

BCA Newsletter No 30

July 2017

Edited by Robin Weare



Editorial

Although I've edited the newsletter for a few years this is my first editorial. It is also my last editorial as this is my final newsletter. It was after the October 2014 Council meeting and an impassioned plea from Les, that I volunteered to take it on - simply to prove that it can be done.

I feel that I have succeeded in that self imposed task, thanks to the many contributors who have sometimes overwhelmed me with information. My mission has been to try to bring the benefits of BCA to the attention of the membership and to highlight the hard work done on behalf of members by a comparatively few volunteers who serve on Council, sub committees, working groups and constituent bodies.

One thing I've not done is make it look pretty; it needs someone more technically savvy to take it forward and it would be good to think that the right volunteer will appear and keep it going.

The one major disappointment has been that the newsletter is read by only a small proportion of our members. And this is despite the advent of BCA Online and the means to have it delivered as an e-mail attachment.

Whilst editing the newsletter I have realised what a huge contribution has been made over an extended period by a very few individuals to ensure that the administration of British caving runs smoothly. That those few work quietly behind the scenes and ask nothing of the 5,000 odd members who enjoy the fruits of their efforts and often abuse them online is very much to their credit. On behalf of the silent majority I offer them our thanks.

Robin Weare

Chairman's Introduction

Following on from Robin's editorial, I would like to start by thanking him very much indeed for all the work he has put into the newsletter over the last few years. I think he has made an excellent job of it and the information is there in a very readable form and of course forms the basis of what's been going on in BCA quarter by quarter over the last few years.

I would like to repeat Robin's point that we would like it to reach more of our members.

The recent AGM weekend at Castleton was again a great success, similar to the one there four years ago.

As Chairman, I must hand out a number of thanks for a lot of work put in by a small group of individuals, particularly Henry Rockliff and Martin Grayson who spent the

entire weekend cooking for the masses. The food was good, the prices very reasonable and the effort put in extraordinary. Thank you very much indeed guys.

Further thanks of course to Les and Wendy Williams and their team who looked after the bar and in a very business-like fashion and with great service to all attendees.

There are many other thanks for the weekend that could be given, but particularly I should like to pick out Robin Weare who handled the finances and made the books virtually break-even, thank you very much indeed Robin.

The AGM on the Sunday morning was I think a successful affair, and not too long and with a lot of constructiveness and many good suggestions in addition to the normal business.

I should particularly like to thank Nick Williams for picking up the job of Secretary, and also thank Simon Brooks for his contribution as Secretary over the last 12 months.

I am pleased Bob Mehew has joined the BCA Executive to share the load of many quick decision requests.

The separation in training between recreational and the Qualifications Management Committee is a positive step forward. I thank Nigel Atkins for taking on the Training Officer role looking after recreational training and Graham Mollard chairing the QMC looking after the certification side.

I should now like to mention the ballot will be an important milestone in BCA history tidying up the constitution in a number of ways. It should enable BCA to campaign for things that are instrumental to caves and caving; including things like quarrying, allowing internet balloting will also potentially make BCA more democratic and will enable it to appeal to more of its membership.

It would be very useful if more of our members could agree to being contacted by email so that we can directly and positively inform our members by way of such things as the newsletter.

Additionally, I should like to ask, if there is anyone out there who could assist with the running of BCA, we are desperately short of volunteers and currently of course need a new Equipment and Techniques Officer, and also Robin is due to finish his term as Treasurer in six months-time.

Finally, I should like to thank Robin most sincerely again for his work on the newsletter over the last three years. His efforts are very greatly appreciated and it would be very good if somebody came forward to fill his boots and continue producing this valuable piece of information.

Andy Eavis
BCA Chairman

BCA's AGM & Party Weekend

This year's event was held in Derbyshire over the weekend of 10/11 June and based at the Rotary Centre in Castleton, as it had been in 2013 when the series started.

The Weekend

Although many arrived earlier to set up and organise the programme officially started at 7pm on Friday 9th June with the catering team offering a fine range of pizza and a Speleo Bar – both available until late. When the bar was setting up Les mentioned that he'd purchased some lovely pink rhubarb cider "for the girls". In fact it proved to be a big hit with the "boys" who drank it all very, very quickly. Look out for more at Hidden Earth.



