



Minutes of BCA Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 14 June 2015
at Dean Heritage Centre, Forest of Dean

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	Chairman / UIS Rep. / Individual Member (non-voting)
Paul Ibberson (PI)	Treasurer / Individual Member
Damian Weare (DW)	Secretary / Individual Member (non-voting)
Les Williams (LW)	Publications & Information Officer / 2016 / Wessex CC Rep. / Individual Member
Nick Williams (NW)	Equipment & Techniques Officer / Insurance Manager / Individual Member
Andrew Hinde (AH)	Conservation & Access Officer / Individual Member
David Cooke (DC)	IT Working Party / Cave-Registry / Web Services / Cheddar CC Rep. / Individual Member
Jenny Potts (JP)	Publication Sales / DCA Rep. / Individual Member
Bob Mehew (BM)	Rope-Testing / Individual Member
Helen Brooke (HB)	Youth & Development / Individual Member
Robin Weare (RW)	News Editor / Individual Member
Henry Rockliff (HR)	Individual Member
Boyd Potts (BP)	Individual Member
Martell Baines (MB)	CNCC Rep. / Individual Member
Steve Holding (SH)	NAMHO Rep. / Individual Member
Brian Schofield (BS)	CDG Rep. / Individual Member
John Hine (JH)	FODCCAG Rep. / Individual Member
Thomas Starnes (TS)	CHECC Rep. / Individual Member
John Wilcock (JW)	Individual Member
James Begley (JB)	CSCC Rep. / Individual Member
Mark Vaughan (MV)	UKMC / Individual Member
David Gibson (DG)	Individual Member
Tim Allen (TA)	Individual Member
Jane Allen (JA)	Individual Member
Matt Wire (MW)	Individual Member
Faye Litherland (FL)	Individual Member
Rostam Namaghi (RN)	Individual Member

The meeting commenced at 10:35.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed members to this Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Gunn, Idris Williams, Ged Campion, David Jean, Alan Finch, Nigel Ball, Stephan Natynczuk and Emma Porter. [*Secretary's Note: Dave Tyson (Cambrian/ Individual Member) apologised retrospectively after having a break down on the way to the meeting.*]

3. Applications for Club Membership

There are no new applications since the last Council Meeting.

4. Minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting (previously circulated)

4.1 Proposal: *That the Minutes from 16 June 2014 be confirmed as a true record*

Prop: JP, Sec: LW *agreed unanimously*

4.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 2014 AGM

None.

Officers' Reports

5. **Chairman's Report** (written report circulated)

I would like to thank the British Caving Rescue Council very sincerely for co-hosting this third new-style AGM weekend. This is slightly different from the previous two, in that, rather than being held in conjunction with BCRA and something of a stand-alone event, this year it is held in conjunction with BCRC. They have very much taken the lead in organising it and I thank them very much for this. I should also like to thank everybody who helped with the organisation last year at Dalesbridge. The weekend went very well thanks to lots of individuals. It would have been nicer if there had been slightly better attendance but the AGMs continue to have a significant number of cavers attending which is very good.

The referendum on whether members want BCA to campaign for CROW to apply to going underground took place last year and came out with a significant majority in favour. I have personally changed my opinion on this in the year and believe access and conservation of caves should be in the hands of people who understand and appreciate caves. However, for this to be viable, caving organisations at national and regional level need to up their professionalism and make it clear to the authorities that we can handle this responsibility.

In addition, I thought that the work on tackling CROW was to persuade Natural England and DEFRA that there was a mistake in the legislation and really it should be clarified. In fact, I now think a better approach would be, in addition to this bottom-up, a top-down scenario involving such people as relevant and sympathetic Members of Parliament.

Andrew Hinde and his Conservation and Access Committee have been very busy and revised the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines. In fact the latest publication is the 6th draft. It has been democratically worked on and is looking very good, as is the caving code, which is short, concise and again, is being handled democratically. Andrew reports on this separately in his section.

Training continues to need a lot of hard work and Nigel Ball has been very busy, and I thank him for his efforts.

A lot of changes have taken place in Regions which in my opinion is generally for the better. It particularly shows people care and are prepared to get stuck in for the good of caves and caving.

BCRA has had a change of Chairman and I thank Dave Checkley very much for the efforts he has done over a number of years and his infectious enthusiasm has spread throughout the organisation and, I am sure, will go on lifting the standard of cave science for many years to come. I wish the new Chairman, John Gunn, the best of luck with his efforts into the future.

Finally, I should like to thank all my fellow council members for their hard work, particularly Paul Ibberson for his work as Treasurer and Robin Weare for taking on the job of newsletter Editor and producing two newsletters to date. I know the next one is in preparation and will be out soon after this AGM.

There are many others who have worked particularly hard, but the champion is still Damian who continues to put an immense amount of effort into British Caving and we should all be very grateful to him for all his efforts. Unfortunately, it is agreed that he will retire at the end of the next AGM in 2016, so we must find a new Secretary of similar calibre before then.

Thank you all very much indeed for all your efforts.

Andy Eavis

Proposal: **that the Chairman's Report be accepted**

Prop: NW, Sec: AH agreed unanimously

6. **Secretary's Report** (written report previously circulated)

CRoW: *There can be little doubt that the issue of 2014 was CRoW and specifically whether or not the CRoW Act applies, and if not, should apply to going underground. Because of the strength of feeling on both sides, and the importance of the issue to members, Council felt a clear yes/no-style referendum was appropriate. This was carried out towards the end of 2014 and the result, published in early January, saw 61.9% of the votes supporting the notion that BCA should "campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground".*

BCA's response to this is ongoing and, technically speaking, not the subject of this report for 2014. However, for members' general interest an initial meeting with DEFRA and Natural England was held at the end of January. It was felt that the most effective course of action at the moment is likely to lie in close liaison with both Bodies, rather than clear opposition to their approach.

Indeed their existing guidance has been "clarified" a number of times in recent years and it is reasonable to assume that further "clarification" may be forthcoming if handled correctly.

In this respect careful diplomacy and measured pressure are key. This is not something we are going to achieve overnight, or indeed in the next few months but it is clear that this is currently the best way to bring about the desired result.

While this is going on, we will also be taking the opportunity to prepare our case, should our work with Natural England

and DEFRA prove fruitless.

Membership Restructuring: A roadmap to simplifying our membership structure was presented to the March 2014 Council Meeting. This split the process into three clear stages:

- 1) Initial Preparations
- 2) Implementation of Universal Individual Membership
- 3) Financial Rebalancing following stage 2.

Stage 1, the initial preparations, is the most demanding of these stages and it is pleasing to report that it is now well underway. BCA is a complex organisation but I hope that I will be able to report further progress at next year's AGM.

Secretary Position: Next year will be the end of my third three-year term as Secretary and I have made it clear that I will not be standing again. I take this opportunity to remind everyone that I will not be changing my mind!

Damian Weare

Proposal: **that the Secretary's Report be accepted**

Prop: LW, Sec: BP agreed unanimously

7. Treasurer's Report

The last year has been very much a case of "as you were" in terms of the treasury/accounting side of the Association and this year's AGM report will bear significant similarities to the previous one. As reported 12 months ago, whilst opportunities to improve the process undoubtedly exist, I have not been able to progress things as I would have liked. Hence the 2014 Accounts have been prepared on the same basis and platform as those for 2013. There remains an ideal position of spreading the investment of the capital fund to reduce risk, although whilst the main deposit remains with Barclays we can at least take the view that the risk is small. Improving the return on investment is still something of a forlorn exercise, but should be an objective that is kept very much under review as the financial institutions continue to move the goalposts on a regular basis.

As this report is being compiled, the 2014 Accounts are being scrutinised by our Independent Examiner. A draft copy has been prepared for circulation with the Officers' Reports and I expect these to be confirmed by the Examiner and then formally signed off at the AGM.

