

BritishCaving

The newsletter of the British Caving Association



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Editorial

by David Rose

The 2019 AGM proved to be an important one with big consequences for the future of the BCA. To my regret, I was unable to attend, because of the serious illness of a close family member. Therefore the report of the meeting is by Tim Allen.

We have two new executive members, Howard Jones as Treasurer and Matt Ewles as Secretary. Anyone who has ever had anything to do with them will know they can be expected to bring energy, enthusiasm and new ideas to their roles, and both are steeped in the culture of British caving. In addition, the meeting saw the re-election of Jane Allen to Publications and Information Officer, a job similar to which she was first nominated last year but sadly resigned after a few months, as described in the last newsletter. There will no longer be a committee associated with the role, and this should

enable her to forge ahead with the many positive innovations to help 'market' caving which she has already conceived. Welcome also to Louise Baddeley, who takes over as the new Conservation and Access officer, and Gary Douthwaite, our new webmaster.

Displayed in this newsletter - which for the first time, will be available both online and on paper - is the new BCA logo. This arises from the CHECC Grand Prize 'best BCA logo' competition Jane Allen ran via UKcaving.com in 2018. She had hoped the competition might bring forth a design the BCA could use to update the existing logo, and student cavers didn't disappoint. It was designed by the winner, Jason McMahon of the Queen's University, Belfast Caving Club, and approved at the AGM. Many cavers will recognise the logo as being a silhouette view of a caver looking out over Alum Pot from Dollytubs, an iconic Yorkshire Dales scene.

Now in prospect is a bigger, more significant reform: a ballot of members to change the constitution in order to abolish the current 'two house' voting system (one house for individuals and the second for clubs or other constituent bodies). This measure passed by the required 70% majority in both houses. The ballot seems likely to confirm that most cavers support this change, and it should enable the BCA to become more democratic, and closer to its members.

The changes already made and the proposed further reforms already seem to be energizing the organization, to judge by the increased response to my request for contributions to the newsletter. As with the last issue, it features the work of a particular underground photographer, in this case Nicky Bayley. My thanks to her for supplying a superb set of images.

Another significant innovation is the introduction of new BCA expedition and caving holiday insurance, for which we must thank the incoming Treasurer, Howard Jones, and Andy Eavis, both expedition cavers for decades. The penalties of inadequate insurance were shockingly highlighted by the 2014 rescue of the seriously injured Johann Westhauser from a remote chamber 1,000 metres below the surface in Riesending, Germany's deepest cave. The huge costs of this far outstripped his own insurance provision, and he was left in severe financial difficulty, despite being successfully rescued after a 12-day epic, and making a full physical recovery. Anyone seeking a permit for Riesending now needs rescue insurance cover to the value of 10 million Euro.

Finally, it will be seen that the newsletter has a new, professional format. For that, heartfelt thanks to Matt Ewles and Gary Douthwaite.

Latest news and events...

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Representing Cavers in Westminster



Hellie Adams

to a range of speeches, Hellie was able to meet with various MPs including David Rutley who went caving in 2016 with fellow MP, David Davis, Tim Allen (BCA CRoW Officer at the time) as part of a team of cavers to Gaping Ghyll Main Chamber.

David Rutley remembered his trip and the reason for it – to highlight the CRoW campaign. The BCA are pleased to note access is still on the minds of at least some politicians.

Tom Watson MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, made a speech and met with Hellie afterwards where he agreed to go caving. Mr Watson has been taking part in a variety of challenges so it is hoped the BCA can arrange to him to help him explore the wonders of the underground soon.

Our thanks to Hellie for making the long journey to the capital, queuing for hours to get past protesters and finally making it to the reception. Hellie summarised:

Recently, Hellie Adams attended the Sports and Recreation Alliance's Summer drinks reception at Westminster where they were launching a new campaign about getting young people into sport to combat obesity. This was an excellent opportunity for Hellie to represent the BCA and to help raise the awareness of caving amongst people who influence decisions at the highest level.

There were 70+ people in attendance, though Hellie being under 40 and female was a minority in the room. Having listened

"I had some great discussions with a variety of people and hope BCA can be more involved in this project in the future. As cavers we know the benefits both physically and mentally of caving as it's great exercise with team spirit and a strong social scene. The BCA are keen to encourage younger folks into our sport and hope to do our bit to combat childhood obesity".



Photo by Hellie Adams

2019 AGM



Photo by Hellie Adams

by Tim Allen

More than 75 people attended this year's BCA AGM in Horton in Ribblesdale, a recent record. As usual, it began with reports from various officers. All are available on the BCA website, alongside the original agenda and draft minutes.

There was a contentious debate when the Youth and Development group presented its report. Until recently, the Charterhouse Caving Company had been banning under 18s from caves under its control. These include some of Mendip's most important systems, including GB and Charterhouse. After consultation with a barrister, the limit has been reduced to its previous limit of 16, although the barrister's report and other advice suggested there is no legal reason to limit access to this age group. It is clear that many BCA members regard even the lower limit as unjustified, and setting a precedent which they do not wish to see emulated elsewhere.

The Treasurer revealed that over the past year, the BCA has generated a surplus of £19,000 and has net cash assets in the bank of £250,000.

There was a heated debate as to whether Will Burn had been correctly nominated to re-stand for one of the individual member rep positions. In the end, the AGM voted to accept his nomination and to create a one-off extra individual member rep position for him, thus all four nominees could take up a position if they were voted in (by achieving at least 50% backing from the room). The result of this election were that Tony Brocklebank and David Cooke were not elected but Phil Rowsell and Will Burn both were (joining Andrew McLeod who is already halfway through a two-year post). Hellie Adams and Gary Douthwaite were elected as club representatives, joining Idris Williams and John Hine.

There were several proposals from the BCA Council to adopt policies on Equality and

Diversity, Safeguarding, Bullying and Harassment and Serious Incidents. All can be read on the website and were adopted.

Several members' proposals were also passed, most emanating from the new BCA Secretary, Matt Ewles. These included (1) Approving the adoption of a New to Caving leaflet to go with the website, to be placed in suitable venues to generate interest in the sport (2) allowing the P&I officer to operate without a committee, and (3) the new logo. It was also decided that Gary Douthwaite is to become webmaster, and in that capacity will re-design and improve the functions of the BCA site.

The mood of the AGM was very much one of modernising and adopting change, with many younger cavers present. I hope the whole caving community will be able to get behind BCA as it moves forward.

