



**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 29 March 2014
at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	BCA Chairman
Damian Weare (DW)	BCA Secretary
Nigel Ball (NB)	BCA Training Officer
Andrew Hinde (AH)	Acting BCA Conservation & Access Officer
Nick Williams (NW)	BCA Equipment & Techniques Officer
David Judson (DJu)	BCA Legal & Insurance Officer
Les Williams (LW)	BCA Publications & Information Officer / Webmaster / 2016 Convenor
Jenny Potts (JP)	DCA Rep.
David Jean (DJe)	DCUC Rep.
Alan Finch (AF)	WPCST Rep.
Idris Williams (IW)	ASCT Rep.
Steve Holding (SH)	NAMHO Rep.
Boyd Potts (BP)	Club Rep. 3
Bernie Woodley (BW)	Individual Member Rep. 1
Matt Wire (MW)	Individual Member Rep. 3
Mick Day (MD)	BCA President
Richard Vooght (RV)	<i>observer</i>

The meeting commenced at 10:30am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Dave Checkley, Paul Ibberson, Henry Rockliff, Chris Jewell, Matt Ewles, David Cooke, Stephan Natynczuk, Ged Campion, Dave Tyson, Emma Porter and Bob Mehew.

3. Applications for Club Membership

DW: GJ reports that the Gibraltar Museum Caving Unit, Phoenix Caving Club, CNCC Technical Group and King Edward's School Caving Club have all provided the correct paperwork and payments to become BCA Member Clubs.

Proposal: *to accept the Gibraltar Museum Caving Unit, Phoenix Caving Club, CNCC Technical Group and King Edward's School Caving Club as Member Clubs.*

Prop: LW, Sec: NW *agreed unanimously.*

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 11 January 2014 (previously circulated)

NB: The proposal at the end of item 11 on page 10 should read "that we appoint Gill Jordan ..." rather than "Gill Ball". Action 131 on p.10 and p.16 also needs amending accordingly.

AH: On page 8 under Acting Conservation & Access report it says "There is also the opportunity for National Nature Reserve status on a cave, which also brings with it open access". Could the phrase "to the surface" be added to the end to make this clear?

Proposal: *to accept the amended Minutes from 11 January 2014 as a true record*

Prop: JP, Sec: NB *agreed unanimously*

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

Review of Action Log

Action 36: *Ongoing*

Action 54 (Liaise with SUI on insurance): *In progress.*

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): *In progress - nearly complete, ready for next meeting.*

Action 104 (Ask at TC for Potential CP Officer): completed - see Training Report.

Action 115 (Summary of Landowner Insurance Benefits) Ongoing.

Action 131 (Liaise over temporary appointment of Gill Jordan): Complete

Action 132 (List of dates for the next 18 months): DW apologised for not doing this in advance of the meeting and promised to circulate a list of dates by e-mail in the next few days.

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman (written report previously circulated)

This report is going to be short as I am just back from Mulu and about to go away again to return just before the Council Meeting.

Recently there have been a number of regional AGMs and these have resulted in several personnel changes. I wish the new officers all the best in their new positions and BCA will, of course, give them any help we can.

I am pleased issue 19 of Speleology has now come out - it looks very good, so full marks to Dave Gibson and his team.

The next round of Ghar Parau awards will be decided shortly. I would like to thank Henry Patton and Phil Rowsell for producing the new website. It is excellent. I am sure this has contributed to getting a reasonable number of good applications.

Please support the BCA/BCRA weekend from 13-15th June at Dalesbridge near Ingleton. It promises to be as good as the one in Castleton last year.

Finally many thanks to all Council members for their continued hard work and support.

Andy Eavis

Membership Structure

DW: At present we have a membership system that works, but many feel there could be improvements. The question is really whether we think these improvements will justify the effort involved in bringing them about.

SH: What are the timescales?

DW: It is difficult to put a specific timescale on implementation of the proposed changes because they depend very much on how quickly we can make the "behind the scenes" things, such as the IT systems, do what we want them to.

David Gibson has indicated that this could be achieved by the end of the year, but it is an important principle of the proposals that nothing be implemented that affects the end user until everything is fully working. It seems sensible to assume that nothing will happen publicly until the 2016 membership year.

MW: It is important that we focus on the specification for any IT system before we consider when it is likely to be completed. The IT Working Party should be involved in implementing the specification, rather than writing it.

NB: We should consider whether we are actually looking for a membership database or actually a BCA database. It would be nice to think that all our systems functioned in a joined up way.

DW: Really the IT systems are not what we need to consider today. Instead we need to decide whether we think we wish to change and, if so, whether the proposed roadmap is more or less the way to go.

LW: The system is certainly quite complex at the moment, but that means that there will need to be lots of change to make it simple.

AE: The proposals do actually simplify the system considerably with relatively limited change.

NW: The principle of having only full members and discounted full members is perfectly possible and it is clear that the current distinctions are not necessary. What we need is for people to join and pay enough money in an equitable way that we are able to do what we need to do for the benefit of all.

SH: The current system works more or less and any suggestion of change would more than likely go down badly with the membership, particularly because there is talk of increasing the basic fee in the process.

IW: Can we use the current IT system to do what we wish?

NW: There are various systems in place at the moment and these would not adapt in certain respects.

DW: At present CIM data is stored on a spreadsheet and the rest of the data is kept on an online system. These will need to come together for our proposals to work.

SH: There are lots of people who like the current system and a number of clubs that struggle even now to process the data and provide it in an appropriate format. Even adding a column to add e-mail addresses is complex for some.

AE: Provided everyone is more or less happy with the principle that we wish to change the process, we need to take it to the AGM and have the discussion there.

SH: The increase in cost is going to be difficult for members to stomach.

BP: Agreed.

AH: Likes the idea of universal membership. Would help CNCC if there were one type of membership, but this could

have unintended consequences because it will look as if BCA is interfering with CNCC.

DW: Our proposals were published before the recent debate about access to CNCC permitted caves for individuals, so hopefully this won't be an issue.

MW: Suggests that the existing roadmap is modified or rewritten before the AGM to separate the general principle of change from the actual roadmap.

