



**Minutes of BCA Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 20th March 2010
at Alvechurch Church Hall, Alvechurch**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	BCA Chairman / BCA UIS Rep. / Individual Member
David Cooke (DC)	BCA Treasurer / Cave Registry Sec / Cheddar CC Rep. / Individual Member
Damian Weare (DW)	BCA Secretary / Handbook Editor / Hades CC Rep / Individual Member
David Judson (DJu)	BCA Legal & Insurance Officer / Individual Member
Elsie Little (EL)	BCA Conservation & Access Officer / Individual Member
Les Williams (LW)	BCA P & I Officer / BCA Webmaster / Wessex CC Rep. / Individual Member
Nick Williams (NW)	BCA Insurance Manager / Individual Member
Glenn Jones (GJ)	BCA Membership Administrator / Acting Equipment & Techniques Officer / CNCC Rep.
Jenny Potts (JP)	BCA Publication Sales / Individual Member
Graham Mollard (GM)	BCA Training Officer
Chris Jewell (CJ)	Youth & Development Officer / Individual Member
David Jean (DJe)	DCUC Rep. / Individual Member
Mike McCombe (MM)	CCC Rep. / Individual Member
Mark Williams (MW)	CSCC Rep. / Individual Member
Idris Williams (IW)	ASCT Rep. / Individual Member
Steve Holding (SH)	NAMHO Rep. / Individual Member
Dave Checkley (DCh)	BCRA Rep. / Individual Member
Mick Day (MD)	Individual Member
Boyd Potts (BP)	Orpheus CC Rep. / Individual Member
Charles Milton (CM)	Combined Services Caving Club Rep. / Individual Member
Owen Clark (OC)	Cwmbran CC Rep / Individual Member
Bob Dearman (BD)	DCA Rep. / Individual Member
Arthur Champion (AC)	Craven PC Rep. / Individual Member
Dave Pettet (DP)	Essex Scout Caving Team Rep. / Individual Member
Joe Duxbury (JD)	Gloucester SS Rep. / Individual Member
Ged Campion (GC)	BCA FSE Rep. / Individual Member
Fleur Loveridge (FLo)	PDCMG Rep. / Individual Member
Faye Litherland (FLi)	Individual Member
Ben Lovett (BL)	Individual Member
Steve Roberts (SR)	Oucc Rep / Individual Member

The meeting commenced at 10:36.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed members to this Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Clark Friend, Emma Porter, Mike Clayton, Alan Finch, Bob Mehew, John Cordingley and Bernie Woodley, James Collings.

3. Applications for Club Membership

GJ: Applications have been received from: Reading University Caving Club (previously members in 2007); Cundurrow Mine Group; Ogoffydd Jeunesse; The Tees Valley Caving Group; and Nidderdale Adventure Club. All the relevant paperwork and payments have been supplied.

Proposal: *That Reading University CC, Cundurrow Mine Group, Ogoffydd Jeunesse, The Tees Valley CG and Nidderdale Adventure Club be accepted as BCA Member Clubs.*

Prop: GJ, Sec: DW *agreed unanimously*

4. Minutes of the 2009 Annual General Meeting (previously circulated)

4.1 Proposal: *That the Minutes from 28th March 2009 be taken as read*
Prop: JP, Sec: BP *agreed unanimously*

4.2 Proposal: *That the Minutes from 28th March 2009 be accepted as a true record*
Prop: NW, Sec: CM *agreed unanimously*

5. Matters Arising for the Minutes of the last Council Meeting

None

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman's Report (written report previously circulated)

AE: Would like to emphasise the second paragraph of his written report in support of landowners. They must be respected and we should not forget this. We should always do what is good for caving, cavers and members. AE reported that he was received very well at a meeting on the extension of the Yorkshire Dales National Park where he was the only non-farmer or landowner, and found the landowners and farmers very interested and sympathetic.

GJ: Farmers are quite often not the landowners.

Proposal: *That the Chairman Report be accepted*

Prop: DW, Sec: DJ *agreed unanimously*

7. Secretary's Report (written report previously circulated)

AE: The time has definitely come to sort out a Manual of Operations. This will be a big job.

