



Reports to the BCA AGM 2021

Contents:

Chairman's Report to BCA AGM 2021	2
Secretaries Report.....	3
BCA Treasurer Report to BCA AGM Autumn 2021	4
BCA Insurance Managers report to BCA AGM Autumn 2021	5
BCA Membership report for BCA AGM Autumn 2021	7
Qualifications Management Committee – Report to BCA AGM 2021	9
IT Group	10
Publications and Information Report.....	11
Safeguarding Officers Report	13
FSE delegate report to BCA AGM October 2021	14
British Caving Library Report to BCA AGM, 10 October 2021	16
Rope Testing Officer's Report	18
CRoW	19
UIS report	20

Chairman's Report to BCA AGM 2021

A year ago, my predecessor Phil Rowsell reported "BCA being left broken, dysfunctional and plagued by continual bitter infighting that has been hard to see the back of." By this time last year, Phil had set about resolving the situation and we saw the benefits of his labours gain momentum. Sadly, Phil stepped down in December due to personal reasons but I am more than pleased to report that BCA has moved on a pace and the "torrid place" Phil found when he first joined up is now a distant memory.

BCA functions, Council is productive, things happen, outcomes are achieved, time is not wasted bickering over minutiae, Zoom has put paid to that; the Association has stabilised, we are in a good place moving forward. For sure, we are not perfect and there is work to do but the core functions work. Despite a serious setback earlier in the year when the Membership Administrator was taken seriously ill, the true strength of the Association emerged when a small team formed and pulled out the stops to ensure membership continued to be serviced; a true reflection of cavers' grit and determination to overcome the odds. My thanks to them on your behalf for a job well done and continuing to be done as I write. We wish Wendy well in her recovery and receive regular updates on her improvement.

We are still in extraordinary times with the Covid Pandemic which continues to affect our daily lives despite vaccination; it is still not something to be infected by, I have witnessed vaccinated, fit people knocked off their feet and laid low for days on end. We need to continue to be careful. I personally know of four cavers who have succumbed in the past year to the virus and I think it fitting to record here that these cavers have died from Covid. All very sad and puts matters into perspective; bickering over minutiae pales into insignificance against lives lost. I sincerely hope and will do my best to ensure that BCA never returns to those dark days of its recent past on my watch.

So, we are in good shape, I'm optimistic about the future, there is work to be done, not least to re-invigorate British caving; some sectors will need significant support and we can't get away from the fact that the University Clubs have been hit hard but they will not be the only ones who need our support and help. The true impact of the pandemic has not been felt yet but I see green shoots of optimism in the form of cavers out caving again. It is a pleasure to be part of that and make a difference.

On a final caving note, in the longest cave in the Country, the Three Counties System, an audacious project was launched earlier in the year to traverse from one extremity of the system to the other. Over 10 kilometres underground in one go – it has been achieved. Inspirational!

Russell Myers
Acting Chair
BCA

Secretaries Report

Having attended BCA Council as the Secretary of CCC, I had no plans to become the BCA Secretary or anything else for that matter. Out of the blue I was contacted by Howard Jones who asked did I know anyone who might be the new Secretary, thinking rapidly I "fingered" various likely suspects who all gave valid excuses, he then asked would I do it, not having a good enough excuse, I ended up with the job.

An interesting 10 months or so as we continued to grapple with the move back to "normality" and underground activities. I have found Council to be a helpful and supportive organisation, thanks must go to Russell with his previous experience as Secretary and his long experience of caving administration.

Much of my work is fairly straight forward, helping members to the right person on council to deal with their requests, I also end up fielding unusual requests from organisations and individuals who view BCA as a one stop shop for all their "underground" problems, for example in one week I dealt with a query from a Southern University re a lost wallet containing a members card, a request from the owner of an orchard who was concerned that some of his trees had died and was it due to the mine underneath, followed by a request did BCA provide a commercial inspection service for a culvert under a industrial area. This level of query was unusual but reflects how we are seen externally.

Allan Richardson
Acting Secretary

BCA Treasurer Report to BCA AGM Autumn 2021

Current bank balances:

as at 26/07/2021 was £244,000. Of which £121,000 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £86,000 is in a short term deposit account. I am holding more in the current account than usual due to potential CRoW legal fees.