DW: The intention would be to have a simple proposal for the AGM along the lines of "that Council investigate and decide upon a suitable way of simplifying the membership structure and begin its implementation."

AH: Should we consult with the Regions at their meetings?

DW: This may well be a sensible idea, but probably needs to come after the AGM has agreed the basic principle.

The remainder of the Chairman's Report was accepted without discussion.

7. Secretary (written report previously circulated)

AGM / Party Weekend: *This has all the makings of another excellent weekend. Dave Checkley has done a fantastic job in pulling together an excellent programme for Saturday day time. Dave Brook will then entertain us with a talk on "The Three Counties System" followed by food, beer and a disco courtesy of Basher. Sunday morning, for those who make it up, will be the AGM and food will be provided throughout the weekend by Slug. The full range of accommodation is available from camping to plush B&B-style rooms.*

Adverts and information are on the BCA website and the UKCaving forum. Posters are being printed (on the back of the Hidden Earth ones) shortly and an advert will be in the next Speleology.

The list of people I need to thank for volunteering for jobs is already long. I anticipate it will be much longer by the Sunday evening!

AGM: *Nominations for the posts of Treasurer, Equipment & Techniques Officer, Publications & Information Officer and Conservation & Access Officer, together with 2 Club and 2 Individual Representatives are due to me by midnight on 29th March (the day of our meeting). Details of what is needed are on the AGM page of the BCA website (linked from the front page), together with a blank nomination form if you wish to use it.*

Regional Representatives: *I am pleased to report that CNCC elected Matt Ewles as its new BCA Representative at its recent AGM. Matt unfortunately has prior commitments for both this meeting and the next, but he hopes to attend regularly beyond this. Council Members may also be aware that Cambrian CC has had a substantial change in personnel in recent weeks, but I have not yet been advised of any change to their representative.*

Membership Discussions: *Executive tabled a document at the last Council Meeting on a route to improving our membership structure. This is included in Appendix 1 and this meeting has been earmarked for detailed discussion.*

Damian Weare

Party Weekend

SH: Unfortunately the Party Weekend clashes with a mining event.

DJe: It also clashes with a Pengelly Event.

DW: Looking ahead the plan is broadly to move around the Regions and, therefore, we had envisaged going to the Mendips in 2015.

Action 133: LW to discuss dates with suitable venues on and around Mendip for the 2015 Party prior to the AGM in June.

AH: It would probably be sensible if the North-South rotation followed the opposite pattern to the Hidden Earth one.

LW: As this is a different event, we could actually look more widely than the areas visited by Hidden Earth, including for example N. Wales, Shropshire, or some of the larger mining locations.

AGM

DW: Unfortunately DW will now need to leave the Party Weekend in time to take a school trip abroad on the Sunday afternoon. This means we need to find someone to take the Minutes.

JP: Some time ago we agreed to pay someone to take the Minutes at the AGM. Maybe this is an option this time.

DW: Maybe Gill Jordan would be willing?

Action 134: DW to find someone to take the AGM Minutes.

Regional Representatives

DW: In an update to the written report the new Cambrian representative to BCA Council will be Dave Tyson.

Unfortunately, though, he has had to send his apologies for the next two meetings due to prior engagements.

The remainder of the Secretary's Report was accepted without discussion.

8. Treasurer (written report previously circulated)

First of all I must pass on my apologies for non-attendance, but at least this is (hopefully) in the cause of exploring caverns measurable!

Since the last Council meeting, my main focus has been the 2013 Accounts. These are progressing steadily and there are a few outstanding items to clear, but I am happy with progress to date. Completion will be a priority once I get back from expedition. I would once again ask that any outstanding items of income or expenditure relating to 2013 are notified to me by 31 March, after which date I will be looking to close the year. Updates on RCC Funding issues have been requested from Regional Council Treasurers and will be incorporated into the final Accounts.

In the relatively short time since the last meeting apart from Accounts there has been the usual issue of cash management as the bulk of subscriptions land in the first couple of months. Other routine matters have been addressed with no real items to note, hence my report is fairly brief.

One item of expenditure which was good to clear was the invoice for the production cost of Speleology #19 - well done to the editorial team and I look forward to writing out cheques for further issues.

If anyone has any matters to raise which are not addressed at the meeting I will be happy to deal with them directly on my return.

Paul Ibberson

The remainder of the Treasurer's Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Conservation & Access

AH: The latest issue of *Speleology* had an excellent article on cave conservation, particularly what has been achieved in the Yorkshire Dales in recent years. Natural England publish National Character Area Profiles which are available via a link from the front page of the Natural England website, or directly via:

naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca. There are profiles for the Yorkshire Dales, Mendip and White Peak and each contain useful data, particularly facts and figures which could be used to promote the need for conservation in the Regions. AH has submitted a paper to the European Cave Protection Symposium in Romania later this year and he will deliver it if it is accepted. It is likely that NE will contribute to the funding of this.

AE: Is not aware that anyone from the UK has presented at this previously, so this would be very positive.

AH: The Heritage Lottery Fund has recently awarded £2m to the Ingleborough-Dales Landscape partnership. It is worth noting that the work done by CNCC in recent years was vital in securing this.

AH: Quite a lot of the Regional Councils have separate Conservation and Access Officers. By their very nature the two roles do not necessarily sit easily side by side. AH wonders if this might be a sensible approach for BCA too.

LW: The alternative argument is that there will almost inevitably be conflict between the two and having one person means there is one balanced and considered view put forward to Bodies.

DW: BCA's structure means that each Standing Committee is more or less free to run its own business and can, therefore, choose to make appointments as it sees fit. Equipment & Techniques has its own person in charge of Rope Testing, and Training has chosen to have various sub-committees to deal with different aspects of their business. Matters are then discussed with the Committee or Committees and the Committee come up with an agreed view. The convenor, or Officer, then puts forward this view and generally enacts the will of the Committee. Creating totally separate Standing Committees is probably not sensible as it duplicates effort and meetings and also alters the balance of voting at Council.

JP: Access is often a regional matter, because it is so varied. In practice, therefore, access matters are generally dealt with by the Regions rather than at BCA level anyway.

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

Not a great deal to report since we have not had an E+T meeting since the last Council meeting - the meeting originally planned for 9 March has been moved to 5 April to avoid a clash with the CCC AGM.