With respect to the 2014 Accounts, I can report again that the broad picture is very similar to the previous year. There have been no fundamental departures from the basic setup and operation of the main areas of activity. Certain transactions have impacted on the detail, but the overall scenario remains the same. The Association continues to more than meet its running costs and the Reserves position remains sound for the current view of future activities; any new funding matters can thus be considered accordingly. As noted earlier, there remains the dual objective of squeezing a greater return from the cash reserve whilst at the same time minimising and spreading the investment risk. However, the current investment climate still does not lend itself to that scenario; it remains the case though that to ensure opportunities are not missed, Executive should be authorised to transfer deposits as required if suitable products are brought forward.

In terms of the 2014 position, Subscription income was unchanged during the year. Against this, the cost of administering membership fell slightly which meant that the overall surplus increased. General subscription expenses returned to normal levels after equipment costs were charged in the prior year. General Association running costs increased notably when compared to the previous year, but this was solely the impact of the costs of the CRoW ballot. Conservation and Access expenditure increased for much the same underlying reason.

Training Services once more ran a deficit during the year. Mostly this came about due to a cyclical reduction in Training Scheme registration income. It is anticipated that this element will return to more normal levels in 2015 and it remains the case that over the years a cumulative surplus has resulted from these activities. Costs for Training were broadly in line with prior years. Caver Training costs increased in the year due to support of both the Voluntary Sector and increased awards for recreational caver training.

Publications costs were reduced as Handbook and Newsletter costs were Nil in the year. Costs for Speleology included the balance of previous issue preparation. E&T expenses were in line with the previous year. Meetings & Conferences included the AGM Party Weekend – this led to both increased income and increased expenditure but the net effect was that costs exceeded revenue and an alternative solution is obviously the plan for 2015. Web Services costs reduced and this allowed for a small surplus in the year.

Funding of Expeditions (via the Ghar Parau Foundation) and the British Caving Library has continued at the same level as previous years and Regional Council funding has reduced following significant project work charged in 2013. The 2014 charge comprises outstanding funding claims for the year as drafted by the regions and accrued accordingly. Further consideration of these claims will be undertaken shortly by Finance Committee and appropriate reimbursement

made in due course. Thanks are once again due to the Regions for providing the necessary information on a timely basis. Overall, the position for the year is that the Association recorded a surplus of £5,799, against which a tax credit of £298 is realisable, thus leaving a net addition to reserves of £6,097. The tax credit arises from the net loss arising when taxable income is set against the Training Services deficit. It is anticipated that the resultant tax asset will be realisable against future profit and it is held on the balance sheet accordingly. The new insurance deal at the end of 2014 involves a significant reduction in the excess position, but for the time being it is my intention to keep the Sinking Fund at its previous level and the position can then be reviewed once a new Treasurer is in place.

On the latter point, I noted last year that I was willing to remain in post for the next 12 months. I can now confirm that the changes in personal circumstances and/or duties required to extend that timescale have not materialised and it is time to hand over to someone else to take the Association's finances forward.

Paul Ibberson

PI: The accounts were signed off this week by our Independent Examiner, Richard Johnson. Broadly the financial position is very similar to last year with a few noticeable variations. The CRoW ballot was a significant cost. There was a fall in training income but this is a known cyclical variation and over time Professional Training more than breaks even and it is anticipated that this heading will come back into balance next year. Last year's AGM weekend showed a loss. Web Services showed a small surplus, as had been anticipated. RCC expenditure dropped a little after some significant project costs in 2013.

Action: AE to visit Richard Johnson to thank him for acting as Independent Examiner over the last few years.

PI: Overall we are in a strong position financially which allows us to deal with issues such as the CRoW ballot. It remains PI's intention to hand over at some point in the foreseeable future, but in the meantime we intend to appoint Robin Weare as Assistant Treasurer to help with the workload.

AE: In this respect PI will remain in his Executive role and much of the administration will be done by RW.

Proposal: **that the 2014 Accounts be adopted.**

Prop: HR, Sec: MV agreed unanimously

Proposal: **that the remainder of the Treasurer's Report be accepted.**

Prop: HR, Sec: MV agreed unanimously

8. **Conservation & Access Report** (written report previously circulated)

Eurospeleo Forum: Since the last meeting I have represented BCA at the Eurospeleo Forum- Baille Herculane, Romania. (22-24 August 2014). I gave a presentation to the European Cave Protection Symposium and attended the ECPC committee meeting. There are clearly some difficulties in coordinating principals and procedures across dozens of different countries which are at different evolutionary stages of conservation management and education. However, there were plenty of useful examples of practical conservation measures displayed in the poster salon and via presentations. The ECPC is starved of people prepared to undertake officer posts in these austere times. I was offered and declined a co-option onto the ECPC executive.

The cost of flights and transfers were met by Natural England. I will be making a claim from BCA to meet accommodation costs. I would encourage BCA to send Conservation Officers from other RCCs to present at future events. I feel that the British experience of conservation is of value to ECPC.

CRoW: The CRoW and Caving debate has generated a huge amount of correspondence in my inbox. I apologise if I have kept anyone waiting too long for a response. The emails I have received on the subject have all been civil, well considered, and useful contributions.

I would like to thank the CRoW Working Group for undertaking a huge amount of work on behalf of BCA and the C&A Committee.

In light of the Yes vote in the CRoW ballot I have undertaken the following action point: Continue to explore ways to effectively protect our more fragile sites.

I have been instructed by the C&A Committee to review the many caving codes that are in circulation. The C&A Committee concluded that the current Cave Conservation Code was too long and the Minimal Impact Caving Code was severe in its tone and over prescriptive. With the help of a few committee members I have drafted a shorter and more compact 'Caving Code' plus a 'Minimal Impact Caving Guidance' which expands on the themes within the Code. I think it is important that we have an internationally recognisable MIC Guidance that will be familiar to delegates of the Speleo 2016 event.

The current draft of the Code and Guidelines can be found in the appendix. Drafts of these documents have been reviewed by C&A committee members and BCA Council. The drafts have now gone to RCCs and Constituent Bodies for

consultation.

The script will be part of a pdf with colour photos, illustrations and useful hyperlinks. The photos should support the text and enhance understanding. It is proposed to have flier and poster versions of the Code for caving huts and pubs.

I can report that the C&A committee has not met since November 2014 but I feel that it has been working effectively via email on matters that require our attention. I would expect to convene a meeting of C&A before the 12 months are up or as soon as our work load demands.

Regional CC Conservation Activities: *The Regional Caving Council websites contain updates on local cave-conservation activities. A huge amount of effort has gone into conservation projects.*

On a personal note I believe we owe a debt of gratitude to these individuals and groups who make such a valuable contribution to protecting our underground heritage. The best way to express that gratitude is to join in and do your bit, or start your own conservation project.

Andrew Hinde

AH: Very little feedback has so far been received on the proposed Codes from the Regional Councils and Constituent Bodies. A number of people have given quite a bit of time to getting the guidance this far and it is now nearing completion. For cave conservation to be truly effective, it needs to be spread far beyond BCA.

8a. **CRoW Working Party** (written report previously circulated)

The CRoW Working Group is now in abeyance, pending progress from the BCA Chairman's discussions with NE and Defra. It can be called back into action by the BCA C&A Officer if he thinks there is a need.

Jenny Potts

Proposal: **that the remainder of the Conservation & Access Reports be accepted.**

Prop: BP, Sec: TS agreed unanimously

9. **Equipment & Techniques Report** (written report previously circulated)

The Committee met on 5 April and 2 November in 2014.

It is good to be able to report that both DCA and CNCC are now participating as proper members of the Committee once more. The Speleological Union of Ireland (SUI) has also been accepted as a member of the Committee and as a participant in the BCA anchor scheme although they have thus far been unable to send anyone to the meetings.

The supply of Bolt Product Type 316 anchors has remained sufficient to meet demand, though the reserve stock levels remain low. Following discussion, E&T agreed to adopt the Bolt Product Type 304 anchor for locations where the potential of chloride stress corrosion cracking is considered to be acceptably low. This enables installers to make use of the more than adequate reserve stock of Bolt Product Type 304 anchors held by BCA. Work has started to look at alternative anchors based on High Corrosion Resistance (HCR) steel and Titanium to cope with sites where the potential for Chloride Stress Corrosion Cracking is high - e.g. in mines and at sea side locations.

