



## *Minutes for Training and Equipment Working Group Meeting*

*January 9th, 2024, at 7pm*

Held via Zoom

### **In attendance**

Steve Gray BCA Training Officer SG  
Steve Holding NAHMO SH  
Stephan Natynczuk ACI SN  
Rich Hill CCC RH  
Jo White BCRA JoW  
Bob Mehew BM  
Mark Richards (CNCC Equipment Representative) MR  
George Plant Chair QMC GP  
Richard Vooght WP RV  
Vince Allkins CCC Equipment Officer VA  
Pete Knight DCA PK  
Ian Patrick CNCC IP  
Amelia Oliver CHECC AO  
R. Myers (Recorder) RM

### **Apologies**

Nigel Atkins (attended later) NA

### **Acceptance of the minutes from the meeting held on 01/06/2023**

The minutes were accepted on a proposal by BM second MR with no matters arising other than those occurring on the agenda for this meeting.

### **Training Officer's Reports**

Those received are recorded in the appendix below and had been previously circulated. RH asked about the status of the DCA Coaching Scheme becoming a national scheme and was referred to Nigel Atkins. NA attended the meeting later and confirmed that the Coaching Scheme still remained within DCA but required rolling out nationally at some point through this working group. **SG offered to pursue this.**

The training officer reports were accepted on a proposal by RH second PK.

### **Final draft of the Terms of Reference for the Working Group**

These had been finalised by MR and previously circulated for comments. Discussion took place about para vi regarding "Except that for anchors, some aspects of such guidance may be worded as mandatory."

It was agreed that the ToR could be amended at a later date if felt necessary. The Terms of Reference were agreed following a proposal by SG, second SN with 8 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions.

### **T&E WG Budget**

SG raised the issue of having no budget for the WG which RM offered to address but there was a need to quantify this. **RM and SG to discuss.**

### **Training Officer email address**

SG raised his concerns that he didn't have a specific BCA email address which concerned him when communicating with outside agencies. Currently, incoming email was via the Training Administrator, but SG was using his own email address for outgoing email. **RM agreed to pursue this but pointed out a dire need for IT assistance within BCA and if anyone in this group knows of any interested parties to let him know.**

### **Petzl Aven and Avanti harnesses update.**

To date, no updates had been received from Petzl which both SG and CB confirmed. The Group collectively, felt that this was an unacceptable situation given that the matter of the harnesses slipping open had been raised with Petzl some 18 or more months ago.

It was unanimously agreed on a proposal by JoW, second CB, that the Group, through BCA put out a statement on all available media. **SG and CB to draft the wording and forward to RM for distribution.**

### **Petzl Lanyards and their use.**

A request was made for clarification on the use of these lanyards and following discussion it was accepted that the manufacturer's recommendations were the default recommendation. Use outside these recommendations is a personal choice which the Group felt was a personal choice and agreed not to issue any further information and adopt QMC's wording on the matter confirming this.

### **IC Anchor Storage**

Allan Speight, CNCC has now taken responsibility from Andrew Hinde for the storage of the IC anchors.

### **New to Caving Update**

**SG and IP reported successful events last year through RRCPC and CPC and envisaged 4 similar events in the 2024 but needed to discuss arrangements and report back.**

### **Belt Test update**

A discussion took place about the belt testing results and of note the fact that this did not consider belts taking a fall factor but to reduce the potential for a slip with the belt holding the static load of the user. It was pointed out that the results of the belt testing were available on the BCA website posted by QMC. No further action was required although it was suggested that a link could be made to the document from interested parties such as regional councils to help disseminate the information.

### **Dawo sub Acetyled light.**

No more contact had been made and SG reported the matter closed.

### **Caver's Butterfly Knot**

Refer to BM butterfly knot report for details. A discussion took place about the merits of the Caver's Butterfly Knot versus the Alpine Butterfly Knot. RH pointed out that the preferred knot within QMC was the Alpine Knot over the Caver's and proposed the advice on the BCA website be changed to reflect this, second CB.

The proposal was carried 6 for, 0 against and 6 abstentions.

**The advice on the BCA website will need amending.**

### **Job Advert**

SG referred to a job which may be of interest to the group or others outside it, previously circulated in his emails about tonight's meeting.

### **Any other business**

IP reported the setting up of specialist group on UKC to act as a discussion forum for anchor work. He emphasised that this would be for discussion and any decisions about anchors would be referred to the T&E WG. The discussion group was accepted unanimously on a proposal by BM, second PK.

VA asked for an update on the failed IC anchors when being test pulled at the Anchor Workshop last year. IP reported there was more work to be done on this to get a full understanding of what was happening but that this would be reported back to the Group.

AO reported on problems at Glasgow and Birmingham City university caving clubs regarding caving qualifications. It was pointed out that BCA's policy had always been on developing competence rather than qualifications per se in recreational caving. RM intervened and asked that the matter is not taken any further in this Group as such, as it was already being dealt with through Youth and Development. Further involvement from T&E WG would only complicate the current situation.

### **Date and Time of next meeting**

TBC but looking at April/May

### **Appendix**

#### **1. DCA TRAINING OFFICER - Report to Training Committee January 2024**

DCA is continuing to support caving clubs running their own training to a high standard which is achieved by training up their own club trainers, coaches, leaders. Continuity in techniques is important so that cavers don't get confused with differing opinions about things. This is where training workshops are so valuable to be able to help maintain best/good practice techniques to a high standard.

#### **DCA Caver Training Workshops**

We have our usual training events for cavers running which are advertised on the training page of the DCA web site.