We have now had three deliveries of 316 anchors, the third batch is awaiting confirmation of material. The bolt tester is currently in Devon for tests on anchors in non-limestone rocks.

Nick Williams

AE: Are you checking each batch of bolts that is received for the correct steel?

NW: Yes

Rope-Testing

Little to report, back log of rope samples from 2013's Hidden Earth now cleared but a new back log has appeared.

Bob Mehew

AE: Has had a number of ropes break in Mulu in recent years. Hull University has been doing a research project on this and it seems that the cause is probably organic acids present underground, probably from guano. PH values of 2 or 3 have been noted. This only seems to be a problem when ropes are left over a period of time.

MD: Could it be sunlight?

AE: No, the most recent was 250m in. There was sediment over the lip of the handline climb and we assume that it actually contained bat guano. Is proposing to issue a statement warning people in the foreseeable future.

LW: Could we issue BCA advice?

Action 135: AE to liaise with NW on issuing advice on failed ropes from Mulu.

The remainder of the Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report was accepted without discussion.

11. Training (written report previously circulated)

Both the LCML and CIC schemes are continuing to develop. The data for each is listed below.

Local Cave and Mine Leader Award

Registrations	45
Level 1 assessments	7
Level 2 assessments	4
Level 1 revalidations	13
Level 2 revalidations	3

Current number of Award Holders: Level 1 = 481 Level 2 = 233

Cave Instructor Certificate

Registrations	2
Assessments	0
Revalidations	5

Current number of Award Holders = 80

At the recent Training Committee meeting held on 18th March 2014 a number of decisions were made and the salient points are listed below.

At the CNCC AGM held recently, the motion to have a fourth class of membership, that being "commercial", was not accepted. This was disappointing from the Training Committee's view point as it hindered Award Holders from delivering certain kinds of course.

The Cambrian CC Training Officer reported that they had run a number of very successful training course for SRT with another running soon. Courses studying bats and photography are planned for the Summer and a cave surveying course in Autumn.

Training Committee were very pleased to see that grants were being applied for to help run training courses ,i.e. CNCC held an paperless surveying course recently. Training Committee would welcome more applications from clubs to assist with training courses.

The Training Committee have been approached from a number of organisations who deal with young people asking if BCA have an award scheme for the children in caving. This had previously been considered by the T/O and some work is going to be done to provide such a scheme for children.

The appointment of Trainer / Assessors is now controlled by Training Committee and the process of how it will be organised is currently being devised. It is intended to have it up and running by July 2014.

Two long serving Trainer / Assessors have recently resigned their positions. The Training Officer has written to them, to show T/C's appreciation of the hard work they have put into the BCA schemes.

After discussions with SUI and their acceptance of BCA awards, the BCA T/O felt that recognition of SUI awards was imperative. To this end T/C agreed that a formal assessment of SUI Award Holder working in the UK was not required. As LCML awards are regionally based, SUI Award Holders looking for qualifications in the UK will need to present risk assessments for the sites that they want to operate in. The BCA T/O will write a report to the SUI Training Officer to explain everything.

Training Committee voted in favour of the process of moderation of BCA courses to be initially actioned by the Training Officer but for it to be rolled out to a team of moderators in the future.

The Training Officer approached the Training Committee asking for a Child Protection representative but no one was willing to stand.

Nigel Ball

NB: The data at the top of the report is the data since the last meeting. It is hoped that the Award Scheme for children can be considered in conjunction with Youth & Development. The intention would be to provide something tangible for children to work towards and also encourage breadth of training by leaders, including for example conservation.

DW: Council Members will recall that we have an agreed process in place for checking draft Minutes for approval prior to publication. This was initially put in place for BCA Council and its Standing Committees. The process is that they are checked by one of Executive, principally to avoid any possibility of libellous material being published in our name, the Training Officer and also two of those present at the meeting to ensure the minute-taker is not grossly misrepresenting what actually took place. Following this, Minutes are issued in draft form. About 18 months ago we received a complaint from someone relating to the behaviour of some attendees at a Local-Panel meeting. This was investigated and we realised that there was currently no guidance at all for any of the various Training sub-Committees. Executive then issued suitable guidance which included the same process for checking of Minutes

prior to publication as happens in the rest of the Organisation. There has been some considerable disquiet among Panels and NCP since then about this process, and the soon-to-be-released draft Minutes from the most recent Training Committee include a decision that Panel Minutes no longer need to go through this process. This is explained as being because they are not published on the BCA website and are, therefore, apparently only an internal document. DW is very concerned at this and would like Council to overturn this decision so that we can continue to avoid libellous or incorrect information being published in our name.

LW: What is a Panel? Does it manage the Award Schemes?

NB: They do not run the Scheme. They are purely a set of providers.

DJu: We as a Body need to make clear their role. If they set Policy, then that is very different from simply being an advisory group. In the case of the latter, they can surely say what they like provided we include a line that it is not our views.

DW: The Panels traditionally had two main "policy-making" roles. The first was to appoint Trainer-Assessors on our behalf, and the second was to decide which caves, or sections of caves, are appropriate for use by LCMLA Award holders. The first of these roles has just been taken on by Training Committee.

NB: Previously there was the requirement from BCA for Panel Members to attend at least 1 meeting per year, but that has just been removed.

LW: What is wrong with us simply taking away altogether our requirement that they should exist?

SH: They are very clearly part of BCA but there must surely be some potential for saying that they only have an advisory role.

MD: The problem of libel is not just limited to what one person might say in one situation. In the past we needed to produce a quick response to a document relating to some land containing caves. This was considered by Council and the Chairman wrote on BCA's behalf. Following this we received a letter from some solicitors with 4 separate issues relating to this document. This continued for a considerable period of time and MD nearly suffered personally as a result. We should take these matters very seriously.

Proposal: *that all Committees and Sub-Committees of BCA be reminded that they must follow the rules laid down by Council on how they should run.*

Prop: DW Sec: LW agreed unanimously

Action 136: DW to contact all Committees and Sub-Committees to remind them that they should follow the rules laid down by Council.

