

Reports to the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Chair Report

Bringing the AGM date back into line with pre-pandemic timing has created a short year and this year's AGM in June feels to be upon us with some speed. Whilst I personally feel not to have achieved as much as I may have wished the day-to-day functions of the Association continue to run providing services to members for which I express thanks to those involved on behalf of the membership at large.

In particular, it is pleasing to note the membership report showing an increase in overall membership (6202) when considered against the similar period ending in 2020 which the Covid pandemic had not had time to affect. Clearly, the restrictions at the time had a very serious effect on actual caving, all but wiping out the activity. The current membership figures and anecdotal evidence from the ground indicate that caving has bounced back and reflects the resilience of cavers to return to their chosen sport; it is most encouraging.

Of concern, is the lack of volunteers coming forward to help run the Association, these are highlighted in the vacant posts which require filling and for which we have not received any nominations. Whilst there is a feeling that Council has become too large and unwieldy and a proposal has been made to reduce the representatives by four, there are some key positions which really could do with being filled; the Conservation position being a prominent one.

I have a personal philosophy of putting more back than I take out of activities I have been engaged in and hope that members share something similar to the extent of coming forward and volunteering. I am happy to discuss any aspects of this with anyone maybe wavering about doing the right thing. Don't be afraid of jumping in at the deep end!

On a more serious, (as I write 27/5) the CRoW legal case has reached an unsatisfactory conclusion which has left those of us involved feeling deeply disappointed that the key issue about whether caving is a permissible activity remains unresolved. Irrespective of your views on CRoW, we owe a deep sense of gratitude to those directly involved for the time and effort they have dedicated to pursuing this course of action. I do not wish to dwell on the finer details of the outcome which will no doubt be highlighted in the CRoW working group convenor's report, suffice to say there are some positives on which to build future strategy to address this issue.

BCA policy remains that in the Association's opinion, caving is a permissible activity in CRoW designated land.

Ukraine became a situation of great concern for UK cavers and BCA issued a statement of support along with that from BCRA condemning unreservedly, the Russian invasion and war. Whilst our support is for the entire people of Ukraine, we cannot help but consider the effect this war is having on the Ukraine caving community. Initial points of contact have been made with key cavers in the country but it has been difficult to establish just what help can be provided other than the moral support we have demonstrated. It is clear that financial donations to recognised organisations e.g., DEC help overall with the knowledge that donations are disseminated through legitimate relief agencies. However, establishing how we may support the caving community there more directly is

proving difficult to achieve; our contact indicates that many of the cavers are actively engaged in the war. However, it looks possible to become members of the Ukraine Speleological Association (UkrSA) both as individual members and also joining as a national body i.e., BCA which we will continue to explore.

Finally, it was a privilege to be elected as Chair of BCA for a further term of office and I feel honoured to have received your confidence to continue in the role which I will undertake to the best of my abilities.

Russell Myers
Chair, May 2022.

Secretaries Report

The usual run of meetings, answering queries and pointing people in the right direction, in other words nothing out of the ordinary to report.

R. Allan Richardson
Secretary

Treasurer Report

Current bank balances

as at 22/05/2022 was £239,000. Of which £88,000 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £77,000 is in a short term deposit account.

Bank charges

As at 1/1/2022 HSBC has decided to inflict bank charges on all charities. This brings them into line with most other retail banks. I estimate this will cost BCA around £300 a year. I have closed a dormant account which was attracting bank charges. I have asked our membership and training administrators to discourage the use of cheques when members pay us as this is now expensive for BCA.

Unusual spend since last Council

BCRA 2021 cross charge £2,000, UBSS grant to attend UIS conference £500, donation to Ghar Parau Foundation £4,000, DCUC claim for 2021 £55.

BCA Region claims for 2021 paid in 2022

We received a claim from DCUC for £55. BCA Finance committee approved the claim and it has been paid in full.

BCA accounts result for 2021

These have been signed off by the independent reviewer and BCA Chairperson. . They show the following (round numbers):

Reduced income by £10k (Covid and reduced club membership fee Council decision 2021)

CRoW legal costs of £45k, total over the 2 years £80k.