New BCA logo

As you will see from the header to this newsletter, and from the AGM report, the BCA has adopted a new logo. If you are responsible for any documentation or web content in which the old logo (abseiling stickman) is used, please endeavour to update this as soon as possible. We have compiled a press-pack of the new logo and a usage document which can be found here:

www.british-caving.org.uk/logo

Anyone wishing to use the BCA logo other than for existing or official BCA business is requested to first get in touch (secretary@british-caving.org.uk) to discuss.

BCA Democracy: Upcoming membership ballot

By Matt Ewles

At the BCA AGM, I proposed a significant change to BCA democracy. Currently all proposals are put to a two-house voting system, in which individual members (CIMs and DIMs) vote in one 'house' and BCA group members (clubs and constituent bodies) vote in another, both having to pass for motions to be accepted.

My proposal puts forward constitutional changes to remove the group vote meaning voting would be by individual members only. Concurrently, it will become mandatory for the BCA to make voting available to all individual members by introducing an online ballot for motions and contested elections, to run for a roughly one-month period commencing soon after the AGM.

Full details of the proposal can be found in

the AGM agenda and a discussion (including arguments for and against) can be found in the minutes, both of which are available on the BCA website:

www.british-caving.org.uk/meetings

This proposal was accepted with high majority in the house of individuals and just passed in the house of groups at the AGM on 9th June (70% majority is required for constitutional changes). It must now achieve 70% support in both houses in a ballot of all BCA members. We know that there are very mixed opinions on this, so we urge all groups and individuals to start considering this matter now and to participate in the ballot when it happens.

Work is ongoing behind the scenes to get this ballot to happen. More news in due course. If you have registered for BCA-

Online to receive communications by email, then you will receive ballot information by email. If you have not registered for BCA-Online, then your ballot information will come by post.

Of course, although the direct role of clubs in voting would be removed if this proposal were accepted, there is nothing to stop clubs educating their members on upcoming BCA proposals, and lobbying their members to vote in a particular way. In fact, this kind of engagement and discussion is great! Therefore, clubs would still be able to exert influence on BCA democracy (and in a way that is more proportional to their number of members), but the final voting decisions would come down to each individual member.

BCRC rescue conference

By James Begley

ResCon, the British Cave Rescue conference, is a bi-annual gathering of British cave rescue volunteers and others with a passing interest in cave rescue techniques.

This year it will be hosted by Mendip Cave Rescue on the weekend of 6–8 September 2019. Participants will have the opportunity to attend talks on rescue techniques, and to join in surface or underground workshops to practice specialist techniques such as cave diving rescue (for divers and non-divers),

vertical hauling, underground communication technology and gas monitoring.

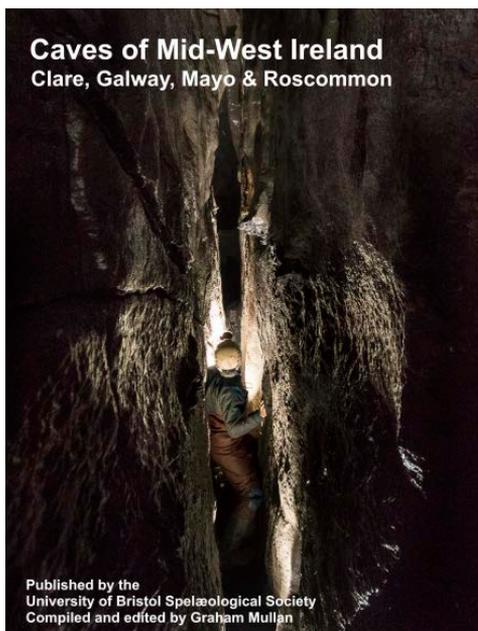
We are planning on holding some sessions for people who have had little involvement with cave rescue, but are interested in finding out how cave rescues are organised. Saturday night will include a bar, hog roast (and veggie alternative) and music, along with this year's 'Wessex Challenge', a team obstacle course that has become a Mendip caving tradition, this year hosted by the Wessex Caving Club following their victory last year.

Tickets are now available, priced at £50 for the weekend, with a reduced price if you are in full time education. Tickets include camping, food, tea & coffee - basically everything except drinks at the bar. Tickets are now available from:

www.rescon.eventbrite.co.uk

More information will be available from the website (www.rescon.org.uk) or from Facebook at www.facebook.com/ResCon19. Tickets for just one day, or just the Saturday evening, are also available.

New guide to Mid-West Ireland



By Graham Mullan

The UBSS is about to publish its fourth guide to Irish caves. Following the pattern set by the first three, the area covered has expanded, and will now include all of the counties of Clare, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The book will be formally launched in Ireland at SUICRO in Leitrim on the weekend of the 25-27 October, and in Britain at the Society's Centenary Symposium in Bristol on the weekend of the 8-10 November.

The cover price will probably be in the region of £20, and as the book has been produced in conjunction with the Speleological Union of Ireland (and also with Aillwee Cave, Co. Clare) there will be a special reduced rate at the launch weekends.

Joint Service cave training in Spain

By Ross Duncan

Military personnel from across the Joint Services including some members of the BCA took part in 14 days of quality classic caving in the Spanish Cantabrian mountain region from late May to early June.

Groups gained vital log book experience in preparation for Cave Leader Training (CVT) and Cave Leader Award (CVL).

Systems visited included Rio Del Sol, Cueva Coventosa and Cueva Canuela.

Students, young people and the future of caving

by Rob Watson

It's been another good year for CHECC, the Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs, with a well-attended forum at Hope Valley College, Derbyshire. We're happy to welcome Swansea and Birmingham as BCA member clubs and look forward to seeing them caving with other clubs and at CHECC events.

The main CHECC Forum this year is the 22nd-24th November at Plas-y-Dolygaer Outdoor Centre, near Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, and as always, all are welcome, especially if you have a talk you think students would enjoy, or would like to give (or receive!) some training.

CHECC is an important part of a wider debate which has seen renewed interest recently – how we should encourage more new recruits to come caving. This is important for obvious reasons: without fresh interest in caving, it will cease to exist as a sport, and deprive people of a unique experience in the outdoors. It will also mean that scientific knowledge of our planet will be set back significantly, since many and varied scientific disciplines are enhanced by the information stored within the cave environment. Aside from the question of generating initial interest, there has been discussion over how best to channel the potential of those keen newcomers once they are hooked. Above all, we want to encourage safe and responsible caving among young people, to limit the damage to the environment and to themselves, and to be an approachable community open to newcomers of all kinds.