Unusual spend since last Council:

BCRA third quarter donation £3,000. CSCC 2020 claim £3,500.

Income 2021:

An analysis of membership renewals 2021 shows we are down on the 2020 membership figures. If this does not come back we will be £10,000 down on membership income budgeted for the year. Since lock down has eased then there is a steady trickle of renewals. If we don't catch up in the coming months then our membership income will be the lowest for a number of years.

Forecast 2021:

November 2020 Council meeting approved a budget for 2021 which had a deficit of £20,000. It had no allowance for any CroW legal costs in 2021 beyond the £30k spent in 2020. Since then Council agreed to increase the legal budget from £60k to £90k. If therefore the case goes the distance and we lose, the deficit for 2021 would be £70k. If we win then up to £35k of our costs would be refunded. If our income does not recover (see above) the deficit could be closer to £100k for the year, which would leave BCA with net assets of around £100k, a £150k reduction in 2 years.

BCA accounts result for 2020:

These were approved at the March 2021 Council meeting and will be presented to the AGM for note in October accordingly

Regional accounts:

CNCC, CSCC and DCUC claims for 2020 have been received to date.

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 invested £35k in the legal proceedings. Should we win the case some of the costs we have incurred to date will be refunded. At present the case and its outcome are uncertain.

HJJ September 2021.

BCA Insurance Managers report to BCA AGM Autumn 2021

Liability policy Renewal 2021:

We were allowed to pay the annual premium at 2/3 last year's rate until later in 2021 when membership numbers became clearer. We have declared numbers as at end August and the monthly premium has been updated accordingly.

Claims:

We have had two potential claims which we are discussing with the underwriters. BCA will pay the excess on the first claim by agreement and can decide whether to pay the second excess or not. Excess is £2,500.

One claim had been rejected many months ago and we heard nothing for almost twelve months. The property has been repaired by the landowner. We have recently had renewed correspondence and so the claim file has been reopened.

The second claim has been challenged by us and we sent a series of queries in November 2020 and we never received a response. The claim file has since been closed by the underwriters. Until the outstanding claim is resolved without cost we won't receive our no claims bonus for 2020

Landowner indemnity:

BCA member clubs or regional bodies or access control groups from time to time make arrangements with landowners for cavers to access their land. Once granted those cavers will undertake various caving activities on the land, from digging new entrances in the hope of finding new unexplored cave passage to sporting trips in known systems.

The landowner will have concerns that the risk of his ownership has just increased as more people will be crossing his land and indeed undertaking an activity that he has no knowledge or control over. Hence the landowner will ask what Public Liability (PL) policy is in place to cover the activity and will respond in the event of a claim. Clearly he does not want that policy cost and cover and maintenance to be his responsibility. The caving club can provide cover information i.e. the BCA PL policy. If satisfied the landowner then gives permission, either verbally or in writing for cavers to access his land.

The vast majority of active cavers in the UK are BCA members (estimate 95%); however it's impossible to guarantee that all are current members. BCA is NOT looking for their policy to substitute for the landowner's own PL policy in any regard other than as explained above. A member of public claiming against a landowner due to a dodgy gate will never be covered by the BCA policy extension. It's only a claim that arises as a result of the access agreement that BCA expect their policy to step in for the Landowner's policy, as promised when the access agreement was negotiated on day one with the landowner.

For the landowner to have full comfort the access agreement must cover all cavers, the BCA policy only covers BCA members, hence there is a potential gap.

BCA consulted with the BMC and BCU but it was discovered that their PL cover was not as good as the one the BCA currently enjoys.

Underwriters were obviously NOT keen to extend the policy to an unknown number of cavers of unknown competence who were not paying for the cover. After months of negotiation with the underwriters it is agreed the policy will be extended to non-members who are caving under an access agreement if either they are accompanied by a BCA member or they have more than 2 years of caving experience. Hence in the event of a PL incident caused by cavers on land covered by an access agreement the following are covered (extract from the policy wording)

Landowner:

Any owner of land you have an agreement with in respect of access on their land for the purpose of access to a private cave.