QMC break even position (income and expenditure both £15k)

Record regional support due to increased C&A activity especially CSCC and DCA regions.

Deficit £60k (lower than I predicted)

Net assets £155k.

I will bring to the BCA AGM in June for approval. Once approved I will submit the tax return. No tax due.

Note any CRoW legal cost refund decision has not been reflected in the 2021 accounts as they stand. (See below)

CRoW financial situation

A previous Council meeting agreed we could spend up to £90k pursuing this claim on the basis of its details and likely impact for UK caving as a whole. To date we have paid £67k and there is a further £13k due to the lawyers for recent work, taking the total cost to £80k as budgeted on our own lawyer (which he acknowledges). There is a court deliberation over costs in the matter due in the next few weeks and it is possible we could be awarded up to £35k in costs; at the maximum award it would mean a refund to BCA of some £20k.

BCA Budget 2022

Has been approved and distributed to Council. If all the assumptions come true it's a break even budget.

HJJ May 2022.

CROW Group Report

29 May 2022

As council members will recall, following the terms of the settlement of our judicial review over the meaning and application of the open access provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) against the Welsh Government, the BCA submitted representations to it in February. The invitation to make these representations was part of the settlement.

It should be recalled that our lawyers had told us very clearly that we ought to accept this settlement, because if we didn't, the way the law works means we would likely have had to pay much higher costs, without getting the fundamental issue resolved. The likelihood, according to Gwion Lewis QC, was that because the settlement offer was made formally and thus was known to the court, we would not even have been able to persuade the judge to hear argument about the meaning of the CROW Act, but would have wasted time and money on procedural questions that wouldn't have clarified the Act's meaning at all. The judge would have said: "You should have taken this offer which would have allowed you to make representations. That remains the best next step. And the fact you didn't means you must now pay the costs incurred by the other side in this hearing."

Regrettably, at the last BCA council, held when I was away caving in Mexico, an inaccurate account of these developments was given by a former group member, Stuart France, who insisted we should have gone to court anyhow. He claimed that I had not shared this legal advice with the rest of the group, nor kept them informed as to the decision making process that followed. In fact, as the email trail shows – and if anyone wants to see it, I can provide it – both the CROW group and the executive were kept fully informed at every stage. I forwarded the critical advice from Gwion Lewis QC that we should settle on the day I received it. I followed this up with an email to the group and the exec in which I tried to explain this in non-technical terms. Several CROW group members and the BCA Treasurer commented in further emails to me that we did indeed have to accept the settlement, much as this went against the grain. I am grateful to the two group members, Tim Allen and Jenny Potts, who have already written to the exec to support the above account and disassociating themselves from Stuart, who has in any event resigned from the group.

In our representations we argued that that even if it did not accept that CROW does not apply to caving, the WG should convene an access reform advisory body to consider how and whether our access should be reformed. The Government has now responded, and its answer is a resounding "no". (The English Government is effectively also a party to the case.) For the very first time, they have given proper reasons for rejecting our arguments. Their main point is that there is no need to reform cave access, or even to consider it, because this would involve a disproportionate use of resources that would be better deployed elsewhere. Some of the evidence they cite here is bizarre, and maybe open to challenge: for example, they say that the location of cave entrances is unknown, and that caves are not properly mapped, so establishing whether a particular cave actually is on CROW land would cost a fortune.

Meanwhile, last week the judge in the first case finally made a ruling on costs. He has determined that the case amounts to a "score draw": neither side has to pay the other's costs. Of course, that means we don't get reimbursed.

So where does this leave us? I asked our lawyers to assess whether, in light of the Government's response, which we think contains factual errors, we would stand a good chance of success if we now lodged a second judicial review, and whether, if we did, the court would cut to the chase – ruling simply on the meaning of the Act and the refusal of the Government to set up a new advisory body to consider widening cavers' access – and whether it would do so without the procedural distractions that bogged the first case down.

On Friday I had an online meeting with our solicitor Richard Buxton and Gwion Lewis QC. The upshot was that we are, for the time being, at the end of the legal road.