One of the most successful methods of introducing new people to caving in the



Sarah Gilligan

UK has been to run caving clubs with the support of a university. Some of these clubs have been established for a very long time. The University of Bristol Speleological Society (UBSS) turned 100 this year, and my own club, the University of Leeds Speleological Association (ULSA, formerly LUSS), turned 62. As well as being long-lived, many of these clubs have a very rich legacy of cave exploration, in the UK and abroad. Student caving clubs have introduced many of the most enthusiastic cave explorers to the sport, and several university clubs have been involved in extremely important discoveries worldwide. An inexhaustive list of such discoveries in recent years includes members of many student caving clubs (but especially Cardiff University) connecting the caves of the Hoher Dachstein to the Hirlatzhöhle in 2018; the exploration of the Schwarzmooskogelhöhle (SMK) system by members of Cambridge, Leeds, Bristol and other university club members; and the continued exploration of Tolminski Migovec in Slovenia by Imperial College Caving Club (ICCC). Many more examples exist, and I am sure student caver involvement in active exploration will only grow in future years.

However, another even more important aspect of student caving exists other than exploration and discovery. Within student caving, there exists an extremely caring, compassionate and inclusive community which greatly enriches the sport. This community is really what draws me back to caving in the UK. Many of my peers would say the same: 'it's not just about the caving, it's about the people.' This community has gone from strength to strength of late. Since I started caving as a student, I have witnessed three student caving clubs being built almost from scratch. First, Nottingham

University Caving Club (NUCC), which in 2014 was essentially unheard of, had by 2017 begun bringing more cavers to the annual CHECC forum than my own, and won the 2017 UKCaving.com CHECC Grand Prize. Lancaster University Speleological Society (LUSS), a great force in exploratory caving in the UK and abroad during the 70s and 80s which sadly became inactive in the early 2000s, has also experienced near complete regeneration, and won last year's CHECC Grand Prize. Then, this year, Swansea Speleological Society was created to serve all students in the Swansea area, building upon the momentum generated by the success in Lancaster.

These achievements are in part due to the determination and hard work of some very committed individuals, both in the respective university clubs but also on the CHECC committee and the BCA Youth and Development (Y&D) team. However, I think they would all be the first to admit that their accomplishments were only able to come to fruition after being cultured within a hugely supportive and positive environment, that has been intrinsic to student caving as long as I have known it. We are uniquely privileged in the UK to have such a wealth of knowledge, experience and passion surrounding student caving. Clubs from opposite ends of the country go to great lengths to socialise with one another, and lend a hand where it is needed, be that in local cave knowledge, lending equipment, or logistical experience. I have lived in a few different countries aside from the UK (New Zealand, Ireland and now Austria), all of which have extensive karst and great cave explorers. Yet it is only in the UK and Ireland that such a strong scene of young cavers exists. This is in large part due to



Zander Lee

our framework of university-based clubs, something which really does not exist in kind in other countries to my knowledge (I'm happy to be proved wrong!). For example, despite having some of the most extensive karst in Europe, there is no Austrian equivalent to CHECC, whose bi-annual training and social events for other students are a highlight of the calendar. These events have become some of the biggest gatherings of cavers in the UK: at the 2017 CHECC forum, 278 cavers attended, and at the last Northern CHECC meeting, there were 112 attendees, almost double the average in previous years.

CHECC events are important for student clubs to share knowledge regarding safe caving and logistics. The maturity of CHECC as an organisation and student caving as a whole is showcased by the rigour and high level of caving practice demonstrated at the training sessions held at these events. The annual CHECC forum has, in the last few years, moved well beyond being merely a rowdy and occasionally destructive piss-up, something which I have still not yet fully adjusted to myself! Another factor which greatly aids the student caving cause is the general interconnectedness of the UK caving scene. As Josh Bratchley asserted during a drunken conversation at this year's Northern CHECC: 'Cavers in other European countries are amazed at the breadth of community spirit in UK caving. They have communities that exist between one or two clubs, but in the UK everyone knows everyone.' For me, this is what is really special about caving in the UK, and it must be preserved and allowed to flourish further.

Student caving has also begun moving away from the 'white male' demographic that is overwhelming in the sport as a whole. For example, though I haven't looked at the stats, I would say that most CHECC

forums I have attended have had a pretty equal male : female split. I also meet a lot more new student cavers from more diverse ethnic backgrounds than in the past. However, there is still progress to be made. For all my singing the praises of student caving, one aspect of it (and to a certain extent the wider caving scene in the UK) which can present certain inclusivity issues is the dependence of its social scene on drinking, which may not be comfortable for all members of the community for various reasons (religious, cultural and personal). There are of course ways to remedy this: in Leeds, we run soup kitchens where we cook up a big meal from the pickings of supermarket bins in the vicinity before training sessions. SUSS run Film Night on a Sunday, which is another nice alternative to drinking (though there are only so many times you can watch 'How To Train Your Dragon', or so I thought). Student clubs have also started to engage politically in a big way: I am told that CHECC have been the biggest voting block in BCA AGMs for the last 5 years or so. Young cavers, like most people, may not be very interested in attending long meetings and reading documents (I definitely do not enjoy this) but we understand the importance of making our opinions known.

What are the next steps to make caving in the UK even more inclusive and accessible to newcomers of all ages, sexes and backgrounds? In the last few months, a number of initiatives have begun to be realised which will help to bring about change in this regard. Mostly, these involve moving beyond the focus on student caving. A major sticking point for youth engagement in caving is the reluctance of adult caving clubs to cater for young people. Much of this reluctance seems to be due to fears surrounding liability issues and duty of care when not caving. However, these

fears are often magnified far beyond their reality. Young cavers need access to caves, equipment and a sustainable way to get caving frequently. Given a handful of adults leading a group who have suitable levels of cave experience, and that a relevant child protection policy is established for the group, there is little reason why this cannot be achieved. The success of my friend Ian Peachey's two caving groups specialising in Under-18 provision, the Forest School Camps (FSC) and Education in the Environment Caving Club (EECC), is a testament to the potential of these groups. Another important channel through which young people can get into caving is Scout groups: the BCA Youth and Development team is composed of people from Scout Caving and CHECC.