Non BCA member :

Any party who:

- 1. has been granted permission to access a private cave; and*
- 2. is accompanied by a BCA registered club or a current member of, or;*
- 3. has a minimum of 2 years caving experience.*

It goes without saying that the best way of ensuring PL cover is to join the BCA either directly or via a club and hence get the significant member benefit of £10m Public liability cover.

A new TWIMC letter for landowners is being drawn up for distribution.

HJJ September 2021.

BCA Membership report for BCA AGM Autumn 2021

In February 2021 Wendy Williams BCA Membership administrator had a stroke. She had been in an acute stroke ward but is now back home. We expect she will be off work for the foreseeable future. I have liaised between Les and BCA payroll accordingly.

As previously reported the role has been divided between a number of us. You can see separate reports from Katie Eavis covering clubs and CIMs and one from David Gibson covering DIMs.

As can be seen we are down on membership numbers compared to 2020. Since lock downs have eased there has been a steady trickle of members re-joining.

Katie has picked up the role well and between the 3 of us we are dealing with all queries in a timely manner.

We have transferred the BCA Franking machine and card printing machine to Derbyshire and Katie is now dealing with that administration. David has tweaked the card and member letter printing system which appears to be working well.

HJJ 26092021

BCA CIM and club membership report:

Hi Howard,
Updated numbers to today below.

2020 vs 2021 Club Membership levels

	2020 (up until 31st December)	2021 (up until 7th May)	2021 (up until 4th July)	2021 (up until 20th Sep)
Groups (including Member Clubs, Associates and Access Controlling Bodies)	166	150	158	159
CIMs (including Caving, Non-Caving, Students, Under 18s and CDG)	5308	4622	4797	4921

There are about 3 more clubs who have expressed interest in renewing for 2021 but haven't yet got all their paperwork in.

No issues outstanding that I can think of.

I have recently emailed all club secretaries/ membership secretaries to confirm price increase for Caving members for 2022.

Katie Eavis 21/09/2021

BCA DIM Membership Report:

DIM Membership figure for 25 September, with the change from the end of 2020 shown in brackets, is 799 (+15). In other words, we have caught up and exceeded last year's figure. However, BCA traditionally has a very high turnover of members - in the hundreds - and this was certainly the case for 2020/21. 273 DIMs did not renew membership in 2021.

There has been an unexpected drift of CIMs to DIMs this year so the above figure does not necessarily represent new members; some of them could be CIMs who have, for several likely reasons, shifted to DIM membership.

We have 11 members who either have no email address at all, or who specifically said that we are not to contact them by email under any circumstances. All members have the opportunity to opt out of "non-essential email" and a significant number (106) do so. That point needs to be well understood by any BCA officers who are handling members' data. One overseas member suggested we did not need to post a card to him, and this option might be implemented on the application form next year.

The vast majority of DIMs now pay online via Paypal. This year only 34 members paid by cheque and 14 by bank transfer. Cheques and bank transfers both require additional admin effort to process. Some members continue to report that Paypal does not let them pay when they do not have an account. It is true that "casual" payments via Paypal require an account, but so-called "web accept" payments via our payment page should always work. Thus it is believed that customers who report that they cannot pay are those who do not pay at the time they submit the transaction but try to make a casual payment later. This point is still being investigated and additional clarity might be needed on the application form.

On the membership software: Regarding DIMs, the focus in 2021 has been on the creation and updating of the "back office" processes for DIMs, which has meant that the planned upgrade of the customer-facing online DIM form has not taken place. It is hoped that that will be done before "renewal time" but the focus is still currently on the "back office" processes.

David Gibson 26/09/2021

Qualifications Management Committee – Report to BCA AGM 2021

Another difficult year for all who lead groups in the outdoors, in the voluntary, education and commercial sectors. The summer months saw a slow return to led caving activities, but many award holders are still not fully able to resume their former level of activity.