In a nutshell, Gwion addressed four issues:

- We are unlikely to succeed in an appeal against the decision of the judge not to award us costs from the WG. He feels the decision was wrong, but the Court of Appeal reverses such decisions very rarely. He does point out that not having costs awarded against us does represent a level of success.
- In his view, the response to the submissions we made DOES represent a justiciable decision over whether CROW applies to caving. Therefore if we were to launch a second JR, we would be at least 60% likely to succeed in an attempt to get the court to focus solely on the issue we have always wanted resolved: the meaning of the law.
- However, the detailed reasons set out for the first time by the WG in its response means we would be much less likely to win. The reasons and evidence cited are open to challenge. But the fact they exist and the detail in which they are set out mean it would be a very bold judge who disregarded them. The Court of Appeal would be even less likely to find in our favour. The courts would, Gwion thinks, likely decide that this was properly a matter for government, not the courts, especially because of the argument a decision in our favour would have resource implications. Courts would not be likely to tell the WG: “ You have to do this, even though you say it would cost money you'd rather spend on other things, that would affect a larger group of people.” Therefore Gwion advises AGAINST any further JR.
- Nevertheless, we can chalk up some small victories. We have persuaded the Court of Appeal to state that there is an arguable case in law that CROW applies to caving, and that the WG was wrong to exclude us from its first access reform group. Moreover, the WG refused our offer of a “part 8 hearing” which would have been a joint approach asking the courts to clarify the law. This suggests it is far from confident we are wrong. It may be that one day, we will want to pursue another court case making a similar claim, in other circumstances, perhaps in England. If so, these victories would weigh in our favour and could be cited in court. They can also be used in a further campaign of persuasion with lawmakers.

Jenny has already suggested that we should concentrate on politicians for now, if we want to continue this campaign. Gwion thinks she is right. And I would suggest we should especially be targeting Labour ones, since Labour is increasingly looking likely to win the next election – and will have a much more liberal attitude to outdoors access in general. I am happy to continue to try

to lead this. In my new job as a political journalist, I have a parliamentary “access all areas” lobby pass, which means it’s very easy for me to talk face to face with politicians.

In summary: the position is more uncertain than it was before – and the needle has moved a little in our favour. But the court case is done.

David Rose
BCA CROW group convenor

BCA Insurance Managers Report

Claims

We have no outstanding claims. Hence we have received a no claims bonus of £1,200 for 2021. The 2 claims we received in 2020 have both been vigorously defended and have gone away.

Public Liability Policy renewal as at 1/1/2022

We have renewed the above for 2022 with no price increase for policies over 2021. We have updated the necessary documents on the BCA website including the FAQs document. The number of underwriters for sporting PL policies is reducing which is a medium term concern. One of the BCA underwriters left the market and was replaced. Some limited non-member cover was added in 2021 but to ensure PL cover its best to join BCA.

BCA travel policy

We have renewed the above for 2022 with no price increase for policies over 2021. However the war in Eastern Europe will affect some travel and hence insurance.

Howard Jones 22/05/2022
BCA Insurance Manager

BCA Membership Report

Club Membership Report

Katie Eavis

Membership Administrator

2020 vs 2021 vs 2022 Membership levels

	2020 (up until 31 st December)	2021 (up until 31 st December)	2022 (up until the 24 th May)
Groups (including Member Clubs, Associates and Access Controlling Bodies)	166	162	167
CIMs (including Cavers, Non-Cavers, Students, Under 18s and CDG)	5308	5049	5395

Clubs:

Seven clubs that were members in 2021 have not yet renewed for 2022. One of these one has let me know they don't intend to renew. The others have not replied. I will chase one more time in early June and then assume they are not interested in joining.

The BCA has one new access controlling body for 2022.

Twelve clubs who have previously been BCA members, but were not members in 2021, have re-joined the BCA this year. Four of these are university linked caving clubs.

Club members:

CIM levels are looking very good. (although not having all of Wendy's data I can't compare to pre-2020) Several clubs are reporting very high levels of interest in caving at the moment and there are a number of clubs who seem to be adding new members at an impressive rate.