Despite the considerable efforts to encourage young cavers presented above, there are still a number of obstacles to continued progress. Money is not an issue; it is having people willing to put the time in to promoting youth caving. Regarding the integration of young people into 'adult' clubs, the BCA Youth and Development team are in the process of talking to clubs to make sure they know where they stand legally, safeguarding, and, where possible, being prepared to do the paperwork for them. Similarly, scout caving has struggled to grow in recent years, but I'm told there has been a fair amount of organisational reform behind the scenes of late which should make this easier.

Often, however, those who want to facilitate young people caving fight an uphill battle for little reason beyond a reluctance of parts of the community to accept change. If we want to see growth, and broadening of the appeal and potential of caving (and I accept that some people don't want this at all), then we need to see more discussion on this topic, and proposals for more creative ways to nurture the passion for caving that surely exists among young people. It is naive to think that young people only want to cave in large groups with a guide in easy caves - many of them are likely to be physically more capable than older cavers and, with the correct guidance, can easily be doing more challenging trips after gaining relevant experience.

Ultimately, I believe it is really important that young people continue to be interested in caving and we all have a responsibility to make this happen. Caving has shaped my life from a very young age and has given me so much that I value: memories, friendships, personal development and more besides. I want young people in the future to discover caving and get at least as much out of it as I have, and this requires a collective effort to promote caving in the UK so that those who want to be a part of it know that it is there for them.



Swansea using their new kit to explore OFD – Black Planet Photography

Students, young people and the future of caving: BCA helps fund new clubs

By David Botcherby

At the Council Meeting on April 13th, the BCA Council voted to gift over £3000 worth of kit to two new student clubs. They are now using this kit to get many new cavers underground, introducing them to the sport we all love.

You may have heard about new efforts to revitalise caving in a few key universities that have lacked a club for some time. What you may not know about is the support that the BCA has been lending to these clubs, in funding, administration, and logistics. Led by the BCA Youth and Development (Y&D) team, the BCA has been investing in the future of caving.

In 2017, the Y&D group was approached by someone wanting to start up a caving club at Lancaster University. As a university which did once have a very strong club, positioned close to the Dales (LUSS), this was an obvious choice for an experiment in starting a club from scratch. Y&D provided administrative support (liaising with the union, writing documents etc.), alumni of the original LUSS helped out on fresher trips, and CHECC provided both training and some initial kit.

However, a problem soon arose: with only a small amount of equipment available, the new club was having trouble taking underground the numbers of students they had managed to get interested. As students, they couldn't just buy all the kit needed to get a club off the ground, and so another source of funding had to be found.

Capitalising on the cash reserve of the BCA, a kit loan scheme was agreed: the BCA would fund enough kit to get LUSS properly established, and would be repaid over the next three years. Thanks to this support, LUSS really took off, running many weekends in the Dales, and sent large



LUSS descending Alum Pot – Tommy Moore

numbers of attendees to both the 2018 CHECC Forum and 2019 Northern CHECC.

Seeing this success, cavers came forward from both Swansea and Birmingham universities. Both have since become BCA member clubs, and Swansea became the second recipient of a BCA kit loan. Swansea has since been using this kit to take trips to OFD and other South Wales classics with the help of local SWCC members.

When presented with the results of these loans, Council was understandably pleased to see so many new cavers being introduced to the sport. So, when the BCA was revealed to have a windfall from lower than expected expenses, it was suggested by multiple council members that this be used to show support to the new clubs by writing off the equipment loans. Thus, the BCA used its resources to give a massive helping hand to keen young people, and made a huge investment in the future of the sport.

While writing this article, I reached out to members of Lancaster and Swansea caving clubs for comment. They asked me to send on their messages of thanks, which I have put here in full:

"Since the reformation of LUSS, we've been lucky enough to receive equipment on loan from CHECC and the BCA. Without this help, we simply would not have a club. We've had suits, helmets, lights, SRT kits and rope; everything a club needs to get people underground. We usually cave on weekday evenings in the Yorkshire Dales and have taken somewhere in the region of 50 people underground. Our active club consists of about a dozen people, almost all of whom were new to caving last year. The equipment we've received has allowed us to train people in SRT and rigging skills; all of our active members are SRT competent.

The support that we've seen from the BCA, CHECC, and the wider caving community has been overwhelming. We are so grateful to be able to carry on the fine tradition of caving at Lancaster University and entice more people underground."

Zander Lee

Lancaster University Speleological Society

"On behalf of everyone at the newly formed Swansea Speleo Society, we would like to give a massive thank you, and express our gratitude to everyone at the BCA and CHECC for supplying us with the necessary kit, and support to get the club started.

As we all know, South Wales and the Gower offer some fantastic caving locations, and it is with thanks to the support of the caving community that we are able to now explore these areas, and bring new faces into the world of caving by setting up this club for Swansea students. The feedback received from new members of the club so far has been amazing, which has made all the hard work worth it.

We're looking forward to working closely with the BCA and CHECC, along with other local clubs such as Aberystwyth Caving Club, South Wales Caving Club, Cardiff University Caving Club, and Gwent Caving Club over the next few years, to help grow the club, hopefully re-establishing what used to be one of the biggest caving clubs in Wales.

Looking forward to bumping into some of you underground."

Simon Williams

Swansea Speleo Society

Through these determined cavers, a bright future for British caving is emerging. Hopefully we'll see these clubs caving for years to come.



Elif Okutan

Council of Northern Caving Clubs update



by Matt Ewles

Online booking system update

The last BCA newsletter reported the introduction of the Online Booking System for the caves of Ingleborough Estate including Gaping Gill, the Allotment, Hurnel Moss and Newby Moss. This is a compromise system that allows all cavers to book landowner-consented access very easily indeed. The system has so far been a massive success, proving robust and popular.

Big changes for Leck Fell

Despite initial positivity for the online booking system from the landowners of Leck Fell, engaging with them has proved more difficult. As a result of this, the CNCC have released a statement on their website (www.cncc.org.uk) in which they announce their discontinuation of administration of the Leck Fell permit system. Cavers are instead referred to the CNCC's statement on CRoW access land caves, and the BCA's policy which states that the BCA believes the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving.

