

BCA Newsletter No 27

October 2016

Edited by Robin Weare



Chairman's Introduction

Since the last newsletter the very major event that has taken place was Euro Speleo, although not directly coming under the auspices of the British Caving Association BCA officials were very involved with it.

A great deal of work was done by a large number of people, but one in particular who broke all records for the amount of effort put in was Damian Weare, I would like to give thanks to Damian for Euro Speleo. Also to thank him for all the work he has put in to being Secretary to BCA over the last 7 years or so. His contribution has been immense and we in the BCA Council will all miss him a great deal. Simon Brooks has taken over as Secretary assisted by the new BCA Clerical Assistant - Leanne Barrett. Leanne took the minutes at a BCA Council meeting on the first day of her appointment, and the draft minutes are looking very good.

As promised at the last AGM, work on conservation is going on hand in hand with the clarification of the CRoW Act. Andrew Hinde, who took a major role in Euro Speleo with a lot of the discussions on cave protection, and, in conjunction with his committee and Tim Allen, is producing an amount of literature on cave conservation. The cave conservation code with its six points is widely circulating and I particularly like the beer mat/coaster which was distributed to those who attended Eurospeleo.

Bob Mehew is producing a number of leaflets which should promote caving in a good light and will also help towards cave conservation. Thank you to Bob.

Subscription levels for 2017 are remaining the same for individual members. However, it is anticipated that, with an increase in insurance tax and the re-assessment of caving insurance in the year 2018, there will have to be an increase then.

BCRA is very active at the moment and I would like to thank the outgoing Chairman Dave Checkley for all his contributions and welcome John Gunn the incoming Chairman of BCRA. It is good to have a professional scientific arm to British caving.

We are now having a regular presence in the Descent magazine, both by way of editorial and advertising, so I would encourage British cavers to support the UK's major popular caving magazine.

Andy Eavis
BCA Chairman

5th European Speleological Congress (Eurospeleo)

BCA is proud to have been involved as one of the sponsors of Eurospeleo; an event which exceeded expectations in so many ways.

This week-long festival of British caving was a huge success and attended by about **1300 delegates** from **36 countries** around the world, not just in Europe.

75 delegates also attended pre and post congress camps in the other caving regions of England and Wales.

The main event was held in the Yorkshire Dales at the Dalesbridge Centre near the village of Austwick. 6km of rope provided by Spanset and Teufelberger was used to rig 176 pitches in over 30 of the Yorkshire Dales' finest caves. They were rigged for the duration of the event by over 30 caving clubs from across the UK.

Almost **700 caving trips** took place around the Dales with an estimated **400km prussiked** during the week. In addition to this the [Craven Pothole Club](#) set up their winch over the impressive Gaping Gill and transported delegates up or down the 100m from the main chamber 400 times. Even with all this activity no cave rescue callouts were required.

I know that the Eurospeleo organisers are particularly grateful to Dalesbridge, Spanset and Teufelberger and Craven Pothole Club, their three major sponsors, as well as all the other sponsors who were so generous. It is understood that Jon Beavan, the owner of Dalesbridge, is recovering from a serious medical problem – JJ we wish you well and all hope to see you up and about very soon [Editor]

Aside from the caving, **110 lectures** and **11 field trips** took place with a large range of talks on discovery, science and archaeology by speakers from all over the world offering something for everyone. You can [read the session abstracts online](#).

Competitions were also popular. The custom built scaffolding rig in the centre of the site hosted SRT races, timed prussiks, knot tying and more. The photo, art and survey salons attracted a very high standard of work. [Click here for more details of the winners](#).

Each evening was filled with entertainment from bands, discos and quizzes with over **118 barrels of beer** being consumed.

1,050m of security fencing was erected; **2,489m of electric cable** was installed and **375m of water and waste pipe** was laid by the regular Hidden Earth team who were amazing – especially in the appalling weather which preceded and followed the main event.

Delegates used **1310 toilet rolls** – that's 47.2 km of tissue - and the quite brilliant catering staff prepared **800 meals per day**.

And - for most of the week – **the sun shone**.

Eurospeleo Legacy

Everyone I spoke to during Eurospeleo was hugely impressed by the quality of the cave descriptions published by the Eurospeleo team [Editor]. An initiative to make them available in the long term is explained by CNCC Secretary, Matt Ewles.

The cave descriptions which were written for Eurospeleo proved rather more popular than expected. By popular demand, these are currently being modified to be non-Eurospeleo focussed and will soon appear on the CNCC website. Furthermore, we are delighted to say that the CNCC rigging topos (as found in the CNCC Rigging Guides, and more recently, the excellent book 'Northern Caving') will also be included with these online descriptions - many thanks to the CNCC Technical Group for allowing these to be made freely available.