Gender:

Of 5395 club members we have gender data on 4622 members.

Of these the gender split is:

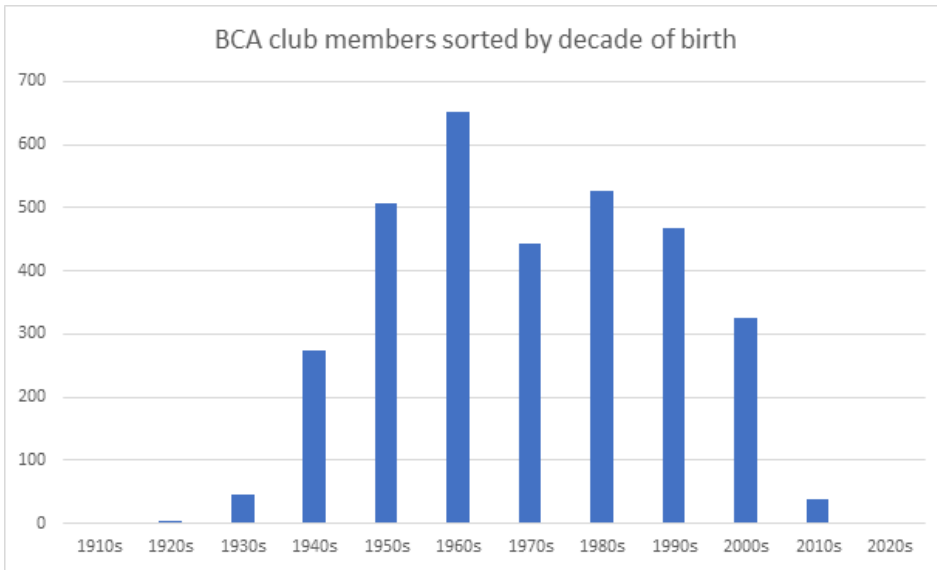
Male – 3470 = 75% of those we have data for

Female – 1152 = 25% of those we have data for

2022 BCA club members sorted by decade of birth:

From the 5395 CIM members BCA has year of birth data for 3290 of these.

This does not include any DIM data.



Club members by membership category:

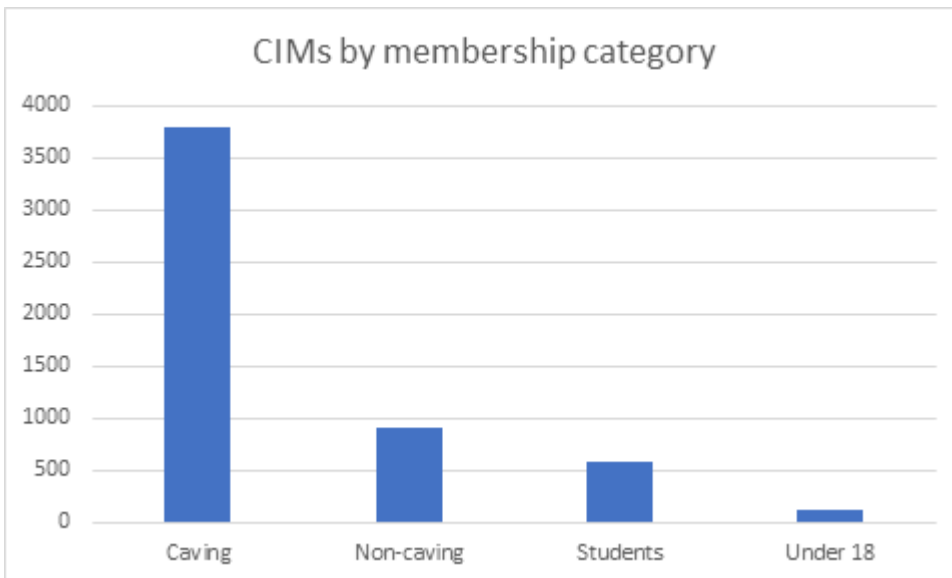
Club members all fall into 4 categories which each have a different membership price.