SH: Some of our Award Holders think that being within BCA is too laborious and they would like to set themselves up separately. Many would also like to see the main Training Committee better reflect the make-up of caving nationally, with non-professional people present. All too often the only people present are actually professional and, sometimes, the very same people who also attend NCP.

DW: There is a big problem at the moment in that issues are often discussed at NCP and a decision reached. They are then brought to Training Committee for ratification and the very same people end up discussing the same decision again. The fundamental problem is that too few people attend TC and that sometimes too many of those who do have a personal, professional interest in the decisions being taken. One issue from BCA's point of view is that we are paying about £1,000 per year for travel to NCP meetings and a further £1,000 for travel to Training Committee meetings, yet the agenda is very similar and the personnel are mostly at both meetings. Even more damagingly for us as an Organisation than the apparent waste of money, though, is that volunteers' time is being wasted.

IW: If there were better representation from the Regions and Constituent Bodies, then Training Committee would be able to take advice from the experts and work as it was intended to.

MD: The last thing we want as a sport is for bureaucrats from London telling us what we should and should not do and how our Award Schemes should be run. It is, therefore, very important that we, as cavers, maintain control of the Award Scheme.

LW: As an Organisation we do very little in the way of caver training for anyone who is non-professional. This seems to be because people are just not interested. CSCC cannot get anyone to stand as Training Officer, for example.

NW: It is clear that the structure of Training Committee is complex and, therefore, some key parts of it take place quite a long way away from the core of BCA. There has been some debate on UKCaving recently about BCA and Commercial Caving which shows our members don't really understand how BCA works.

IW: It is certainly very complex and we may well benefit from simplification.

Proposal: *Council is concerned at the complexity of the current arrangements for the administration of the training schemes and is aware of dissatisfaction at all levels. We invite the Training Committee to review its structure with a view to providing recommendations as to how it can be made to function more efficiently for the benefit of all stakeholders.*

Prop: NW Sec: LW agreed unanimously

Action 137: NB to invite TC to review its structure based on Council's proposal.

The remainder of the Training Officer's Report was accepted without discussion.

12. Publications & Information

a. Webmaster (written report previously circulated)

After a period of review the new BCA website went live on the 31 Jan. Thank you to those who took part in the review. The new website is visually more appealing with a relatively uncluttered screen and more pictures. The new menu structure is easier to follow. It is easier for Officers to update their sections of the website. Officers can leave comments to highlight errors or suggest improvements at the bottom of each page. These comments are not seen by the public. Behind the scenes the technicalities of managing and maintaining the site is easier.

Early feedback includes comments such as "Luv it!" and "It is much easier to update now."

However much of the content is unchanged and out of date. Could Officers please take the time to review their sections if they haven't done so already? I will update the pages if you feel unable to do it yourself but you must provide the words. If there is interest and time I intend to run a short training seminar on updating the website at the BCA party weekend.

More pictures are needed for the website. There is an opening for a website picture editor if someone could be found with an eye for an appropriate image.

David Cooke

IW: Tried to find the draft Minutes of the January Council meeting prior to this meeting and found it quite difficult to navigate around the various menus.

LW: There are probably issues with the menus, but in principle the site is great and Cookie has done an excellent job. The website is our main contact with our membership and we must all try to keep the content up to date. At the moment it is largely done by two people and there is some very out-of-date content. It is quite easy to upload information or change what is currently there, so everyone should be encouraged to do so.

b. Web Services (written report previously circulated)

The BCA webserver continues to run reliably with no unscheduled outages. Les Williams and I have dealt with the queries that crop up from our users – mostly forgotten passwords.

I would like to thank Karen Foxhall for her excellent work recording and banking the money whilst Katie Eavis is on maternity leave.

The new prices I mentioned in my previous report came into effect on the 1st March. I have updated the 60 odd website accounts and a similar number of repeating invoices accordingly.

I've set the 1st June as the date to upgrade the versions of php, mysql and apache on the BCA webserver so that they remain current. It might cause some pain so I'll setup a temporary test server to help the webmasters check their sites will continue to work.

David Cooke

c. Newsletter

LW: The editor is waiting for content to produce a newsletter.

d. Handbook (written report previously circulated)

Work will begin shortly on the 2015 version, which will go to print just before the end of June. I have updated the online download of the 2014 version twice since the last meeting.

Damian Weare

e. Speleology (written report previously circulated)

Speleology 19 was eventually published on 28 February. Part of the delay was that it spent an unusually long time at our printers – four weeks instead of the normal 10 days. I'm hoping to get the April issue to Press sometime in April, so it might not appear on doorsteps until the end of May.

My plan, at the moment, is for issue 19 to be available online, "sometime soon", using the same Open Access scheme that we are now using for C&KS, which means that non-BCRA members can register for a free ID. If BCA Council wants to suggest any other arrangement, please let me know. When issue 19 goes online it will include a supplement of about 15 pages, which is material that was omitted from the print edition.

The printing cost was covered by 616 paid-for copies, which results in a cost of £3.00 per copy. The breakdown of postage is complicated (see email to Treasurers) but, spread equally over 616 copies, is £1.05/person. The handling and packing charges, spread over the paid-for 616 copies, come to 37p/person. It could therefore be said, with some caveats, that the cost of Speleology, per paying-person is approx £4.42 per issue, making a subscription price of £15 a reasonable figure. Although no

non-member subscriptions are currently due, it seemed wise to anticipate by raising the non-member subscription rate from £10 to £20, so this has been done. If/when an opt-out is put in place for BCA members (as discussed in the new membership proposals), it would seem that a paper subscription could be valued at £15.

At the moment, BCRA is subsidising the production of *Cave & Karst Science*. Payment for one of the editors and a partial payment of the printing and mailing costs come from BCRA's reserves. In my calculations above, the printing and mailing costs of *Speleology* can be met by valuing a subscription at £15. However, it is clear that if money also needs to be found for remuneration of the editorial team then this will have to come from 'reserves' – either BCA's or BCRA's. Without this, the long-term future of the magazine is clearly in doubt although, of course, any final decision on this rests with BCRA as the publisher.

