

BCA Newsletter

Number 25 - May 2016

This newsletter was originally only published as a web page but has been re-created as this PDF in July 2019.

Chairman's Introduction

I welcome everybody to this latest newsletter and thank Robin Weare very sincerely for his hard work in producing it.

I am looking forward enormously to Eurospeleo on 13th – 20th August at Dalesbridge. A huge amount of work has been done to prepare for the event and a lot more will be done by August to get it all into action. I know that the Eurospeleo Organising Committee is very grateful to the many sponsors who have given considerable assistance, particularly J J Bevan who is being very helpful in preparing to hand over Dalesbridge to what will be well in excess of 1,000 cavers and to SpanSetUK and Teufelberger who between them have generously provided 6,000 metres of their rope to allow the caves to be rigged. Not only will the event be educational with many trips, lectures and slides shows but it will also be very enjoyable with so many eminent cavers from around the world coming together to share experiences and party!

On a different subject, CRoW continues to take up a lot of time for BCA's Executive and Council. It is being tackled on two fronts. Tim Allen is heading up the campaign to comply with the vote of the membership of BCA which were in favour of BCA campaigning for the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to go underground. As an offshoot to Tim's campaign I believe he is improving the public opinion of caves and caving. In addition, Andrew Hinde is spearheading a move to improve conservation and access generally, but also of course if the CRoW Act is seen to apply to caving. A side-shoot of this CRoW Act debate should be that access is better controlled for all caves and conservation is better understood and considerably improved.

I should like to thank all the Officers of BCA and its related organisations for doing an enormous amount of work, which many people simply don't appreciate is going on. In particular I should like to thank Dave Lowe and John Gunn for their continued work editing and producing //Cave and Karst Science// on behalf of BCRA, this continues to be an excellent publication and long may it last.

A special thank you is due to David Judson who stands down as Legal and Insurance Officer at the coming AGM. David has given huge, mostly unsung, service to British caving in many roles over many years; we all owe him a great deal.

Finally, I look forward to meeting many of you at the Digfest weekend and the AGM at the Hunters on Sunday 5th June.

Andy Eavis

BCA Chairman

2016 Annual General Meeting at Dig Fest

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the British Caving Association will once again take place as part of a weekend of activities. This year's event will be held in conjunction with the CSCC Dig Fest in Priddy where the diggers of Mendip will be opening their digs for you to visit and have a go. In addition to the opportunity to make the big breakthrough there will be:

- Workshops
- Talks

- Wessex Challenge (hosted by the BEC)
- BBQ
- Stomp

The AGM itself will begin at 10:30am on Sunday 5 June in the back room of the Hunters Lodge, Priddy. The agenda is now {{about:documents:general_meetings:agm_agenda_2016.pdf|available}}. The deadline has now passed for nominations for posts on BCA Council.

Thanks are due to Andrew Hinde for standing for a further term as Conservation & Access Officer, to Matt Wire who will again be an Individual Member representative and to Bob Mehew for his election as Legal & Insurance Officer. Bob will replace David Judson who has stepped down after many years' service to BCA and its predecessor, NCA. We are indebted to David for all his hard work and wish him well in his "retirement".

As there were no nominations for Secretary, either of the Club Representatives or for the second Individual Member representative, these positions are open to nominations from the floor of the AGM. The position of Secretary is particularly pivotal to the Association's success and we would urge anyone who thinks they might be able to offer their services to get in touch as soon as possible.

[The European Speleological Federation \(FSE\)](#)

With the 5th European Speleological Congress taking place in the Dales later this year it seems appropriate to ask a few questions about the European Speleological Federation, on whose behalf the event is being organised. Ged Campion represents UK cavers and is the current President of the Federation.

The European Speleological Federation (FSE) is a grouping of the national caving associations of 30 European countries. It is part of the International Union of Speleology (UIS) and organises regular events including, every year since 2006, a Eurospeleo Forum. This year the forum is part of the 5th Eurospeleo Congress (the last was in 2008) which is to be held in the UK from August 13th to 20th.

