.
- BM: While the ordinary caver will tolerate a loss for a few years, it is reasonable to assume that this tolerance will run out at some point.
- PI: More analysis is definitely needed.
- NW: We should note that it is not necessarily in the Association's interests to be self-financing. Our Award Schemes provide a wider benefit to the caving world in general.
- CB: Has this happened as a result of an increase in Site-Specific qualifications? These are where the outdoor centre itself self-certifies some of its staff. This might be something that Heads of Centre could be asked to look at. CB knows a level 2 who works in Devon and meets numerous other instructors who are running on site-specific qualifications.
- NB: About 6 years ago the Training Officer tried to introduce a basic award, where people were working in one or two simple caves only. However this was thrown out by Training Committee. Since then the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS) has been trying to introduce a Level Zero qualification. Graham Mollard has been speaking to AALS about this.
- BM: Do you think the Training Committee will accept it?
- SN: It went down favourably at the last meeting.
- BM: When Site-Specific qualifications came out, it was feared then that that would mark the end of the LCMLA Scheme. Maybe this is now coming to fruition. It sounds as if some positive action is taking place.
- AH: DW recently circulated a note about a provider in the Dales who had received lottery funding to provide conservation training. What did Training Committee think about it?
- NB: Does not think it was discussed.
- AH: Might be worth keeping an eye on it locally.
- CB: Southern Professional Cavers provide conservation training but we do not charge for it because we feel that morally we should be putting something back in. Every professional trip has to be putting a case for conservation. If a company is offering conservation training, we may wish to consider whether it should come under Recreational Training Grants.
- AH: The provider is aiming at the Outdoor Centres because he feels there is insufficient training given to commercial providers in a specific site and wants to address this.
- CB: A cave in the South-West has hundreds of mud balls in a chamber, so there is clearly a problem here. It is likely that this is because leaders feel throwing mud is a standard part of a trip and this needs addressing.

Publications & Information Report

- LW: Apologies for not submitting a written report. There is little to say that is not already covered in other reports. Would like to thank Bob Mehew for taking on the Weil's Disease guidance. This is now available on a card to be

distributed at EuroSpeleo and it is planned to also circulate this to members at the next membership renewal.
Thanks to DC and RW for their excellent work.

a. **Webmaster's Report**

The Google Analytics service gives an idea of how much the website is being used. For the main BCA website, for the calendar year 2015 as a monthly average there were 5986 page views, 2055 sessions and 1436 individual users. The average user viewed 2.91 pages and stayed for 2:19 minutes. The top 10 pages were: Welcome, Training LCMLA Scheme, Training Downloads, About BCA, Membership, News & Events, PL Insurance, Contact BCA, Training, PL Insurance Documents, Member Clubs.

So in summary the website is being used and that usage is pretty consistent over time.

I would like to thank the Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Training Administrator, Rope Test Officer and Insurance Manager for keeping their sections of the website up to date. I would like more Council Members to be updating the website. I'm always willing to offer help and advice. It really isn't difficult. Failing that I will post any content that is sent to me.

A volunteer was found to reboot the Try Caving website but after a review it was decided that replacing the site would be easier than upgrading it. Plans for a replacement are in hand.

BCA Online was successfully launched at the beginning of June 2015. BCA Online allows members to login under their own membership number and set their own email contact preferences. They can change their email address and password as necessary. They can review their membership details (membership status, insurance status, address, etc) as held by BCA. If those need to be updated they can email the Membership Administrator. This provides BCA with a verified and maintained list of email addresses and crucially, to remain legal, the consents to use them. This mailing list has been used to distribute the BCA Newsletter to members since Issue 23, Oct 2015.

Unfortunately fewer than 10% of members have registered to receive the Newsletter. This needs to be improved. Maybe it is time for a competition, part of which would be a requirement to register.

BCA Online is being continually improved with particular effort being spent on tidying up the records and spotting inconsistencies in the submissions from the clubs. I must thank Glenn Jones and David Gibson for their help and patience.

David Cooke

DC: The main thing to highlight is that BCA Online allows members to keep their details up-to-date. This is really the start of what is possible and can be built on in the future. DC's current focus is on streamlining a lot of the background work that is done by DG and GJ.

AE: You mention a competition. What were you thinking of?

DC: At the moment not enough people have opted in to the newsletter. Because of the way the law is, we need people to register before they can receive them. Although it is an easy process, it seems it is enough of a hurdle to put people off and wondered if a competition might encourage this.

CB: Could we also have a competition for getting club websites in the top 2 when searching for "conservation"?

AH: We need a prize that is good. It should be financially commensurate with the savings we will achieve as an organisation.

PH: Is it more a case of a lack of awareness, rather than a lack of motivation when it comes to members signing up?

DC: The final paper newsletter encouraged people.

DW: We should not lose sight of the importance of Twitter & Facebook. The EuroSpeleo Congress has very clearly demonstrated their power and may well help BCA reach an audience it doesn't currently reach.

LWi: Agrees completely. The statistics for the website www.darknessbelow.co.uk show a clear link with Social Media posts. On a quiet day on Social Media, there are a comparatively low number of visits to the site, whereas a busy day with key events leads to more than 1,000 hits. Facebook plays a large part in this. If Darkness Below receives a news story about BCA online, we will happily put it out. The site team is already working on an article relating to the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines and will happily make use of anything provided. We can probably guarantee at least 100 clicks.

DT: Most of the problem lies with club secretaries for not pushing it. They can generally email around their members via a general list and it seems many have not.

AH: Maybe we can distribute prizes to club secretaries with a publicly available list of the percentages of their memberships who have signed up!

PH: Most clubs presumably hold a list of email addresses. Could there not be a tick box on their forms?

JP: You are not allowed to sign up someone else.

BM: Is not sure that we have actually ever sent anything to Club Secretaries based on BCA Online and asked them to put

it into their newsletters. The fundamental weakness in BCA's structure is that communication with most members passes via the Clubs.

MB: A small article to secretaries that we can drop into the newsletter would be helpful. Bradford Pothole Club has a Facebook page and a monthly newsletter.

LW: The government, via the Inland Revenue, has effectively compelled everyone to go online.

GM: Paying tax is compulsory but joining BCA is not.

FL: The way the Government has done it is to charge £40 for submissions by paper and £10 online. If there is a tangible benefit, people will do it. We need a way to save membership by signing up. How about; the year you sign up, you get half-price membership for that year.

DW: That is likely to be a major headache for the membership team having to manually check each member's online status and then issuing bills for the missing fees if they have not signed up as they said they had.