Intellectual Property Rights: A point of clarification might be helpful. Clearly *Speleology* relies heavily on BCA's funding. However, *Speleology* remains a BCRA publication and any intellectual property rights that reside with BCRA will form a part of its charitable assets, which BCRA has a duty of care to preserve. By stating that, I am not intending to be obstructive in any way – clearly BCRA and BCA Councils need to work together – but I think it would be helpful for everyone to remember that “deciding the future of *Speleology*” is not the simple matter that it might appear to be, at first sight.

David Gibson

LW: Is concerned that BCA pays for the magazine completely, yet David Gibson states that it is BCRA's publication.

JP: Would it exist if BCRA didn't make it happen?

LW: No but it wouldn't exist if we didn't pay for it either.

DW: Since David took over as Editor, we have been able to have a lot more input into the magazine and David is desperate to reflect BCA's interests but does not receive any articles or information to do so.

LW: We need to look carefully at whether we can fund *Speleology* in the future.

DJu: Is unclear about the purpose of the last paragraph of David's report.

DW: David has been involved in our discussions about membership and has seen that we are proposing altering the way *Speleology* is provided. This paragraph is probably to clarify that we can choose to remove the funding, but we cannot choose to cease publication, as we are not the publishers. That is a decision for BCRA.

LW: Free downloads could reduce the circulation of *Speleology* to such an extent that it becomes very difficult to continue production.

NW: David Gibson is one of very few people in BCRA who truly understands Copyright. It is likely that his comment relates to this.

JP: This is discussed by BCRA Council regularly and is also an issue with *Cave and Karst Science*.

LW: The cost of online data storage is also quite substantial and we should not, therefore, think that publication online has no cost.

DW: David suggests we should let him know if we wish to suggest any alternative to his plans for free downloads of *Speleology* in the near future. On the one hand we could argue that one of our roles with *Speleology* is to support the dissemination of ideas, information and articles that would otherwise not be published and, therefore, we should generally seek to make them freely available. On the other hand we could take the view that our members pay for the editorial costs of the publication and that it is therefore a tangible benefit of membership that should not be made available to everyone.

NW: Could we just delay publication online by 3 or 6 months from the time it is sent to members?

AE: We could also ask them to hold off making it available online until we have considered the membership restructuring.

AH: It is possible that having free access to *Speleology* might produce an increase in subscriptions to the paper version.

AE: It sounds like we should report to BCRA Council at their meeting tomorrow that we would like online publication to be delayed for a while.

Action 138: AE and JP to liaise with David Gibson re: delaying online publication of *Speleology*.

The remainder of the Publications & Information Reports were accepted without discussion.

13. Legal & Insurance

1 Possible Risks arising from Fracking Shale/Gas Exploration in the UK: Widely based research, both in the USA and elsewhere, are all tending to suggest that there is likely to be little or no detriment to our areas of interest, but this is ongoing and we still need to keep our eye on the ball. The Bowland Shales have again been mentioned as a major potential source, as has “the Blackpool area”, but since these strata, where still extant, always overlie the Carboniferous limestones, extraction from them would be unlikely to affect the structural stability of caves. Water quality could be affected, but since this consideration will be of primary concern to water users, I do not feel that we need to stress about it. No cave containing areas have so far been mentioned in shale/gas exploration proposals within the U.K.

2 Acute Shortage of Housing across the UK - New Town/Village Proposals: Strangely, within hours of my reporting at

our January Meeting announcements were made concerning the need for and possibility of a Third Generation of New Towns. Whilst only areas in Sussex, Bucks and Oxons have so far been mooted I still think that we need to be vigilant, as outlined in my January report.

Whilst a third generation of New Town development would properly require primary legislation as its starting point, the thinking at this stage could well morph into the concept of new and/or extended or expanded villages (what does Prince Charles think?) and we should thus be both cautious and listening to all of this!

From the way that thinking appears to be developing here I suggest that caving interests across the Peak District might have the greatest need for our vigilance.

Our main caving/limestone areas are underwritten by the National Parks legislation, e.g. The Yorkshire Dales, and are likely to be much less at risk here, but almost anything can change when new primary legislation is being considered!

3 Global Warming - Concerns for Cavers and Caving: The simple outcome so far as we are concerned lies in the term erratic weather, which in this context means unpredictable, or not as might reasonably be expected for the time of year. The recent repeated occurrence of high winds with heavy prolonged rainfall being just one example. Clearly the long-established equilibrium of our planet's weather system has been fundamentally disturbed, possibly by the 'affairs of man' but I suspect largely by much greater planetary/extra-terrestrial and/or solar-orbital activities that are totally beyond our control. All that can currently be said with certainty is that there is no sign of an end to this erraticism, and it might well get worse before it gets better, so, be prepared for anything!

There could be beneficial changes to our caves, as occurred in Swildon's Hole on Mendip a few years ago, but more likely we just need to be even more cautious than hitherto about prevailing and impending weather conditions before entering active cave systems!

David Judson

MW: Attended a talk about fracking recently and wondered if it might be interesting to invite him to talk at 2016.

a. Insurance Manager

NW: Is involved in a number of discussions with a number of groups at the moment about possible extensions to the Public-Liability policy. NW requested that Council provide some guidance on whether or not we should seek to recoup any additional premium costs that may result from these groups, or whether we should bear the cost on behalf of the caving community as a whole. *[Further information was given to Council but for reasons of commercial sensitivity it was agreed not to minute this].*

[Discussion followed which, again, has not been minuted for reasons of commercial sensitivity. It was agreed, though, that as a general principle where the benefits that accrue are available to everyone we should seek to support the change financially, but where the benefits apply to certain individuals or groups only we should generally expect those individuals or groups to support it financially.]

The remainder of the Legal & Insurance Reports were accepted without discussion.

Other Reports

14. **Youth & Development** No report received.

15. **Membership Administrator** *(written report previously circulated)*

Membership to 17th March 2014

DIMs 390

CIMs 4668

Clubs: 150

Associates: 4

Access Bodies: 7

New Clubs: The following clubs have supplied the correct paperwork and payment in order to become BCA member clubs:

Gibraltar Museum Caving Unit; Phoenix Caving Club; CNCC Technical Group.

Glenn Jones

The Membership Administrator's Report was accepted without discussion.

