



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Saturday 5th February 2005

1. ATTENDANCE (17)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS/SMCC Obs), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, Cheddar CC), Andy Sparrow (CSCC Training Officer, Cheddar CC Obs), Dave Cooke (CSCC BCA/NCA Representative, Wessex CC Obs), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC), Graham Price (Cerberus SS), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS Obs), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Darrel Instrell (MNRC/HSCC), Lee Hawkswell (MCG), Doug Harris (ACG Obs), Tony Keegan (Frome CG), Rob Norcross (Moles), Rich Witcombe (ATLAS Obs), Alan Butcher (SMCC).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS), Jonathan Roberts (MCG), Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, SBSS).

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There were three amendments:

3.1 – Re: Item 4; Surrey Mines Agent: Change the last sentence to read “DC said that in fact Peter’s *legitimate* concerns (about spam through the website) were *partially* unfounded as all email addresses were deliberately obfuscated against this happening”.

3.2 – Re: Item 16; BCA Discussion: Change the paragraph “GP asked if there was any explanation for this unwillingness. BM declined to comment” to “DC asked why his concerns were not put to the meeting of the RCC’s & BCA Treasurer on November 28th? GP asked if there was any explanation. BM in declining to comment suggested that the CSCC Treasurer should respond to the question. CW made no response”.

3.3 – Re: Item 16; BCA Discussion: Add the following sentence to the end of the paragraph beginning “AG said that some of the emails...”; “DC said that he was quite happy to make the whole correspondence available for others to judge”.

These corrections have been uploaded to the copy of the Minutes on the CSCC Website.

That they otherwise be a true and accurate record. Agreed. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Item 4 – CSCC Handbook.

GP and DC just need to make sure that all the known updates are in the text to be passed to the printers. DC has obtained a quote from Cathedral Press in Westbury-sub-Mendip of £142 for 200 A5 copies of 36 pages. GM said that this was very good value and would be hard to beat. The Meeting therefore endorsed publication.

The question of distribution arose. Copies will be sent to all CSCC Member Clubs, to the Secretaries of other Regional Councils, and to a small number of other interested parties for “liaison” purposes. However this would still leave a significant number of copies for general distribution. DC proposed that these should be available both “over-the-counter” and by post. This was agreed. DC will approach Tony Jarratt to see if Bat Products will take some. The meeting agreed a cover price of £2 (+ p&p where applicable).

ACTION: DC to put the Handbook to press by the end of February 2005.

Item 15.3 – NCA Website

GP said that he had not had a chance to pursue this as he had been away on expedition.

5. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Asbestos

This item was originally raised, but not minuted, in discussions at the CSCC September 2004 Meeting.

GP reported that he had taken advice on this matter. The 2004 Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations place a duty on people and organisations to manage the risk of asbestos on non-domestic premises. GP said that it appeared this would include caving club huts. LW asked LindaW if HSE regulations can apply outside of a work context. LindaW replied that in certain cases they most likely could, and that this might be one such case. AD said that the Scout Association had recently had its halls surveyed, and in one instance continued use of a building had been forbidden! He added that even halls built as recently as the mid-1980’s had been found to contain asbestos, so it did not necessarily follow that this was only an issue for “old” buildings. The

Meeting agreed that this was an issue that should be looked into at National level so that authoritative advice could be sought and issued.

ACTION: GP/LindaW/LW/AD to raise the issue of the Asbestos at Work Regulations with the BCA Legal Officer and BCA Council.

Disability Rights Legislation

This item was accepted as business as it followed the theme established by the previous item.

GP said that, as a consequence of their charitable status, the Cerberus CC had found it necessary to investigate the requirements that were placed on them by this legislation. Two aspects had come to light. Firstly, new legislation, currently before parliament, would require all clubs of more than 25 members (whether a charity or not) to provide for disabled access to club buildings. The Meeting agreed to revisit this issue if it became law.