Proposal: *That the Secretary's Report be accepted*

Prop: JP, Sec: BP *agreed unanimously*

8. Treasurer's Report (written report circulated)

DC: Apologies for delay but not complete until early this morning. Basic income down a fraction, but this is not worrying and reflects slightly fewer members.

NW: Nothing for Mine Inspections. Why?

GM: These are paid for by the people that request them e.g. PICA.

SH: Mine Inspections have been completed.

GM: From now on it is a commercial operation and should not need to feature in our accounts.

DC: Web Services is making a loss because we are paying for two servers due to the time taken to move the sites from one Server to another. We are paying the Regional Councils significantly more. The British Caving Library appears in the Accounts for the first time. Overall we made a healthy surplus.

NW: What will be the cost of a postal ballot?

DW: About 55p per person.

DC: When his existing period of office comes to an end in 2011, DC does not intend to stand again as Treasurer.

JD: Why has the expenditure on Subscriptions risen, yet the income has fallen?

DC: This is due to duplicated subscriptions which were written off in 2008 and were, therefore, a one-off item.

SR: What do we pay tax on?

DC: Bank interest and the training surplus.

AE: Our challenge is to either persuade DC to stay on, or to find someone to replace him next year.

NW: Many thanks for getting the accounts ready for today. This is a huge improvement on last year.

Proposal: *That the Treasurer's Report be accepted*

Prop: JP, Sec: MW *agreed unanimously*

9. Conservation & Access Report (written report circulated)

EL: I am pleased to report that we continue to cement a mutual support between the caving and mining branches of our small community and that we exchange thoughts on access and conservation with the mountaineers too.

Our work with the National Trust has "come of age" and the understanding we have come to with the NT centrally has resulted in general advice being provided to their regions and a workable licence being produced. This licence has been used on behalf of sporting cavers and was satisfactory all round in the case in question.

The work of the C&A group on the subject of SSSI Monitoring once more rose to the surface this year. The

monitoring scheme was centrally developed between English Nature and NCA/BCA. It has been carried out at least once on the 6-year cycle in each area except Wales, which has different arrangements. However, the 2 Regions with the biggest commitment of monitoring seemed to be the only ones recognised as being involved by the English Nature staff who have changed over the years. Their old documentation was lost within their system but has now been reproduced for them and I am confident the other Regions will receive the acknowledgement of their good work and that they will continue to produce the necessary 6-yearly checks of condition.

The Act granting Access to the Coast has now been settled. England has a more liberal arrangement than Wales, where there is no compulsion on the Welsh Assembly to enact the Act in full. As with CRoW there is no right given to access the underground – only the surface land. The real improvement for us is the reduction of liability on the owners for buildings and other man-made structures in the coastal access strip. It is to be hoped that when CRoW is revisited there may be a similar reduction in landowner liability for man-made features.

The next Act about to be sorted is Access to Inland Waters. Currently much is being considered about surface waters but not yet the underground. It will come and will matter to us all.

Finally a major problem has arisen in Wales concerning access to Ogof Draenen where yet again an entrance has been opened without having a current permission from the landowner. There has been an extensive period of negotiations between the PDCMG, the diggers and the owners that have ended at the point where the owners have had to threaten to close the whole cave if this extra entrance is not closed as an access point.

As the C&A Officer I wish to stress that I am deeply concerned that some cavers simply choose to question a landowner's rights over his own property, which extend from the surface to the core of the earth and, as far as a cave is concerned, are not affected by mineral rights as we are accessing a void, not a mineral source!

I thank the BCA Chairman for his support in this matter and also the Legal & Insurance Officer and Linda Wilson, a fount of common sense.

I hope sense comes about in Wales so that disputes with landowners don't spread around the country.

FLo: The PDCMG is working hard to maintain access at the end of the month and we are quite hopeful that this will be maintained.

BP: Should we produce a statement on behalf of BCA?

AE: This really is a Cambrian issue. AE has written a piece for *Descent*.

NW: Our Constitution refuses to allow us to get involved with Constituent Bodies without their express request. We need to be formally requested to do so.