Presentations were made to the Committee on the development of a new resin anchor by Simon Wilson. (Details can be found at his web site at www.resinanchor.co.uk/.) The work is a significant contribution to the field (and it is noted that E&T adopted the IC anchor at its meeting on 15 March 2015). These presentations started two strands of work by E&T. The first was to investigate a replacement resin which was not styrene based. A test bed was set up in South Wales to test a proposed new resin but work has carried over into 2015. (It is noted that the completed work in 2015 supports the adoption of the chosen resin.) The second strand of work focuses on the conservation impact of replacing anchors. It has been noted that in testing Bolt Product anchors, a substantial proportion (well in excess of 50%) extracted using the rig, spall the surrounding rock to a sufficient extent that the location of the hole would not be suitable for reuse. By contrast, the IC anchors rarely spoil the location. We have started to look into alternative extraction methods for Bolt Product and DMM anchors.

Testing of anchors in alternative rocks has taken place in Devon and further work is planned. A programme of work was also funded to test a range of anchors in several different types of North Wales slate. The range of anchors chosen reflect the different ones already in use in North Wales as well as the Bolt Product and IC anchors. The work was completed in early 2015 and a report is in preparation.

Work on developing advice for other fixed aids has ceased following a lack of contributions on the topic.

Nick Williams

a. **Rope-Test Report**

Activity on rope testing matters were much reduced in the year owing to a pre occupation with other caving matters.

24 samples of rope have been received and tested in 2014. Curiously only 7 of these were received at Hidden Earth, a much lower number than usual. A further 6 lengths of rope have been received during 2014 but have not yet been tested

as yet. In part this is awaiting other developments. Of those sample tested, I have now had my first sample which failed without surviving any drops. I have held back testing the remaining rope from which this sample was taken until the Bradford rig is available to maximise the information obtained from the samples. But it is noted that the 10mm diameter rope had been left in a cave for some 15 years. Given other ropes have survived better after similar lengths of time in cave, I offer no comment.

Part 2 of the Long Term Rope Test is nearing completion in getting ropes used to a pre-determined amount. One rope awaits return before testing of the used samples can commence.

The experiment on hand lines continues with 8 samples remaining in place and continued to be monitored. One sample failed to be located in the agreed position and has subsequently been lost. A further sample was withdrawn from service in late 2013 when it was found to have worn. (The sample had been placed as a hand line on a climb. The length was such that the free end dangled in a stream when under high water conditions which injected movement into the whole rope.) Another sample used on a Tyrolean was returned in 2014 following the rope being deliberately cut mid location by vandals.

The work on different Cows Tail Knots has not been progressed during the year.

No work has been undertaken on the static rig during 2014.

Work on the instrumentation of the Bradford Pothole Club's rig has made very slow progress during the year. A new method for measuring rope extension has been developed but installation and testing has only recently been undertaken. This has held back other development work.

Bob Mehew

TA: At the recent CNCC meeting there was a query over whether, from a conservation point of view, it might be better to stop using the BP anchor and replace it entirely with the IC Anchor.

NW: There are a number of reasons as to why the IC anchor might be preferable, but the bigger issue is over supply as they are handmade and cannot probably be supplied in the quantity needed. Simon Wilson, the IC anchor's designer, is relatively new to the E&T Committee having started as the CNCC representative at the last meeting. In recent years we have learnt a lot about anchors and particularly the performance of the resin. It is pleasing to report that the E&T Committee now has very strong knowledge bank among its membership.

AH: Is a major bolting project likely to be imminent outside of the Dales?

NW: Individual bolting projects are handled by the individual Regions rather than the E&T Committee, so this is not known. We are currently looking at other variables such as titanium anchors.

TA: If there is a major project envisaged, then we should maybe consider holding off in favour of using IC anchors. When it became clear that the PECO anchors installed in the Rowten Gulley Route were unreliable, they couldn't be easily removed, so were hammered flat and covered in mud with further anchors placed nearby.

BM: It may be premature to write off replacing anchors, as BP themselves claim they are extractable with a core drill.

NW: As a Committee we are starting to realise that we may actually not necessarily be looking for the strongest anchor possible, but that in fact other factors are also important.

AE: Can you give some details of the rope that only survived one drop?

BM: So far only one sample has been tested. The total sample length was long enough for three separate samples and the remaining two are being saved for the BPC rig once it is fully functional. It came from Winnats Head.

Prop: BS, Sec: LW

Proposal: **that the remainder of the Equipment & Techniques Reports be accepted.**

Prop: HR Sec: AH agreed unanimously

10. **Training Report** (written report previously circulated)

One of the reoccurring discussions at Training Committee over the last twelve months has been the disappointment in the number of BCA caving clubs applying for training grants. The criteria for approving grants have been recently looked at and a decision has been made to simplify the process and make it more inviting. This information will be added to the leaflets that have been produced for caving events.

There is an increasing level of conversation at meetings about the time that is required to travel to NCP, CIC and Training Committee and it is very strongly felt that video conferencing should be developed for this. It is acknowledged that there would be a cost to BCA in setting it up around the UK, but it would make the meetings easier to attend and hopefully get more attending. The CIC Panel have been doing this for over a year and it has improved things enormously.

During the past twelve months, Training Committee has responded to a request from Council to review its current structure and functionality with a view to improving it. The Training Officer put forward a view to Training Committee

as to how things could be changed but when voted on, the majority of people thought that things were ok as they currently were and did not need to be changed.

During last year, an enquiry came from two independent organisations asking about award schemes for children who participate in caving. This is an on-going situation and we hope that we can put something forward within the next six months.

Reports have been received from a number of Regional Councils about the caver training course they have delivered in the last twelve months and they include SRT, cave surveying, and bat studies. They all were attended well and they were very successful. Other Regional Councils have announced that they will be putting on a training event this later this year. The BCA award schemes are still very much on going. New people are registering with the schemes and people are completing their assessments. Some people, although only a few, have let their awards lapse and have had to go through the Core Skills Reassessment process. A few people have left the schemes.

It is still felt strongly that the Local Cave and Mine Leader syllabus needs to be rewritten in a more streamlined way. The problem with this is that it is a huge job to be done voluntarily. Recently some funding opportunities have been identified and they are being looked into.

Within the last twelve months a parity of awards has been approved between the BCA Training Committee and the Speleological Union of Ireland.

The moderation of training and assessment courses is now underway and it is proving to be very useful process. This will continue in its current state until a national view is achieved.

There are still major problems of access to suitable caves for the delivery of training and assessment courses in South Wales. Much discussion has taken place on this topic and it is felt that BCA Council needs to give Training Committee support with this.

Training Committee is looking forward to the BCA Chairman attending the next meeting on Saturday 19 September 2015. Since the last AGM in June 2014, the data for the training schemes up to May 2015 is as follows:

Local Cave and Mine Leader Award (LCMLA)

Registrations 126

Level 1 assessments: 34, Level 1 Revalidations: 25

Level 2 assessments: 26, Level 2 Revalidations: 14

Core-Skills Reassessments: 8

Current Award Holders: Level 1: 463, Level 2: 252

Cave Instructor Certificate (CIC)

Registrations: 19

Assessments: 3, Revalidations: 22

Current Award Holders: 81.

Income/Expenditure for revalidation courses to April 2015.

	LCMLA	CIC	CSR
2009	£1,887.00	£420.00	
2010	£459.97	£225.00	
2011	£179.60	£609.00	
2012	£2,151.00	£930.00	
2013	£1,606.97	£330.00	£150.00
2014	£840.00	£295.00	£150.00
2015	-£29.07	£320.00	£50.00

Nigel Ball

HB: Yet again we seem to be discussing S. Wales caves for level 2 training. It has been discussed time and time again and it is clear there are suitable venues but that they do not happen to be the exact cave the Panel is after.