There will be a reporting tool to alert us to any errors in the topos and descriptions, meaning they will be continuously updated. There will be more news to come as this project progresses.

BCA Subscriptions for 2017

At the BCA Council meeting on 1st October the levels of subscription for the following year were discussed.

It was agreed that BCA had sufficient resources to cover the expected deficit on individual members' contributions for the year, so the cost of BCA membership for Direct Individual Members and Club Individual Members will remain the same for 2017, although it is likely that an increase will be necessary in 2018.

However, it was decided that there would be an increase in subscriptions for caving clubs in 2017. There is a sliding scale, dependent on the number of members in the club, so the amount will vary - for the largest clubs the increase will be £20, while for smaller clubs the rise will be limited to £5. There will also be a £10 increase in the additional charge to access controllers, associate members and to clubs which provide accommodation.

CNCC Council seeks Individual Member

A fuller report of the CNCC decision to expand Council Membership appeared in the April newsletter. We now have a reminder from CNCC Secretary Matt Ewles

At the CNCC AGM on 11th March 2017 (Hellifield Village Institute, 10am), as well as electing the annual Officers and club Committee, we will, for the first time be electing a Committee member to represent the needs of cavers who cave predominantly outside a club structure. This Individual Caver (IC) representative can be any BCA-individual member (with either club or direct membership) and will be elected by a majority vote of all attending BCA Direct Individual Members (DIMs). If you often cave outside of clubs and you would like to play a greater role in working with the CNCC to improve northern caving, why don't you come along to the AGM to elect a representative (bring your BCA card to deliver a vote), or perhaps consider standing to be the representative yourself?

The successful applicant will ideally be available to attend three Committee meetings and the AGM across the year, and should be willing to serve as a point of contact for any cavers who also regularly cave outside of clubs to help ensure that the CNCC is better able to represent their needs.

More details can be found in our June newsletter which can be downloaded from our website [publications](#) page.

The deadline for all applications, including Officer and Committee applications (including the IC representative), as well as applications from clubs to become full members (to enable a vote at our AGM) is Saturday 14th January 2017.

Please get in touch with the CNCC Secretary, Matt Ewles (secretary@cncc.org.uk) if you need any assistance or information on how to apply.

European Cave Protection Symposium

BCA's Conservation & Access Officer, Andrew Hinde, who attended the Symposium, which was held during and as part of Eurospeleo 2016, updates us:

This well attended event took place during the Eurospeleo Congress in August 2016. The theme for presentations and workshops was "Cave Protection under EU Law" and featured some of the many Cave Monitoring procedures used across European karst areas.

British Delegates were major contributors and made useful contributions in spite of the "Brexit" dilemma. They also made useful connections with their European counterparts.

The symposium concluded with a Biological Monitoring Field Trip to Scoska Cave. This was probably the most productive element of the symposium and generated a good Q&A session with some of the leading Biospeleologists in Europe.

BCA Conservation Publications

I've not overlooked the fact that these were mentioned in the last newsletter but I think they're important so make no apology for the repeat [Editor]

Cave Conservation Code

- 1 Cave with care and thought for the environment.
- 2 Disturb nothing whether living or geological.
- 3 Avoid touching formations.
- 4 Keep to marked routes and never cross conservation tapes.
- 5 Take nothing but photographs.
- 6 Do not pollute the cave, leave nothing behind.



The code was printed onto a coaster and distributed to those who attended Eurospeleo 2016.

Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines

The new Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines leaflet was distributed to those who attended Eurospeleo 2016 and copies of the leaflet will be made available to Regional Councils for distribution to member clubs. It can also be downloaded from the BCA website.

British Caving Library

The British Caving Library's stand at Eurospeleo2016 took over £400 in donations for a "Lucky Dip" of unwanted duplicate journals and books. Both UK and foreign publications were snapped up and about 13 archive boxes full were successfully "recycled". A number of new publications were donated to the library and some of the "takings" were used to buy new books.

With the purchase and installation of extra shelving it has been possible to complete the incorporation of the John Beck/Doug Nash legacy into the Library holdings and the C.R.O. archive has now been placed on the BCRA Online Archive, where it available to everyone.

Forthcoming BCA leaflets

BCA Council has approved the development of a series of leaflets providing advice and information and Bob Mehew is busy drafting them.

Most of the leaflets will be produced in electronic form and made available via the BCA website from where it will be possible to print copies.

Included in this project are the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines leaflet and the Weil's Disease card which have already been produced and widely distributed. Copies of the Weil's Disease cards will also be issued with the 2017 membership cards.