Also part of the 2016 Congress is the 4th European Protection Symposium: Caves & Karst - Protection and Conservation under EU Law and the Congress schedule will include the General Assembly of the Federation.

Later in the year the 27th Cave Science Symposium will take place in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Department of Earth Sciences. This FSE event is organised by the British Cave Research Association and Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford

What else does it do?

There is an expedition grant process, FSE EuroSpeleo Projects. Grants are available for expeditions which include participants from 4 member countries (3 if to Africa/Middle East/South or Central America. The ESP Application Form is available [here](#) and the ESP Explanatory Notes [here](#).

A magazine is a recent innovation. There have been two issues and both can be [downloaded](#).

[Speleo-TV](#) is a collection of caving films from across the continent which may be downloaded or just enjoyed.

[Eurospeleo 2016 Update](#)

The event is now under 4 months away with over 900 tickets sold!

People are attending from all over the world including Lebanon, Turkey, Ukraine, Japan, Finland, China, Costa Rica, Brazil, USA and Australia.

Still time to book! Discounted rate of £80 is available until the 31st May 2016

The Banquet is filling up fast - if you'd like a ticket just contact the bookings manager who will be happy to arrange one for you.

T-Shirts - a number of extra sizes for T-Shirts (particularly Women's fit) have been released. Please check on the bookings page and contact the bookings manager]] if you'd like to change the size or add one to your booking.

Alongside caving trips, there will be a lecture theatre running all week with a packed programme ensuring there is something of interest for everyone. Each afternoon session will be followed by some of La Salle 3D's amazing films, which will then lead into the evening's themed entertainment.

The bar will be stocked with a vast selection of local ales** and everyone attending will be provided with his own glass to take away as a souvenir.

Every evening there will be live entertainment; so far there are bands, discos and quizzes booked.

The catering and banquet will be provided by [[<http://chapmanholmes.co.uk/>|Chapman Holmes Catering]] who have been established for over 25 years and have worked on some of the largest events in the UK. These include: Opening of The Conway Tunnel, (Her Majesty – Guest of Honour), World Round Table Event, World Firefighter Games, Opening of the Welsh Parliament, Princes Trust. Working internationally, they have catered for over 5000 people in one sitting so they should have no problem catering for the banquet on Wednesday night!

- All food will be cooked fresh and to order. Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner will be available most days.
- Credit Cards accepted. (Service charge of 50p per transaction).
- All special dietary requirements catered for with advance notice.

Cave & Trip Descriptions - full trip descriptions are now online. Each trip has been timed and graded for wet weather, technical difficulty, caving difficulty and optimized for printing. Visit <http://eurospeleo.uk/caves/descriptions.php> from where you can print out the descriptions; connect to an area map and separate pages of novice and wet weather trips.

Trader and Club Stand Bookings are now open. Please contact the bookings manager with details of your requirements and get booking!

Day Visitors – will be welcome if there is space available. Day tickets will not be on sale in advance and are strictly “subject to availability”. The rates have now been set at:

- £20 (access to all day and evening events) including overnight camping
- £10 evening only (including overnight camping)
- £5 evening only
- £5 caving only

Lectures and posters - there will be a series of lectures each day, and a number of posters to browse. It is hoped to have a good balance on all aspects of caving, including (but not limited to):

- Academic/scientific
- New explorations
- History/retrospectives
- Overviews of caving areas
- Teaching (e.g. survey/photography techniques)
- New equipment
- Personal memoirs
- Informal/Funny

Workshops

In addition to lectures there will be rooms available for a variety of discussion, or hands-on practical workshops. We welcome anyone who would like to run a workshop. This can involve anything you wish; a scientific discussion, comparing caving technology (surveying or lighting equipment), training sessions; anything that would work well as an interactive round-table session.

Field trips/guided trips

Finally, EuroSpeleo will involve a number of field trips and guided events. These will include:

- Geology walks
- Guided caving trips (either scientific or sporting)
- Local interests

Still time to book! Discounted rate of £80 is available until the 31st May 2016.