Parking and access for High Birkwith area caves

Parking at High Birkwith Farm for caves such as Birkwith Cave, Calf Holes, Old Ing, Browgill etc. has been problematic. The new owners did not want lots of vehicles parking on their land, but were happy for cavers to visit the caves, having parked elsewhere, with no restrictions or need to call for permission. They implemented a charge of £10 for cars to park at the farm in the hope that this would deter many people from parking, and encourage car sharing for those who do. This situation didn't last long unfortunately, as parking at the farm continued (not just by cavers; many walkers too) and resulted in the family's dog and one of their sheep getting killed by cars driving onto their land. As a result, parking at High Birkwith is now totally off-limits, although

cavers continue to still be welcome to approach the caves on foot. The landowners have said that the cavers they have met have been extremely pleasant and polite and have no desire to limit access to the caves; it's just the parking that is the issue. Cavers are therefore urged to park elsewhere and to approach the caves on foot; to get to them from Selside or Horton-in-Ribblesdale is still shorter than the typical walk to Gaping Gill.

Modifications to caves



Removing steel pegs in County Pot – Gary Douthwaite

At the CNCC AGM in March, some recent modifications that have been made to caves in our region were discussed, including the placement of metal staples in Kingsdale Master Cave and later on the Upper Trident climb in County Pot by persons unknown. The latter were promptly cut off (leaving sharp metal spikes sticking 2-5cm out of the wall) also by persons unknown. Then it was found that someone had blasted footholds into the climbs just inside Wretched Rabbit to make these climbs easier. Stainless Steel resin anchors are installed at both of these Ease Gill locations in, so these modifications were presumably made to enable groups to ascend/descend these climbs without having to carry their own tackle and with greater ease than is currently possible.

At the AGM, member clubs overwhelming backed the CNCC removing the remaining metal spikes on the County Pot Trident pitch. A team comprising Mark Sims, Andrew Hinde, Gary Douthwaite and Matt Ewles set off to County Pot that afternoon and quickly addressed the issue. The staples in Kingsdale Master Cave had previously been removed by a CNCC team on conservation grounds, as they were not stainless steel, so likely to rust.

We would like to appeal to the individual(s) involved in installing these staples, capping these walls, or considering other such projects, to please consider your actions carefully. These caves are for everyone to enjoy and share. Unilateral and irreversible action, particularly where simple or less damaging alternatives exist, risks upsetting other visitors to the caves. We urge democratic consensus on such projects, and Regional Councils, including the CNCC, seem a good place to achieve this.

Conservation

A major initiative to clean up Crackpot Cave in Swaledale was undertaken in April/May. Work focused on lots of badly muddied stal in the river passage and in a chamber just above it, where a generation of mud has left its mark. A couple of the CNCC volunteers made a short video of the work which may be beneficial for anyone seeking to demonstrate conservation in action:

<https://youtu.be/7lvauNQge64>

(Or search for Crackpot Cave on Youtube)

Work has continue to clear up and make safe abandoned digs on Ingleborough and clear up shakeholes, including a horror of a shakehole near P5/Grange Rigg Pot, where mounds of rusting metal resided for many years. With help from the CNCC's new petrol capstan winch, the scrap metal was removed and taken off the fell for disposal. These kinds of projects put cavers in extremely good light with landowners, and show off our responsible attitude to cave and countryside conservation.



Crackpot Cave cleanup – Gary Douthwaite

Derbyshire Caving Association update



by Wayne Sheldon

We have been maintaining our strong links with our landowners by capping shafts and the securing of sites. On National Trust (NT) land

in Lathkill Dale, Mandale Mine entrances have been left unsecure on many occasions. NT require these entrances to be secured to stop the entry of members of the public, but cavers can still gain access using the Derbyshire key system. Plaques have also been installed that inform people where to report problems or get access information from. If they are left unsecure in the future, the

landowner may consider permanent closure of these sites. Kirkland Shaft into Devonshire Mine was capped late last year by our project officer and his team of helpers (see picture).

As with many organisations, we require volunteers to help with the running of it. We have had recent retirements of several of our long-term officers so really need volunteers to undertake the roles of access officer, conservation officer and secretary. One person doesn't have to undertake a particular role, they can be split between several volunteers. Anybody interested should contact me via our website, <https://thedca.org.uk>



DCA volunteers at Kirkland Shaft – Wayne Sheldon

On becoming BCA Secretary: An agenda for reform

By Matt Ewles, BCA Secretary

Firstly, thank you to those individuals and groups who came along to the AGM on 9 June in Horton-in-Ribblesdale. The meeting seemed almost certain to have a level of contention associated with it, but our Chairman, Les Williams, carefully and diplomatically navigated around this.

Becoming BCA Secretary isn't something I especially wanted to do. However, my decision to stand stemmed from the January Council meeting where the lack of energy and positivity for change and reform was palpable. What energy there was had become stifled by bureaucracy.

The amount of free time people (particularly those with full time jobs) can dedicate to working for organisations such as the BCA has dropped over the past 10-15 years. Our lives keep getting busier, yet the complexity of running the BCA, the expectations

accepted (with a few tweaks).

These proposals were aimed to get the ball rolling on change; to give us a new and more modern logo for our Association, and to see us actively promoting our sport to those not yet involved. They will see the development of a more modern website, and the opportunity to re-examine the way that the BCA democratically interacts with our members (see separate article on this). Finally, they saw the appointment of someone (Jane) to run the Publications and Information side of the BCA, ensuring that our members are better informed of why being a BCA member is such a great thing and ensuring our work doesn't go unnoticed.

Getting our members to better understand the benefits of the BCA is important and must improve. Of course, most people equate BCA membership with public liability insurance. That's certainly not going to

“The BCA needs to become more streamlined, so that those who do have time to give are more empowered to get on with their jobs, and where significant changes to the way the organisation is constituted and operated, and our key priorities, are willingly considered.”

of our members, and the scrutiny we face to deliver value for money have increased. Therefore, adaptation and change are essential to allow the BCA to remain a sustainable and valued organisation.

The BCA needs to become more streamlined, so that those who do have time to give are more empowered to get on with their jobs, and where significant changes to the way the organisation is constituted and operated, and our key priorities, are willingly considered.