## **BCA Caving Coaching Guidelines**

It is important that BCA has a clear set of guidelines to help continuity across the UK where regional training officers can help inform and update clubs in their area.

Whilst many clubs offer training, how are standards set, reached and maintained? BCA has regional training officers now looking after many cavers, however there are also many cavers who do not belong to a club and seek out other opportunities for training. It made sense in 2018 for the BCA training officer to bring together many of its outstanding, dedicated and enthusiastic cavers within the BCA training committee to share the skills and experience with other cavers at nationally. I worked very hard to help promote and support training needs to recreational cavers not just to Derbyshire but elsewhere in the UK.

The proposed BCA recreational caver training scheme changed to Club Coaching Guidelines in 2018 following feedback from members of BCA that the scheme looked like an accreditation award for recreational cavers. These guidelines changed to BCA Caving Coaching Guidelines in 2021 by the BCA Training Officer with a clear set of training modules ready for TC to work from.

### **The Training Modules**

The training modules are divided into four modules and delivered by club coaches. Basic Caving, Vertical (non-SRT), Vertical (SRT), SRT Pitch Rigging & Self Rescue. Each module is completed before progressing to the next module. The guidelines offer caving clubs the means to achieve a high standard of competence entirely relevant to the club caver and which can be kept up to date by active club coaches. It can additionally be used by the caving clubs as a means of motivating and monitoring individual club cavers.

I have been constantly monitoring and developing training guidelines from the BCA awards schemes and with input from club coaches/training officers and practical workshops run for DCA clubs. Indeed, the term coach is not a qualification, it is simply a title of someone competent who delivers training, and some clubs refer to their training officer as the same.

### **Coaching Training Courses**

These are now being run outside of DCA by BCA trainers and assessors.

DCA. Training officer  
Nigel Atkins

## **2. CNCC report – see pdf accompanying these minutes.**

## **3. Note from Bob Mehew regarding butterfly knots**

Cavers Butterfly

An action was raised at the last meeting about removing the sentence "It is considered that the observed weakness of the Cavers Butterfly knot makes it a knot to avoid." from the BCA web site document which I authored. I asked for the background to this concern. It was raised at QMC by Phil Baker and recorded as "6.4

Safety notice on website good but PB has questions about the last line regarding cavers butterfly knot." Rich Hill also commented to me "Some people find the cavers butterfly easier in traverses especially if it requires a long knot." and "there should be education at all levels about where to use it". I responded to Rich that I had hoped for some better based arguments, especially given Rich admitted there was no new information to deny the weakness of the caver's butterfly when used to tie out a defect.

As the WG is aware I am no longer the Rope Test Officer. I suggest that if you do decide to remove the sentence that you produce some better evidence to justify the action of doing so. And I will insist on the removal of my name to such an amended statement. Else you may just wish to remove the whole document; an action I would also object to.

Bob Mehew

#### **4. Note from Bob Mehew on anchors**

Terms of Reference / Anchors

The Terms of Reference for the Working Group include at item vi on Methods, a statement which states: "The working group will promote training , equipment and techniques for cavers and clubs by way of good practice on effective training and technique methods, such guidelines to be provided on a non-mandatory basis." (I will admit to not spotting this in previous versions.) Belatedly I came across on the BCA web site at <https://british-caving.org.uk/documents/safety-information-on-resin-bonded-anchors/> a comment " During your trip, check all anchors before use: Cavers must perform a pre-use inspection of all resin anchors ". Is this considered to be a guideline or something else and hence out with the methods statement?

I believe there are times when information has to be mandatory. I suggest the topic of only non mandatory guidelines is one for Council to debate. And in particular, I strongly urge you to seek comment from the BCA Insurance broker before you change the statement as it has a direct bearing on liability for anchor defects.

From  
Bob Mehew

#### **5. Note from Bob Mehew on Suspension Trauma**

Suspension Trauma

The item finally went up in October. I also posted a thread on UKCaving to alert people to the topic, see <https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?threads/suspension-trauma.31141/> . The discussion was not overly revealing (i.e. I don't recall anything) apart from a question on possible cases in the UK. One person did admit in the thread to being present on a trip where someone else did go unconscious but then recovered. I did a scan of the BCRC Annual Incident Reports back to 1995 and found records of 16 incident causes described by BCRC members as "hang ups". A read of all the BCRC reports on every incident since 1995 indicate that there were possibly 24 incidents where the casualty may have suffered suspension trauma, including possibly one death, three persons unconscious and one person semi-

conscious. An article has also been submitted to Descent in my name expanding on some aspects of the material in the published item.

From  
Bob Mehew

## **6. Job advert**

Dear Russell,

We are contacting you as the Chair of the BCA.

Adventure RMS, the AALA & MoD inspectorate, are currently recruiting additional inspectors for anticipated work during 2024. We recognise that many of your members and those involved with your organisation may have the skills we are looking for in our inspectors and hoped you might be willing/able to share the attached with them or direct them to the advert currently posted on the [IOL jobs page](#). We are particularly keen to recruit current and active, experienced professionals hence our efforts to share the advert as broadly as possible and our approach to you.

If you, or any of your members, would like to discuss the roles or our request to share the advert please contact our head of service, Tim Morton ([tmorton@adventurerms.org.uk](mailto:tmorton@adventurerms.org.uk) or 07760 770507).

Kind regards

**Kathryn Hedley**

**Senior Liaison Officer**

**(Monday – Thursday 09.00 – 14.30)**