“Mend our Mountains” Project

BCA Council has decided to contribute to a BMC crowdfunding project known as “Mend our Mountains”. BMC is hoping to raise up to £100k for path repair work in 8 of our National Parks, as follows:

- **Peak District:** Stanage – (Cowperstones & Hooks Carr) as well as Ringing Roger on Kinder
- **Yorkshire Dales:** Swine Tail, Ingleborough
- **Snowdonia:** Top of the Watkin Path, Yr Wyddfa
- **Brecon Beacons:** Waun Rydd Path in the Central Beacons
- **Dartmoor:** High Moor on Dartmoor between Nuns Cross and Eylesbarrow
- **North York Moors:** Lyke Wake Walk over Fylingdales Moor south of Whitby
- **Lake District:** Scafell Pike – Brown Tongue Route (part of the Three Peaks route) & Hollowstones
- **Exmoor:** Long Chains Combe, Exmoor Forest

The BMC contributed £1,000 to each of the projects before going live with the public campaign.

When you read this, there will probably be no more than a week of the campaign to run. Contributions at the time of writing were just over half way at £54,320.

If you wish to make a personal contribution visit <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/campaign/mend-our-mountains>

Scans of old BCRA publications to go online soon

Bob McIntosh continues to do a fantastic job scanning our old periodicals. He has recently submitted over 130 PDFs of material to add to that which is already [online](#).

This includes Caves and Caving (1979-2000), as well as older issues of the CRG Newsletter, CRG Biological Supplement and BCRA Bulletin. These are not expected to be online for a few months, and if anyone needs any of this material before then, please contact the BCRA secretary.

Similarly, there are 30 CREG journals, from #48 to #77 now ready to go online, which will just leave the gap from #25 to #47 to be filled. Again, these are not expected to be online for a few months, and if anyone needs any of this material, please contact the BCRA secretary.

Changes to Training Schemes?

A Training Committee proposal which could result in radical changes to the professional training schemes and a reorganisation of the committee structure was discussed at the January and April Council meetings.

The proposed revised structure is shown in the following graphic:

Whilst Council agreed in principle that it made sense to split the existing Training Committee into two parts (Recreational & Professional) it concluded that more work was needed on the detail, especially of the proposed changes to the professional award scheme.

An invitation - Hagg Brow Cave Excavation

The first phase of excavations at Hagg Brow Cave, Lower Winskill will take place from Friday 20th May to Tuesday 31st May 2016. Participation is free and the excavations are primarily aimed at sporting cavers wishing to learn about scientific excavation methods used in cave archaeology.

The excavations will be led by Tom Lord who has over 30 years experience of cave archaeology and palaeontology in the Dales. If you'd like to be part of the team on site or to get involved in some other way contact details are on the Cave Archaeology Group projects page of the [[<http://cag.bcra.org.uk/styled-3/> | BCRA website]]

BCA's handling of the CRoW issue

There were three matters before the April Council meeting, all relating to the way in which BCA is handling the CRoW issue.

The first was a complaint from CSCC whose representative read out a prepared statement:

The CSCC has grave doubts that a change to the CRoW Act to include caving will be of advantage to cavers in their region where access arrangements have been carefully negotiated and maintained for many years. It seems to the CSCC that this change may well have unintended consequences for our access arrangements and access to caves will be lost rather than secured.

It is with this background that the CSCC comes to this meeting to make a complaint about the way that the Constitution is being interpreted in the apparent headlong rush to promote a change in the law. It seems to the CSCC that a blind eye is being turned to the very loose interpretation of the Constitution being applied by the CRoW Liaison Officer in respect of the motion passed at the most recent BCA AGM.

The CSCC is therefore making a complaint about the failure of the BCA to properly operate its Constitution in respect of discussions about the CRoW Act, especially given there are a large minority of BCA members who voted against the current action who are being ignored.