PH: It might work via a one-time discount code for the following year.

b. **Web Services Report**

The BCA Web Server performed well during the year with only two unscheduled outages in 2015 totalling 2½ hours (up-time better than 99.97%). There are currently 72 domains registered through BCA Web Services with 58 websites hosted. The BCA funds 15 of those websites including the Regional Councils, BCRA, BCRA's Special Interest Groups, Cave Registry Data Archive, Caving Library and some of the cave rescue organisations.

The general work of keeping the web server up and running, supporting the clubs and organisations that we host and doing the financial book keeping continues quietly in the background.

I would like to thank Matt Wire, Matt Voysey and Les Williams for their help with the server and Katie Eavis for her help with the book keeping and banking.

David Cooke

DC: Quite a lot goes on behind the scenes to keep the services running.

RW: There was definitely a lot of work put in at the start of this year when all the prices were increased. DC's systems dealt with this well.

DC: Tries to design systems so that changes can be implemented with relative ease.

LW: For the avoidance of doubt, it wasn't *our* prices that went up, but rather those of the external agency whose increases we had to pass on.

c. **News Editor Report**

When I took on the post of news editor it was with the intention of proving, to at least my own satisfaction, that it would be possible to produce an informative newsletter regularly and in time for the content to be fresh.

I am satisfied that has been done and am more than grateful for the level of co-operation from contributors.

Four online newsletters were produced during 2015 and two have been produced since. The October newsletter was also distributed as an e-mail attachment to those who have agreed to receive it. This procedure has continued into 2016 and the May 2016 newsletter was distributed to 548 subscribers.

Although this was an increase from the 504 who received the January edition it only represents about 8% of our total membership and it is understood that a much lower proportion of the Club Individual Members have registered to receive the newsletter. This is disappointing – and I hope that a way can be found to increase the newsletter readership.

A final printed newsletter was produced in September 2015. This was distributed to Group and Direct Individual Members.

As well as providing timely information there is a secondary intention - to bring to the attention of our membership some of the work which goes on behind the scenes for their benefit.

However hard I try and however long the newsletter, it cannot be possible to reflect all of that work. I do hope, however, that I have been at least partially successful. During 2015 there were items on the new insurance policy, conservation, white nose syndrome, training, bolt testing, the new BCA online system – which allows members to update their own contact details, CRoW, Weil's disease, Training Grants.....

The next concept has been to inform the wider membership about some of the work done by our Constituent Bodies and with this in mind I have attempted to highlight at least one of them in each newsletter. During 2015 the newsletter included items from or about BCRA, CHECC, the British Caving Library, the Association of Scout Caving Teams, the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust, the British Caving Audio Archive and the Cave Registry Data Archive and this has continued into 2016.

Robin Weare

RW: Anything that can get news out to the club member has to be positive. We are reaching as few as 1% of our CIMs. Since becoming involved with BCA, it is clear that a lot of effort is put in by people and it would be great if more of the members were aware of this.

Legal & Insurance Report (*nothing received*)

12a) **Insurance Manager’s Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

I am pleased to report another claim-free year. Overall, the relationship with Perkins Slade has worked well: they have been responsive to enquiries, and we had a fruitful renewal meeting in December during which several minor policy enhancements were agreed at no cost to the Association. One negative note was poor performance by Perkins Slade with regard to offering competitive cover for club huts: there has now been a change of personnel and I am pleased to report the response to enquiries by clubs has been much better, and several clubs are now included in the Perkins Slade hut scheme.

Nick Williams

LWi: Tim Allen’s report suggested there may be some threat of losing insurance and not maintaining access agreements, and linked this to CRoW. How does NW see this?

NW: With regard to there being a risk to access agreements if we lose insurance, this has been the case for some time. As for the second part of the question, linking it to CRoW, is unable to comment. In general would take the view that we are now less susceptible to losing our insurance in the future. Our policy is now with Perkins Slade who insure many other similar outdoor sports. This means we are now seen by our underwriters as part of a bigger group meaning that they may be willing to insure us where we wouldn’t have been previously.

LWi: Although I did not raise it at the time, the paragraph in TA’s report is therefore simply scaremongering, as NW has stated there is no greater danger than there ever has been.

CB: Indeed, TA states that “Under CRoW even if we lost insurance cover, we would still enjoy access”. This is being used as a supporting argument despite NW’s belief that it is now less likely to occur than in the past.

LW: On the flip side, we did lose our insurance and it did impact on access. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that it could happen again. That said, I do not wish to disagree with the other comments.

AE: We are in a blessed position with insurance, because there are no claims.

PH: Insurance has been lost in the past and CRoW will be for the long term. We have no idea what the insurance situation will be in 30 or 40 years’ time. While you could say it is scaremongering, it is logical.

LWi: We do not want to turn the arguments here into one akin to Brexit arguments.

Other Reports

13. **Membership Administrator’s Report**

Membership to 23 May 2016

DIMs (Caving):452 (Non-caving):42 (of which DIMs incl. BCRA: 263 (including 19 students), CIM Plus: 2

Honorary (BCRA): 7

CIMs (Caving): 3,836 (Student): 487 (Non-caving): 857

Clubs: 169

Associates: 2

Access: 8

The table below shows membership trends since BCA’s formation. It is important to note that data for 2004 and 2005 is presented in a different format to that currently employed, but I believe the figures for those years are accurate enough for comparison. There is no reliable data for 2006.

2,162 new membership numbers were issued during 2015: 14821 – 15837 which includes nos 15620 – 15812 issued to Groups for on-line registration purposes.

	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
DIMs	93	185	437	432	397	487*	505*	507*	513*	535*
CIMs	3,523	3,909	4,965	5,216	5,115	5,296	5,435	5,397	5,585	5,564
Clubs	89	140	153	152	160	166	189	159	186	190

** Including 21 CIM Plus members in 2010, 12 in 2011, 9 in 2012, 7 in 2013, 3 in 2014 and 5 in 2015.*

Glenn Jones

AE: Turnover of members is always quite high, yet our annual membership totals generally remain quite static.

JP: At one time we were looking at whether it would be possible to pay by credit card. Is it time to look at this again?

DW: Are you not talking about Direct Debit? You can currently pay by credit card through PayPal. Direct Debit has been

looked at and is far too expensive for the sort of numbers we are looking at.

LWi: Agrees that it is very expensive. – it is also necessary to take out an insurance premium to cover mistakes made in the Direct Debit process.

PI: Indeed – there are a whole heap of hoops to jump through.

TR: Do we know the age profile of cavers?

DW: No, but there is an agenda item for the Council Meeting following this AGM to consider whether we should begin collecting the data.

LW: It is often claimed that there is a decline in young cavers. However, there is a healthy university scene with lots of youngsters around. Our own club's membership is also increasing. Things are often said without evidence to back it up. What is clear is that those at meetings are getting older. The issue is convincing the young people to come to this meeting.