16. **Radon Information** No report received.

17. **2016 Working Party**

LW: Very little to report since the last meeting. Negotiations are continuing with venues. There is considerable support

from Craven Council and we will hopefully be able to announce a venue imminently.

The 2016 Report was accepted.

18. Cave Registry

There have been some discussions on the merits of also providing GIT and Mercurial archives in addition to the current SVN archive. This would help some longstanding surveying projects but would create an addition workload.

David Cooke

MW: GIT and Mercurial archives have the benefit that the whole archive is available offline at all times, so this may appeal to expedition cavers where there is no internet access.

The Cave Registry Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. IT Working Party

The main work has been the new BCA website which is now live. For details see the separate report.

After a false start I have moved the Try Caving website to the BCA webserver. Thanks must go to the Bristol Exploration Club for hosting the website until now and to Chris Jewell for his assistance. The site content could do with some refreshing. It could also do with porting to the latest version of Joomla (the software that manages the site). In short we need a keen webmaster with some Joomla experience. In the meantime I will upload any content that is provided.

With thanks to Nigel Ball and Mary Wilde I now have the Training Database requirements documents and examples of the current training databases. Once I have completed my review of those, I will propose a way or ways forward for the Training Committee's consideration.

Work continues with the project to develop email communication with our members. There are two possible solutions being evaluated. Matt Wire is working on a solution using the civiCRM extension to Drupal. I'm converting a bespoke solution I wrote for work using the phpCake framework.

David Cooke

NB: As far as the Training database is concerned we have been looking at whether to tweak the existing systems, or start from scratch.

MW: Was not aware DC is working on an alternative solution to providing email communication.

The IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

20. CRoW Working Party (written report previously circulated)

Work by volunteers on producing the necessary database for English caving regions continues in the North and the Peak District. I have been told I will receive a report from the North in a few weeks time; the work in the Peak District continues but is not ready yet. The CSCC Conservation & Access Officer has been kept informed of progress but I have no knowledge of any work done in the South - possibly the newly published "Mendip Underground" will spark progress. I have not yet asked DCUC for their help.

It is clear that that the recommendations in the English Nature commissioned report of 2009 (NECR012), that caving should be included, were not followed up. I have seen a copy of the Q/A considered by Defra and the statement by Natural England on the subject in December 2013 stating why there is no access for cavers on CRoW land. It is clear from this that there are some misconceptions which, if followed to their logical conclusion, might even have prevented the designation of caves as SSSIs.

Discussions on UKCaving and elsewhere indicate that there are some strong views on the subject of extending CRoW to apply to access to caves: some cavers being very strongly "pro", others being equally "anti". With this in mind I feel it is essential that cavers are fully briefed before any discussion takes place at BCA level because to effect a change in the law or a change in its interpretation will require the full support of BCA in England.

Jenny Potts

JP: Further to the written report DCUC are now looking at helping with the database. The whole business of access under CRoW is extremely confusing. A report commissioned by Natural England (NECR012), which appeared in 2009, recommended that caving should be included, but this was not followed up. Since then a publication was produced by Natural England in 2013 (NE 13 FS[1]) setting out the facts. This is confusing and says that, for example, climbing is included, but rock climbing is not. Some are on CRoW land, some are within a designated SSSI area and some are not. One thing for certain is that things are not clear cut. There is a very strong movement among some of the Northern cavers to insist that CRoW should apply to caving. At the moment it seems that it will require a change in the Law, or its interpretation, for access to be allowed to caving in general. If we are to contemplate doing this, it will need BCA's support, rather than that of specific Regions or individuals. It is clear from what has come out so far that there is much more land covered by CRoW up north than in other regions, but

it is not necessarily insignificant in other regions. This is the reason for the database because we must make absolutely sure that we do not have unintended consequences in any action we may decide to take. According to the Cambrian Caving Council rep. earlier in the year the Forest of Dean cavers would not want anything to do with CRoW because they came under Cambrian Council. It is for this reason that we are trying to get a complete picture for the whole country. Access under CRoW where the site is also a SSSI and a NNR brings all sorts of complications.

BW: The Forest of Dean comes under Cambrian's wing. The Forest has its own regulations and Forest of Dean cavers are happy with the current situation.

JP: Yes, but we need to know why and what the consequences might be of CRoW being extended to their sites. Therefore, we need their input.

BW: Large areas of land are privately owned. As soon as the landowners get any idea that open access might be a possibility, then they will ban digging, fill in entrances etc.

AE: When CRoW came in, did it make much difference for climbers?

LW: They lobbied for climbing to be included and were able to access certain areas as a result that had previously been denied to them.

JP: Until the CRoW Act the National Park paid the landowners substantial sums to allow free access.

JP: Most of the force behind the push on CRoW access to caves is based on one particular cave system where access is limited to 3 clubs per day. We, of course, need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages across the whole country before we take a view one way or the other. What might benefit one area, might not in another.

AE: What would you like us to do today?

JP: Nothing. Accept that we are trying to look at it, but need to do it from the bottom up to see how things work currently in England.

AH: Whatever happens in the CRoW-caving debate in general, it is clear that there will be a serious split among the caving community with two distinct sides.

The CRoW Report was accepted without further discussion.

21. International Representative

It has been comparatively quiet on the International scene recently.

There have however been a number of deaths of senior members of the International Union of Speleology. It seems as though the passing of Hubert Trimmel last Autumn set the ball rolling with both Ivan Gams and Marcel Letrone, both founding members of UIS, having died in the last few days. I guess this is to be expected, as it is nearly 70 years since it was founded.

There are a number of important international speleological meetings this autumn in Australasia including KR7 in Melbourne at the end of September and ISCA/UIS council in Sydney at the end of October. I shall try and go to both of these.

Organising the next UIS Congress in Australia for 2017 is well underway!!!

Andy Eavis

a. FSE

Very little to report since BCA's last meeting. In November the FSE Bureau and the General Assembly Meeting took place in Casola Italy. The next Bureau meeting and General Assembly will take place at the 9th ES Forum 2014 in Herculane, Romania from 22-24 August.