MM: Formally requests BCA C&A Committee, on behalf of Cambrian, to write to the landowners. **Action: EL to write to the landowners on behalf of C&A Committee.**

DJu: FL has requested a landowner certificate.

GJ: This is no problem. DJu / FLo should simply liaise with GJ on the content of the certificate.

Proposal: ***That the Conservation & Access Officer's Report be accepted***

Prop: DJ, Sec: MM *agreed unanimously*

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

GJ: DCA have a proposal to make:

Proposal: ***"That the current IPTD, (entitled PERMANENT RESIN BONDED ANCHORS - INSTALLATION PROCEDURE, TRAINING & DOCUMENTATION) Issue 4 - Updated 23rd March 2009, is accepted as the standard BCA document on Eco-Anchor installation."*** Prop: BD, Sec: GJ

NW: Would like to put an alternative proposal, as follows:

Proposal: ***"BCA formally confirms that issue 4 of the Installation Procedure, Training & Documentation is accepted as the standard BCA procedure for Eco-Anchor installation and requests the Equipment and Techniques Committee to continue to develop the Association's activities in the field of anchor placement with due regard to the need to avoid rogue bolting, recognise the current state of art and any future technical developments, and in the light of practical experience."***

Prop: NW, Sec: BD

BD: In that case BD will withdraw his proposal in favour of NW's.

DC: This comes about because the CSCC have a procedural problem with agreeing the document. Does the meeting see that this proposal is binding on the CSCC, or do we have a right to continue to challenge it?

NW: The document should always be considered to be a working document and needs to take account of changes.

DC: In a sense this confirms the status-quo where it can be approved by a democratic vote and still be challenged by CSCC.

GJ: Would, for example, CNCC be able to stall the changes to the procedures introduced this year by the Training Committee if it felt so inclined?

AE: Constitutionally it is not clear and is definitely in need of clarification. We need to be thinking in terms of the future.

BD: E&T Committee ratified the document and CSCC were not there. Afterwards CSCC disputed it. If they weren't there, they missed the opportunity, surely?

DC: Surely we need a document that allows us all to go out and bolt caves.

BD: We have one and 4 of the 5 Regional Councils have agreed it.

A vote was then carried out on NW's proposal. The results were as follows:

Individual Member vote: For: 17, Against: 0, Abstentions: 6

Group Member vote: For: 11, Against: 0, Abstentions: 6

The proposal was, therefore, agreed.

a. **Rope-Test Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

Proposal: **To accept Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report.**

Prop: GM, Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

11. **Training Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

GM: GM is meeting with the SUI at Easter to discuss parity between the two training schemes. GM advised the meeting he would be resigning as Training Officer at the 2011 AGM.

AE: AE had been approached by student cavers about some training with Mark Wright. AE and GM approved payment of up to £400 as a contingency fund.

LW: We are no longer paying a Technical Training Advisor. Is now the right time to think about paying someone again?

GM: Whoever takes over from GM in 2011, the level of work is high if they are intending to be proactive. GM feels we need to be looking at remuneration. He fields about 40 phone calls per week, as well as around 2 hours on the phone with Mary Wilde each week and numerous meetings during the year.

LW: There are Constitutional issues with paying an Officer. Perhaps the solution is to pay the Technical Training Advisor.

Proposal: **To accept Training Officer's Report.**

Prop: LW, Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

12. **Publications & Information Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

LW: Having reviewed the new LCMLA syllabus, the Weil's disease reprint and the flooding document, LW can report that they are superb and represent considerable work on the part of the Training Committee. This is the sort of stuff we should be publishing.

a. **Webmaster's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

LW: We are currently paying too much for the website because we are running two servers. DC can't cope with the time required to move the existing sites from the old server to the new one. However, we believe we have someone to help with the final migration and this should be the last time we have double expenditure.

DC: We replaced the new server with an even newer server at Christmas. This has now doubled the memory, processor speed, hard disk space and bandwidth. The reason for this upgrade was low hard disk space, of which the British Caving Audio Library had taken a significant proportion. It does now mean we have loads of space to sell domains to other people again.

NW: Is there really a strategy for reducing the workload?