Les at the bar (photo Dave Cooke)



The kitchen team at work (photo Dave Cooke)

Saturday morning started with a superb breakfast and was followed by a host of activities. Some of those attending actually went underground; for others there were visits to the British Caving Library at Glutton Bridge, expedition training, an interesting talk on water tracing by John Gunn as well as a surface walk around the Peak/Speedwell catchment led, in the rain, by Paul Hardwick. The walk started from Perryfoot and took in several of the swallets in the catchment of Speedwell Cavern before visiting Eldon Hill Quarry, passing through the catchment to view dolines that have been traced to Peak Cavern and finally visiting the three Castleton springs: Russet Well, Slop Moll and Peak Cavern Rising via the Cave Dale dry valley.



Badger busy at the Bar (photo: Robin Weare)



Children at play on the climbing frame (photo: Robin Weare)

Lunch was available for those who remained at the Rotary Centre and in the early part of the evening there was a Bar-B-Q, a cavers sing-along led by Rostam Namaghi and,

of course, a bar. Many of the pots and pans left the kitchen to serve as “armour” for the (unscheduled) jousting event and the evening concluded with a techno/house party which was ably conducted by 99 Flake and went on only a little longer than it was supposed to. A valiant, but ultimately unsuccessful, effort was made to empty the bar.



Rostam leads the sing – along (photo: Dave Cooke)

As well as those individuals already mentioned special thanks are due to Les & Wendy Williams who ran the bar and to Henry Rockliff, Martyn Grayson and the catering team. You were all brilliant.....

The Meetings

The draft minutes of the AGM are now available on the BCA web site and it is expected that the draft minutes of the subsequent Council Meeting will soon appear. The AGM started with a welcome from our Chairman, Andy Eavis, and went on to consider and accept each of the officers’ reports without too much discussion.

Les Williams was re-appointed for a further term as Publications & Information Officer but the posts of Equipment Officer and Treasurer were left vacant (although Robin Weare subsequently agreed to continue as Acting Treasurer for a further 6 months).

Of long term significance was the recommendation by Youth Development Officer, Rostam Namaghi, that his post be replaced by a working group; the election of two of BCA’s younger members, Mark Richardson and William Burn, to Council as Individual Member representatives and the creation of a Youth Development working group at the subsequent Council meeting with Rostam as convenor and Thom Starnes, Rob Eavis, Mark Richardson & William Burn as members.

Other significant appointments by Council were of Nick Williams as Acting Secretary, replacing Simon Brooks who had stood down; the co-option of Bob Mehew to serve as an additional member of the Executive and of Nigel Atkins as Training Officer, replacing Nigel Ball who had stood down,

As instructed by the AGM, Council set up a working group to be known as the Qualifications Management Committee to run the BCA Local Cave and Mine Leader Assessment and the Cave Instructor Certificate schemes and appointed Graham Mollard as Chair. This leaves the Training Committee to look after recreational caving.

The first significant motion at the AGM concerned the interpretation of the opening sentence in Section 4.6 of BCA's constitution, namely "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access". It had been claimed that this sentence barred BCA from any campaigning "... for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) to apply to going underground." The argument accepted by the AGM was that the sentence did not bar BCA from doing so and the motion was passed by the meeting.

The second significant motion was remitted from last year's AGM and covered several alternative proposals to either replace or delete that sentence. The AGM took the view that removing it would not show disrespect to landowners and members selected the deletion approach for the substantive vote by a margin of 38 to 8. The meeting went on to pass the motion with 43 individual members voting for and 3 against and 17 group members for and 3 against.

The other significant motion remitted from last year's AGM on proxy voting fared less well. In the end 73% of the individual members were in favour but the proposal failed to reach the 70% of group members also required by the constitution and, accordingly, it failed to pass.

Several motions were put forward to 'tidy up' the constitution. That on clarifying the voting method for officers as a simple show of hands rather than the formal two house system was passed. The more significant motion on expanding the system of balloting to permit online balloting was also accepted with all individual members voting in favour and only one out of 19 group members voting against. BCA's Executive did give a strong assurance that this did not mean an end to postal ballots and that both approaches would remain available. The AGM was completed within 3 hours which was notably better than last year.

Arrangements for the Ballot

The constitutional changes agreed by the AGM must now be ratified by a ballot of the entire BCA membership.