The second aspect was that existing legislation placed a duty on web site designers/owners not to exclude disabled people. A recent investigation by the Disability Rights Commission had identified significant shortcomings in this respect. Although no individuals have yet been prosecuted for a breach of this legislation, the DRC were making it clear that organisations and service providers would be expected to make their web sites much more accessible to disabled people. GP said that anyone requiring further information might like to visit www.drc-gb.org/publicationsandreports, www.w3.org/WAI/, and www.cast.org. In addition, the web site <http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp> can scan other web sites and test their compatibility.

Presentation by Frome CG

TK said that he would appreciate the opportunity to talk about the activities of Frome CG. AG suggested that this be done just before Any Other Business.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman had no report to make.

7. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

7.1 – BCA Membership & Insurance

SK reported that the costs of BCA Membership and BCA Insurance for 2005 were now known and that subscriptions and premiums were due. The insurance premiums have remained at the 2004 level, and it is no longer necessary for individuals who are members of more than one BCA Member Club to pay multiple premiums because of their additional memberships. Club subscriptions to the BCA are now banded based on the number of members in the club.

The necessary forms may be found on the BCA website at <http://www.british-caving.org.uk/bca/insurance/insurance.htm>.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The attention of Clubs that were CSCC Members in 2004 is drawn to the following points:

1. *Your BCA Insurance for 2004 expired on January 31st 2005;*
2. *Although the CSCC will continue to honour your existing affiliation until the CSCC AGM on May 7th 2005, if your Club wishes to continue to affiliate to the CSCC it must either:*
 - a. *Join the BCA and stipulate the CSCC as its “Primary Region” (there is no additional charge for this), or*
 - b. *Join the BCA but write to the CSCC Secretary stating that it wishes to affiliate to the CSCC as a “Secondary Region” (for which there will be a small additional charge levied by the CSCC, see below), or*
 - c. *Not join the BCA but write to the CSCC Secretary stating that it wishes to affiliate directly to the CSCC (for the CSCC will levy a subscription charge, see below).*

Note that in case 2(b) above the CSCC will need to levy a small “administration charge”, probably of about £3 (as the bulk is funded by the BCA). But in case 2(c) above the CSCC is not permitted to use BCA funding to “subsidise” any services it provides to clubs/individuals that are not members of the BCA and so it must charge for them. It is envisaged that a direct subscription to the CSCC will cost about the same as at present; i.e. about £15. However, all three options above will confer entitlement to CSCC papers and the right to vote at CSCC Meetings. These arrangements are subject to ratification at the CSCC AGM in May 2005. Only options 2(a) and 2(b) confer the right to vote at BCA Meetings.

Although it is not necessary for BCA Member Clubs to affiliate to the CSCC in order to gain access to CSCC-controlled caves, this being a benefit of membership, they will need to affiliate to the CSCC if they wish to have or retain “a voice” in the region. Conversely, Clubs that choose not to join the BCA may wish to affiliate to the CSCC in order to keep themselves apprised of regional policies and access changes.

7.2 - Publications received

Minutes of the NCA/BCA Council Meeting (Oct 2004), DCA Information Circular (Oct-Dec 2004), Minutes of the DCA Council Meeting (Nov 2004), NCA Training Committee Minutes (Dec 04), Minutes of the NCA/BCA Council Meeting (Jan 2005), Agenda for the DCA AGM (Feb 19th 2005).

SK said that he had noted that the NCA Training Committee had expressed concern over the possible loss of Sports Council grants, and had stated that the new BCA Newsletter was “not a satisfactory replacement” for SpeleoScene. LW said that the latter comment was probably because unlike SpeleoScene the BCA Newsletter was not distributed outside of the BCA membership and then typically only as one copy per club. This means that it in the case of BCA CIM’s it is vitally important that clubs keep their members informed of pertinent information passed down from the BCA. CB reminded everyone that this was in fact a condition of obtaining BCA insurance. However, he conceded that how such information should be distributed practically was less clear.

BCA Member Clubs are reminded of their legal obligation to keep their members informed of communications from the BCA.