Under 18s – free membership for those under 18 on the 1st January 2022

Student membership – a discounted membership rate for full time undergraduate students

Caving membership – those who wish to go underground but aren't full time students or under 18.

Non-caving membership – for club members who don't intend to go underground.



Card Printing and Posting:

Membership cards are being printed and posted out within 2 weeks.

Regional councils:

Since the last meeting I have contacted all regional councils and passed on the lists of clubs that wish to affiliate and their contact details.

DIM Membership Report

David Gibson

I am currently re-coding the statistics module so this is just a quick summary obtained by running COUNTIF functions on the output spreadsheet.

BCA's DIM membership is currently 807 (March: 687) including 61 (March: 59) non-cavers. That is, there are an additional 120 members since March. These are mostly late renewals and people who, having declared they were a DIM on their club's CIM form, needed chasing for a payment.

Regarding the membership software, development continues, and this year the customer-facing form will be re-designed to make it easier to use, and more phone-friendly.

FSE delegate report

The FSE comprises 31 countries in Europe and beyond.

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held in October as a virtual meeting because of the COVID restrictions. Countries and members of the bureau have remained the same with no new additions this time. Details of the meeting can be found in the minutes of the GAM.

This summer will be a busy time for international congresses and gatherings due to the backlog caused by the pandemic.

When the COVID-19 pandemic befell us, we thought that things couldn't get any worse - but they have, as we have all witnessed Russia's brutal military invasion of Russia Ukraine. Neither Russia nor Belarus are members of the FSE nor ever has been. The FSE bureau has condemned this violation of a sovereign nation and asked member countries to do whatever they can to support the Ukrainian people. Ukraine's delegate to the FSE is Bogdan Ridush a palaeontologist at the Chernvtsi National University in Western Ukraine near the Romanian border and provides updates on social media.

Despite these disturbing developments, we are all eagerly looking forward to important up and coming speleological events this summer, especially the 18th International Congress of Speleology (ICS) in Savoie (France) and the 14th EuroSpeleo Forum in Burgos (Spain) with its pre-congress in Cantabria.

To encourage young cavers/scientists to attend the ICS, the FSE has introduced a scholarship award scheme to provide financial support. These promise to be great events. After two years of virtual General Assembly Meetings (GAMs) forced upon us by the pandemic, the FSE bureau is delighted to be able to hold a face to face GAM at the ICS. We look forward to seeing members attend in person. The Berger camp (20th July to 10th August) is also open to registrations.

Bureau meetings have given us the opportunity to reflect upon the structure of the bureau, our roles and responsibilities in a changing world and the statutes that support our federation. A small working group will be established to look at this in more detail.

Opportunities to offer ESP project money recently has been seriously limited due to travel restrictions and expeditions being postponed.

Considerable work continues to be invested in maintaining the system of sponsoring European projects, through the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP), the EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF), as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL).

Our strongest commission, the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) continues to effectively engage in issues that are vital to protect our caves and karst. The 6th EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium "Assessing, monitoring and protecting cave biotopes and geotopes through Natura 2000" was held in Germany from 26.10.21. to 30.10.21. This was a very successful event.

Ged Champion
BCA delegate to FSE

BCA Training officer and Training and Equipment Convenors report.

As of 5th June 2022

It has been a very strange year to be new in post. We've started to come out of Covid and people are getting active and very busy. We've had an amalgamation of the Training and Equipment Committees and formed a new working group.

At this point we have had two meetings on zoom and the first ones Minutes were ratified at the meeting on Wednesday 1st June. These will be uploaded too the website soon.

As you can imagine there are lots of things to sort and agree on before we can move forward efficiently.

One of the main ones is we are currently trying to sort out our Terms of Reference. On reading the first draft that we inherited, it was noticed that there was no mention of equipment!

So far we have discussed and started to implement:

- Regional bolting. We are trying to form a full picture of what happens where and how we can support the regions if needed.
- Funding . It has been decided that for training funding that the T/O should approach the Region and they claim off the BCA later. The Budget that we hold as the T and E group will be for all special interest groups.
- Training. All regions are getting very active with the caver training element and are taking approaches that work in their regions. We are agreeing transparency policies and coming up with ways to bring other trainers on board. The vast majority of courses are fully subscribed.