BCA's Executive is working on how best to implement the ballot. Broadly speaking the approach being taken is the same as used in 2010 with one notable exception. The ballot paper will be circulated by email to all members who have provided their email address to BCA and by post to the rest. Printed voting forms will be supplied on request. The paper states each proposal and gives the resultant change to the constitution so members can see its full impact. The Executive will provide a short commentary for each of the proposals based on the proposers' comments and points made during the AGM discussion. The ballot will open by early August and will close by mid September. Members are required to complete the voting part and return it by post.

The returned papers will be counted under the supervision of an independent examiner and the results declared at BCA's Council meeting on 7 October.

Nick Williams (Acting Secretary)

A Reminder

BCA Online allows members to login under their own membership number and set their own email contact preferences. They can change their email address and password as necessary. They can review their membership details (membership status, insurance status, address, etc) as held by BCA. This provides BCA with a verified and maintained list of email addresses and crucially, to remain legal, the consents to use them. **It will greatly assist the ballot process if as many members as possible register for BCA Online in advance of the ballot and that those members who are already registered check to ensure that the information held is up to date.**

BCA at the Royal Geographical Society

It is now confirmed that BCA, in conjunction with BCRA, will be taking over the Royal Geographical Society in December. BCA Chairman, Andy Eavis, who has been the prime mover in this, tells us about some of the plans:

The theme of the weekend will be the British involvement in cave exploration during the last 50 years. It will begin at 7pm on the evening of Friday 1st December with a series of public lectures by Frank Pearson who will talk on UK caves and the history of their exploration; Dick Willis on British International caving history; Howard Limbert on Vietnam and particularly Hang Soong Don. The final lecture will be by Gina Mosely who will talk on the history of British cave science. Andy Eavis will chair the session.

There will be a pay bar available at the Royal Geographical Society all evening and tickets will cost £10 each and be available from Eventbrite <http://bit.ly/2sgD0zI> or on the door but advance booking is recommended.

Saturday and Sunday tickets will cost £5.00 for each day. Saturday can be booked in advance at <http://bit.ly/2t6R7us> and Sunday at <http://bit.ly/2uf5XNM>. Tickets may also be available on the door, but advance booking is recommended. Enquiries to rgsdec17@bcra.org.uk. Each day there will be 8 individual sessions; probably 3 on science, 1 on general caving topics and 4 on British cave exploration at home and abroad.

Monday evening will be a normal Royal Geographical Society Fellows Lecture. Andy Eavis will chair the session which will comprise presentations by Tony Waltham - the history of British cave exploration, Tim Atkinson - the history of British cave science and Hazel Barton will present a guest lecture on cave bacteria - cutting edge science.

Hidden Earth

Hidden Earth will be back on the weekend of **29 Sept to 1 Oct 2017** at [Churchill Academy](#) in the Mendips. The Hidden Earth website will be updated with more information soon. That the bar will have a large stock of Rhubarb Cider is a firm promise. That there may be other “interesting” flavours is a distinct possibility.

BBC Cavers

There has been a lot of interest in the caving clip which is shown quite regularly by the BBC. Alan Jefferies tells us how he and the Grampian got involved, where it was and who was there.

In February of this year (2017), a researcher from BBC Creative contacted the Grampian SG regarding the possibility of filming an 'ident', a prefatory 'mini-feature' to be shown before BBC1 programmes. Viewers will be familiar with the sort of thing required: the Brecon Mountain Rescue Team; swimmers at Avonmouth; wheelchair rugby players; bird watchers – there are quite a few now, all part of their 'Oneness' campaign. The BBC planned to include a couple of Scottish items (the other is a group of Bollywood dancers from Edinburgh). They were greatly taken with the idea of a bunch of cavers, so contacted myself to sound out possibilities.

A party of nine was required, with a suitable gender/age/size balance so, as contact person and arranger, I called together three cavers from GUPA and six from the GSG. The location of the shoot was a chamber in Well Cave, one of the East Wemyss raised beach caves in Fife and despite their ludicrously easy nature we were required to appear in full regalia, SRT and everything, to pretend we were about to descend into some bottomless chasm.



L to R A. Pied, A. Audsley, R. Davidson, S. McWhinney, S. Robinson, A. Morgan, A. Jeffreys, A. Chan and M. O'Driscoll (Photographer unknown)

There was some scouting beforehand, to try and identify a good site within range of Edinburgh (which really reduced the choice to two sites: the East Wemyss caves and Archerfield Cave in East Lothian), and actual filming took place from 9am on Wednesday 1st March. Various scenarios had us gathering in a group, crawling in from the entrance and disappearing down a flat-out side passage, with some background conversation – mostly from myself! The producer obviously liked the idea of mystery and inferred risk surrounding cave exploration, so this particular ident will be used to introduce watershed drama such as 'Line of Duty', 'Poldark' or 'Ripper Street'. Curiously, the Scottish idents are the only ones (at time of writing) with no identifying text.