QMC have strived to provide CPD opportunities for trainer/assessors, for both the LCMLA and CIC awards, and have continued to provide update workshops for award holders – initially through online platforms, but more recently 'face to face' in venues which allow for practical sessions. QMC members have also continued to move forward with several projects:

- QMS – the on-line 'qualifications management system' has been up and running for a year now and is functioning well and has hugely reduced the burden on the training administrator. She continues to be essential to the scheme to answer day to day queries, but the system has greatly eased her work load.
- Resources – Work continues on the 'Geology' resource, which will be added to the library of resources available to award holders through the BCA website. 'Professional Standards Documents' and 'Terms of Reference' for the Trainer/Assessor panels have also been completed.
- A liaison group has been set up between 'QMC', 'Training' and 'Equipment and Techniques' committees.
- We have continued to work with the 'Radon Working Group' in the monitoring of group venues, obtaining data to accompany the BCA 'Radon Underground' document; a resource which enables award holders to comply with the Ionising Radiation Regulations (IRR17).
- Finally, my term in office as chair of QMC terminates at the end of October and personal circumstances necessitate that I step down from this post. Interviews for the next QMC chair are planned and I am sure that my successor will do a fine job – I'll always be just a phone call away, if my help is needed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have aided me over the past three years – Mary Wilde our absolutely invaluable training administrator, who is the 'font of all knowledge' and keeps me continuously entertained; Gethin Thomas, QMC deputy chair, whose work and dedication are second to none; QMC members who work tirelessly as volunteers to keep the award schemes running; and finally, to Russell Myers, who as Chair of BCA has taken a constant interest in the work we do and offered his support continually during his term of office.

Juliet Parker-Smith

IT Group

Report for 2021 Annual General Meeting of the British Caving Association.

Paid hosting:

The IT Group have now moved all paid hosting accounts away from the BCA to other services. As such the BCA only now provides hosting for BCA services and some websites hosted on an unpaid basis such as to some Cave Rescue Organisations and Regional Councils.

Virtual Private Servers:

The IT Group have been working to move all accounts hosted on the older VPS to the newer VPS. We only have one account remaining on the older VPS before it can be removed from the BCA's arsenal – the Cave Registry and Archive. Progress is being made on moving this. A more robust external backup process of these servers has been implemented this year.

Video conferencing:

The Zoom video conferencing service continues to be well used within the organisation.

Website:

The website continues to be well visited, and work continues to keep it up to date. Work continues to integrate the website with social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and UKCaving.

Emails:

The email system continues to be well used, and stability and uptime have improved this year.

BCA Cloud:

The BCA Cloud administration system is seeing increasing use, particularly by the Publicity & Information Group, the British Cave Library, and the Membership Administration.

Membership database:

Following the change in Membership Administrator a temporary membership system was developed by members of the IT Group and the Acting Membership Administrator. This will continue to be used whilst the online membership database is finalised.

Due to the complex data sharing needed between the BCA and BCRA, alongside the shared responsibility for member data between members themselves and their clubs, progress on transitioning to the online membership database is still ongoing. This was further complicated this year by the change in Membership Administrator.

The IT Group:

The IT Group remains run by volunteers. The continued modernisation of the BCA is increasing the workload for the group. The groups volunteer time continues to be the main factor limiting the rate of the groups progress.

On a personal note, I am extremely grateful to the volunteers of the IT Group for their continued hard work and dedication. I will be stepping down as chair at the end of the year to finish my PhD.

Ari Cooper-Davis 02/10/2021

Publications and Information Report

The P&I working group was created in the summer of 2020 with the aims of providing services over 4 areas; Digital, Graphics, Media and Services.

Digital & Graphics:

There have been 39 posts released on the website over the last 12 months, unfortunately we have yet to arrive at a reliable metric to measure readership. Approximately 220 documents have been uploaded to the website since the last AGM, though a large amount of this was transferring things from the previous website that had been missed/needed refiling. There has been a large aggregation of images with the 186 on the website and 217 on Flickr.

Two surveys of the membership have just been completed with 63 responses from the club survey and 109 from the direct membership. The results of these will be published after the AGM, with the aim of a simple handbook being produced for clubs and a report detailing historic patterns of recruitment.