This list is not exhaustive but are the main elements covered so far.

To move forward as a working group, we would like some IT assistance. It has been suggested within the group that maybe the BCA should look at a paid full time IT position. whether we like it or not, IT is the way the worlds going and the younger generation, coming in to caving, now expect it.

After being in post since the last AGM, I still have no way to upload minutes or set up zoom meetings without the help of the BCA chair. Nearly everyone in BCA is a volunteer and a full time IT position can only help all the groups.

We are trying to meet at least every 4 months as a whole group with small groups holding their own discussions on items and reporting back, in between.

We are sticking pretty well to agendas, reports are mainly coming in on time from the regions and being read beforehand. This is how we are keeping the meetings under 1 ½ hrs the aim is to get them to 1hr max.

If anyone has any questions for myself or the group, please contact your regional T/O or equipment officer in the first instance, alternatively please feel free to contact me directly.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone in the new working group for all their hard work and help with the new working group. I would also like to thank the people behind the scenes who have given me useful suggestions, hints and offers of help with negotiating the BCA as a whole.

Unfortunately I can't attend the AGM as I'm working abroad for 2 weeks.

Thank you for reading
Steve

Youth & Development Report

2022 AGM CHECC

After a couple of troubling years, thanks to COVID, university caving clubs have come out fighting, and CHECC organised two fantastic events, the northern and southern CHECC forum. The cohesion between university clubs is obvious, even cross region, and will be key to keeping this momentum going.

Further kit loan agreements are in the process of being agreed to help university clubs who are unable to get the required level of funding from their universities/unions cave using safe equipment.

Recently the Youth & Development group and CHECC have been able to agree a store in the mendips, where certain caving kit will be stored, with the aim of reducing the amount of kit required to be transported on weekends, making them easier to arrange, and increasing their frequency. Our thanks goes to the Wessex Cave Club for arranging this. Over the next 18 months, the aim is to set up a similar store in each of the major caving regions in the UK.

Website Development

Several very popular articles have been posted on the BCA website by Y&D, that has raised the profile of the group, but also has raised the profile of important issues such as diversity and inclusion and youth related caving issues.

Recently a member of the Y&D working group has been introduced to the newtocaving website. We intend on utilising this website better, that due to various issues has been mostly left since its acquisition by the BCA.

International Congress of Speleology Grants

An idea was brought forwards by the representative for CSCC to provide grants to young people from the UK to support them going to ICS. Upon discussion within the Y&D working group, the proposal was accepted, but based upon applications coming in from groups of young people or those in full time education.

After putting together some fantastic applications two £500 grants have now been provided to groups associated with Reading University and University of Bristol. We look forwards to hearing reports back from the congress.

Youth & Development worked alongside other members of council to put this scheme together, and as a group we look forward to being able to work alongside other parts of the BCA to help provide services to our members.

Experience Caving

In light of a big return to caving happening for most, this project, described in the May 2021 report to council has taken a bit of a backseat. I intend on having a big push before the end of 2022 with regards to upping the inclusion of young people within caving clubs. This will start with providing and rolling out a full guide to all clubs with recommendations about how they can open their clubs up to young people. For this I am working alongside Chris Boardman, BCA Safeguarding Officer.

Scout Caving

Scout caving has restarted in some regions but not others since lockdown. It is anticipated that the covid break will result in fewer scout cave leaders. Discussions between Y&D and Scout cavers are ongoing as to what support the BCA can provide with regards to this.

Charterhouse Caving Age Restrictions

It is good to see that Charterhouse Caving Club have reduced their age limit from 16 to 12 (via 18), and we see this as progress, but not the end goal. It has been noted that the most recent “reasoning” for the age restrictions, around young people having a ‘greater tendency to shine lights at anything of interest, including bats’ was not previously cited, but also seems fairly baseless.