RW: The Panel has had a number of alternative sites suggested and at one site permission has been specifically obtained for its use by CICs. It has been confirmed by a local CIC as an ideal site and yet the Panel members do not seem to be willing to have a look.

BM: Of course if necessary there is always the ultimate sanction for the landowner.

RW: NRW, the landowner, is not reliant on our insurance and will absolutely not allow professional use.

NW: Regarding video conferencing and its costs, regional hubs would seem to be a very good idea.

FL: Works for a virtual company and has regular weekly meetings involving 13 people via video conferencing. It works very well.

BS: The CDG Central Committee moved to Skype several years ago. This is done as voice only and, as Chairman, it can be difficult to know if somebody wants to talk, but it works well.

AE: Skype is used successfully for UIS meetings.

DG: Uses instant messaging which gives an instant record of the minutes.

HB : Regarding rewriting the training Schemes, perhaps we should fund it by asking all Award Holders to become members. This is how BCU awards work.

DW: This has been considered several times in the past but the fear is that many Award Holders do not get enough use of their Awards from employers to justify the additional expense and we may lose significant Award Holders as a result. This could endanger the scheme.

Proposal: *that the remainder of the Training Report be accepted.*

Prop: LW, Sec: SH agreed unanimously

11. Publications & Information Report

LW: Apologies for not providing the meeting with a written report. Would like to thank RW for stepping up to the news sheet.

a. Webmaster's Report

The Google Analytics service was installed in June 2014. It gives an idea of how much the website is being used. It is also ideal for filling reports with reams of statistics! I'll keep it short. For the main BCA website, for the period Jul –Dec 2014 as a monthly average there were 6,286 page views, 1,856 sessions and 1,165 individual users. The average user viewed 3.39 pages and stayed for 2:44 minutes. The top 10 pages were: Welcome, Training Downloads, Training LCMLA Scheme, News & Events, About BCA, C&A News, Membership, Training, PL Insurance & Member Clubs.

In the first quarter (Jan-Mar 2015) as a monthly average there were 6849 page views, 2062 sessions and 1279 individual users. The average user viewed 3.32 pages and stayed for 2:39 minutes. The top 10 pages were: Welcome, Training LCMLA Scheme, Training Downloads, About BCA, Newsheet 19 (Jan 2015), Membership, News & Events, PL Insurance, Training, PL Insurance Documents.

So in summary the website is being used and that usage is pretty consistent over time.

There have been no radical updates to the software during the year although the diary is once again updatable by the Secretary and any other designated individuals. The ability was lost when the website was upgraded in Jan 2014.

I would like to thank the Secretary who wins the prize for the most regular updater in his sterling efforts to keep the content up to date. The next most regular updater is the Training Administrator followed some way behind by the Rope Test Officer and the Insurance Manager. And that's it. I would like more Council Members to be updating the website. I'm always willing to offer help and advice. It really isn't difficult. Failing that I will post any content that is sent to me. The Newsletter fits into the latter category and I'm grateful to the Newsletter Editor for the regular injection of new and interesting content.

David Cooke

JA: UKCaving installed google analytics in March and it has had 250k page views since then. 858 individual users came onto UKCaving last Monday. It is very much in BCA's interests to have a presence there.

b. Web Services Report

The BCA Web Server performed well during the year with no unscheduled outages. There are 72 domains registered through BCA Web Services with 58 websites hosted. The BCA funds 15 of those websites including the Regional Councils, BCRA, BCRA's Special Interest Groups, Cave Registry Data Archive, Caving Library and some of the cave rescue organisations.

The current on-going task is to upgrade the versions of php, mysql and apache on the server so that they remain current. This can cause compatibility issues with the hosted websites and therefore needs to be carefully managed to reduce any possible pain.

The general work of keeping the web server up and running, supporting the clubs and organisations that we host and doing the financial book keeping continues quietly in the background.

I would like to thank Matt Voysey and Les Williams for their help with the server and Katie Eavis for her help with the book keeping and banking.

David Cooke

LW: We should not forget that this is a relatively useful resource that we provide to members.

c. News Editor Report

Three editions of an online news-sheet have been published since the last Annual General Meeting. They appeared in November 2014, January 2015 and April 2015 and statistics suggest that the readership has increased with each edition.

The intention is to publish four editions each year and to time them to appear within a few weeks of each Council Meeting.

Whilst the nature of the regular content is a work in progress I do have a vision which is gradually taking shape and I hope it will be possible to bring the available facilities and the activities of BCA, the various Committees and the Constituent Bodies to the more general notice of the membership.

I particularly hope that when the Members' online contact management system is in place and operating smoothly it will be possible to use e-mail addresses to distribute BCA's News directly to each individual member.

Robin Weare

RW: The plan is that there will be four news sheets per year generally to be published within a few weeks of a Council Meeting. So far everyone has responded to requests for content and it is hoped that this will continue. Is trying hard to highlight to the general membership what we do as an Organisation by focusing on a Constituent Body, Committee or aspect of Regional Council work in each news sheet.

DG: Would it not be a good idea to send a paper newsletter to make members aware of the new email version?

DW: Perhaps it would actually be better to do so to all members.

BM: We can also include a 2016 flyer in the mailing.

JP: Asking Regional Councils to pass it on might also help take-up. There are some members of Regional Councils who are not BCA members.

Action: Council to consider paper communication with the membership.

d. **Speleology Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

Clearly, I am having difficulty in keeping to schedule with Speleology and no issue has appeared since January 2014. Personally, I must apologise to the authors and contributors who are still sending me material. At the very least, I want to clear this backlog of material, even if it means placing it in an online-only version of the magazine.

In any debate on Speleology, I would highlight three salient points. 1) BCA advertised for a paid editor in January 2012 but failed to find a suitable candidate. 2) BCA Council's action 142, "to look at the future of Speleology", from the meeting of 11 October 2014, has not been followed up. 3) My comment to the 2014 AGM that "reliable volunteers, prepared to put in the considerable amount of time that is required, must step forward to implement any plan" has not resulted in anyone stepping forward.

Speleology is actually a BCRA publication (although it is largely funded by BCA) and the situation has been discussed by BCRA Council, which has indicated that if I did not produce a proof version of issue 20 by the date of the BCA AGM (still a few days to go!), it would be time to "consider the future of the magazine". Even if BCRA decided to continue with Speleology, this might only be in some "ad hoc" fashion (perhaps as an online "pay as you go" publication) and it would still leave BCA in the position of needing to decide how best to service its membership. Does the membership need a publication like Speleology? What purpose is it supposed to serve? I (and others) have asked those questions, but they remain largely unanswered. It is becoming imperative that they are answered.

To answer those points, one must also consider BCA's other 'services' – a paper newsletter and a paper handbook are being replaced by online information. Should BCA start up its own online publication, to replace Speleology? If BCA were to abandon the concept of an in-house magazine and reduce the membership fees accordingly, would that be such a bad thing? Although my own interest lies in a high-quality paper production, I do think that an online publication – well managed (and not by me) – could be successful, with contributors posting their material directly online.

David Gibson

DG: The original idea with Speleology was to produce something that was easier to produce than Caves and Caving. However DG soon found he couldn't keep up with the pace and Erin Lynch took over, who also found it difficult. DG then took it back on. BCRA Council's March meeting proposed pulling the plug on Speleology immediately. They agreed to give it one last chance, giving DG until the BCA AGM to produce an issue. This was not managed and that will almost certainly mean Speleology is finished as a publication. This is not necessarily a bad thing because it forces us to accept as a fact what has been virtually the case for a while.

HB: We should just give up with it. People have been frustrated by submitting content but nothing appears.

RW: This meeting can only be concerned about a replacement. There is no point pretending to produce something if it is not going to happen. We should just accept Speleology has gone and decide what to do about it.

BM: What are DIMs now getting for their money? Is there a case for reducing the subscription to better reflect the services received?