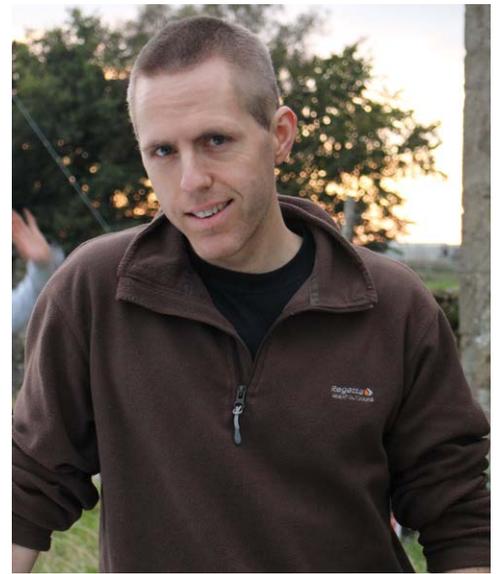
I put forward four proposals to the AGM, and Jane Allen put forward one, and all were



change; but the BCA does so much more than this. We're also exploring the option of including personal accident insurance as a membership benefit. Our Insurance Manager has already arranged via our insurers for an expedition/caving holiday insurance policy to be available for BCA members, and this is reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

The BCA essentially creates a central pool of cash which can be distributed to support the Regional Councils in access, conservation, training and other work. There will be very few cavers who haven't (perhaps without realising it) benefitted from a BCA-funded project over the past year, whether that be the use of a stainless steel resin anchor, a stabilised or conserved cave entrance, a training course in first aid, SRT, conservation techniques or paperless surveying, or use of the British Caving Library. Much, if not all of the money for these comes from the BCA pool. The BCA also funds Ghar Parau, helping British caving to thrive across the world and supporting particularly younger cavers with opportunities to get involved in international expeditions.

The BCA is your representative body, campaigning at a national level on matters such as access (including the CRoW campaign) and taking a leading role in publishing



advice on matters such as radon, safeguarding, Weil's disease, conservation (including the minimal impact caving guidelines), equipment and safety amongst others.

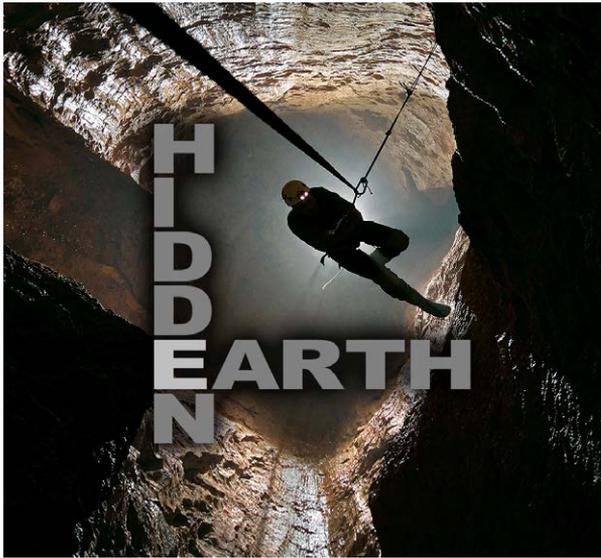
Hopefully in reading this you will see that the BCA is about far more than just liability insurance. This is all possible thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and your membership.

I am extremely pleased with the team in place to drive the BCA Council for the coming years. We have a Chairman who showed unprecedented diplomatic capabilities at the AGM, a Treasurer and Insurance Manager who has been extremely proactive since taking role (including establishing the caver travel insurance and researching personal accident insurance options). We have a webmaster with a proven track record for caving websites, and our former webmaster now with more time to spend on the IT Working Party and BCA web services. I'm extremely pleased to welcome our new Conservation and Access, and Publications and Information officers, Louise and Jane, as well as our new Individual and Group representatives. This is in addition to our existing Officers and Working Party convenors who work so hard behind the scenes to coordinate the various BCA facets.

You can help us not only through your continued support in the form of membership, but by also making it easier for us to engage with you as a member. If you have not yet registered for BCA online to allow us to email newsletters and other important information to you, then please do. We're not going to spam you, sell your details or anything like that, just keep you up to date with key matters relevant to British caving. It is a shame that we still have about 2000 members who have not given us their email addresses, meaning lots of communications still being done by post, costing money and volunteer time.

BCA Online:
www.british-caving.org.uk/members

Hidden Earth 2019: Welcome to North Wales



Hidden Earth 2019 looks forward to welcoming you to an excellent weekend:

27th to 29th September, Glyndwr University in Wrexham

The weekend will feature the usual excellent talks, workshops, trade hall, bar and evening events and competitions. More information at www.hidden.earth (yes, that is the full website address) where tickets will be on sale in due course.

Anyone wishing to submit a talk, workshop or entry for the video salon can already do so using new online systems which can be easily located on the website. Talk submissions are welcome right up to one week before the event (but earlier preferred please) and videos up to 31st August. You can also submit by email to the lecture secretary, Gary Douthwaite, at: lectures@hidden.earth (please include plenty of detail about your talk).

Going on expedition this summer? Got a good dig or recent discovery? Or just something interesting to say?...

... Then tell everyone about it by giving a talk!

All the latest updates at www.hidden.earth or follow HE on Facebook and Twitter.

CavefestUK 2019

By Neil Jackson, CavefestUK Founder/Chairman

CavefestUK have been working hard all year to bring you another fabulous cave festival.

Our event is in Crickhowell this year and is being held on the August bank holiday 23rd to 26th.

So what's on offer? Lots of caving for everyone. Quite simply, one of the best opportunities to experience caving together. From the absolute beginner, to the skilled and seasoned among us. Everyone can come and enjoy the company of cavers alike and relax with friends. The onsite bar and great atmosphere will ensure that the entertainment available will hit the spot and encourage everyone to get involved. With evening events such as the Mexican fancy dress, fun is assured. Great prizes are on offer for the best dressed.

A full list of all our activities, competitions prizes and prices, and all the information about what caves are on offer with detailed descriptions of the caves themselves are available on our website (www.cavefestuk.co.uk).

Registration is open and payments can be made direct, so don't delay and get yourself signed up for what is shaping up to be the best event we've created yet. CavefestUK can also be followed on Facebook and Instagram, where fantastic offers, merchandise, news and updates, pictures from past events and additions to our list of activities can be found.