After much discussion the following response was agreed:

Council acknowledges the complaint from CSCC but in Council's view the motion agreed at the 2015 AGM was not a limiting motion and Council and its Officers have, therefore, acted properly.

The second matter was a proposal from Faye Litherland which, after even more discussion, passed without dissent

This meeting of the BCA National Council acknowledges that, in an organisation representing some 6000 members, the guiding principles of that organisation represent the expressed views of those members and that the BCA National Council confirm they accept and will abide by the guiding principles detailed in sections 4.2 to 4.8 of the BCA constitution.

A further proposal was also then agreed to explain Council's position as follows:

BCA Council is fully aware of the Guiding Principles as outlined in sections 4.2 to 4.8 of the Constitution and always seeks to act in line with these. However the law of the land takes precedent over a Constitution. Therefore Council is happy that sections 4.2 to 4.8 are no impediment to BCA campaigning to change DEFRA's current interpretation of the law, which by their own admission is not definitive.

The third matter was a question from two members

Can the National Council please clarify what level of damage to landowner/caver relationships that have been carefully nurtured over decades they deem acceptable in the pursuit of the BCA CRoW campaign?

It was agreed to reply as follows:

BCA Council has the utmost respect for landowners and recognises their right to decide how their land is used within the constraints of the law.

It is now more than 15 years since the CRoW Act was introduced. At the time all sorts of potential concerns were raised by opponents of the legislation, but Council believes these have largely failed to materialise. Indeed in general landowners now seem content with the legislation and Council does not see this changing if caving is shown to also be included as a permitted activity.

Furthermore CRoW legislation reduces landowners' potential liability to the lowest level possible in law and, as such, Council believes the majority of landowners will benefit if the CRoW Act is understood to apply to caves.

BCA Web Services

British Caving Association Web Services provide a fully featured web hosting and email service which was set up to provide caving clubs with reliable web hosting at a reasonable price. Our services are only available to BCA members and caving or mining not-for-profit organisations.

The basic service, at £25 annual charge, comes with 500MB hosting space (incl mailboxes), unlimited bandwidth, unlimited email forwarding and unlimited POP3 mail boxes. The Web space is hosted on Linux Servers in a secure data centre and comes with scripting (Php, Perl, etc) as standard. More advanced features such as MySQL database, password protection, ODBC connectivity and advanced mailboxes (with powerful spam filters, out-of-office responder, etc.) are available at extra cost. We can also register domain names.

From the 1st March Nominet, the official registry of UK domain names, increased its wholesale prices by 50% and the BCA Web Services' charges have been adjusted accordingly. A two year .uk domain will go from £8 to £12 and a one year .com domain will go from £12 to £13.

Cave & Karst Science 43(1) now online

The April issue of C&KS is now [online](#). The print issue is "in press" and should be distributed; it is hoped, by the end of April.

Council of Northern Caving Clubs Creates Committee Position to represent Individual Cavers.

CNCC Secretary, Matt Ewles, tells us about this new development.

For years, the CNCC has elected a Committee annually from our pool of full member clubs. This Committee meets at least three times a year to instruct the Officers and carry out the day to day business of the CNCC, relating to conservation, access, training, anchor installation and various other matters. Recently, there has been considerable discussion about the fact that the CNCC offers no representation for individuals who choose to cave outside of a traditional club structure.

We are very conscious that many cavers now enjoy the sport away from traditional club structuring (often in conjunction with club caving too). This absence of democratic representation for these individuals was something we wished to address.

At the CNCC Annual General Meeting on 5th March 2016, our members voted to accept a number of constitutional amendments to create a position for an individual caver to serve as a full Committee member. This representative is called the Individual Caver (IC) representative. This person can be any individual member of the BCA (a CIM or DIM), and their remit is simply to represent the needs of cavers who are regularly active outside of a traditional club structure.

The IC representative, like all other Committee members, will be elected each year at our Annual General Meeting. However, unlike the club Committee positions, the IC representative will be elected by a majority vote of all Direct Individual Members of the British Caving Association present at the meeting. This specific mechanism of election may change in due course with changes to BCA membership structures and terminology, however, the aim will always be to try to ensure (as best as we possibly can) that non-club cavers are given the opportunity to elect their representative.