During the summer a new printed leaflet was produced for distribution to caving shops and show caves focused on members of the public interested in going caving. That leaflet includes comments about the dangers, the need for conservation and protection of caves.

Work is now moving on a leaflet to cover digging. Although DCA and CNCC have produced leaflets for their areas, they focus on digging on SSSI locations but omit the significant area of dig abandonment. It is no longer acceptable to just leave a dig with gear decaying away. The new leaflet will deal with digging both above and below ground as well as on or off SSSI locations.

Work has also started on a New Member's Pack. Member clubs have been consulted and the current thinking is to include the participation statement, Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines and Training advice (under preliminary consideration by Training Committee). Suggestions are sought for other material for inclusion. Examples of club's work in this area would also be welcomed.

British Caving Audio Archive

If you've not checked out this resource you should. The archive already contains many hours of material which has to be of interest to anyone who ever goes underground and is regularly added to. [Editor]

Andy Chapman has been busy in the last few months and has added over twenty interviews to this valuable resource. To listen to his recent interviews with Rick Stanton, Derek Ford, Jason Mallinson & Andy Eavis visit <http://caving-library.org.uk/audio/list.php?sort=desc>

An Education Strategy for the Conservation of Caves

The C&A committee have prepared an Education Strategy for the Conservation of Caves. Please note that this is NOT a policy document with details. It is more of a road map showing our proposed direction of travel. It is for BCA guidance and eventually it is hoped to have guidance prepared for use by Clubs and Constituent Bodies should they wish to take advantage of it.

The British Caving Association believes that the most effective long term means of conserving caves is through education.

The BCA will produce material, such as the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines and 6 Point Caving Code, in a variety of formats and make it widely available to their membership and beyond.

The BCA will encourage all membership groups, constituent bodies, clubs and individuals, to strengthen their conservation message.

Whilst education is a key issue, the BCA also support conservation monitoring schemes such as the SSSI Monitoring Projects, and conservation management, such as route marking, signage and conservation wardens. In this respect, the BCA recommends adopting a guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation need. We also acknowledge the value of Cave Management Plans and Conservation Audits.

Ideally all people visiting a cave should hear a conservation message. The primary focus should be on those new to the activity but the message should also be used as a reminder to those who are more regularly engaged with caving activities. The BCA believes there are four main ways to deliver a conservation message:

- Through caving clubs. Many cavers are members of caving clubs or have contact with them. The club has an ideal opportunity to pass on conservation messages. Some clubs nominate a ‘conservation officer’ for this purpose and BCA encourages clubs to consider this.
- Through caving instructors. Many people are introduced to caving through an instructed caving trip. The cave instructor training and assessment scheme requires conservation briefings to be delivered and other conservation considerations to be met as part of trip planning.
- At the cave and in the caving area. Some people with an interest in visiting caves will not be instructed or contacted by a club. These may be experienced cavers or relative novices. Regional Caving Councils are encouraged to play a role ensuring the message is available in local shops, cafes, events and even at the cave itself where this is appropriate.
- Online via Websites and Social Media platforms.

Recent BCRA Publications

Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales

The latest chapter of volume 2 to go on line is "Caves of Pen-y-ghent and Fountains Fell". You can access this book at <http://bcra.org.uk/dales> but please note that to access the above chapter you will need to log in with the ID on your BCRA membership card.

This will be the last of the chapters to be made available online in advance of the publication of the paper edition of Volume 2. The remaining chapters (three on the Three Counties Cave System, and one on Gaping Gill) will first appear in the printed version of the book, which will be published early in 2017. Only some time after publication of the printed edition will the remaining chapters be placed on-line.

BCRA Newsletter

A BCRA newsletter was mailed to members at the end of September. The text is also online at <http://bcra.org.uk/news>

CREG Journal

CREG journal 95 has been mailed to subscribers and is online at <http://bcra.org.uk/cregj>

BCRA Review

BCRA Review is a new publication that will appear annually and will contain reports of the previous year's activities, together with annual reports from BCRA officers and a copy of the annual report and accounts that we send to the Charity Commission. It will be edited by David Lowe in a similar format to Cave and Karst Science.

The first issue of the BCRA Review will cover the year 2015, but it will also include meetings reports from earlier years that did not make it into Speleology. The Review is available as a free download from <http://bcra.org.uk/news>

Only a limited number of paper copies will be printed, and will be offered for sale at meetings, whilst stocks last.