Many thanks go out to Andrew Morgan and Kay Easton for providing their expertise and assistance in compiling the demographics report (this can be found under P&I on the website), which has formed a basis on how to interpret future datasets and surveys. The current surveys aim to help answer the questions posed at the end of that report, and a repeat Demographic survey is due to be carried out this December. Additionally 3 feedback surveys have been created for various items/services on the BCA website and P&I can offer this service very easily.

Updated logos and digital stationary was created for working groups and the executive, for clarity in where documents are being published and by who, this has seen some uptake and further work on this can be carried out once we have a better idea on what's need/limitations of the current resources.

Media:

We have sadly not had any requests for interviews from the media however we have provided advice to a media company asking for our recommendations on working underground. This went well and I am pleased to say that the project was completed and due to be released in the coming weeks (a news item will be available on the BCA website).

We have had multiple issues with our automated social media posting and unfortunately owing to the heavy workload on the IT group with the whole membership situation and the database, we have struggled to resolve it. That being said we have still published 50 facebook posts in the last year. The biggest reach was obtained by Andy Eavis's medal, the Demographics report and the increase in membership fees.

5 Podcasts have been released (with 3 recorded and awaiting release), and have had a large amount of positive feedback. We have migrated the hosting over to AnchorFM and the main limitation is finding a competent editor. It may also be prudent to pay for editing software once we have someone who knows what they are doing and can give the BCA advice. We are currently using free to use software.

We have not updated our print advertising/released new materials over covid.



Services:

We have set up a proof reading service for members with a group of volunteers ready to oblige, all you have to do is email P&I and agree that 2 copies of the book/publication be made available (one for the volunteer and one for the British Caving Library). There are aspirations to extend this to surveys and providing assistance with Journals but currently the demand is low and so this was parked in favour of other priorities.

Publication guidance for all BCA documents and media is available on the website. It includes clear summaries of the process, tools to consider and advice for engaging on social media.

Conclusion:

In my 15 months in the role I have to say that this job has been far harder than my time in Youth and Development, primarily due to the lack of volunteers. Understandably this has not been helped by significant support required by the executive over this period which ate into developing the group. I remain convinced however that P&I is the area in BCA that could have the biggest impact over the next 12 months of British Caving. Early anecdotal reports are coming through from many clubs in a big uptick in interest in the general public in getting out and doing things after a year and a half sat at home. We need to make sure that our member clubs are able to capitalise on this, both by directing interest their way and helping clubs not familiar with handling lots of new people.

I would suggest that this takes the place in the form of the following:

- a club handbook
- a national advertising campaign, including use of digital and print resources
- keeping newtosting updated and at the centre of such a campaign

In order to do this we would need:

- a new P&I officer
- a competent audio editor
- a competent video editor
- people interested in compiling reports on surveys & demographics
- additional social media volunteers

I will be leaving this role to either become Chair or, failing that, will step down from the organisation. This is due to the strained working relationship between myself and the acting chair, and in the interests of the organisation stepping aside to let someone start with a blank slate seems like a good idea. I would happily stay in place in a technical capacity until a replacement is found but should this extend beyond 2021 I would need to resign. I hope that the P&I meeting will solve this in the coming weeks but unfortunately I do not have good news for you at the time of writing.

Rostam Namaghi



Safeguarding Officers Report

No safeguarding issues have been raised since the last AGM.

A number of clubs have been in touch for advice regarding young people and caving. The usual issues raised are whether cavers need to have a DBS certificate to take youngsters caving and whether consent forms are required. Often my reply widens to explain the duty of care we have towards young cavers or vulnerable adults.

If anyone reading this very short report does have questions like these, please do refer to <https://british-caving.org.uk/about-bca/safeguarding/> where there is quite a lot of guidance.

Chris Boardman
BCA Safeguarding Officer

FSE delegate report to BCA AGM October 2021.

The FSE comprises a membership of 31 countries.

Despite the difficulties presented by the Covid 19 pandemic over the last 12 months, members of the FSE bureau have continued to work hard in their respective roles. Planning the FSE's part in the International Year of the Caves and Karst (IYCK) and the International Congress of Speleology (ICS) in France has been particularly challenging with all the uncertainties caused by the unpredictable nature of the pandemic.