14. **Cave Registry Report**

The Archive has continued to grow and is now a substantial 25GB in size. Some of the many hosted projects and data sets include the Cheddar Catchment, Matienzo, the DY0 Catchment, Leck Fell and Three Counties, County Clare, Lathkill, Mynydd Llangattwg, Sarawak, Wookey Catchment and Thailand. If you have survey data that needs a home, go to the cave-registry.org.uk website for further details. My thanks to Andrew Atkinson for his work on the data archive.

There continue to be rumours of more regional online registries but none have so far appeared. I remain ready to provide help and advice. The Mendip Cave Registry and Archive has generously offered a copy of their software to any regional registry that would like to use it.

David Cooke

DC: Andrew Atkinson is doing a fantastic job. This is far and away the biggest website we have in terms of space on the hard disk. However there is still a huge amount of survey data that is not backed up in any way. It would be good to drop it onto the website.

PH: Is there an easy way?

RW: There is an article on this in a recent newsletter.

15. **IT Working Party**

As instructed by the 2015 AGM and after a careful review of the video conferencing services available I have set up a Webex account for BCA. The cost is £30+vat/month although that would go down to £24+vat/month if purchased annually. The account allows one meeting at a time for up to 25 people. We can hold an unlimited number of meetings. I have also bought a two Logitech BCC950 conference cam (£330) and two Plantronics P620 speakerphone (£155) to setup "hubs" where more than one person can share a camera/location. Depending upon experience and subject to approval/budget I will buy more of these to equip other regional hubs as necessary. The saving in travel costs will easily cover the expense.

The technology is the easy bit; the hard work is training and coordinating the participants, which is akin to herding cats. Despite that E&T, Training, C&A and the IT Group are now all successfully holding meetings using WebEx. The convenors of the other Committees should contact me if they wish to do the same.

Work on enhancing BCA Online continues. Work has started on enhancing the Membership system.

David Cooke

16. **Youth & Development**

2015 was a mixed year. Although we have seen 2 clubs run down to the wire with one briefly having its activities temporarily suspended, we have also seen a successful CHECC forum, and expeditions by Imperial, Oxford and Cambridge University Caving Clubs. Northern and Southern CHECC proved to have very good feedback from both events and the mock rescue and survey workshop proved to be good enough that there are plans to run them at the main forum in 2016.

Regarding the two student caving clubs in difficulty:

Club 1: They were briefly suspended from the union due to inappropriate paperwork being filed. This is not unusual in student caving as safety paperwork regularly changes and forms often get sent in an old format. An issue cropped up with a new staff member of the athletic union emailing the BCA secretary. After discussion with the club a reply was sent along the lines of: BCA qualifications are for commercial organisations and that BCA insurance covers them to go caving. I have had no further reply but they continue as an active caving club and have regular training. I hope to persuade them to attend the national forum in 2016 and formally affiliate with CHECC.

Club 2: Found that they were severely struggling both with transport and with a lack of experienced leaders. I contacted

a large student club in close proximity and the training schedules were co-ordinated and weekends open to members needing more experience underground. This arrangement has run extremely well but the situation needs to be monitored for the next 2 years to ensure that the improvement translates to the next generation.

A third club contacted me with regards for further training. I informed them of the BCA training scheme and there is planning underway for a multiple club leader training weekend this summer before the start of the new term. Given the proximity of all these clubs and the difficulties they've had I will be discussing with various clubs in the Derbyshire Caving Community to try and bolster the region's student caving community.

Plans for 2016: *There is an ambitious programme for 2016 - 2017*

A caving club handbook, detailing what has worked for other clubs in the past, common problems, and most importantly how to avoid problems down the line (in its second draft, it will be published in September but draft material has already been made available to clubs that have asked for it)

Starting up Speleology Research Groups and making a national network to keep scientists in caving.

Improve SRT training in clubs by offering training on how to train at Northern and Southern CHECC. Should this be successful, then it may be extended to the national forum.

A guide to Caving Clubs in Higher Education for the student interested in caving will be released at the same time as the caving club handbook.

Identify any mountaineering clubs that wish to develop caving sections and offer support and help plan their fresher season.

Here's to a successful summer expedition season!

Rostam Namaghi

CB: Is the starting age 18?

RN: For CHECC, yes, but not for Youth & Development.

CB: Abroad lots of youngsters are becoming very competent at SRT very young and we are losing the younger generation.

PH: We had a 16 year old who wanted to start with Cheddar a few years back and there were concerns about the difficulties.

CB: Is not involved personally with Scouting, but feels the Scout Association is very well placed to help. There are schools that run summer camps with no end of activities. Do we have the ability within BCA to set up summer camps?

RN: There is one of these in the Forest of Dean annually and something on the Mendips too.

CB: If a company wanted to set up something like that, presumably BCA would be willing to support it.

AE: In the past people joined the University of Leeds because the caving club was good. Thus people joining the caving club were already good cavers. This does not seem to be the case anymore, with few people becoming competent cavers before University.

MB: There is a lot of anecdotal evidence being discussed, but that hints that we should possibly be collecting concrete data.

RN: A lot of work by CHECC has been a firefight to preserve existing clubs, rather than to try and increase the number of Higher-Education clubs.

AH: The generation we have missed is the one that used to join a climbing or caving club at 16 before going to university. We need those whose parents are not involved in the outdoors. It has to be over 18s now.

BM: It does not "have to" be under 18s.

BP: This is not just a problem in caving.

BM: It is possible that BCA's advice needs updating.

LW: There are quite a few clubs which are happy to accept under 18s and, if BCA's advice is clearer, they may be more likely to do so.

17. International Representative's Report

AE: The annual bureau meeting was held in mid-June 2015 in Slovenia in conjunction with the Karst School in Postonja. This was very informative with fantastic caves – arguably the best in Europe – and like-minded people. Sydney will also be very good and will be followed by a meeting of the Asian section of the UIS in China. That was an excellent meeting, hosted by Erin Lynch. The next meeting of UIS bureau is at EuroSpeleo.

a) FSE Report

The last FSE Bureau and General Assembly Meeting took place on Saturday 30th May 2015 in Pertosa – Auletta in Italy at the Euro Speleo Forum hosted by the 22nd National Italian Congress. The main changes to the composition of the

bureau was the candidature of Martina Drskova, delegate from Slovakia, who was unanimously elected to the position of General Secretary. This replaced Olivier Vidal who resigned from the post in 2014. Martina is the first woman to be appointed to the bureau certainly since I have been a member.