Facebook

BCA now has a facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/BritishCavingAssociation/>

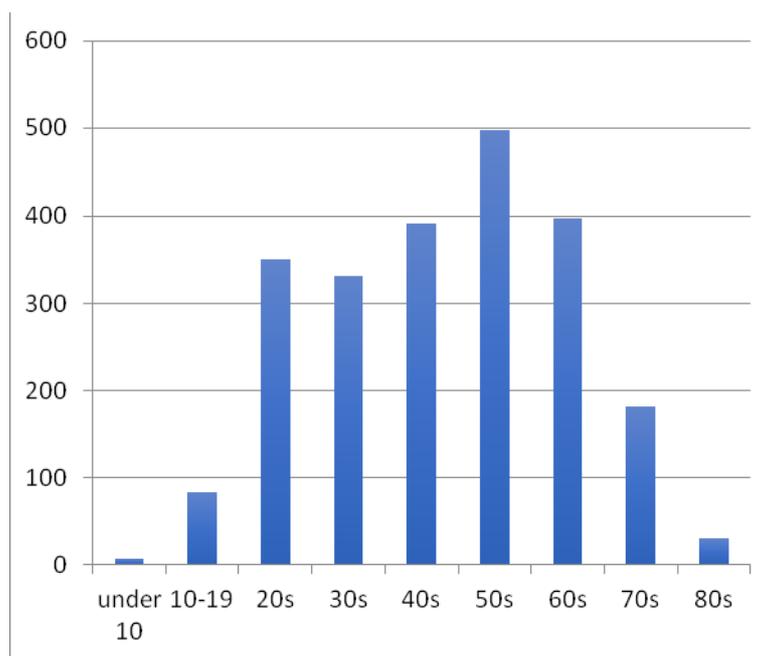
General information and updates from BCA will be posted there, including updates and information relating to the professional training schemes.

How old are we?

Members will recall that they were asked to provide year of birth information at the 2016 renewal. There was a reason for this and, with the aid of a retired statistician; Tim Allen has crunched the numbers

2270 members returned credible year of birth data out of a total of 4942. A small number of entries were removed from the sample which gave ages over life expectancy or were not actually a year of birth.

The sample size is considered to be adequate but it is reasonable to ask whether it is representative of the membership. There may be age bias in whether members chose to respond to the request for year of birth. Nevertheless it is all we have to go on.



There are considerably more members in their 50s than in their 20s and 30s. The median age is 49 – nearly half the membership is 50 or over. 18% of the membership is over 65.

There will be further work on this and it is hoped that we'll have more information following the next renewal process. Meanwhile, it is felt that a time trend would provide useful information and, with suitably anonymised data, Stuart France has volunteered to use the fact that membership numbers were issued in a chronological order to work out year of joining and year of leaving and thus sort out a time trend.

Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults

An update from BCA's Legal & Insurance Officer, Bob Mehew.

Whilst there has been no response to the request for comments about BCA's child protection policy and guidance, recent events suggest that a reminder on some basic points would be of value.

The first point is that the topic is wider than just children; it also applies to vulnerable adults. Although there are some significant differences in the treatment of children and vulnerable adults, there is a core feature that care must be taken when engaging with them.

The second point is that all clubs should ensure that they have a person nominated to deal with any complaint or reasonable suspicion about abuse, mistreatment or whatever involving a member of the club with a child or vulnerable adult. Whilst hopefully this person will never have anything to do; their function is to take any expression of concern by other members and then either help that person to report their concern to the appropriate authority or report it on their behalf. The appropriate authority will often be the local Safeguarding Board, a body set up by each Local Authority. You can find out who is your local board by simply searching on line for your Local Authority and use the term 'safeguarding'. Many Councils have separate boards for children and adults. Reports which give rise to extreme concern (such as clear physical abuse) should be taken to the police. It is emphasised that the function of this person is not to investigate or make judgements; it is purely to receive and then convey the information.