- DW: This was put to Executive last year but the decision was that we should not. Personally would support a reduction in next year's rate. The only current difference in services provided is the Membership Administrator's time.
- NW: Is it the case that CIMs do not pay for the Membership Administrator's time?
- DW: No, and in reality they often take more time than DIM's. This is an important point.
- AH: The real value of Speleology was that it was an historic record. Online chapters of Cave & Karst of the Yorkshire Dales are clearly very popular, so there is clear demand for online publications.
- DG: This point has been made at BCRA Council and one answer is we do continue with an online ad-hoc version which is perhaps collated annually as a print-on-demand publication for those who wish to collect it. In the future the C&KS editors are going to retire and we will also need to find an editor who can take this forward.
- AE: Over the last 50 years all successful publications have been so, due largely to having a superb editor. Currently for Descent this is Chris Howes. If you can find a great editor, you may well have a great publication.
- TA: The Italians and the Spanish are very good at producing publications. We do not seem to have this propensity. BCA should perhaps concentrate better on communicating more generally with its membership. Descent may not last forever and we will almost certainly find web-based publications
- AE: The important point will be to have a reliable newsletter and Descent. In the short term these will happen.
- DC: We must not forget that any web-based publication will still need an editor.
- HR: A lot of the content that will be lost from Speleology's demise will likely reoccur in a different format but the challenge will be keeping a record of it in the longer term. We perhaps ought to be increasing the remit of the Library to collate it all in some form.
- JP: We used to have exchanges with some organisations but international postage has become extremely expensive and the Library is looking at cloud storage and how we make that available to people.
- DC: Paper is an amazing technology and we sometimes forget this. Society has a potential problem in the next 100 years as we may find we have no history.
- DG: There is going to be a move back to paper shortly. Print on demand is getting cheaper and this will mean high international postage will no longer be a concern. You publish online and a printed copy is then delivered locally.
- BM: There is a moderate-sized component of the subscription that relates to Speleology which we may decide to factor out. There is also the question of how we are going to move forward in the future. Would like to propose that LW reports to the October Council Meeting on potential routes forward.
- DG: We should remember that volunteers tend to do what they want to do, rather than what is asked of them.
- RW: Volunteered on his own terms a few Council Meetings ago, Executive accepted the proposal and we have a news sheet as a result.
- MB: While there is not a strategic plan on paper, in the last half hour there has been a lot of discussion and it is clear there are ideas on a way forward.
- AH: DG's report asks whether we need a publication. Have we answered this?
- RW: Would see any replacement as being largely a summary of a whole collection of expedition reports. Does not see that a newsletter is the appropriate way of doing this.

Action: LW to report to October's Council Meeting on a proposed roadmap for publications.

Proposal: *that the Publications & Information Reports be accepted.*

Prop: HR Sec: JB *agreed unanimously*

12. **Legal & Insurance Report** (*nothing received*)

12a) **Insurance Manager's Report** (*written report previously circulated*)

Things seem to have changed in the insurance business since the difficult days of 2003 and by the end of November 2014 we had several firms chasing our business. I issued a challenge to those interested that they should review the information available on our web site and make us an offer which they felt matched or exceeded our existing cover. Following correspondence, we eventually ended up with offers of insurance from the existing insurers (Zurich, via brokers Anderson Ashcroft), from Perkins Slade (the BMC's insurer, who have been after BCA's business for decades) and newcomers Endsleigh Insurance.

Despite feeling significant loyalty to Anderson Ashcroft we finally decided to move the business to Perkins Slade. This was for a number of reasons, the main ones being:

- *Slight price advantage: a few hundred pounds cheaper than Anderson Ashcroft, rising to potentially a couple of thousand if we increase the limit of indemnity to £10m;*
- *Per head pricing model which will better protect us against future changes in membership numbers;*
- *Single insurer for the full £5m cover;*

- *Easy and low cost increase in limit of indemnity should we decide that £5m is no longer sufficient;*
- *Marginally improved cover, including Directors and Officer's cover which provides better protection for libel/slander and financial mismanagement;*
- *Significantly lower excess than the previous policy (although note that essentially this was matched by Anderson Ashcroft in the negotiations);*
- *Better cover for pollution incidents (although, again, this was matched by Anderson Ashcroft);*
- *Better alignment with the BCAs' professionals scheme which is already provided by Perkins Slade;*
- *No-cost inclusion of landowner/occupier's indemnity for clubs/ACB's with significant land lease/ownership;*
- *Easy availability of a property policy for clubs with huts;*
- *Better backup/support to Members in respect of queries and information about the policy.*

I would like to place on record my thanks to our previous broker, Anderson Ashcroft in Preston, and in particular, their principal John Anderson who made a very good fist of retaining the business in a field which is not their specialism, and who has accepted our decision to take the business elsewhere with good grace. It was a very close decision and I would thoroughly recommend anyone looking for commercial cover to contact Anderson Ashcroft for a quote, but in the end it was clear that the best interests of British cavers will be served by moving the business to Perkins Slade who specialise in the field of sports governing body cover. Thanks also to Endsleigh Insurance who also made a serious effort to win the business.

I would also like to thank Pete Mellors of DCA who assisted me by attending the meetings with the potential insurers and helped to ensure we got the best deal.

On a final point it's worth noting that it became pretty clear early in the discussions that the work done in 2003/2004 to establish the BCA as one-member one-vote organisation with a clear identification of each individual member helped immensely with our credibility when it came to negotiating with the insurers. Furthermore, work done on training by the Cave Diving Group and the Explosives User Group figured highly in the insurers' perceptions of caving as an acceptable risk. It's a nice change to find that cavers are now seen as good business in the insurance world and we used this to our advantage and gained a much better deal for cavers as a result.

Nick Williams

NW: Perkins Slade has not been quite as reactive as they originally said they would be. Also, despite what they had told us previously, they have in fact used the same underwriters as under our previous policy.

TA: The CNCC recently discussed whether or not CHECC could apply for permits. The discussion was laborious. Why can things not be made simple for youngsters to go caving?

NW: The BCA policy will cover any member for landowner indemnity and, therefore, CHECC and all its members are covered during any CHECC event. However member-to-member aspects, cover for officers and cover for explosives and cave diving will not be covered unless people are individual members of the scheme.

DW: From BCA's point of view, the issue discussed by CNCC was simple: CHECC members would be covered for insurance if CHECC were given permits. Beyond this it was up to CNCC to decide whether it fitted their existing rules. That was where the complexity lay.

BM: Indeed. The question was quite narrowly defined and NW replied that if CHECC wanted a permit for its members, this would be fine unless the landowner wanted individual member cover.

TA: Where do we stand with insurance for EuroSpeleo 2016?

NW: Is confident it will be fine, but will be contacting the insurers formally. Suspects they will would absorb the additional minimal risk at no cost.

TA: What is the potential for BCA's policy to cover all cavers from the point of view of landowner liability, whether or not they are members?

NW: That is likely to be problematic for insurers because it represents a significant unknown. As it happens this was specifically put to the insurers when they were bidding for our business and they refused.

JB: There was some discussion about insurance for clubs with huts through Perkins Slade. Is this still ongoing?

NW: Experience to date is that their policy isn't quite as favourable as some others. NW will put any interested club in touch and has done so with a number of clubs, most of whom have found a more competitive policy elsewhere.

Proposal: *that the Legal & Insurance Report be accepted.*

Prop: JA, Sec: BS *agreed unanimously*

Other Reports

13. Membership Administrator's Report *Membership to 28 May 2015*

DIMs (Caving):431 (Non-caving):43 (of which DIMs incl. BCRA: 200 (including 33 students), CIM Plus: 5 Honorary (BCRA): 4 (BCA): 1
CIMs (Caving): 3,819 (Student): 438 (Non-caving): 877
Clubs: 171
Associates: 5
Access: 8

Membership Trends: *The table below shows membership trends since BCA's formation. It is important to note that data for 2004 and 2005 is presented in a different format to that currently employed, but I believe the figures for those years are accurate enough for comparison. There is no reliable data for 2006.*

903 new membership numbers were issued during 2014: 13,917 – 14,820.