A representative of the FSE (Ernst Geyer) attended 1st International Geosciences Congress 2014 in Tehran & Hamadan, Iran in February. It was attended by approximately 150 foreign scientists and experts. Cavers from South Korea, Pakistan, Italy, France, Poland, Turkey & Austria attended this meeting.

Eurospeleo Projects

Some feedback on EPs last year. The table below is from the annual EP report and outlines the expeditions/projects that received funding support and countries participating.

Project name and location	Participation Countries
ESP 2012-13 Exploration of Caves in Mt. Athos , Greece	BG, GR, RUS, TR
ESP 2012-15 Book publishing of Cave Pearls of Meghalaya	CH, GB, RO, D, IRL
ESP 2012-16 Northern Lao – Euro Cave Project 2013	D, NL, RUS, I, CH
ESP 2013-02 Camp Berger -1112	FR, HUN, B, SLO, OAE, B&H, CAN
ESP 2013-03 Expedition Banski Suhodol '2013	BG, RS, RO, GR, CZ
ESP 2013-04 Balkan Speleological Conference'2014"	BG, GR, RO, TR, RS, SLO,AL,CRO
ESP 2013-05 5th FSE Exploration Camp of Chamois Cave	FR, HUN, I, D, RUS,
ESP 2013-06 Training course for perfection	FR, Ethiopia, OAE
ESP-2013-07 Exploration of Greece's second deepest cave	GR, FR, RO, SLO, D, CH, E

ESP 2013-08 Exploration of Caves in Mt. Athos , Greece	BG, GR, RUS, UA, SR
ESP 2013-09 Speleological days	B, NL, FR, D, GB

Organisation of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years

ES Forum 2015 Applications will be invited. Bulgaria has expressed an interest. European Congress 2016 will be in the UK. The next UIS Congress will be in Sydney in 2017.

Ged Campion

The remainder of the International Reports was accepted without discussion.

22. Media-Liaison

I have not received any communication from the media since the last Council Meeting (though I have done some filming for Red Bull and learnt some useful lessons) and I continue to operate in a reactive manner.

Chris Jewell

The remainder of the Media-Liaison Report was accepted without discussion.

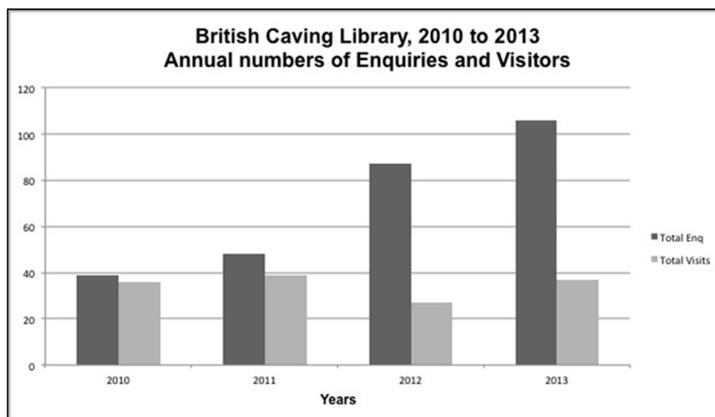
23. British Caving Library Report

Cataloguing the collections: Work continues on re-cataloguing the entire contents of the Library - necessary because of the backlog inherited when BCL was set up in 2008. **UK periodicals:** we now have a complete list of all organisations whose publications we hold and these sets are now in the correct order on the shelves; so far approx. 30% of the sets have been catalogued in detail for every single item contained. **Foreign Periodicals:** virtually all the foreign periodicals on our list of 55 exchanges with BCRA publications are now catalogued plus some 50% of other foreign periodicals. **Books:** there is now no backlog and new items are added to the catalogue as they come in.

As far as we know other material had never previously been catalogued although some of the following items were found in the BCRA Library. **Surveys & Maps:** work is now well in hand with the help of volunteers. **CD's DVD's, etc.:** these are gradually being catalogued as they arrive. **Photographic material:** some has been catalogued and some has even been scanned and is on the BCRA Archives website; we need an expert volunteer to help deal with the remainder of the very large collection.

We continue to receive donations from many people so all the areas of the Library collections are growing, including a sizeable amount of archive material.

Enquiries: We now collect monthly information on numbers of enquiries and visitors and, for the benefit of BCA & BCRA, we will report the annual figures. Note that we find and collect together in advance items requested by visitors to enable them to make maximum use of their time. Visitors may bring their own laptops and make use of the Library WiFi or are welcome to make use of our own computer, scanners and copiers. Prior to 2008, when we moved into the Glutton Bridge premises, there had been almost no enquiry service and no records of enquiries were kept; the Visitors Book shows that visits to the BCRA holdings at the Matlock Local Studies library were in single figures per year. The graph below illustrates the current position following the consolidation of all the collections at Glutton Bridge in 2010 - rising to a total of 143 enquiries and visitors in 2013.



On-line facilities linked to the Library now available include: the Audio Archives, the BCRA Archives website, the Librarian's Facebook, the On-Line Catalogue, etc.

The BCRA Simpson Archives held at BGS have not been digitised but it is been possible to follow up a few basic enquiries using the BGS Calm database. However very little can be done without these archives being digitised since we cannot access the material on line and have no idea of the detail of what is there - we are still seeking a Heritage Lottery Grant to fund the digitisation.

Jenny Potts

AE: It is a little disappointing that there haven't been more enquiries and visits.

JP: Each one generates quite a bit of work for the Library Assistant.

The remainder of the Library Report was accepted without discussion.

24. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Sunday, 15 June 2014 at Dalesbridge, Austwick.

25. Any Other Business

Nothing

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.

Action Log (as at March 2014)

No. Action by ... Details of Action

36 **DW** Put together a Manual of Operations

54 **NW & DJu** Liaise with SUI with a view to helping them streamline their insurance situation.

October 2011

83 **PI** Produce an Asset Register and liaise with NW/EP over the total replacement value of our insured equipment.

October 2012

115 **DJu** Put together a summary for landowners of the insurance benefits relating to BCA access agreements.

March 2014

133 **LW** To discuss dates with suitable venues on and around Mendip for the 2015 Party prior to the AGM in June.

134 **DW** To find someone to take the AGM Minutes.