Diversity & Inclusion

A proposal from the convener of the Youth & Development working group was accepted at the last AGM, as well as a proposal to ensure gender neutral wording in the constitution wording and council roles. These are solid steps forward, and I hope to continue off the back of these in the coming year to ensure that these solid steps become great strides by utilising information learned at a national outdoors conference to provide recommendations to clubs, regional bodies and the BCA itself as to how we can become more inclusive as organisations.

Josh White
Youth & Development May 2022

Safeguarding officer's report

No safeguarding concerns have been raised with me during the past 12 months. I wrote the safeguarding policy, and guidelines for clubs, when the position of safeguarding officer was created, and those guidelines remain accessible on the BCA website. Clubs or members who have questions or concerns are welcome to contact me directly.

A small number of clubs have been in touch with plans to take youngsters caving. When this involves unsupervised contact (ie parents or teachers / youth workers / scout leaders not present), I have arranged for DBS checks for club members who have kindly volunteered to take the kids caving. Only a very few checks have been made and BCA Council agreed some time ago to fund them, so there is no cost to clubs or members.

I've also written up a procedure whereby instructors with BCA qualifications who need a DBS certificate can apply for one through BCA. This is funded directly by the instructors themselves. I'm just waiting for BCA Treasurer to think of a suitable method for instructors to pay - I have to pay by credit card for each check, so there needs to be a process for instructors to reimburse me.

Chris Boardman
BCA Safeguarding Officer

IT Convenors Report

If the last couple of years have been all about Zoom meetings and virtual AGMs for the IT group, this year it's been all about virtual private servers.

The IT Group have decommissioned two of our virtual private servers and replaced them with one new one. This will reduce server costs. This is used to host 33 accounts free of charge that are of significant value to our membership. These include BCA affiliated organisations such as the BCRA and the Cave Registry, cave rescue organisations such as the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group, and regional councils such as the Devon & Cornwall Underground Council.

We have been forced to move these servers away from Memset to their owners' new cloud platform; a task that took considerable volunteer time and effort. Thank you to the webmasters who we host for being very good about the minor disruption and downtime that this entailed.

We have performed an audit of the domains that we register for both our own use and on behalf of the organisations that we provide hosting for, again in doing so reducing costs.

Our ongoing projects include:

- working with the membership secretary to transition onto the new online membership database (this should not result in any disruption for individuals or clubs).
- working with the webmasters that we host to transition away from older software versions (particularly PHP) in order to improve server security and performance.
- continuing to support the BCA's work through provision of email, administrative, and technical services and support

We are always looking for volunteers to get involved with the IT Group, who can take on as much or as little as they'd like. This can be quite rewarding and interesting, and we'd like to help support the development of our volunteers as best we can. If you'd be interested in taking on some volunteering, particularly the Chair role, please get in touch with it@british-caving.org.uk

Thank you so much to the fantastic volunteers who are keeping this all going: particularly to Angus Sawyer and David Gibson for their invaluable and long-standing service.

Ari Cooper-Davis
IT Group Chair 2022

British Caving Library Report

This report covers the period from September 2021 to the present; it is for information and reflects the situation at the time it is being written.

Following the relaxation of the Covid-19 contact rules we have been able to return to our normal routine of working together in the Library on one day a week and welcoming, by appointment, visitors doing research.

Librarian Mary Wilde has continued to deal with foreign journals, which we receive in exchange for BCRA Caves & Karst Science, and also with books. I continue to deal with newly acquired UK journals, sent to us by BCA member clubs, and with archive materials now arriving in increasing amounts. We also buy any relevant newly published books, etc. which are brought to our attention and are very grateful to those authors and editors who provide us with a free copy for the Library. As Katie Eavis has now transferred to dealing with BCA Membership, we have been pleased to welcome Karen Slatcher, who works for us one day a week and has taken over dealing with modern surveys.

Mary and I both deal with incoming enquiries, passing the enquiries between us so that there is minimum delay in responding, usually by emailing out scans. (There was no drop in the number of enquiries we dealt with during the Covid-19 lockdown periods compared to more normal times.) We also both deal with visitors coming to do research and I come in regularly at weekends.