We are keen to broadcast to as many cavers as possible these opportunities which will be available for the 2017 AGM:

- The opportunity for any CIM or DIM to stand for this 'IC representative' position (contact the CNCC Secretary to express your interest at least eight weeks before the AGM)
- The opportunity for any DIM to attend the CNCC Annual General Meeting and deliver a vote on the election of the IC representative.

We hope that lots of you are keen to get involved in helping the CNCC to elect our first IC representative. Unfortunately, the CNCC does not have a mailing list of all DIMs, however all the information you will need to know (including a list of the applicants) will be available publically on the CNCC website meetings page at least six weeks before the AGM. This will provide opportunity for all interested DIMs to consider the applicants and decided who to vote for to represent the interests of non-club cavers.

CRoW Update

CRoW Liaison Officer, Tim Allen, continues to be very busy.

National Local Access Forum Conferences: Cllr Richard Toon is the chair of the Lancashire LAF and chair of the North West group of chairs. He supports the BCA campaign and attended both conferences and reported that everyone he spoke to was sympathetic and supportive of the BCA campaign. No-one seemed to understand the illogical position taken by Defra over how the Act applies to caving. He also wrote a supportive piece for the conference newsletter.

Sport & Recreation Alliance: Tim attended a meeting of the SRA Access Working Group and in advance of the meeting circulated a briefing note which set out the basics of our case and made clear that we were not seeking to change or amend the law but considered that the existing law already covered caving. He was given about half an hour of the meetings time which questions and answers and informative suggestions of how to go about changing Defra's mind. These included focusing on the messages given out in the Strategy for Sport, cross departmental interests, Defra's 25 year plan on getting people into contact with nature, agreements in principal with other organisations, cutting red tape, economic value and links to education.

DEFRA: Tim has continued to correspond with DEFRA (and NE), both direct to Rory Stewart (Parliamentary Under-Secretary) and to the department address and some via email with Richard Hepburn (who our chairman met with in 2014). It is worth recording that DEFRA "fully recognises that there are many benefits to those who participate in caving and from the benefits that may occur from those activities to the local economy". DEFRA have been willing to discuss some detail but it is clear from all this correspondence that they are broadly sticking to their original view. That view is repeated in a recent letter:

Tim's full report will appear in the draft minutes.

CRoW and Access Controlling Bodies

Work is well under way on producing advice to Access Controlling Bodies (ACBs) on the impact of CRoW applying to caving. Advice has been sought from our brokers, Perkin Slade, on some detail of how the Public Liability insurance applies. It is hoped that the advice should be ready to issue by late May. Two things already clear are the need for ACBs to be clear about the status of their cave with respect to CRoW in terms of how much lies in "access land" and

the need to responsibly brief land owners about the implications. For those interested in the detail to date, the draft minutes, which include draft documentation and comments, will be made available online in due course.

CNCC targets abandoned digs

As part of their on-going conservation efforts, the CNCC is planning to get more involved in the clean-up of abandoned surface digs across the region.

They would very much like to hear about any abandoned surface digs or untidy cave entrances where work to restore the surface to a tidy state may be required. In particular, they are keen to hear about any such sites on Ingleborough (all sides), as this will be the first area of attention.

If you have any information please get in touch with their Conservation Officer, Kay Easton:
conservation@cncc.org.uk

Audio Archive Additions

Another update from librarian, Mary Wilde, this time on the recent additions to the British Caving Library's audio archives.

We have been delighted to add an interview with the late, great Mike Boon which was made in 2010, and conducted by John Donovan who did a lot of caving with Mike. The tape was edited by Sid Perou. In it Mike is first asked about the writing of his book //Down to a Sunless Sea//, and he then goes on to talk about his Castleguard explorations, including the occasion when he and Pete Thompson were trapped by flood waters for two days, which resulted in the de facto closure of all caves in the Banff National Park. He also talks a little about his solo exploration in the cave.