As for all organisations, travel restrictions have required a new way of working and meant an increased reliance on virtual meetings rather than the traditional face to face bureau meetings. The FSE Bureau held 6 virtual meetings over the last 12 months. Scheduled Eurospeleo Forums (ESF's) have had to be postponed and this has created a backlog of events that we still hope can be slotted into a busy calendar over the next few years. However, a lot of virtual events were organised by the FSE member countries during the pandemic, such as online webinars and photography events, video and art competitions.

The General Assembly Meeting (GAM) last year also had to be organised and executed as a virtual meeting. Whilst this was unprecedented for the FSE, the meeting was generally considered a success, with member countries being able to express their views and vote on a wide range of issues. The human contact and the networking that always plays a major part of a Eurospeleo Forum or European get togethers has been sorely missed and I'm sure everyone will be looking forward to 2022 when this can happen again. There will not be a Eurospeleo Forum at the International Congress of Speleology (ICS) next year although the GAM of the FSE will be held during the ICS.

The FSE continues to work closely with the UIS who like us have been presented by many challenges in recent months.

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.

Since 2009 the Eurospeleo Projects (ESPs) have been a resounding success for the FSE sponsoring and supporting caving expeditions from member countries. Opportunities to offer ESP's recently has been seriously limited due to travel restrictions.

However, 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" will be held in Germany from 26.10.21. to 30.10.21. BCA conservation and access officer Will Burn will be attending as well as John Gunn. This will be a hybrid event, and anyone can join virtually but will have to register by 10.10.21. It is free of charge and the link is;



https://www.bfn.de/en/int-academy/typ-3.html?tx_blitzcalendar_pi1%5Bcid%5D=3865

Communication to our members is crucial especially during these difficult times. The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by Henk Goutier, is continuously visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo> and since the beginning of 2020 the FSE also has an Instagram page: @eurospeleo_fse. Also, with the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organization we are able to update the FSE website on a regular basis.

As the work of the bureau increases our approach has been to outsource some of the tasks previously completed by bureau members, an example of this has been the EuroSpeleo Newsletter which is collated and edited by Michael Laummans. The FSE continues to look for volunteers who are keen to be more involved in the work of the FSE.

Despite all the European politics the BCA still has a strong presence in Europe. Your BCA representatives are Ged Campion and David Botcherby.

Ged Campion.

British Caving Library Report to BCA AGM, 10 October 2021

This report covers the period from September 2020 to September 2021; it is for information and reflects the situation at the time it is being written.

Following the various Coronavirus lockdowns and the the relaxation of contact rules we have been able to return to our normal routine of working together in the Library on one day a week and receiving visitors by appointment.

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 surveys, maps, etc. 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.

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 seems to have been no drop in the number of enquiries we dealt with during the Coronavirus lockdown periods compared to more normal times.) We also both deal with visitors coming to do research and I come in regularly at weekends.

We welcomed an important addition to the Library staff in November 2019: Library Assistant Katie Eavis, who completed the task of cataloguing in detail all the UK periodicals, including weeding out all the duplicate copies which have been accumulating since the 1930s. These Katie boxed and listed separately and advertised to clubs with libraries. Now "caver post" is operating again, we have been able send these on their way, including over 20 boxes to a club on Mendip whose library was destroyed in a flood so we are helping them to re-stock. Sadly, we have lost Katie's services for the time being as she has had to take over BCA Membership Admin. role since mid-February 2021.

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 all but completed the task of cataloguing not far short of 1,000 surveys, aerial photos and maps. Some of the newly catalogued surveys have now been scanned and put on the Derbyshire Cave Registry website where they are available to all cavers.

Archive material has continued to arrive in the Library throughout the year. The most important recent acquisition came from Mike Binns (now resident in Australia), son of the first CRG Treasurer, the late Peter Binns, who served from 1947 to 1968. Peter was was also a member of BSA from its foundation in 1935, being appointed Assistant Treasurer in 1947, before being summarily expelled (apparently for "disloyalty") along with the 7 others who founded CRG. The Binns archive includes hundreds of photos of historical importance taken by Peter, a selection of which are now on the BCRA Archives section of the Library Website. More important are schoolboy Peter's diaries of his caving holidays in 1934 and '35, working with Eli Simpson, the founder of BSA - revealing that Simpson was using Peter and his school friends to collect numbers



of formations which were deliberately broken off and transported out of the caves in specially prepared sawdust-lined wooden boxes.