LindaW asked AS if the loss of the Sports Council grants would have any regional implications. AS replied that they would, but mostly indirectly, because all cavers benefit from good training and, with the current decline in numbers of cavers and the problems in Universities, the outdoor activity centres, for example, were a key source of new talent. It was therefore important that high standards were maintained on instructed schemes. AB said that the NCA Training Scheme had been intended (eventually) to be self-financing. DC said that BCA Council was being told that the scheme could not be self-financing because it was in competition with commercial schemes. LindaW said that the reason for her question was that it would be wrong for the BCA to ignore the possibility of a self-financing scheme; cavers would not welcome a rise in their subscriptions to subsidise the scheme. AS added that the problem with club training was one of mindset; money could invariably be found to run club training events but clubs were reluctant to hold them! There was a need to recognise the worth of training schemes and not to create an “us” and “them” culture between the commercial sector and the BCA.

LindaW asked that the historic accord between AB and AS be minuted!

7.3 – Resignation of the NCA/BCA Secretary

The Meeting noted that Eddy Hill, the NCA/BCA Secretary had been forced to tender his resignation, effective as of February 11th 2005. This was to enable him to take up employment overseas. SK said that from his dealings with EH he had found him a good and efficient Secretary. This was a sentiment that found favour amongst several others present.

Anyone willing to take on the role of BCA Secretary should contact the BCA Chairman as soon as possible. The NCA SGM and BCA AGM are on March 12th 2005. BCA also needs a new Auditor (see Item 12).

8. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer was not present but had sent a report.

The current account stood at £756.49 and the reserve account at £3984.60.

Monies had been received from the BCA (£570 in respect of the 2005 regional “tithe”) and BEC (£24). It was not known what the BEC cheque was for!

No invoice has yet been received from Les Sykes in respect of bolting resin.

9. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

CB said that by now he was sure everyone was aware that Cuckoo Cleaves had been put up for sale by private treaty. Offers in the region of £10000 pounds were being invited (though the value of the entrance shakehole land, 0.16 acres or 0.065 hectares, was only about £500)! The sale had attracted a considerable amount of regional and national press interest, including an article in The Times (January 8th) and CB himself appeared in a short segment on HTV news just before Christmas. All-in-all the press coverage had been quite favourable. CB said that his most recent conversation with the Land Agents had revealed that there were at least two serious offers and one described as “derisory”! Any sale is expected to be completed by the end of February 2005.

AG asked if the sale included pedestrian access across the remainder of the field. CB said it did. AG then asked if the sale of a wild cave would set a precedent. GM said not. RW highlighted caves owned by Somerset CC. (*Post-Meeting Note: Grebe Swallet is owned by Willy Stanton. AG*).

TK said that before the sale had come to light Frome CG had been making arrangements to fit a new lid to Cuckoo Cleaves as it was their adopted cave. As a new lid was ready he wondered what they should do? On behalf of the CSCC CB thanked the FCG for their generosity, and suggested that the best course of action would be to do nothing for the moment. The lid could then be used as a bargaining tool with, or goodwill gesture towards, the new owner, for example, to secure continued access. For these reasons CB will hold off installing a new padlock.

The draft access proposal for Box Mine has been received from English Nature Wiltshire. It proposes fitting fixed grilles (and replacing the solid door on the A4 Door entrance with a grille) to all entrances except the Back Door, Lady Hamilton's and Jack's entrances - which would be gated and locked with a common key, probably to be held at The Quarrymen's pub - and the Grille and Cathedral entrances - keys to which would be highly restricted. The proposal then puts three access scenarios up for consultation, ranging from no access for cavers between October 1st and March 31st with controlled access at other times, to no access between January 1st and March 31st and unrestricted access at other times, to unrestricted access. CB said that he would naturally push for the least restrictive set of access conditions and for the common key to be the CSCC key.

Note added in proof:

CB has initiated a discussion forum about the Box Mine proposals on UKcaving.com. The "Darkplaces" website has also initiated its own forum. Feedback at the time of writing has actually been quite responsible. SK.

In contrast, **Avon Wildlife Trust have closed Browne's Folly Mine until further notice**, pending a Mines Inspectors report. CB said that he should be on the mailing list for a copy of the report and has been told by AWT that they do not want to stop cavers having access to the mine. But the Meeting expressed concern at this turn of developments.