[Mike Boon - Explorations in Castleguard](#)

We have also added a recording of Mike talking about his cave diving experiences, which was extracted from one of Sid Perou's cave diving films.

[Mike Boon - Pioneer Cave Diver](#)

With thanks to Andy Chapman, we are pleased to publish a couple of interviews with Malcolm Bass. Malcolm is best known for his climbing exploits, having been involved in exploratory alpine mountaineering all over the world with successes including the west face of Vasuki Parbat (6,780m) in India; The Prey, a new route on Alaska's Mount Hunter; the first ascent of Dunlung Khangri in India (6,365m); the first ascent of Haizi Shan in China (5,880m); and a pair of new routes on Kahiltna Queen in Alaska. Malcolm's exploratory tendencies were first kindled at Leeds University where he was a keen member of ULSA, and where he became a key figure in the discovery of the Living Dead Extensions in Penyghent Pot - which involved some of the most extreme cave explorations undertaken in the UK. In these interviews Malcolm describes the ecstasies and agonies associated with those explorations.

[Malcolm Bass: Explorations in Penyghent Pot - Part 1](#)

[Malcolm Bass: Explorations in Penyghent Pot - Part 2](#)

Sid Perou Video Collection

Now more accessible via the British Caving Library. Librarian, Mary Wilde, writes:

One of the more important caving collections is Sid Perou's video collection on Youtube, documenting as it does almost fifty years of British cavers caving at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, Youtube doesn't provide the best facilities to allow the collection to be put into context, or to be given a structured presentation.

A [page](#) has been added to the Collections Registry on the BCA Library website that is an attempt to overcome those disadvantages. It's basically a filmography of Sid's films which have an outdoor adventure and/or speleological bent. It is sortable by date, subject and title - with links to Sid's Youtube channel where appropriate.

Cave Access Update

Titan (Derbyshire)

Access to Titan resumed on 13th March 2016, following major works replacing the failing entrance shaft lining with cast concrete. For more details and booking information see www.peakspeedwell.info.

Holme Bank Mine (Derbyshire)

Chatsworth are taking up the apparent dispute with the owner of Holme Hall over access to the bottom entrance to the Mine. In the meantime DCA understands that applications to visit the Mine should continue to be made as usual to Oldfield Design and that for divers and others access will be allowed via Entrance No. 2 known as Smiths Level.

Parking should be as discreet as possible and on no account should the bridleway or the driveway to Holme Hall be obstructed.

However, Smiths Level cannot be used for Wheelchair Access and it is not yet clear whether access via that route is approved by the Mine Inspector for instructed parties.

There is currently building work going on in the vicinity of the cave so it's likely that a new arrangement will need to be made to allow access.

Eldon Hole (Derbyshire)

The remaining old bollards have now been removed and await transport away from the site. At this time there's only the single bollard on the West route but it is hoped to install a second back up as soon as weather and volunteers allow.

The East route currently has no ground anchors so unfortunately this route is not safely passable for the time being. There are 3 new bollards in storage ready to be installed here. Please continue to check all safety anchors, bolt, bollard or other, as part of your safe caving practice and if in doubt, contact the DCA Equipment Projects team.

JH Over Engine Mine (Derbyshire)

It has been reported that the netting holding the debris directly above Leviathan last pitch (alt route) below Tea Rooms has deteriorated badly and become detached on left. DCA warns that JH is very unstable in places and is difficult to deal with. As always, take great care in tackling JH and watch out for loose rock at pitch heads.

Hunters Lodge Inn Sink (Mendips)

Hunters Lodge Inn Sink will be closed for at least a month while there is an attempt to repair, clean up and retape after what appears to be some deliberate vandalism to the cave. There have been several trips of cleaning stal, finding jigsaw pieces, lining them up and starting to put it all back together. It is a long job and slow progress, but it is hoped to get as many as possible of the stals reconnected to where they came from in the coming weeks.

Please note: The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the formal view of the British Caving Association.