DC: Invoicing is a big job and DC has installed some software to do this automatically, as well as automatically chasing non-payers. This should make everything much smoother in future.

b. **Newsletter Editor's Report**

LW: The acting newsletter Editor has issued a newsletter. The current editor will return shortly and will presumably be producing the next newsletter.

c. **Handbook Editor's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

DW: Nothing to add to written report.

LW: DW and Mary Wilde have done a fabulous job with keeping the website and Handbook up-to-date. Many thanks, as

these are essential services.

Proposal: **To accept Publications & Information Officer's Report.**

Prop: JP Sec: CJ *agreed unanimously*

13. **Legal & Insurance Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

JP: The Proposal on Agenda is actually a proposal for Council.

DJu: Would, therefore, like to withdraw point 5 of his written report.

Proposal: **To accept Legal & Insurance Officer's Report.**

Prop: NW, Sec: DC *agreed unanimously*

14. **Youth & Development Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

DW: This should really be under the "Other Reports" heading.

CJ: Apologised to the meeting for accidentally submitting last year's report. This year's Report is as follows:

1) Standing Down: As reported at previous meeting I've decided to step down at this AGM and let someone else with more time and enthusiasm take over. To end my period as Youth and Development Officer I have sent Descent Magazine a review of the BCA Youth and Development campaign – which started almost 4 years ago.

In summary the campaign has involved a new website, letters to all the caving clubs, flyers, posters, attendance at the national Outdoor show, the cliff hanger event, and many clubs running 'try caving' events promoted by the campaign.

We can't claim all the credit but things do seem to have improved. The number of 'registered' (e.g. by BCA/NCA) cavers in 2005 was about 4,000 and there were 140 clubs. At the last count this figure is now over 5,500 and there are 160 clubs. Hidden Earth recorded a record high figure for delegate days in 2009 and, as for the caving infrastructure, when one caving shop in South Wales shut, two sprang up to take its place! Looking at the entry point into caving the CHECC seminar also attracts more students each year suggesting that University clubs are flourishing.

2) CIM+ text in Descent: I've also sent some text to Descent to promote the new CIM Plus membership category.

3) Caving Flyers: As the last meeting didn't happen I did not go ahead with getting any more flyer produced. I will now leave it up to my replacement to take this on. Gonzo suggested giving the flyers a 'face lift'. Including his time, they would cost as follows: 5,000 more - £555, 10,000 more - £757 with Delivery at cost. and VAT at the current rate.

4) Artificial Cave - Following my last report the feeling in council was that a 'speleo-box' concept would work best. There might also be the option of working with the Scouts on this and sharing the expenditure. Again I leave this to the next Youth and Development office to progress with as they see fit.

AE: Entre-Prises have offered to give us an artificial cave. They are proposing to make a revolutionary cave system. 8 pieces of pipe of 500mm diameter which bolt together in various configurations to make a caving obstacle course. They do, however, want BCA to agree to a number of requests relating to advertising for Entre-Prises in return.

DW: They are asking for clickable link on BCA website, plus use of logo. This is generally something LW is not happy to do.

CJ: Could it go on Try Caving website instead?

AE: That could well be acceptable. **Action: AE will liaise with Entre-Prises.**

DW: Are we happy that they will be able to use our logo in publicity materials?

NW: The use of logo has already been sanctioned for use by Jardine Lloyd Thompson and Summit Financial Services, so this is not a precedent.

JP: It would be good to arrange for an outside event to be able to use it whenever it wished and for it to be bookable.

AE: We probably need someone to look after it and administer it.

GJ: What are the transport requirements?

AE: AE has a trailer suitable.

AE: The next Council meeting will look at the detail. **Action: Please send comments about the detail to AE.**

SR: Serious point. Who will pay to have it fixed? This needs to be in the agreement. **Action: AE to discuss with Entre-Prises.**

JD: There is an initiative being set up by the BBC. It was initially called "DropZone" and its name has now changed to "Thrill Seeker". The point, according to the BBC, is to get people off their sofas. GSS is looking for new members and this gives free advertising on both the internet and television. However, JD wonders whether "Thrill Seeker" provides us with what we need? There is a link to BCA website. What is BCA's view on this?