DC asked about the peppercorn rent that CSCC pays to the Hobhouse Estate for access to Browne's Folly. GP replied that there was an open entrance on Hobhouse Estate land, but added that AWT may well have pointed this out to the Estate! GP added that it was possible that he had the original access agreement with the Estate "filed away" somewhere and that he would have a look.

ACTION: GP to investigate if he has the Hobhouse Estate agreement.

The lid on Waterwheel Swallet is badly in need of replacement (it is over 20 years old!). CB has a new lid lined up through Dave Speed but money is required. CB will approach the Charterhouse Centre, who represent the landowners, Somerset CC. If this is not successful he suggested that both the Cheddar CC and the MCG should fund the replacement as they hold keys and administer access, along with the Centre. There was a question as to why the cave did not have a CSCC lock. CB said that the current arrangement (a key must be signed out) promoted conservation of the cave and that this would not, unfortunately, be the case with a CSCC key.

It has transpired that the abandoned dig near Waterwheel Swallet (mentioned in the December 2004 Minutes) is on land owned by John Small, and not Somerset CC as first thought. Nevertheless, Les Davies, the Mendip Hills AONB Warden, is concerned about the dangerous nature of the site due to the close proximity of a permissive footpath. CB reported that it would not be possible to (easily) back fill the dig after all as there was insufficient spoil remaining in the vicinity! This made gating the site a more attractive, if more expensive, proposition. However the meeting was concerned that the CSCC should not automatically be expected to pick up the tab for every abandoned dig on Mendip. The digger was identified as being John Cornwell. CB will contact him to further discuss the situation.

The last 10 – 12 feet of Avelines Hole have been gated to protect what have been identified as possible Mesolithic carvings. The UBSS have a key to the gate should a need for access arise.

As no BEC Club Representative was present there was no further information on the proposed leader scheme for Loxton Cavern.

LindaW asked what key was on Priddy Green Sink? There were several replies. It should be the CSCC key, but it was suggested that LindaW should check with Tony Jarratt. There had been talk of fitting a new lid.

10. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer said that he was sad to report the passing of Dave Edwards (the NCA Training Coordinator) the previous week. AS said that Dave Edwards had done a lot of good for the NCA Training Scheme and asked that the CSCC contribute to any initiative that might arise in memory of him. The Meeting agreed.

AS reported that the First Aid Course held in December was “not fantastically well attended”; it attracted about half of the total number that could have been accommodated. It was unclear if the CSCC would get charged for the hire of the room at the Charterhouse Centre and so AS asked that £65 be set aside for this purpose.

Concluding, AS referred to the correspondence he had initiated in the letters pages of *Descent* #181 & #182 regarding the usage of the Petzl Stop. AS asked CSCC Club Representatives to highlight the issue within their Clubs.

11. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer had no report to make.

12. NCA/BCA REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

DC reported on the NCA/BCA Council meeting held on January 8th 2005 and on subsequent developments.

Eddy Hill, the BCA Secretary, and Pat Hall, the BCA Auditor, have resigned. Bob Mehew is stepping down as the BCA Treasurer and the CSCC's “own” Jonathan Roberts has been nominated to take over!

Notice has been given of a Special General Meeting of the NCA on March 12th 2005, the purpose of which is to formally wind up the NCA. The BCA AGM is being held on the same day at the same venue (see Item 14 below).

The DCA have tabled a proposal for the AGM which seeks to clarify the status of CIM's in Clubs which are not part of the BCA insurance scheme.

Bob Mehew did not in the end put forward a motion that intended to limit Regional Council membership to Members of the BCA. Although this leaves a situation where there are different routes to different levels of service from the regions, it is a more inclusive position and as such is welcomed by the CSCC.

A reduced rate of insurance has been proposed for full-time student cavers by the BCA Council. This is intended to give support to student caving clubs which find themselves under considerable financial pressure at the moment.