The library welcomes enquiries by phone, email or personal visit and enquiries continue to run at between 80 to 90 per year. It is noticeable that the nature of these is trending towards research rather than simple scans or copies, with around 50% now requiring us to carry out research which may take a number of hours for each enquiry.

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. Visits dropped to zero from March 2020 during the Coronavirus lockdowns but with the relaxation of the lockdown rules we are now welcoming visitors to the Library once more. We have again been asked to host group of cavers from the BCRA Cave Survey Group who have used the facilities in previous years to organise a 3-day training seminar on various aspects of cave survey software.

Jenny Potts, (j.potts@bcra.org.uk)

BCRA Library Co-ordinator
22 September 2021

Rope Testing Officer's Report

There has been no rope testing service during 2020 (or 2021). The Bradford Pothole Club informed me back in 2019 of their intention to rebuild their garage in which their instrumented rope test rig stood, together with BCA's tensile rig. Unfortunately due to planning restrictions, the Bradford decided that they were not able to offer space for a new rig. In early 2021 I decided to resign from the post of Rope Test Officer.

Prior to the lock down in March 2020, work was conducted on exploring the differences between the Alpine and Caver's Butterfly knots at the request of QMC. As a consequence a note was issued, see <https://british-caving.org.uk/documents/comparison-of-alpine-cavers-butterfly-knots/> with the conclusion that it was considered that the observed weakness of the Cavers Butterfly knot makes it a knot to avoid.

The tensile rig and some parts of their rope test rig have now been removed from the Bradford's garage and placed in safe storage, along with the mobile test rig and the anchor puller which I held. Instructions and information has been placed with the rigs to facilitate the rebuild and operation of them.

For information, it is my intention to place an electronic copy of my work for BCA in the British Caving Library covering not only my work as Rope Test Officer, but also as Chair of Equipment & Techniques and Training Committees, BCA and NCA Treasurers, plus of course my work in helping setting up BCA.

My thanks go to Roy Rodgers who has supported me in much of the work on the instrumented rope test rig over the past 10 years.

Bob Mehew
September 2021



CROW

Having indicated via their lawyers in July that they wished to settle the case, admit they acted unlawfully and pay our costs, the Welsh Government and Defra suddenly told us in mid-September that they had changed their minds, and they now want to fight it – both on technical, procedural grounds, and on the substantive issue, their insistence that CROW does not apply to caving. A hearing has been listed for December. At present, our lawyers are reviewing the case in detail, and we will be deciding what to do in the next few days. I will be giving a verbal report at the AGM.

David Rose

UIS report

As the world is coming out of lock-down international caving and international caving politics is beginning to happen. The International Congress for 2021 was postponed till July 2022, however the International Year of Caves and Karst has carried on, it is now over 18 months long rather than 12 months, so it will finish at the international Congress in France in July 2022.

A virtual vote by the country delegates of UIS decided unanimously for Brazil to host the International Congress in 2025. They did host a very successful congress in Brasilia in 2001. It will be in Belo Horizonte 27th July – 2nd August 2025. A preliminary video is available on:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwjhHEKEDUQ>

On September 14th I attended a UNESCO reception for the International Union of Speleology in Paris at the UNESCO headquarters.

There are various International Year of Caves and Karst events going on around the world. Our BCRA Monday evening lecture series continues with the second Monday in the month, so far, they have all been very good, many are available online and more will be available in the future. Sad news that Adolfo Eraso, Christian Dodelin, two senior UIS people have both died recently. Christian from France was very involved with French and International Cave Rescue and a particularly nice guy. Adolfo Eraso from Spain was UIS Secretary 1977-1981, President 81-86 and an honorary bureau member. It is a great shame both of them have passed away.

To look at the past events of the International Year of Caves and Karst, please see:
www.iyck2021.org

The UIS bulletin is due to be published online shortly so please watch the UIS website www.uis-speleo.org

As ever, keep an eye on these websites.

Andy Eavis