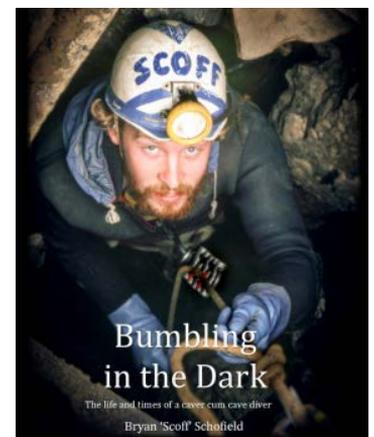


Bumbling in the Dark Scoff's posthumous memoir

Bryan 'Scoff' Scoffield, who sadly passed away far too young two years ago, was one the best-loved figures in British caving and cave diving. He was a warm, witty, generous and loving man who was a reassuring tutor and mentor for young divers, a keen explorer, and the man responsible for designing important new items of equipment such as the legendary Bogo-zep, a dive scooter fashioned from a lavatory pipe.

His friend, Dave Ryall, has compiled and edited his writing to produce 'Bumbling in the Dark', a memoir by turns riveting and hilarious. Published in June, copies are available from bumbling@gmx.co.uk

Proceeds will go to the institution where Scoff was cared for when he was very ill, the Sue Ryder Wheatfields Hospice. Get your copy while the print run lasts!



New Hidden Earth video archive

By Kieth Edwards

The Hidden Earth Video Archive is now online at www.hidden.earth/video-archive

It contains links to videos related to Hidden Earth, including opening videos, closing videos, videos featured in lectures, video salon entries, salon winners, distinctions and merits. Currently it has 39 subscribers. When the channel reaches 100 subscribers I can apply for a custom URL.

The archive is a work-in-progress and there are many gaps that need to be filled, and possibly errors that need to be corrected. Please let me know if either you have produced/entered such a video or if you

know of any other videos that have featured at Hidden Earth. I would like to know:

- Name and year of video
- If it's online, the URL of the video.
- What it was used for/in, e.g. opening video, lecture, video salon entry etc
- For video salon entries, if it won or got a distinction or merit
- Anything else of interest

It would be really great if I could unearth earlier stuff. I understand that the video/AV salon first appeared at Hidden Earth 2001. Early stuff may only exist on VHS tape or DVD. I can easily digitise DVDs



and may be able to blow the dust off an old VHS player in order to digitise tapes.

Also please let me know of any cave-related video channels that you think should be added to the 'Featured Channels' section. Please email me at:

thecaverkeith@gmail.com

BCA expedition and holiday insurance cover



In recent years, cavers travelling abroad on expedition have had to buy their travel insurance from various commercial outlets. Naturally enough, many have had concerns. Is exploratory caving covered? What are the age limits? Will the insurer actually pay out?

The BCA has been working hard to solve this problem and is pleased to announce the launch of BCA Member Caving Cover.

- An underwritten policy for UK resident cavers caving abroad
- Realistic search and rescue cover and age limits
- ALL expedition members can be insured on one policy (giving reassurance for expedition leaders)
- To cover rescue expenses, even in an area with no local rescue back up
- Three options: All expedition members, individual annual or single trip.

Find more details and get a quote online at:

www.bcacavingcover.co.uk

You can phone P. J. Hayman & Company Limited: 02392 419 896

This came about after Howard Jones, BCA Treasurer and Insurance Manager, spoke to a number of third parties with similar insurance policies to the one needed by cavers, including the BMC. He knew from 40 years of experience with business insurance, access to the underwriter was key.

The BCA brokers (Howdens) have been involved with the BMC scheme for many years, working recently with Peter Hayman of P. J. Hayman & Company who not only have their own scheme (Adventures) but are responsible for the BMC scheme. A number of meetings were held with Howdens, Peter and potential underwriters and Howard consulted with Andy Eavis, Nick Williams, and Robin Weare from a BCA perspective plus a number of active expedition cavers. Andy in particular has been heavily involved throughout.

More details:

- The makeup of the scheme is similar to the BMC scheme - an adventure policy focused on caving but covering other activities too.
- A number (14) of different sections have differing claims limits - These include all the normal cover such as cancellation, lost passport etc., but most importantly focus on caving and rescue.
- Cover is open to BCA members resident in the UK.
- Worldwide cover except Iran and areas where FCO advise no go. Zoning of different regions of the world.
- Three options: Expedition insurance covering all members (to be encouraged) probable discount for 20 or more members, single expedition insurance for individuals, annual insurance for individuals who takes part in a number of activities in a year.
- Activities include, mountaineering, skiing, biking etc.
- Expedition cover to be flexible until just before departure to allow for changing member details.
- Definition of search and rescue agreed with BCA.
- Commercially viable compared to alternatives, especially for exploration with no local rescue team.
- Available for exploratory and non-exploratory foreign trips.
- Over 65's more expensive to cover due to world-wide accident statistics. Cover available up to 74 years of age, beyond that by application.
- Cave diving is included, but only by application. Hopefully over time we can improve this element.

Personal accident insurance

By Howard Jones, BCA Insurance Manager

The BCA is looking at additional ways they can support and provide membership benefits to cavers, particularly given our budgetary surplus over recent years.

One of the possibilities that has been raised, and which has received quite a bit of positivity, is the BCA providing personal accident (death and disability) insurance as a benefit of membership, as well as their existing public liability insurance. As with the public liability insurance, this must be given as a benefit of membership to all BCA members; there cannot be an 'opt in/out' option as the BCA cannot sell insurance and we have been informed that this means the benefit must be applied to all full members of the BCA regardless of whether it is actually wanted by that individual.

Personal accident insurance is one of those policies which is very expensive to take out as an individual (especially as a caver) but much cheaper as a group.

I've contacted our public liability insurance broker, Howdens, to look for a policy for BCA members to go on top of the liability policy

already in place as a member benefit. They will go to the market to secure the best deal for BCA members.

For the purposes of the insurance, a caving event is defined as the walk to and from the cave (or mine) and the trip underground. Hence, the drive to the cave would not be covered. As well as Death, the following expenses could be covered:

- Accident Medical Expenses
- Coma Benefit
- Convalescence
- Counselling
- Funeral Expenses
- Hospitalisation
- Paralysis

These benefits would all be limited in value depending on the cost of the policy. You get what you pay for!