In terms of membership fees approval has been given to 31 countries with the exception of Macedonia who didn't pay their fees. More information about membership can be found on the FSE web site www.eurospeleo.eu. There are two countries in the Federation who are currently experiencing considerable political upheaval, these being Bulgaria and Spain. In both cases new fledgling organisations are attempting to oust their existing national body. The FSE is providing some mediation to get the two sides together to try and reach an agreement how they are represented at FSE level. New countries that have expressed an interest in joining the FSE last year and this year include Georgia and Montenegro.

The Eurospeleo projects have continued to be a popular source of funding for many countries organising expeditions and creating new projects that brings different nationalities of cavers together. A full report on projects will be published at this year's General Assembly Meeting in the UK.

The FSE is working actively with the organisers of Eurospeleo 2016 to make this a resounding success. Henk Goutier, vice delegate from the Netherlands & FSE Treasurer, is assisting Ged Campion in the foreign liaison matters and translations. The GAM agreed a contribution of 1500 euros to the Eurospeleo 2016 event.

The FSE was represented at the 50th Anniversary of the Karst Institute in Slovenia on 17th June where the UIS held their bureau meeting. The FSE was invited to attend the UIS Bureau meeting and discussions took place on how a regional body like the FSE could complement the work of the UIS. The UIS may well adopt the Eurospeleo projects model used by the FSE to introduce their own UIS speleo projects.

Outside of Europe but helping others countries to develop infrastructure, the FSE Vice-Treasurer attended the 34th National and 2nd International Geoscience Congress (Geosciences and Speleology) held from the 22nd to 24th February, 2016 in Tehran, Iran. The Vice President and Vice Treasurer of the FSE attended the 2nd Asian Transkarst Conference in Lichuan, Hubei (China) the Asian Union of Speleology (AUS) which was founded on 6th November 2015. FSE was invited as an observer to the inaugural dinner on 5th November where Asian delegates from South Korea, China, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Iran, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Lebanon and Indonesia agreed on the Statutes, which was formally signed by the founding members.

Timetable of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years that involve the FSE:

European Congress 2016 will be in the Yorkshire Dales, UK from 13-20th August

ES Forum 2017 Dryanovo, in September, Central North Bulgaria, northern slopes of the Balkan Mountain

ES Forum 2018 will be in Sazkammergut, Upper-Austria.

Ged Campion

18. Media-Liaison Report

[Sec's note: Hellie Adams has recently stepped down from the role of Media-Liaison. This is being temporarily filled by Andy Eavis. There is no formal report, but work in this role has been reactive and has generally involved forwarding enquiries on to the appropriate person.]

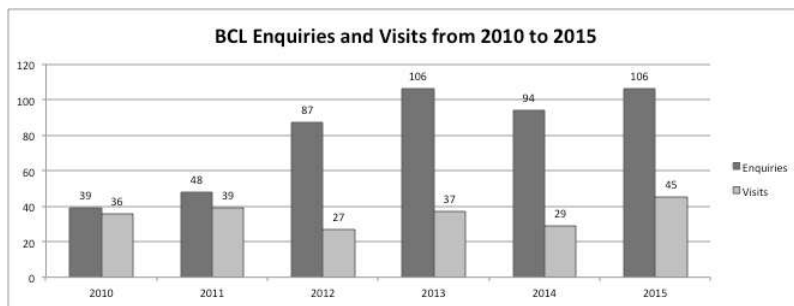
LWi: If the role is largely reactive, how does Tim Allen's role fit in?

DW: The Media-Liaison role is indeed reactive. The intention is to field media enquiries and direct them towards the correct people.

AE: There is the argument that the job could rest with the Chairman who can then refer enquiries onwards if appropriate. A recent enquiry related to CRoW and AE has handled himself.

19. British Caving Library

History and Progress: In 2007 the then BCRA Library consisted of about 70 m of shelf length of UK and foreign periodicals and books (no surveys or photos) and with only a printed catalogue dated 2004. It was hosted by the Local Studies Library in Derbyshire and their staff dealt with enquiries on behalf of BCRA; records for the final year at Matlock indicate only one enquiry during the year. There was also a similar amount of uncatalogued material, which had to be moved from the home of the deceased BCRA Librarian to a storage facility.



BCRA set up the Glutton Bridge premises in July 2008, bringing the material from the storage facility to the new site and in 2009 BCA agreed to assist in funding the Library as the British Caving Library. In May 2010 the Matlock Local Studies Library could no longer host the BCRA Library, so this was also moved to Glutton Bridge, the two collections were combined

under BCL and we began completely re-cataloguing.

Currently we have over 200 m of shelf length in total, plus filing cabinets and metal cupboards for secure storage and 4 large map chests for surveys. We have a team of volunteers working with a paid Librarian (who works one day a week) so we now have a Library website, an online catalogue, Archive and Audio-Archive websites and a Facebook page with currently over 750+ followers both UK and foreign. The Library can be open at any time, by arrangement with the Librarian, and visitors are welcomed. There are comfortable working conditions with computers, scanners, printers, etc. for visitors to use, or they may come with their own laptops and make use of the Library Wifi. The increase in usage since 2010 is shown in the graph below.

During the first 3 months of 2016 we have had 26 enquiries; the ratio is around 65% requests for copies of known items and around 35% enquiries requiring research. Some 20% of our enquiries now come from abroad. Up to the end of April 2016 we have welcomed a total of 30 visitors to the Library.

The Library hosts committee and Council meetings for BCRA and BCA and can be made available for other meetings of up to about 12-15 people. Because of its situation in a limestone area with caves nearby we hope that it may be possible in the future to host field trips or educational visits.

As always, where we have duplicate or surplus material, as a first option we pass it on to other caving club libraries. Any remaining material appears in our "Lucky Dip" boxes at caving events and the donations received go towards buying more books for the Library.

Two major developments in 2015: *Firstly, following the death of John Beck early in 2015, the complete combined collection owned by John and Doug Nash, with whom John shared a house, has been donated to the Library: thousands of items, including books, journals, maps, surveys, archive material and John's caving notebooks plus two full map chests and some bookcases. We are working to incorporate this material into the Library and will be adding yet more permanent shelving to bring us up to around 250m, probably the maximum we have room for. Original items of specific interest to mining historians were sorted for us by the Peak District Mines Historical Society and are now deposited in the Derbyshire Record Office where they are accessible to enquirers.*

Secondly, thanks to John Gardner, we have begun a web-based register of caving collections. Some are archives held by the Library itself, which we are in the process of digitising; the digitised versions can be accessed via our website and visitors to the Library are able to inspect the originals. Collections of caving archives held by other bodies are listed, together with details of how to contact the holders and access the material.