JP: DCA have given them advice to work with PICA rather than clubs.

CM: Should we focus this through the Try Caving initiative? The link probably would be better off going directly to the Try Caving website, rather than BCA site. **Action: CJ to contact organiser and try to get a link to the Try Caving site, rather than BCA site.**

Proposal: **To accept Youth & Development Officer's Report.**

Prop: JP Sec: BD *agreed unanimously*

Other Reports

15. **Membership Administrator's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

GJ: Overall numbers for 2009 are down when compared with 2008. In April 2009 GJ issued the 10,000th member. 12 months later he had issued the 10,800th number. There is considerable turnover of members, even though overall membership totals remain fairly stable.

LW: A number of these are probably University Groups?

DJu: Suspects this has always been the case and is likely to be much greater now due to the huge choice of what is available for people to do in their spare time.

DC: Might this be due to duplication because people don't provide their membership number?

GJ: GJ put in a big effort to check names against numbers, so as to minimise any possibility of this.

CJ: CIM+ is now available to all clubs. Please will the clubs offer this to their members in 2011?

AC: Craven PC thanks GJ for the prompt dispatch of their cards in 2010.

GJ: GJ reports that his aim is to turn around most cards within a week, and clubs within a fortnight.

Proposal: **To accept Membership Administrator's Report.**

Prop: BP, Sec: LW *agreed unanimously*

16. **Insurance Manager's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

LW: A consultation was requested re: £5m.

NW: This is really a Council Matter, but NW feels there is not a significant demand for £5m cover.

Proposal: **To accept the Insurance Manager's Report.**

Prop: OC, Sec: MW *agreed unanimously*

17. **Radon Working Party Convenor's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

LW: It is good to see progress on Radon booklet, as there is lots of demand for it.

Proposal: **To accept the Insurance Manager's Report.**

Prop: LW, Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

18. **Cave Registry Coordinator's Report**

DC: It has been a quiet year for DC himself, but there are things happening.

Proposal: **To accept the Cave Registry Co-ordinator's Report.**

Prop: DW Sec: AE

19. **International Representative's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

AE: Working towards the next UIS conference in the Czech Republic in 2013.

a) **FSE Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

GC: Apologised for the short written report. He is more involved with the FSE than just as a UK delegate. There is lots going on and it is a very active federation. 24 countries are now involved and the FSE has, therefore, expanded beyond its original EU parameters. GC noted that there was little take up for Grants for European Projects and said this probably needs better promotion in the UK. In order to qualify a project does need participants from 5 different member countries, which can be difficult. There is a EU Cave Protection Commission which is very active and EL has been linked with some of this. There is a National Caving Day being proposed and there is a big issue in Budapest where caves are under threat. The frequency of the General Assembly Meetings is being increased to every 12 months. The next is 9th May in Bulgaria and anyone is welcome. The Expedition database is being developed to help groups research previous expeditions in an area. There are issues with this, but it is important.

2016: There is a proposal that we have a caving congress in the UK in 2016 and the bureau will need to work quite hard with Hidden Earth. This will be along the lines of the Vercors event in 2008.

AE: The important issue is to apply and get it on the calendar. We need approval from this meeting to approach the EU

Council. It is envisaged to be a one-week long event attracting around 2,000 people. We will know by 12th May whether we will be accepted.

FLi: The crux question is whether there is a team in place.

LW: LW is pretty confident that there is a team around, although it is a far bigger event than Hidden Earth.

BL: Is LW taking on overall responsibility?

LW: LW will act in the absence of a formal decision.

DJu: Is there any chance of other people putting counter bids?

AE: Probably not, but someone else may propose something that will conflict with the calendar. AE suspects our bid will be welcomed with open arms.

BP: There were no objections from anyone when it was muted at the Vercors.

LW: The feeling of the meeting is that we should go ahead.

JP: How big an issue is Bulgaria? Should BCA support it?

AE: Would advise caution. By all means support it as an individual, but there can be more to things than first meets the eye.