The third point is that children, and that means anyone under the age of 18, and vulnerable adults should be present at a club activity in the company of their parent, guardian or a family friend. Otherwise the club should have someone who is appointed to take responsibility for them and does so. That role is potentially onerous. Clubs offering to take groups of children or vulnerable adults underground are advised to ensure that the group's adult leader(s) also goes underground with them and has confirmed their authority for being responsible for the group in respect of safeguarding matters. That way, the club has no need to take responsibility on itself for safeguarding matters.

BCA Webservices

Amongst the many services BCA provides to the wider caving community is the funding and hosting of websites for Regional Councils, BCRA, BCRA's Special Interest Groups, Cave Registry Data Archive, British Caving Library and some of the cave rescue organisation. This is done through BCA Webservices which also hosts the main BCA website. Additionally it provides web hosting at a reasonable cost and the income received goes a long way to covering the cost of the "free" sites

Corporation Tax and Clubs

Following an enquiry from one of our member clubs BCA's Acting Treasurer, Robin Weare, reminds clubs that they may have to pay Corporation Tax - and this is particularly relevant to those clubs which previously had CASC status as they may have got used to the exemption that status gave them.

Corporation Tax is a tax on the profits of limited companies and some organisations including clubs, societies, associations, co-operatives, charities and other unincorporated bodies.

Taxable profits for Corporation Tax include:

- profits from taxable income such as trading profits and investment profits (except dividend income which is taxed differently)
- capital gains – known as 'chargeable gains' for Corporation Tax purposes

What are clubs liable for? The activities of most clubs will be exempt from Corporation Tax on the grounds of what is called mutual trading which is essentially the re-cycling of members' own money for the purpose of running the recreational, sporting affairs of the club for their benefit. Although income from mutual trading is exempt from CT, income from non-members, and investment income, such as bank interest, is taxable. If a club thinks it might have income that is taxable, it should contact HMRC.

Although there is a process by which HMRC will accept that returns would not be necessary from unincorporated organisations where the tax at stake would be less than £100, which at a CT rate of around 20% means bank interest of less than £500 per annum, it is necessary to make a formal application for this concession to apply.

Incorporated clubs are required to complete a tax return even if their tax liability is below £100 and all clubs should be aware that tax evasion is an offence.

Another consideration is the change that came in 1 April 2011 in respect of all companies and organisations that have to complete a tax return; they are required to submit it online for any accounting period ending after 31 March 2010. Additionally, if you have to prepare accounts under the Companies Act 2006, you must submit your accounts and computations in a set format.

So, in a nutshell, (save for a concession regarding trading undertaken to raise money for charity), club incomes other than that protected by the mutual trading provisions are taxable, however, it must not be forgotten that trading income will be subject to the deduction of related expenses and allowances. Combine this with the online reporting requirements and larger clubs, certainly those with huts and income from non members, would be well advised to consider taking professional advice.

BCA Website Updated

BCA's webmaster, Dave Cooke, has completed a major overhaul of the website which now has a fresher and more modern theme. He tells us:

The Google Analytics service gives an idea of how much the website is being used. For the main BCA website, for the calendar year 2016 as a monthly average there were 5980(5986) page views, 1796(2055) sessions and 1154(1436) individual users. The average user viewed 3.33(2.91) pages and stayed for 2:41(2:19) minutes. The figure in brackets is for 2015. So in summary the website is being used and that usage is pretty consistent over time. There number of users is slightly lower but they are spending more time on the site

Following the overhaul the website now works well with mobiles and tablets - most of the background photos have been provided by Jerry Wooldridge and I would like to thank him for his generosity. Please take a look and let me know what you think.

I'll add that you've done a great job, Cookie. The background photos are superb and the whole site looks great, everything is much clearer and it's a lot easier to navigate [Editor]

2021 – International Year of Caves and Karst?

The UIS has published an outline of the proposal which will be submitted to UNESCO to have 2021 proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of Caves and Karst. The proposals include:

- An opening ceremony - Postojna, Slovenia
- 18th International Congress of Speleology - Lyon, France
- International Karstological School "Classic Karst" - Postojna, Slovenia
- 4th Middle East Speleology Symposium - Beirut, Lebanon
- Free admission to show caves – Worldwide

The proposal is based upon 2010 being the 100th anniversary of the publication of Edouard Alfred Martel's landmark book *Nouveau Traité des Eaux Souterraines (New Treatise on Underground Waters)*.

The latest UIS Bulletin Volume 59-1 was published in June and can be downloaded from the UIS website <http://www.uis-speleo.org/downloads/uis-bulletins/uisb591.pdf>

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.