New material in 2016: *Earlier this year we were offered the complete contents of a Derbyshire caving club library after the club was unable to find a home for it. We took over 36 archive boxes of material, which is now being incorporated into the Library, where it will be accessible to the club members; surplus material will be passed on to other libraries.*

Jenny Potts

JP: The intention is to run a library stand at EuroSpeleo. This may help us set up more exchanges with overseas libraries.

CB: Looking at the figures, there are 151 enquiries and there is a £10k subsidy. Are the enquiries from the same people who make multiple enquiries, or from lots of different people?

JP: Tony Waltham has been using us extensively in his research for the Volume 2 of the Yorkshire Dales book. Foreigners have also visited because they wanted to research something about their own caves. We have, for example, provided photos from original exploration in Romania.

BP: The Library could do with being more widely publicised.

JP: The Audio Archive is fantastic, thanks to John Gardner. The Online Catalogue is by Martin Laverty. We are beginning to get a register of archives – we have historical material that has been passed to us so that the material can be made available electronically.

LWi: It would be great to work with JP on an article for the Library for the darknessbelow website.

20. Reports from BCRA, Regional Councils etc

CSCC: Another quiet year.

21. Election of Officers

22.1 Secretary: Simon Brooks (Prop: LW, Sec: DWi) *elected unopposed*

AE: It should be noted that SB's willingness to stand goes hand in hand with appointing a Clerical Assistant. We have had one informal verbal application so far and would like others. Originally DW worked part-time, but has switched to full-time and cannot manage to keep up the work he previously did. He has been an excellent Secretary and we are very grateful.

22.2 Legal & Insurance Officer: Bob Mehew (Prop: Tim Allen, Sec: JP) *elected unopposed*

22.3 Conservation & Access Officer: Andrew Hinde (Prop: LW, Sec: RW) *elected unopposed*

22.4 2 Club Representatives: Idris Williams (Prop: Jenny Potts, Sec: Robin Weare) and John Hine (Prop: RW, Second: TR) *elected unopposed*

22.5 2 Individual Member Representatives: Matt Wire (Prop: RW, Sec: James Begley) *elected unopposed* and Pete Hall (Prop: LW, Sec: FL) *elected unopposed*

Other Matters

25. Proposals

Proposal: ***“Proposed additions to the BCA constitution – add a Section 8.16: ‘8.16 An Individual or Honorary member (the 'voter') who is eligible to vote at a General Meeting may choose to appoint a proxy to speak and vote for them. This proxy (the 'nominee') must be another Individual or Honorary member who is also eligible to vote. The form of proxy, determined by National Council, will be provided with the notice of the meeting. The voter must provide this instrument of proxy to the Secretary at least forty eight hours before the relevant General Meeting. Voters may indicate how they wish their nominee to vote or allow their nominee discretion.*”**

Prop: Andrew McLoed

DW: We have a proposal tabled which is currently without a seconder.

AM: This proposal stemmed from a desire not to attend this meeting. However, on investigating the options for proxy voting, it became clear this was not an option in BCA. In many organisations proxy voting is common, as is being able to cast your vote via the Chair. There will always be people who cannot attend meetings, such as those who are currently underground repairing broken stal in Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink. As it stands most members do not attend BCA's AGMs, and it is clearly better if people have the chance to have their say. This proposal would only affect House of Individuals.

BM: Would like to suggest the following amendments and, if acceptable to AM, would be willing to second his amended proposal. The amended proposal would be as follows: ***“8.16 An Individual or Honorary member (the 'voter') who is eligible to vote at a General Meeting may choose to appoint a proxy to speak and vote for them. This proxy (the 'nominee') must be another Individual or Honorary member who is also eligible to vote. The form of proxy, determined by National Council, will be provided with the notice of the meeting. The voter must provide this instrument the completed form of proxy to the Recorder at least 7 days for any General Meeting before the relevant meeting excepting an Emergency General Meeting where 48 hours shall be sufficient the Secretary at least forty eight hours before the relevant General Meeting. Voters may indicate how they wish their nominee to vote or allow their nominee discretion. Council is empowered to limit the number of voters who may be represented by each individual nominee to as few as two, excepting the Chair who shall have no such limit.”*** The reason for seeking to limit the deadline to 7 days prior to the meeting is to give the Recorder some time to check the authenticity of the proxy form, if they feel it appropriate.

AM: Those amendments are acceptable.

Thus the new amended proposal was:

Proposal: ***“Proposed additions to the BCA constitution – add a Section 8.16: ‘8.16 An Individual or Honorary member (the 'voter') who is eligible to vote at a General Meeting may choose to appoint a proxy to vote for them. This proxy (the 'nominee') must be another Individual or Honorary member who is also eligible to vote. The form of proxy, determined by National Council, will be provided with the notice of the meeting. The voter must provide the completed form of proxy to the Recorder at least 7 days for any General Meeting before the relevant meeting excepting an Emergency General Meeting where 48 hours shall be sufficient. Voters may indicate how they wish their nominee to vote or allow their nominee discretion. Council is empowered to limit the number of voters who may be represented by each individual nominee to as few as two, excepting the Chair who shall have no such limit.”***

Prop: AM Sec: BM

GMu: Has numerous comments that could be made. Is mandated to vote against any proposal that allows anyone to have more than 2 votes.

LWi: Is happy to support all of BM's amendments except the final sentence.

PH: Supports the final sentence.

BM: This allows Council to limit the number of proxies, but will allow the Chair to have multiple proxies. This is the basis of how most companies do their work.

GMu: Electoral law states that nobody can hold more than 2 votes and this is much more appropriate to this organisation than company law.

FL: What concerns me is that, if this were not a Constitutional issue, it could then be discussed and amended at the meeting, in much the same way as we are doing now, without any opportunity for those who have appointed a proxy to consider either the views put forward, or the amended wording. How would the Chair execute the proxy votes received following an amended proposal?

GMu: With a proposal made in a ballot, it cannot be amended. How will Council decide how many votes will be allowed? If somebody wants to vote at a meeting, they should be there.

LWi: Would be willing to support a limited amount of proxy votes because at least that allows some discussion between the representative and the individual. However this cannot happen with the Chairman, who would have no idea of the individuals' wishes and how an amendment might affect their vote. Consequently unlimited votes should not be acceptable. One club might discuss something, give 200 votes to the Chairman and then be able to completely manipulate things. That would be very worrying.

BM: The reason behind the extension to 7 days was to ensure the Recorder could verify the origin of any proxy votes received. We should remember that the Chair has the power to accept or reject proposed amendments. Had the amendment proposed significantly changed the meaning of the original, then it could be refused. There may be a distant club relationship or even an appeal via a forum, rather than the proxy being a trusted friend. Andrew McLoed had a long discussion about whether or not to trust Council to decide on the proxy terms.