Cave Studies booklets

There have been some slight updates and corrections to Cave Studies #17, The Grotte Casteret. Cave Studies #1, "Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales: A Field Guide", by Tony Waltham and Martin Davies has been reprinted. This is the oldest of the Cave Studies booklets, published in 1987. Please note that the text has not been revised, merely re-printed. Obviously the geology has not changed in 30 years, but there will be some caves that are not mentioned in the booklet. Both booklets are available as a download and can be ordered on paper too.

Eli Simpson Archive

Eli Simpson (1884 – 1962) was a founder member, and certainly the leading light, of the British Speleological Association which merged with the Cave Research Group of Great Britain in 1973 to form BCRA.

Work has started on the ambitious task of digitising the Simpson Archive, which comprises 100 large-format record books containing a fascinating mixture of maps, surveys, photographs, exploration accounts, news-paper cuttings and published articles.

The Simpson Archive belongs to BCRA but is stored, under controlled conditions, in the National Geological Repository at the British Geological Survey (BGS). The plan is for BGS Keyworth to send volumes, a few at a time, to BGS Edinburgh where Bob McIntosh works; and for Bob and a team of volunteers to carry out the digitisation. Anyone who lives near Edinburgh and wishes to assist, please contact BCRA.

One small part of the archive, comprising the 227 pages of the Gaping Gill volume has already been digitised and can be seen within the BCRA website at <http://archives.bcra.org.uk/?dir=simpson>. *It makes fascinating reading [Editor]*

Hut Locks

The BCA legal & Insurance Officer, Bob Mehew, shares information which may be of some benefit to clubs which provide accommodation:

Whilst looking for some information, I came across an interesting note on the BMC website at <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/keypad-locks-for-mountaineering-club-huts> on keypad locks. Given the BMC use the same broker and insurer as BCA, the BMC advice applies to any club which is thinking of seeking hut insurance from Perkin Slade. I understand that in making an application for hut insurance, one is likely to be asked about locks on both windows and doors and whether they match some standard such as British Standard 3621. Perkin Slade has made the effort to get several keypad locks accepted by the insurer which otherwise would have been excluded. Whether other insurers will take a similar approach is an open question.

It is also worth remembering that clubs thinking of changing their locks should check with their insurers that the proposed new lock will meet the insurer's specification. BS 3621 focuses on cylinder based locks (the classic Yale lock). RFID and keypad locks appear to not be covered by BS 3621, though this does not necessarily mean they are weaker.

It is also worth noting that whilst each club hut is quite different, it does appear that Perkin Slade's hut insurance premium is very competitive compared to other insurers.

Peak District Online Access Guide

Using the software developed by Matt Voysey and made freely available to DCA a huge amount of work has gone into this project. DCA Chairman, Wayne Sheldon, tells us it is now online:

The online access guide for the Peak District is now online and can be viewed at <http://thedca.org.uk>. It incorporates all the catchment data except Hamps / Manifold which will follow later this year.

Any online guide is only as good as the data that has been put into the system so do take a look at it and if you see any errors, please let us know by submitting updates on the *contact us* links provided within the online registry.

Although it's going live, there is still much work to be done to update it with more accurate grid references, levels, lengths and depths etc. If you have more accurate data, please let us have it.

We will be incorporating a picture library and a bibliography into the online guide at some point in the future. Watch out for further correspondence throughout the year when we will start to request pictures.

Thanks to Matt Voysey for allowing us to use his database software.

Cave Access Update

Hafna Lead Mine (North Wales)

See the latest Cambrian Newsletter for information to this latest addition to the portfolio of National Resources Wales sites accessed through their agreement with Cave Access Limited. For access arrangements visit www.caveaccess.co.uk/

Snake Mine (Derbyshire)

Mrs. Slater is quite happy for cavers to visit Snake Mine but has asked that in future cavers contact her by email **before** their proposed visit, rather than call at the house, as she no longer lives there. For each proposed visit she would like a list of Names, BCA Insurance Numbers and Addresses for all who may be coming to visit the mine and a statement that it is entirely at your own risk that you enter the mine. If possible a template for a suitable letter will be added to the DCA Online Conservation & Access website where it gives access information for Snake Mine. The email address to use for Mrs. Slater is info@jcb Slater.com

Suicide Cave (Derbyshire)

There are continuing problems at the main entrance to Suicide Cave: rubbish dumped - including glass and tins, fires lit, misuse as a barbecue site, persistent use as a toilet, etc. This is a useful site for caving with beginners and is often used by instructed groups but the continuing misuse is now making it impossible for cavers to use the normal walk-in entrance. The problems have continued, despite cave instructors regularly clearing and cleaning this entrance. The land is owned by the National Trust so consultations are taking place between cavers, cave instructors and the National Trust with a view to preventing the misuse while still leaving the site easily accessible to cavers who are prepared to use the alternative entrance which requires crawling.

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