	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
DIMs	93	185	437	432	397	487*	505*	507*	513*	535*
CIMs	3,523	3,909	4,965	5,216	5,115	5,296	5,435	5,397	5,585	5,564
Clubs	89	140	153	152	160	166	189	159	186	190

* Including 21 CIM Plus members in 2010, 12 in 2011, 9 in 2012, 7 in 2013 and 3 in 2014.

Glenn Jones

HB: Has seemingly had her membership number changed, which is disappointing.

DC: As was highlighted during the CRoW ballot, our membership data isn't perfect and quite a lot has been 'improved' with some new numbers being allocated as a result. With the new online system each member will be able to see their own data and amend it via the Membership Administrator.

DG: The report does not show statistics for the number of people who have not renewed annually. The figures are significant.

Proposal: **that the Membership Administrator's Report be accepted.**

Prop: SH, Sec: AH agreed unanimously

14. Cave Registry Report

My thanks to Andrew Atkinson for the work he puts in to the Data Archive and the following report.

The BCA Cave Registry Data Archive goes from strength to strength with the survey areas recently added Cotswolds and Forest of Dean and significant updates to China. Yorkshire appears to be used the most and by the most people. A new Biology data repository now exists, with the Haxelton spread sheet as its main data at the moment; there are signs of others wanting to use it. It was always envisage that other data would also be stored on the archive, it is good to see it happening as more people realise it is a useful collaboration tool that happens to archive, I am sure we will see more of this type. The total size of the archive now stands at 18GB.

There continue to be rumours of more regional online registries but none have so far appeared. I remain ready to provide help and advice. The Mendip Cave Registry and Archive has generously offered a copy of their software to any regional registry that would like to use it.

Work on the National Cave Index is slowly progressing. The idea is to provide a website with a searchable index of UK sites which will result in links back to the regional registry and other cave related websites. This will provide a way of accessing the existing distributed datasets rather than attempting to build a monolithic central registry.

David Cooke

DC: Derbyshire and Yorkshire still need a regional registry, but DC has recently had some useful discussions on Scotland.

JP: Derbyshire had its own registry through John Beck, but it was his own and he died in January.

DC: Has in mind a more public online version.

Proposal: **that the Cave Registry Report be accepted.**

Prop: LW Sec: HR agreed unanimously

16. IT Working Party

By far and away the biggest project this year has been the development of the online members' contact management system. It needs a name that isn't a sentence so unless there are strong objections, I propose to call it "BCA Online".

BCA Online will allow 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. If those need to be updated they can email the Membership Administrator. Behind the scenes there are routines to sanity check and upload the latest spreadsheets

provided by the Membership System. Members will be notified of changes to their profile by email.

This provides BCA with a verified and maintained list of email addresses and crucially, to remain legal, the consents to use them.

The system is installed with the current membership data (Individual CIM & DIM, no Group members just yet) at <http://members.british-caving.org.uk> (note no www). It has been tested by me and some members of Council (thank you) and is ready to go live. I can see no reason not to announce it to our members in the next Newsletter; a Newsletter that can now be emailed directly to those members who wish to receive it. Of the 5268 records, 3282 have email addresses (62%) which I think is a very good start.

BCA Online incorporates the page to update the BCA Diary. By using the authentication system of BCA Online I can choose who has permission to update the Diary. This is a good example of how other services can be built into and upon BCA Online. There are plenty of possible enhancements. One is to provide online voting, that could save BCA £1,000s. Another possibility is to help with the mailing lists that the Training Administrator looks after. BCA Online is also a cornerstone of the proposed Membership Restructuring and no doubt will need enhancing to support that change.

Unfortunately there has been no progress on the Online Training Database for which I apologise. The next step is with me and my priority has been BCA Online although in some mitigation, BCA Online could be seen as a precursor to an online Training Database. I need to recruit a volunteer programmer (PHP, cakePHP & MySQL experience please).

Having thought long and hard about the best way to manage the IT Working Party's work I've decided there should be a steering-group comprising the Executive, the Committee & Working Party Chairman and the odd co-opted member. I hope to hold virtual meetings using video conferencing to avoid the expense and time of travelling. The steering-group's job is to take a high-level view of the projects considering usefulness, progress, priority and resources (human and financial). The actual project work will be done by small teams setup for each project who will report to the appropriate committee or working party. A page summarising the current position can be seen at:

http://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/doku.php?id=it_working_group:start.

David Cooke

DC: The system is now set up and ready to go. In line with data protection requirements, users will have to opt in to receive general communications.

HR: Is it worth sending out "welcome" emails in batches to limit the potential workload rush?

DC: Yes. That is the plan.

Proposal: ***that the IT Working Party Report be accepted.***

Prop: JA Sec: UKMC *agreed unanimously*

17. Youth & Development

2014-15 has been a year when not huge amount has happened, but the key things that have been achieved in youth and development this year have been.

- *Republication of Try Caving / So You Want to Go Caving Leaflets. With the help of Gonzo we've taken the key things from both, amalgamated them, and updated them. 5,000 were produced. If anybody would like any please don't hesitate to ask as there is still a good store left.*
- *A talk was given at Hidden Earth about student caving and rescue numbers about disparaging the myth that student cavers are responsible for all rescues called "Can Students Cave?"*
- *There has been one adoption from the Adopt a Caving Club scheme between the Shepton Mallet and Plymouth University Caving Clubs. Any other clubs interested in partnerships or adoption should get in contact and hopefully we'll have some more successes in the coming year.*

If anyone is interested in being Youth and Development officer I'm willing to stand down or if anyone has any ideas, inspiration or initiatives please don't get hesitate to get in touch. I'm currently no longer the chair of CHECC, but they have a great committee with Thom Starnes as the new chair and I know that they're keen for anyone who wants to help out in student caving to get in touch.

Hellie Brooke

HB: Very pleased to see that there are now two younger people in the room. In fact at least two were born in the '90s.

Proposal: ***that the Youth & Development Report be accepted.***

Prop: TS Sec: LW *agreed unanimously*

17. 2016

LW: Planning continues behind the scenes. There was a very useful meeting yesterday and ticket sales will be online early in July.

Proposal: **that the 2016 Report be accepted.**

Prop: HR Sec: IW agreed unanimously

19. International Representative's Report

Immediately following the next council meeting and AGM I go to Slovenia for the 50th Anniversary of the International Union of Speleology. This is the major event in the UIS calendar which I will report on to the next meeting in October. The build-up to this has been the main thing occupying the UIS. Other things include an International Day of Caving for 2021 approved by UNESCO, and work aiming towards the next UIS convention in Sydney, Australia during 2017.

Ged Campion will be present in Slovenia and between us we will report to the UIS delegation on the 2016 preparations for the European Conference in Ingleton in August 13-20 next year.

Around the world there have been a number of international caving meeting with respect to Karst World Heritage sites, the latest is in Huangjiang , China, 5th-7th June this year. The UIS is increasing its influence on world heritage which is a good thing.

Andy Eavis

a) FSE Report

Since the last years report to the AGM there has been one bureau meeting and a General Assembly Meeting (GAM) of the FSE both of which took place in Baile Herculane in Romania during the 9th EuroSpeleo Forum, organized by the Federatia Romana de Speologie (FRS) in August 2014. The event and delegate attendance at the GAM was good.

A number of officers presented for re-election and the incumbent general secretary Olivier Vidal resigned from his post. He was not supported by his national organisation the FFS (the French Federation). Michael Laumans (Germany) remains Vice President Henk Goutier (Netherlands) Treasurer, Ernst Geyer (Austria) Vice Treasurer. Alexey Zhalov who was previously Vice Secretary resigned earlier in the year. Ged Campion is currently president until re-election of the post in 2017.

Therefore as things stand there is a vacancy for general & vice secretary. It has meant that the remaining four Bureau members have been extremely busy with almost daily exchange of e-mails and many telephone consultations. It is the sincere hope of the bureau that the existing vacancies can be filled during the 2015 General Assembly.