GMu: Had the Chair 400 votes in his pocket now, this entire discussion would be pointless.

LWi: How would the Chair feel about exercising proxy votes?

AE: Would be unhappy about holding unlimited proxy votes.

AM: If someone proposes something that is not fundamentally in agreement with the Agenda, then it cannot be binding. Therefore proposals cannot change that significantly from those published in the Agenda.

GMu: There is a value judgement necessary here and this is problematic.

DT: Specifically excluding the Chair from voting as proxy would reduce issues and limit the number of proxy votes likely at a meeting.

DC: Is against this proposal. There are so many complex factors that have been discussed here. The ballot process ensures everyone has a vote on constitutional matters.

AE: In the UIS Central America used to turn up with 20 proxy votes on any issue. This did not work well.

AMc: This is how at least one other outdoor organisation operates. It is a voter-driven process and whatever the House of Individuals does, there is always the House of Groups to act as safeguard. If one of the clubs chooses to pack out a meeting and force the individual vote on an issue, then this will be voted down by the Group vote.

BM: Perhaps we should agree principles and then leave the change in the wording to a later date.

AH: There are other technologies that could be used too, such as online voting. We may wish to consider that too.

LWi: Thinks it is important that implications are thought through, including AE's concerns over unlimited votes for the Chair.

AMc: Did not have long between realising there was no facility for proxy voting and the deadline for submission of proposals. Is, therefore, happy to accept that the wording can be improved and that it is best considered over a longer period, perhaps by Council.

[AM and BM then agreed to withdraw their proposal and in favour of the following:]

Proposal: This meeting approves the principle of proxy voting and directs Council to develop a form of words that best fits the Association to then be presented at a future General Meeting.

Prop: LW Sec: FL

Individuals: For: 11 Against: 8 Abstentions: 2

Groups: 6 Against: 5 Abstentions: 3

The proposal was, therefore, approved by a majority in both Houses.

[At this point Babs Williams arrived at the meeting and Les Williams provided the necessary authorisation for holding the Wessex CC Group vote]

Proposal: That the following section of item 4.6 of the Constitution "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access." be amended to "That any rights held by the owners and tenants of property or mineral rights to grant or withhold access be respected."

- FL: Feels strongly that the CRoW campaign is operating outside the remit of the Constitution. One of the promises in the CRoW vote was to seek to change section 4.6 of the Constitution and this has not yet happened. This proposal is to amend the Constitution in order to allow BCA to continue its campaigning for CRoW within its Constitution rather than outside it. This is a subtle, but important change. The original version gives landowners a right, the amended version respects any rights they hold.
- CB: Has a conflict of interest here as both a caver and landowner of a locked cave on Access Land. Of course landowners have to operate within the legislation. From the landowners' point of view, there are cavers who say the law gives them rights and they are going to go caving regardless of the landowners' wishes. We could change the Constitution to respecting "the wishes of the landowners". Otherwise we may well upset landowners. It may be seen that BCA is institutionalising the antagonism of landowners. There have been people on UKCaving talking about angle grinders and cutting off gates, as if it is their legal right. Aveline's Hole was broken into yesterday as was Stainsbury's Shaft. As a landowner, it would be nice to see BCA stating that this mindset is not just illegal, but is also one we cannot support. A lot of caves are owned by cavers. Landowners generally like cavers and are happy to allow access. We just don't want open access to the general public and that is what CroW allows.
- AE: We want to give landowners support. The damage in Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink is appalling and it seems we cannot find anyone who knows what happened. Linda Wilson is correct in saying that the cart was put before the horse.
- LWi: BCA admits it put the cart before the horse. Should BCA not now pull back? The legal case is far from clear. Indeed, if I were in a solicitor-client relationship, I would have to give my client very clear advice to think carefully about how to spend their money in any potential action. There is a statement in the Chairman's report that CRoW is going to apply. However, the Chairman cannot see the future and nobody can be certain in English Law. Would ask that the Chairman stop saying that it *is* going to apply.
- AE: There are other people outside BCA who are not willing to pull back. It could get messier yet.
- CB: Personally thinks CRoW will end up applying. BCA cannot control the legislation, but can try to promote correct behaviour among its members.
- AE: We must be a lot better at conservation than we have been in the past. This is not just for caves on Access Land, but for all caves.
- TR: The motion put by Faye Litherland is about whether or not BCA is operating within its constitution and we don't appear to be discussing this at the moment.
- DT: Cambrian CC had a long AGM discussing this matter of Constitutional change a few years ago. The Cambrian Constitution quotes caves and mines together. Roy Fellows points out that Faye has used the same wording as in the amended Cambrian Constitution and that this is sensible because BCA's existing sentence is null and void in terms of the law.
- BM: The Constitution makes the point earlier on that caves equal mines. The proposed sentence makes no difference to the existing wording.
- FL: Objects to the fact that the promise was given in the referendum and has not been followed through.
- BM: The argument Council accepted was that there was no need for a Constitutional change. This is summarised in the Secretary's report. Do you wish to criticise what DW has reported?
- DC: It feels wrong. Council has chosen a very particular interpretation to fit the argument. The permit system in the North is how they express their landowners' rights. If Council can ignore the line in the Constitution because it claims the existing law allows for caving on Access Land, then surely Council should also accept that the Northern permit system should also be scrapped.
- LWi: Council has taken the "flat earth" position, namely "we believe CRoW already applies to caves, therefore we do not need to change the Constitution." This is the same as "my opinion is that the earth is flat, so it is flat". This is in the face of Government ministers' views to the contrary.
- JP: DEFRA is on record as saying CRoW applies to caves so long as you do not go out of daylight. This is farcical, but is DEFRA's considered position. There are MPs on one side saying one thing and MPs on another side saying another. If we are going to change the Constitution, we need more of a think than we are having here. It costs a lot of money to change it. Would like to suggest that we do with this, what we did with the previous one. Can we remit it to Council to return with a properly worded amendment next year? Some people think it should be amended, others think it shouldn't.
- FL: Would be happy with this.
- PH: The Constitution states that the interpretation of the Constitution is down to a General Meeting.
- LWi: Were the issue to be remitted to Council, would BCA then pull back on its media campaign and put the cart back in front of the horse? Currently the ballot seems to have been carried out under false pretences and this is unacceptable. If BCA is seen to have talks to get this right, then would it be willing to hold back on what it is doing with CRoW?

AE: Is very happy to focus on Conservation.

LWi: Would you be happy to stop saying that CRoW will apply?

AE: That's a personal opinion and not the view of the Organisation. This is always stated clearly.