For members who don't have such cover that would respond in the event of a caving incident, then this could provide a significant and cheap member benefit. We acknowledge that some members will have cover elsewhere (e.g. through work) but typically

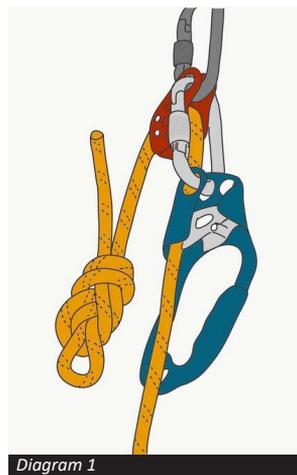
these policies exclude caving. However, to the many cavers without such cover, this could be an extremely valuable benefit.

It is worth bearing in mind that should the situation change in the future and funding of this becomes financially unviable (either due to increased insurance premium, e.g. following claims, or reduced BCA surplus), the decision to continue include this as a membership benefit would be reviewed on a year by year basis.

I propose at this stage that we take this policy out as a benefit of membership and that it is funded via the current budget surplus (i.e. no increase to membership fees).

Feedback either to your regional council or directly to the BCA (insurance@british-caving.org.uk) is greatly welcomed, as this is membership money being spent. The October BCA Council meeting will include a budget both with and without inclusion of this insurance, and a decision will be made then based on the majority opinion of the feedback received and the resulting opinion of BCA Council, as to whether to proceed with this. Watch out for more news.

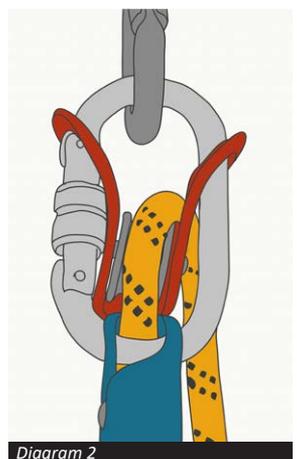
Pulley – Jammer combo risks



By Gethin Thomas

Earlier this year members of the three BCA committees conducted tests with a range of known improvised belay devices or configurations including a pulley/toothed ascender configuration as illustrated in diagram 1. A key feature of this particular system is that the toothed jamming device is located on the opposite side of the pulley to the load.

During the testing, relatively short falls (from a little over 20cm to 45cm) with a 100kg steel mass yielded high impacts ranging from 4.8kN to 6.7kN. It should be noted that toothed jamming devices damage ropes if exposed to more than 4kN, and it is commonly accepted that impacts in excess of 6kN will result in significant injuries to an individual.



Of equal concern was the significant damage caused to the pulley (see diagram 2). This was the result of the carabiner attached to both the ascender and pulley forcing the pulley cheeks apart. In addition, it was noted that the ascender's cam firmly wedged into the ascender and could not be released by hand, and that the rope suffered varying degrees of serious sheath damage.

The BCA is aware that the technique illustrated here was historically advocated by some manufactures, and features in many historic and current forms of literature as a means to belay a second when ascending a climb or ladder.

The BCA would urge cavers to only use devices specifically designed for this purpose in line with current manufacturer's instructions.

BCA Vision

By Hellie Adams

The BCA Vision Working Group was set up to look ahead to the future of our Association. It has now had two meetings and thanks to the feedback from BCA members we have identified some key areas that we intend to explore further:

- Vision for access
- Vision for promotion, publicity and increasing participation
- Vision for operational working of BCA groups and bodies
- Vision for membership structure
- Vision for BCA website / web systems
- Vision for support for clubs
- Vision for cave and mine conservation

We intend to have a draft document setting these visions out later on this year for consultation. We feel that it is important to have feedback and make this something that people have the chance to provide input on before progressing to a final draft.

There will be a talk and open discussion session at Hidden Earth and as always you welcome to send me any thoughts ideas to h.adams@british-caving.org.uk. Thanks to all those who have taken time so far as our new vision is about all of us so i can only be done with your support.

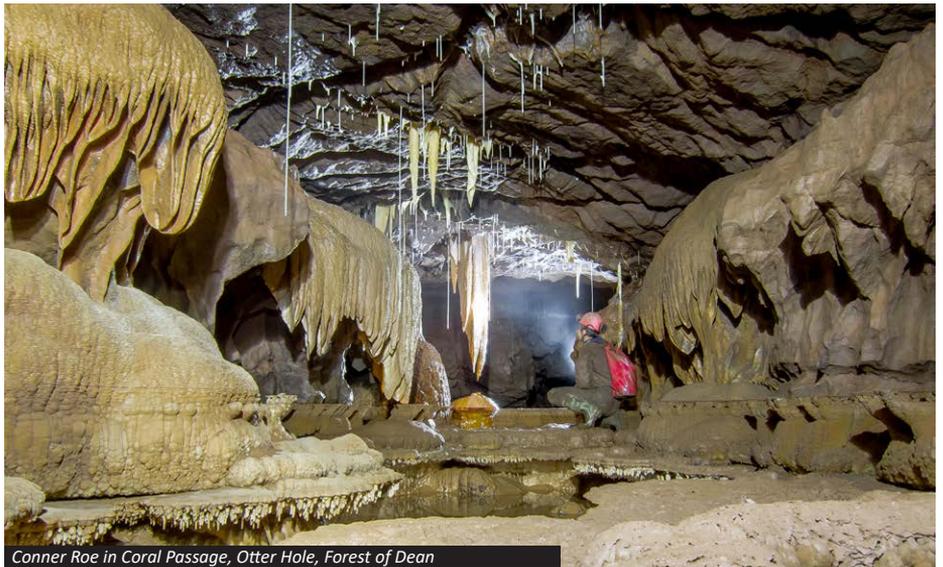
Photography by Nicky Bayley



Alex Moule in Bixhead Stone Mine, Forest of Dean



Neil Shea, Scumring Camp, Clearwater Cave, Mulu



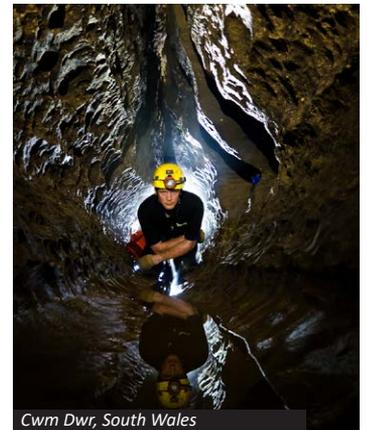
Conner Roe in Coral Passage, Otter Hole, Forest of Dean



Rich Hudson in Bladerunner, Clearwater Cave, Mulu



Frozen River, Ogof Ffynnon Ddu



Cwm Dwr, South Wales

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