In terms of membership fees approval has been given to 31 countries except Macedonia who didn't pay their fees. The next Bureau meeting and General Assembly Meeting will take place on Saturday 30th May 2015 in Pertosa – Auletta in Italy at the Euro Speleo Forum hosted by the 22nd National Italian Congress. (I will try and provide an update for the BCA AGM).

During the last General Assembly some FSE Statutes were changed. These changes, together with other statutory changes over the recent years, were officially registered at the seat of the FSE in Luxembourg in 2014. Although facing severe constraints with regard to its staffing, the Bureau was able to launch a comprehensive reform of the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP) in December 2014, following time-consuming deliberations. The new ESP guidelines and the new application form are available since December 14th on the FSE website and all national delegates were informed about the changes.

(Table below gives more detail of participation). In the same way the Bureau was also able to conclude on a less major update of the EuroSpeleo Forum guidelines which is now also available on the FSE website. The new guidelines clarify several issues which led to confusion in the past and also results in a reduction of the fee that a EuroSpeleo Forum needs to contribute for the EuroSpeleo Projects fund of the FSE, which is now set to 1 EUR per paying participant of a EuroSpeleo Forum.

At the UIS Bureau meeting in November 2014 in Sydney, Australia the application of the FSE to become the first associated regional speleological organization to the International Union of Speleology (UIS) was approved. This affiliation does not result in a fee to be paid by FSE to UIS but in nomination of a delegate with no voting rights to ensure the contacts and the exchange of information between FSE and the Bureau of the UIS are established. FSE president was nominated European delegate to the UIS. The contact from the UIS to the FSE will be the UIS General Secretary Fadi Nader.

No	Country	Participants
1.	Switzerland	20
2.	Bulgaria	20
3.	Greece	19
4.	Germany	18
5.	Belgium	10*
6.	France	9*
7.	Austria	7
8.	Slovenia	7
9.	Serbia	7
10.	Luxemburg	6
11.	Netherlands	6*
12.	Romania	6
13.	United Kingdom	5
14.	Turkey	5
15.	Spain	4
16.	Poland	3
17.	Slovakia	2
18.	Portugal	1
19.	Ireland	1
20.	Hungary	1
	IN TOTAL	157

The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by FSE treasurer Henk Goutier, can be visited by everybody even without a registration on Facebook. The page is continuously visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>.

With the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organization we are able to update the FSE website on a regular basis, The FSE has offered help to WikiCaves to promote their activities to the European caving community. Members of the Bureau participated at the following national caving events: Hidden Earth 2015 in Leek (UK), 52nd congress of the Fédération Française de Spéléologie 2015 (Saint-Vallier de Thiey), the annual conference of the Austrian Speleological Association (Gams bei Hieflau, October 2014), the FSE will be represented at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of UIS in June in Postojna by the president Ged Campion

The Euro Speleo funding for expeditions since the last GAM have enabled cavers to participate in a number of expeditions around the world including Bulgaria, Greece, Laos, Thailand, Philippines and Mozambique. The table shows there has only been 5 UK cavers involved in the 11 granted projects. It would be good to see more UK organised expeditions apply for ESP grants but the general feeling is that many UK expedition leaders tend to apply for Ghar Parau/China Projects funding first and do not always meet the criteria of enough non UK nationals taking part in the expedition/project.

*Participation might increase as expedition planning reaches completion.

Timetable of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years that involve the FSE:

- European Congress 2016 will be in the Yorkshire Dales, UK (hosting the ES Forum).
- ES Forum 2017 Dryanovo, Central North Bulgaria, northern slopes of the Balkan Mountain.
- (The next UIS Congress will be in Sydney in 2017).
- ES Forum 2018 will be in Sazkammergut, Upper-Austria.

Ged Campion

Proposal: **that the International Representatives' Reports be accepted.**

Prop: LW, Sec: NW agreed unanimously

21. Media-Liaison Report

[Secretary's note: The following report was prepared for the meeting, but was not presented as it was emailed after the secretary could access the internet.]

This year has continued in the same fashion as the previous one – reacting to media interest in caving. The notable event since the last AGM report was the Riesending rescue last June which received significant media attention and resulted in me taking many phone calls and directing questions to the right people.

I have been involved with BCA Council since 2006, first as Youth and Development Officer before this current role. Both roles were newly created and I hope they will continue to be staffed and provide an opportunity to bring new members of the caving community onto BCA Council.

Due to other commitments I now feel it's time to stand down and I believe I have found someone who is willing to take on the Media Liaison officer role should council wish it.

Chris Jewell

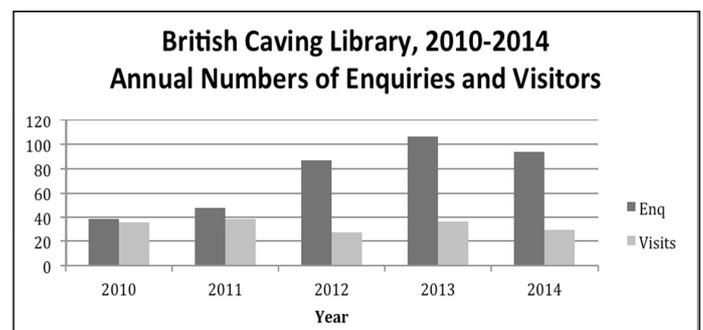
22. British Caving Library

The Library was set up in 2009 as the British Caving Library, supported by both BCA and BCRA financially, and managed by BCRA. It evolved from the original CRG Library, hosted in a member's house, via the former BCRA Library (hosted after 1980 by the Local Studies Library at Matlock, Derbyshire), to its present status as a complete Library and information centre in its own rented premises at Glutton Bridge, Buxton, Derbyshire.

At the time of the death of BCRA's Librarian in 2007, the Library consisted of about 70m of shelf length of UK and foreign periodicals and books (no surveys) and with only a printed catalogue dated 2004. The Local

Studies Library was open only on weekdays and occasional Saturday mornings for visitors and the BCRA collection was squashed into an unpleasantly hot and dusty underground book stack where there was no room to work, so visiting enquirers had to bring publications out to the main public library room. The Local Studies Library staff dealt with enquiries on behalf of BCRA and records kept at Matlock indicate that there was very little use.

BCRA set up in the Glutton Bridge premises in July 2008 and we began work on an uncatalogued mass of



BSA/CRG/BCRA material held since 2005 in a storage facility with no working space; at the same time we continued to maintain and improve the collection at Matlock. In 2009 BCA agreed to a 5-year Business Plan committing it to assist in funding the Library as the British Caving Library. In May 2010 BCRA was told that the Local Studies Library was moving to new premises and there would be no room for the BCRA Library, so we took the opportunity to move it to Glutton Bridge and combine the two collections. We achieved the move in a couple of months and since then we have gone from strength to strength with Library use increasing dramatically.

We have evolved to have over 200 m of shelf length in total (and are looking to add more), plus filing cabinets and metal cupboards for secure storage and 4 large map chests for surveys. We have a team of volunteers working with a paid Librarian (who works one day a week) so we now have a Library website, an on-line catalogue, Archive and Audio-Archive websites and a Facebook page with over 500 followers both UK and foreign. We can be open at any time, by arrangement with the Librarian, and visitors are welcomed. We deal with emailed and phone enquiries, providing scans or photocopies as required for both UK and foreign enquirers, so we now have an international reputation. The Library has comfortable working conditions with its own computers, scanners, printers, etc. for visitors to use, or they may come with their own laptops and make use of the Library Wifi.

Work by the Librarian and volunteers continues on re-cataloguing the whole collection of books and periodicals, as well as reports, surveys, photographic items and an increasing amount of archive material. We continue to receive donations of material, including up to date periodicals, from a number of British Clubs and receive around 50 foreign periodicals in exchange for BCRA's Caves & Karst Science. We have also received generous donations of publications and equipment (printers, scanners, computers, etc.), from a number of interested individuals and organisations. We have links with many British Caving Clubs which have their own Libraries so there are regular exchanges of duplicate material to build up resources around the country.