LWi: We need to stop personal attacks.

AE: Agreed, but some of the things The Association of British and Irish Showcaves (ABIS) has been doing recently have been extraordinary.

JP: If you want BCA to pull back, then ABIS need controlling.

AE: It is clear that they are carrying out a serious publicity campaign focused on one particular cave.

LWi: JP's proposal and FL's acceptance of it provides a way forward.

PH: We have two entrenched positions, but there was a clear vote in favour of CRoW. Are you suggesting we should hold back in favour of the minority, rather than the majority? People's votes were not swayed in the poll. They knew what they were voting for.

LWi: The accompanying paperwork said there would be a ballot. This has not taken place and yet there has been a concerted media campaign by BCA.

DWi: What exactly is a "media campaign"?

LWi: Tim Allen appeared on the radio saying that cavers are fighting for access. As it happens, LWi was with a landowner on a site visit shortly after this interview as aired and it was clear they were very unhappy about BCA's stance.

DWi: 63% of those who responded to the poll were in favour. The things you are talking about were fully in line with that.

FL: Everything that has happened is in line with that, excepting the fact that we would seek to change the Constitution at some time.

CB: It is impossible in law to define when a dip in the land becomes a cave. So DEFRA has to interpret the legal situation. It would be lovely in terms of landowner relations if we could have a change in mindset and a different pace.

PH: Most landowners are not actually cavers. Why do they care about conservation in a cave they do not ever go into?

LWi: That is totally wrong. When a cave was broken into recently, a landowner really cared about the conservation of the cave.

AE: The people who have done most damage to caves around the world are showcave owners.

LWi: It would be appalling if the meeting agreed with the comment that landowners do not care about their cave.

[The meeting agreed with LWi on this point.]

AM: In relation to at least mines, Section 4.6 as it currently stands is wrong.

NW: Why is it wrong?

DT: Because the rights of the mineral owner can trump those of the landowner.

NW: Mineral rights are just another form of property and as such the rights of the owners are recognised by the current wording.

LWi: Welcomes NW's intervention on this. We were talking earlier about putting the cart before the horse and working on some kind of recognition that conservation is important.

JP: We should allow Council to look more closely at the legal position and come up with a more appropriate form of words. Sitting here today, some may think the current wording does not need amending, while others may think it does but be unsure of the current legal situation. This needs taking away and looking at carefully.

LWi: And during that period, we should look at reconciliation and repairing some of the damage done to landowner relations by loose cannons.

DT: We do not have a loose cannon. We have someone who has been working hard at implementing the wishes of the membership.

LWi: Would like some kind of Christmas Truce while people can talk to each other.

JP: Some landowners in the North appreciate the change, because it will mean a reduction in their liability. In the north of England we are often looking at a few tenant farmers with a large landowner who doesn't really care what happens under their ground. They will be happy to get rid of their legal liability.

LWi: They are not getting rid of it, but rather changing it. A risk is a risk and the existence of a risk is what will affect insurance premiums. This is very unlikely to be any change in these.

LW: We have a suggestion from JP that needs formally wording and proposing, together with another proposal that needs voting on or amending.

LWi: What was the wording of JP's suggestion?

DW: That we remit the issue to Council to return with a properly worded amendment next year.

FL: Are we willing to include a rider about BCA holding back on its campaigning in the meantime?

JP: No.

AE: Could we put a rider about landowners.

AH: How do we envisage the role of the CRoW Liaison officer in this? Are we saying Tim Allen's work will not be put on

hold? If so, it is worrying that outside forces may gather momentum if TA is not seen to be pursuing the wishes of the membership.

BM: In fact such a decision will mean a lot of work will be needed by Tim Allen.

FL: One of the most important jobs of the CRoW Liaison Officer will be to liaise with landowners and find out their opinion.

AH: He has done that already in the North.

BM: The difficulty here is that he cannot formally do that unless Regions give him the permission.

LWi: He should liaise through the proper channels in the relevant area. It is really about Access-Controlling Bodies. We would not wish to support anything that gives Tim Allen the chance to talk directly to all landowners.

BP: Talking to landowner about their views is what Tim Allen is doing in the North because he has the permission to do so.

FL: We need some proper information for landowners.

BM: We have text nearly ready on conservation and access issues, but would like to add a little about insurance. For this we are waiting for a response from our insurers. Once we have received this, we will be ready to publish.

GM: Speaking as the Secretary of an Access-Controlling Body, nobody from BCA has approached me. The approach on the radio has not worked in the way it had probably been intended. In fact it has had very negative consequences on landowner goodwill.

AE: Tim Allen was pushed into doing the interview in response to someone locally.

GM: He had no need to give the reply he did and could easily have said "no". He chose to do differently.

Proposal: ***To remit the issue of section 4.6 of the Constitution to Council for consideration to return with a properly worded proposal presented at the next General Meeting. Meanwhile BCA will concentrate on conservation and landowner relations.***

Prop: JP Sec: LW

FL: Is happy with this and is, therefore, happy to withdraw the original proposal.

AE: To be clear, TA will not stop his work on CRoW completely, but will change his key focus.

FL: It is about bridge-building.

[Voting was then carried out on the above proposal]

Individual: For: 22 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

Group: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

[Thus the proposal was passed in both Houses.]

FL: Is very pleased that on this emotive issue, we have finally got everyone agreeing.

AE: We really must focus on conservation, access control and developing landowner relations.

26. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the 2017 Accounts

RW: This year's Independent Examiner has asked if we can try to find someone else for next year.

LW: Could PI be persuaded?

DW: That is probably a little too close to home and would ideally be someone else.

Proposal: ***that the appointment of an Independent Examiner for 2017 be remitted to Council.***

Prop: RW Sec: PI *agreed unanimously*

27. Date of the Annual General Meeting for 2017

Proposal: ***that the 2017 AGM take place on 11 June 2017 at 10:30am at the Rotary Centre, Castleton.***

Prop: FL Sec: LW *agreed unanimously*

28. Any Other Business notified in advance to the Chairman

None.

The meeting ended at 15.10.