135 **AE** To liaise with NW on issuing advice on failed ropes from Mulu.

136 **DW** To contact all Committees and Sub-Committees to remind them that they should follow the rules laid down by Council.

137 **NB** To invite TC to review its structure based on Council's proposal of 29 March 2014.

138 **AE / JP** To liaise with David Gibson re: delaying online publication of Speleology.

Appendix 1: Membership ... a possible way forward

Towards an improved Membership Structure

The fact that the structures and procedures put in place when BCA was set up in 2004 have generally stood the test of time, is due in no small part to the incredible hard work and foresight of a small number of people back then. Some ten years later the UK's Governing Body for Underground Exploration is now financially secure for the future with a strong membership and active, committed volunteers working hard in the background.

However, it was probably inevitable that in the fullness of time some aspects of BCA's membership structure would need to be tweaked. Over the last 18 months or so considerable thought has been given to this and this paper seeks to outline a possible way forward.

Background:

- BCA membership has increased in all categories virtually year on year since BCA's inception.
- BCA generally returns a surplus year on year and has healthy reserves.
- 90% of BCA's individual membership (or roughly 5,500 people) are Club Individual Members (CIMs) meaning they join us through their Club and, therefore, pay a reduced contribution. Approximately 20% of these are "non-cavers" and 10% are students or under 18s. Only around 500 people are Direct Individual Members (DIMs), who pay the additional contribution of £15 per annum to cover publications and additional costs associated with processing their membership.
- The principle of discounts for "non-cavers" and "students/under 18s" seems fair and is generally accepted by the caving world.
- In principle CIMs pay for everything except BCA's publications and the admin cost of processing their membership. DIMs pay an additional £15 for these services.
- Currently we believe few CIMs receive any information on BCA, and many do not properly understand what their annual subscription covers. Indeed many seem to believe they are just paying for "insurance" (and many of these do not really know what sort of "insurance" this is).
- Averaged over the last 3 years, the net cost of BCA's publications is £7,130 while the average additional contribution from DIMs - who in theory pay for publications - has been £6,625, meaning a shortfall of around £500 per annum. Therefore, despite not publishing anywhere near what we promise, CIMs are already subsidising publications. With the likelihood of large increases in spending on Speleology in the coming years, this subsidy will almost certainly increase.
- In 2013, in return for their additional £15 subscription, DIMs received a Handbook, a newsletter, an AGM notification, an AGM agenda and the service of the Membership Administrator. That was two newsletters and three copies of Speleology less than they were promised.

- As it stands at the moment, if we publish all the editions of Speleology and the newsletter that we promise, BCA will run at an annual deficit. CIMs will also be subsidising DIMs to the tune of around £10k per annum (and this is before factoring in a probable increase in Speleology editorial costs).

BCA's current structure has many strengths, not least of which is that a substantial proportion of cavers in the UK are members and, therefore, make a contribution to the costs of, among others, maintaining access to our caves and mines, conservation, bolting, insurance and training. However, there are a few areas that do not seem to be working as well as they should, including:

- the apparent "complexity" of membership.
- ineffective communication with members - publications are few and far between with the result that we are not effectively communicating with members. CIMs often receive little information from their Clubs (which is not actually our fault, but ends up reflecting badly on us) and DIMs are not getting anything like what we promise (i.e. 3 newsletters and 3 copies of Speleology per year).
- an unfair financial burden on CIMs - CIMs are currently subsidising the cost of the publications they do not receive. This problem is likely to grow in the coming months, as Newsletters and Speleology resume publication.

Possible Road Map

Please note: in what follows, we have been careful to ensure no changes in membership categories or prices until the additional benefits are already in place. Thus, if we can't provide it, we don't charge for it!

Stage 1: Preparations for implementing universal Individual Membership

a: Improving communication with all (i.e. 6,000) members at limited cost

In practice this means:

- e-mailing newsletters (or a link) to all members - this will ideally be a simple news document, rather than something with a fancy layout, thus saving volunteer time and avoiding time delay ensuring the news is current;
- replacing the current Handbook with a much smaller document posted to all members annually along with their membership card and merging the remainder of the content with the new website;
- making Speleology available online.

b: Altering the in-house membership processes

Initial discussions have been held with David Gibson (with input from Glenn Jones) and broadly it is clear that systems can be amended to reflect the above. More detailed work is needed here.

Stage 2: Implementing universal Individual Membership (and calling everyone a "Member")

In effect, since CIMs will receive all publications (by e-mail), they receive virtually the same

services as DIMs. Henceforth they can all, therefore, be referred to as “Individual Members” and the existing categories of DIM and CIM be removed for the end user. A percentage discount will continue for “non-cavers” and “students / under 18s”. Paper copies of Speleology will continue to be available and can be tagged onto membership or ordered separately via the website. All Individual Members receive their own online access (and a discount if ordering a paper copy).

Financial Note: There will be a revenue loss here relating to the £15 upgrade currently paid by DIMs. However this will be partly balanced by a reduction in our costs because we no longer print and post a Handbook, newsletters, AGM notifications or Agendas. Instead we will be paying to e-mail 6,000 people 6 times a year. Initially this will be funded by using some of BCA’s reserves.

Admin Note: We need to carefully consider the current requirements on Clubs to provide their members’ data on a spreadsheet. Ideas so far include: a discount; offering to act as a clearing house for the club’s own membership payments and data collection too; data input being a requirement for accessing the full third-party insurance cover.

Stage 3: Financial Rebalancing (following Stage 2)

Alter the basic Membership fee to reflect the new cost structure. *[Note: it is anticipated that this will result in a small increase for those currently CIMs and a decrease for current DIMs].*

The Result

Membership will be either “Group” or “Individual”.

Individual members will receive percentage reductions for being “non-cavers” or “Students/under 18s”. All membership data will be easily accessed and amended online.

Communication will be via 6 bi-monthly e-mails to all members with quick summaries and links to the website for further information. The Handbook will be replaced by a small leaflet for all members posted out at renewal, plus a revamped website.

Speleology will be produced online for all members with paper copies posted to subscribers (with a discount for Members to reflect the fact that they already pay for the content through their membership).

produced by BCA Executive for discussion at BCA Council on 28 March 2014