A complication arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Council Treasurers held on November 28th 2004 (reported in the CSCC December 2004 Minutes) has come to light. The Minutes include the statement “A Member Club of BCA is a Member Club of all RCC's”. This cannot be the case. What the statement should have said was something like “All RCC's will grant BCA Member Clubs the same access rights to caves”. This is an important distinction, and one that has knock-on implications. Until now many Clubs affiliated to more than one region by paying additional subscriptions and, in the process, received access rights, newsletters, and in some cases full voting rights. These voting rights in “Secondary Regions” are not enshrined in the new BCA structure and it will be up to individual regions to decide how to handle the problem. *(The CSCC's solution is described in Item 7.1 above. SK)*

Concluding, DC said that he would not be standing for re-election as the CSCC BCA Representative at the AGM in May. This was because he would be standing for one of the new BCA Club Representative positions on the BCA Council instead.

The Meeting then briefly discussed the embryonic BCA. The consensus was that something workable was emerging and that it would be important for the new Council to assert its identity after the AGM. After a further short discussion a motion was proposed:

“Now that the BCA is constitutionally incorporated the activities of the group known as ‘The Hub’ are no longer desirable and should cease. The CSCC proposes a vote of thanks to ‘The Hub’ for their work”. Proposed: LindaW. Seconded: AB.

The Meeting voted: For: 16, Against: 0, Abstentions: 1

The motion was therefore carried.

Although the closing date for motions for the BCA AGM had passed, the CSCC BCA Representative will ask for the above motion to be introduced by the Chair or Secretary.

13. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator was not present as he was training Alison Moody with placements at the Shatter Pot end of Swine Puke Rift in Swildons Hole.

However SK said that AA was still waiting for LW to pass over the pictures of the bolt placements needed for the documentation and bolting web pages. LW said that he would do this.

ACTION: LW to pass on bolt placement details to AA.

14. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

(It has been suggested that this should be an “evergreen list” of events. SK)

MRO First Aid Talk (by Dr Pete Glanville), Saturday February 5th 2005, Hunters Lodge Inn, 8pm
BCRA SGM, Saturday 26th February 2005, Village Hall, Monyash, 10am
MRO Annual Meeting, Saturday March 12th 2005, Hunters Lodge Inn, Back Room, 8pm
NCA SGM, Saturday March 12th 2005, Church Hall, Alvechurch, 10.30am
BCA AGM, Saturday March 12th 2005, Church Hall, Alvechurch, 10.30am
Charterhouse Caving Company AGM, Saturday April 16th 2005
Forest 2005, June 17th – 19th 2005, www.forest2005.org.uk
2005 British Cave Rescue Conference, Friday-Sunday July 1st - 3rd 2005, Eastwater Farm, Priddy, Mendip
Hidden Earth 2005, Friday-Sunday September 23rd - 25th 2005, Churchill School, Churchill, Mendip

14. PRESENTATION BY FROME CG

TK started by referring to the work that FCG members had done at Cuckoo Cleaves (see Item 9). He went on to explain that the Club was long established and had a number of active cavers, many of whom caved midweek. However TK said that FCG found midweek access (arranging keys & permits) to Charterhouse caves to be problematic and wondered if anything could be done to improve the situation, such as making FCG a Charterhouse CC key holder.

AG said that, regrettably, Charterhouse caves were outside of the control of the CSCC, and suggested that TK take the matter up with the Charterhouse CC. The Charterhouse CC Secretary (GM), who was present, said that the Charterhouse Executive would be happy to consider any formal request at its AGM in April 2005. But LindaW, the Charterhouse CC Conservation Officer, said that the primary concern of the Charterhouse CC was conservation and it would need to be convinced that there was a sound basis for having another key holder. GM expressed surprise at the problems TK had alluded to as he thought the procedures were quite straightforward.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LW said that as Hidden Earth was being hosted by the Mendip region in 2005 he was on the lookout for additional volunteers to help organise and run the event. There were vacancies for: Organising Committee (3 or 4 people), Lecture Secretaries (5 or 6 people), Press & PR (1 or 2 people), and General Dogsbodies/Car Parking (20-30 people).

Contact Les at equipment@csc.org.uk if you want to get involved.

17. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Annual General Meeting, Saturday 7th May 2005, 10:30