Appendix

1) 2015 Accounts

BRITISH
CAVING
ASSOCIATION

Financial Statements for the Year
Ended 31 December 2015

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION
 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
INCOME		
Subscriptions	105,421	102,010
Association	3,069	2,915
Conservation & Access	0	0
Training Services	15,461	16,407
Publications & Information	0	64
Equipment & Techniques	0	0
Meetings & Conference	0	2,065
Web Services	1,212	1,159
TOTAL INCOME	<u>125,163</u>	<u>124,620</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Subscription	55,654	57,287
Association	3,309	8,555
Conservation & Access	120	323
Training Services	20,625	20,646
Caver Training	405	1,055
Publications & Information	424	4,833
Equipment & Techniques	4,040	1,890
Youth Development	104	104
Meetings & Conferences	639	4,244
Web Services	1,608	1,131
Regional Caving Councils	3,754	3,323
International	0	430
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>90,682</u>	<u>103,821</u>
CHARITABLE DONATIONS		
British Cave Research Association for British Caving Library	10,000	10,000
Ghar Parau Foundation for Expedition Programme	5,000	5,000
<u>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</u>	<u>19,481</u>	<u>5,799</u>
TAX	0	-298
<u>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR AFTER TAX</u>	<u>19,481</u>	<u>6,097</u>

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors and Prepayments	192	1,581
Balances at Bank and cash in hand	231,006	211,872
	<u>231,198</u>	<u>213,453</u>
LESS: CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors and Accruals payable within one year	32,237	33,973
NET ASSETS	<u><u>198,961</u></u>	<u><u>179,480</u></u>
REPRESENTED BY RESERVES :		
General Reserve		
Balance brought forward	114,480	108,383
Surplus for year	19,481	6,097
	<u>133,961</u>	<u>114,480</u>
less transfer to Insurance Reserve	15,000	0
	<u>118,961</u>	<u>114,480</u>
Insurance Reserve	80,000	65,000
TOTAL RESERVES	<u><u>198,961</u></u>	<u><u>179,480</u></u>

Approved on behalf of the Executive Committee

A Eavis, Chairman

Date

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

1 Accounting Policies

a) Basis of Accounting

The accounts have been prepared under historical cost accounting rules

b) Equipment

Equipment is charged in the accounts in the year of purchase.

2 Insurance Reserve

Resulting from the review of the Sinking Fund referred to in the 2014 accounts it has been decided to redesignate it as Insurance Reserve in order to more accurately reflect its purpose and to increase the balance to a level which allows a minimum of two years' premiums on the policy.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

I report on the accounts of the association for the year ended 31 December 2015 which are set out on pages 2 & 3.

Respective responsibilities of executive committee and examiner

As members of the association's executive committee you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; it is my responsibility to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the association and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as executive committee members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep proper accounting records or to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Name:

Heather Simpson (FCCA)

Address:

Flat E, The Beeches, Welcombe Road, Stratford-upon-Avon. CV37 6UJ

Dated:

3 May 2016

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
Subscriptions		
Income		
Subscriptions	105,421	102,010
Total	<u>105,421</u>	<u>102,010</u>
Expenditure		
Insurance Premium	37,182	39,444
Employment Expenses	9,281	8,277
General Expenses	3,297	4,457
Refunds, Adj, Unpaid	309	46
BCRA Subscriptions	5,585	5,063
Total	<u>55,654</u>	<u>57,287</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>49,767</u>	<u>44,723</u>
Association		
Income		
Interest received	2,604	2,664
Broker Commission	452	87
Donations, Sundry	13	164
Total	<u>3,069</u>	<u>2,915</u>
Expenditure		
Secretarial	17	297
Financial	61	0
Travel	2,033	2,053
Subscriptions	667	669
Insurance	477	477
Ballot	0	5,059
Sundry	54	0
Total	<u>3,309</u>	<u>8,555</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(240)</u>	<u>(5,640)</u>
Conservation & Access		
Income		
Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure		
Secretarial	0	120
Travel	0	203
CRow	120	0
Total	<u>120</u>	<u>323</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(120)</u>	<u>(323)</u>

Training Services

Income

LCMLA / CIC Schemes	15,341	16,302
Publications	120	105
Total	<u>15,461</u>	<u>16,407</u>

Expenditure

Employment Expenses	8,524	8,283
General Expenses	3,441	2,845
Travel	1,700	1,672
LCMLA/CIC Training	6,903	7,692
Refunds, Adj, Unpaid	51	4
Publications	6	150
Total	<u>20,625</u>	<u>20,646</u>

Surplus / (Deficit) (5,164) (4,239)

Caver Training

Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
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Expenditure

Recreational Caver Training	405	920
Voluntary Sector Support	0	135
Total	<u>405</u>	<u>1,055</u>

Surplus / (Deficit) (405) (1,055)

Publications & Information

Income

Publication Sales	0	44
Advertising	0	20
Total	<u>0</u>	<u>64</u>

Expenditure

Free Leaflets	0	458
Handbook	0	0
Newsletter	424	0
Journal	0	4,375
Total	<u>424</u>	<u>4,833</u>

Surplus / (Deficit) (424) (4,769)

Equipment & Techniques			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
Secretarial		0	0
Travel		564	258
Anchor programme		3,476	1,572
Rope-Test programme		0	60
	Total	<u>4,040</u>	<u>1,890</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(4,040)</u>	<u>(1,890)</u>
Youth Development			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
Youth Development		104	104
	Total	<u>104</u>	<u>104</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(104)</u>	<u>(104)</u>
Meetings & Conferences			
Income			
AGM Weekend		0	2,065
	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>2,065</u>
Expenditure			
AGM Weekend		210	3,658
Artificial Cave		10	394
Cliff Hanger		419	192
	Total	<u>639</u>	<u>4,244</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(639)</u>	<u>(2,179)</u>
Web Services			
Income			
Web Services		1,212	1,159
	Total	<u>1,212</u>	<u>1,159</u>
Expenditure			
Web Services		1,608	1,131
	Total	<u>1,608</u>	<u>1,131</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(396)</u>	<u>28</u>

Regional Caving Council Expenditure			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
CCC claims		277	348
CNCC claims		973	390
CSCC claims		1,224	1,443
DCA claims		1,092	858
DCUC claims		188	284
	Total	<u>3,754</u>	<u>3,323</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(3,754)</u>	<u>(3,323)</u>
British Caving Library			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
Grant	Total	<u>10,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	Total	<u>10,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(10,000)</u>	<u>(10,000)</u>
Expedition Programme			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
Grants to Expeditions	Total	<u>5,000</u>	<u>5,000</u>
	Total	<u>5,000</u>	<u>5,000</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(5,000)</u>	<u>(5,000)</u>
International			
Income	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Expenditure			
Grants to Reprs.	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>430</u>
	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>430</u>
	Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>0</u>	<u>(430)</u>
Total Income		<u>125,163</u>	<u>124,620</u>
Total Expenditure		<u>105,682</u>	<u>118,821</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		<u>19,481</u>	<u>5,799</u>
Tax	Current Year	<u>0</u>	<u>(298)</u>
		<u>0</u>	<u>(298)</u>
Total Surplus / (Deficit) less Tax		<u>19,481</u>	<u>6,097</u>