Volunteers maintain the Library website, including the BCRA Online Archives, the Audio Archives and the all-important Online Bibliography/Catalogue.

Our two regular volunteers cataloguing the late John Beck's legacy of Peak District surveys, have now completed cataloguing approximately 1,000 surveys, aerial photos and maps. Some of these have now been scanned and are on the Derbyshire Cave Registry website where they are available to all cavers. These two volunteers have now started on the archive surveys passed on with the Eli Simpson collection.

Other Archive material has continued to arrive in the Library throughout the year and is, if anything, increasing as the existence of BCL becomes better known to relative of deceased cavers wondering what to do with their collections.

The library welcomes enquiries by phone, email or personal visit and enquiries continue to run at between 80 to 90 per year. We are now recording the types of enquiry so that we know what % now require us to carry out research (which may take a number of hours for each enquiry), as opposed to the simple scan-and-email which takes only minutes.

The Library has excellent WiFi plus digital display facilities for meetings as well as scanners, copiers, etc. which can be used by visitors doing research. The facilities continue to be used by other groups: QMC and Training Administrative groups, a DCA Regional Council meeting and a BCRA Council meeting is due in July.

Jenny Potts, (j.potts@bcra.org.uk)
BCRA Library Co-ordinator, 23 May 2022

UIS Report

The last BCA AGM was on 10th October, the International Year of Caves and Karst was in full swing with BCRA contributing with monthly Monday night lectures, these went down very well and were well received.

The International Year has been extended up to July this year and will finish at the end of the International Congress in France. It has been a great success and there is a book and a video produced.

Work has been continuing all over the world with various events from the International Year, please look on the website for more information - <http://iyck2021.org/>

Since then, the main thrust of the UIS has been towards the International Congress, please look at the website <https://uis-speleo.org/>

Obviously, the big event that has taken place in the last few months is the Russian invasion of Ukraine which has split the international caving population up the middle. The UIS initially brought out a very luke-warm statement which had been prepared from a number of inputs, including countries that were initially showing a certain amount of sympathy towards Russia, ultimately when things got completely out of hand there was almost universal agreement within the representatives from each UIS country that a stronger statement should be made. The statement below was issued.

The revised UIS Bureau statement:

The UIS Bureau condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. This conflict is creating a severe humanitarian crisis that is worsening daily. The UIS Bureau stands with the Ukrainian people and calls on the Russian aggressors to immediately cease their brutal, inhumane and unprovoked violence.

The UIS Bureau is appalled by the current invasion and war crimes committed by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. In solidarity with Ukrainian cavers and scientists, organisations worldwide, the UIS Bureau is freezing all cooperation with caving organisations and speleological institutions of the Russian Federation until further notice.

The UIS Bureau recommends to the next UIS General Assembly to suspend Russia from membership of the UIS until Ukraine's sovereignty and internationally recognised borders, including Crimea, are restored and that the Russian language be excluded as an official UIS language.

UIS Bureau

People have criticised the International Union of Speleology for being rather slow on this, but in reality, they are composed of representatives from over 50 countries, many have good friends in both Russia and Ukraine and although most of them do not condone the aggression they don't see why it should be taken out on cavers. I think now the general opinion is it has got so out of hand that anything that may help towards changing public opinion in Russia and showing support for people in Ukraine is worth doing, including the hard line.

The 18th International Congress of Speleology France Savoie Mont-Blanc 24-31st July this year 2022 will be spectacular as they always are. I personally, with a couple of others am driving from North Sea Ferry through France to the congress centre, travel will be the major cost, everything else will be reasonably priced and well worth the money.

Attending an International Speleo Congress is a life changing experience. Please look at the website <http://uis-speleo.org/index.php/event/18th-international-congress-of-speleology-2/>

The next International Congress of Speleology after France has been announced as Belo Horizonte-MR-Brazil from 20th to 27th July 2025.

It will be back in Europe for 2029, Britain could be a potential possibility for hosting.

See you at the AGM on Zoom Sunday 12th June.

Andy Eavis
27th May 2022