The Library hosts committee and Council meetings for BCRA and BCA and can be made available for other meetings of up to about 12-15 people. Because of its situation in a limestone area with caves nearby we hope that it may be possible in the future to host field trips or educational visits.

Given our record of achievement since 2009, I would ask that BCA confirms its intention to continue to support the Library financially for the foreseeable future.

Jenny Potts

JP: There was an original plan for the Library which has evolved over time. BCRA manages the Library and BCA contributes to its running costs, which include employing a Library assistant. BCRA is now looking for an agreement to continue this funding. There are a number of volunteers who have worked extremely hard for the Library and our work has spiraled in a number of directions as a result. This includes archive material, websites and the audio archive. We intend to put together a steering plan and come back to Council within the next 6 months and are asking BCA to agree to fund us again.

DW: Are you asking for us to commit now to funding the library based on a financial plan that is 6 months away?

RW: It is clear from BCA's accounts what we have spent on the Library in the past, but it is unclear what the money has been used for by the Library. Open-ended financial commitments are always a concern to any Treasurer.

AE: This is probably something for Council to consider, but Council is unlikely to view requests for open-ended commitments positively.

HB: Recently the Library has been doing some great work online with sites such as Facebook.

Proposal: ***that the British Caving Library Report be accepted.***

Prop: JH, Sec: DC agreed unanimously

23. Reports from BCRA, Regional Councils etc

CHECC:

Last November I succeeded Helen Brooke as the Chairperson of the Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs (CHECC) during the AGM in Gilwern. Hellie will be a tough act to follow, but we have a strong and dedicated committee as well as a growing membership ranging from first-year students to zealous alumni. With the annual flux of students exact membership levels are impractical to pin down, but there are currently 16 university speleological clubs which actively participate in CHECC. In excess of 250 students attended the annual CHECC Forum in November, with 175 of these participating in the AGM and a high proportion also attended a special CRoW debate lecture. CHECC actively contributed to the CRoW debate and cast votes which were channelled through the BCA Youth and Development Officer. The debate was just one example of a topical issue sparking thoughtful discussion between student cavers nationwide. Many individuals choose to participate in discussions on social media; the CHECC Facebook page currently has 595 members, many of whom use the group to share news

items of special interest to the student caving community, and to organise and publicise university club trips. CHECC also supported the regional Northern CHECC and Southern CHECC events last spring. The success of these events is testament to the dedication of the organisers and volunteers who put in so much effort to provide entertainment, catering and quality learning opportunities including surveying, photography and ropework, and to whom we are all indebted. In the following year I look forward to working with BCA, particularly the Training Officer and Youth and Development Officer, to promote opportunities for students and to forge and maintain lasting relationships between the CHECC demographic and the rest of the British caving community.

Thomas Starnes

TS: There is a base-camp festival that will be attended by members of CHECC using the artificial cave to hopefully raise the profile of caving.

Proposal: ***that the British Caving Library Report be accepted.***

Prop: HR, Sec: FL *agreed unanimously*

24. Election of Officers

24.1 Chairman: Andy Eavis (Prop: DW, Sec: NB) *elected unopposed.*

24.2 Training Officer: Nigel Ball (Prop: DW, Sec: HB) *elected unopposed.*

24.3 2 Club Representatives: David Cooke (Cheddar CC) (Prop: Andy Sparrow, Sec: Rachel Sparrow) *elected unopposed*

DW: It is not clear anywhere in BCA's Constitution or Manual of Operations whether the Club Representatives need to be named as representing a specific Club or clubs in general. Further it is not clear whether they should be proposed and seconded by Group members or whether individual members are acceptable and, finally, it is not clear whether nominees should provide a letter from the Group they represent giving the Group's permission for this to happen. Until now we have never discussed this, but it is perhaps time to decide what we expect.

[The meeting felt that a Club Representative should be representing all Clubs rather than one specific one and, therefore, does not need permission from one particular club. The meeting was also happy for the proposers and seconders to be any voting members.]

There was then a proposal from the floor for the second post of Club Representative: Faye Litherland Prop: BP, Sec: TS. This was agreed unanimously.

24.4 2 Individual Member Representatives: Hellie Brooke (Prop: RW, Sec: NB) *elected unopposed* and Bernie Woodley (Prop: RW, Sec: John Hine) *elected unopposed*

Other Matters

25. Proposals

Proposal: ***That this General Meeting authorises Council where Council sees appropriate, to poll its membership using solely the means of electronic mail and the list of e-mail addresses of members that it holds, subject to such safeguards as adopted by Council, to obtain the view of its membership on the question or questions put in that poll. And that Council is duly authorised to act on that view and if necessary implement such actions which are consequential to that view. Save that any such view obtained by such a poll shall not bind a General Meeting.***

Prop: BM Sec: TA

TA: The CRoW vote was expensive but helped the organisation to improve communication with its membership and better understand its views.

MB: This issue was raised at the recent CNCC meeting. The feeling was that inclusivity would be an issue as not all members have e-mail. One person who has links to the Data Protection Agency also expressed concern about complying with guidelines on data protection.

JB: CSCC had similar concerns and JB has, therefore, been mandated to vote against the proposal.

AE: We should remember that there are members without current contactable postal addresses, so they would also be excluded from any postal ballot.

HR: Maybe we should amend the proposal to say that we will advertise that the poll is happening and will accept postal returns as well.

TS: Supports the motion in principle but only 62% of members have given us their email addresses.

JP: Would prefer to miss out the word 'solely' and amend the proposal to '[...] electronic mail where this is available and postal if not'.

FL: Is concerned about constraining words such as 'solely'. There are lots of online systems that maybe do not use e-mail and we may find ourselves limited by this.

BM: The motion is simply limiting the means of communication to email rather than the postal system.

- HR: Would like to steer away from anything to do with postal because the cost is then likely to make us reluctant to talk to our membership. If parts of this proposal mean that the meeting does not approve it, it is important to note that the meeting is generally supportive of the principle that engaging with our members is a good one.
- DC: The proposal requires systems to be in place that are not currently.
- BM: There are a number of online options available to us immediately, should we wish to use them.
- BM: We have already asked for people to give us email addresses and 38% have chosen not to. That is fine and their choice. However we see it, it has to be better to canvas the views of 3,500 people over the 30 people who are attending today's meeting.
- SH: As a club membership officer there are a significant number of people who do not have email or who are reluctant, occasional email users. Although BCA is not at fault here, lots of people do not use the email addresses they hold in a confidential, respectful manner, for example by including everyone in the 'to' field of an email. This may explain some reluctance to share addresses with Clubs. That said, it is definitely sensible to seek guidance by email from members and if people to choose to withhold their address, that is fine.

Amended Proposal: ***This General Meeting recommends Council undertakes regular polling of its members by email and other means. The Association shall not be bound by the results of any such poll.***

Prop: NW Sec: JA agreed based on the following vote:

Individual Vote: For 19, Against 0 Abstentions 0

Group Vote: For: 7, Against: 1, Abstentions: 2

Proposal: ***This meeting confirms that the Constitution allows BCA to seek clarification from DEFRA and Natural England on their existing guidance on The CRoW Act and its application to caving.***

Prop: DW Sec: AE agreed based on the following vote:

Individual Vote: For 18, Against 0, Abstentions 1

Group Vote: For: 8, Against 0, Abstentions 2

26. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Proposal: ***that Heather Simpson be appointed as Independent Examiner for the 2015 Accounts.***

Prop: RW Sec: NW agreed unanimously

27. Date of the Annual General Meeting for 2016

Proposal: ***that Council set an appropriate date to take account of the need for a suitable venue.***

Prop: LW Sec: HR agreed unanimously

28. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting ended at 13.50.

Appendices

- 1) 2014 Accounts
- 2) Draft Caving Code
- 3) Draft Minimal Impact Code