Proposal: ***To accept International Representatives' Reports.***

Prop: MW, Sec: DC *agreed unanimously*

20. **British Caving Library** (*written report previously circulated*)

D Ju: The second major set of archive material has been moved to the BGS in Keyworth. Last year there was a very clear feeling that this should be the British Caving Archive. It is now officially known as the BCRA Archive, which hints at a slightly more cautious approach on the part of the BGS.

JP: This does imply that BCL might have to deal with archive material. This needs to be considered.

CJ: It would be nice to have some statistics on library usage.

JP: The library assistant is working on it for the end of the year. It fluctuates quite a lot and we are quite new.

DCh: The audio archive gets an average of 40 plays per day. Sid Perou has put in a lot of effort with this and will be leaving the country soon. We need a replacement.

Proposal: ***To accept British Caving Library Report.***

Prop: BD, Sec: JD *agreed unanimously*

21. **Reports from BCRA, Regional Councils etc**

a) **BCRA:**

D Ch: There is lots going on. The Archive progresses and we are hoping to get as much of this online as possible. There will be 4 science meetings this year: the Science Symposium that has just gone and had a strong archaeological flavour; the Technology Symposium which is about to happen (17th-18th April in Horton-in-Ribblesdale); the cave development meeting in May at Poole's Cavern in the Peak District and a biospeleology meeting in September at Scoska Cave in the Yorkshire Dales. There is interest within The Upland Caves Network for some kind of link with Hidden Earth.

GJ: GJ has tried to contact Ghar Parau via the website with an idea to increase funding, but has had no reply.

b) **Cambrian CC:**

MM: Would like to record CCC's thanks to GJ and NW for producing membership statistics for CCC and this provides quite a lot of money from SCW.

c) **NAMHO:**

SH: NAMHO is working with English Heritage to produce a document that is likely to be used as planning guidance to councils. Mine exploration is heavily active.

22. **Election of Officers**

22.1 Secretary: DW was *elected unopposed*.

22.2 Conservation & Access Officer: Elsie Little (Prop: LW, Sec: DP) *elected unopposed*.

22.3 Legal & Insurance Officer: Dave Judson (Prop: OC, Sec: LW) *elected unopposed*

22.4 Equipment & Techniques Officer: Nick Williams (Prop: DJu Sec: GM) *elected unopposed*

22.5 2 Club Representatives: Boyd Potts (Prop: LW Sec: BD) & Owen Clark (Prop: LW Sec: MW) *elected unopposed*

22.6 2 Individual Member Representatives: Fay Litherland (Prop: CJ Sec: MW) & Chris Jewell (Prop: FLi Sec: LW) *elected unopposed*

23. **Proposals**

Constitutional Amendments

- MD: The existing constitution is based on the NCA Constitution and we were required to spend Sports Council money and this had to be accounted for within 3 months. Therefore, should they be offering grants again in the future, we may well find ourselves in a position where we need to reverse the changes.
- LW: We are now in a position where we are funding ourselves and this is better than returning to a Grant-based situation.
- JP: We haven't changed the Association's accounting year. Therefore we could call an EGM if necessary to comply in the future.
- NW: We are required now to fit around the Insurance year and this is the reason for the change.
- JD: Pointed out typos "ensure that".
- DC: What is the thinking behind amendment 10.6a?
- DW: Amendment suggested by Bob Mehew but DW understands it is to do with PayPal.
- NW: There is nothing in the existing Constitution that prevents us from doing this anyway, so we don't really need 10.6a or 10.6b.

Proposed amendment "*to withdraw amendments 10.6a and 10.6b*"

Prop: LW, Sec: GJ *accepted unanimously*

Proposal: "*to accept the remaining Constitutional Amendments*"

Prop: BP, Sec: JP *accepted unanimously*

23. Other Matters

24. Appointment of Auditor

DC: Jane McCorquodale of Manor House, Tintern.

25. Date of 2011 AGM

Assuming the Constitutional Amendments are passed when voted on by the membership, the 2011 AGM will be held on Saturday 11th June 2011 at 10.30am at Alvechurch Church Hall, Alvechurch. If they are not passed, the AGM will be held on 26th March 2011.

26. Any Other Business

None.

Meeting ended: 14:36