

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 19th May 2007

1. ATTENDANCE (12, 9 eligible to vote)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS Obs/SMCC Obs), Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, SBSS), Dave Cooke (CSCC Webmaster, Wessex CC), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, SCG/BCA DIM), Alan Butcher (CSCC Training Officer, SMCC), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC Obs), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Graham Price (Cerberus SS), Mike Richardson (MCG), Carmen Smith (WCC Obs, CPC Obs).

With 9 voting representatives present the Secretary pronounced the AGM as quorate (see Item 8.3).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS), Toby Maddocks (BEC), Linda Wilson (UBSS).

AA & LindaW were representing the CSCC and the Charterhouse CC Ltd respectively at a Special Meeting of the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee convened to discuss the recent problems with Eco-anchors on Mendip (see Item 13).

3. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Secretary said that he had been contacted by the Secretary of the SCG informing him that they wished to become *Direct Members* of the CSCC. A copy of the SCG Constitution had been enclosed. SK said that he recommended that the CSCC *approve* the application. This was agreed subject to the SCG paying the appropriate subscription.

The Meeting noted that the Kent University Caving Club, granted membership in February, had now joined the BCA (see the previous Minutes).

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

5. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

September

Item 10.2 – CB/DC to put some photographs of the Star Shaft capping on the website. *Done.*

Item 13.5 – LesW to deposit the replacement chain in Swildons as soon as possible. *Done!!!*

February

Item 3 – SK to respond to the KUCC. *Done.*

Item 8.3 – SK/AG to draft a paper on the issues surrounding Club regional affiliations. *Taken under Item 16.*

Item 9 – CW to get the CSCC accounts scrutinised and approved before the AGM. *Taken under Item 9.*

Item 13.2 – AA to furnish DC with a note about the Star Shaft bolts for the website. *Done.*

Item 13.2 – AA to explain why he intends to test the Star Shaft protection bolts to 10kN. *Done.*

Based on similar practice in the CNCC.

Item 15 – CB/SMK to promote the University Club Event. *Done.*

Item 16 – SK to respond to the WCMS. *Done.*

Item 16 – WCMS to supply the C&A Officer with an itemised and supported claim. *Nothing received.*

Item 16 – CB to formally lodge WCMS claim with the BCA C&A Officer. *Unable to progress (see above).*

6. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no other matters.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

"I have been Chairman since 2003 and am willing to stand again for another year, however this will be my last year since I believe that the organisation benefits from a change.

I would like to thank the officers of the CSCC for their hard work, much of it behind the scenes. For example in the last year I have read several hundred e-mails relating to CSCC business whereas the membership usually only see four sets of minutes. Individual thanks goes to the officers that are standing down at this AGM: Steve King, Secretary since May 2004, Chris Binding, C&A Officer since 2004, and Les Williams, Equipment Officer since 1994!"

8. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

"As I indicated at last years AGM, I will be standing down at the conclusion of this Meeting. I hope that my tenure as Secretary is one that will be viewed favourably!"

The Secretary's job is made much easier when he or she knows that they can draw upon the experience, wisdom, and enthusiasm of their fellow Officers. In this I have been very lucky and I would particularly like to single out the help that I have been afforded these past three years by Chris B, Andrew and Cookie. To them, and the other Officers, both past and present, my grateful thanks.

I understand that a volunteer may have been persuaded to take up this office, and so it just leaves me to wish them good luck. I will, of course, give them whatever assistance I can to smooth the transition."

8.1 - Publications received

BCA Council Minutes, Jan 07
BCA AGM Agenda, Minutes & Officers Reports, Mar 07

DCA Information Circular, Mar/Apr 07
DCA AGM Minutes, Mar 07
DCA Council Agenda, Apr 07

8.2 - Correspondence

There is a new Secretary for the MCG: Mike Richardson, mike@quaking.demon.co.uk

CSCC Members are asked to amend their records accordingly.

The Meeting noted with sadness the passing of two respected members of the caving establishment:

Frank Baguley (on 10th March, aged 92). Frank was a member of the SWCC, and former Secretary of both the Cambrian CC and the NCA; (<http://www.swcc.org.uk/news/article.php?id=66>), and

Dave 'Wig' Irwin (on 26th March, aged 71). Dave was a member of the BEC and former Vice President of the WCC but will be best remembered for founding both the Mendip Cave Registry and Mendip Cave Bibliography. He also co-wrote two editions of the 'Mendip Underground' guide and wrote and compiled the report 'St Cuthberts Swallet'; (<http://www.bec-cave.org.uk/content/view/651/1/> & <http://www.wessex-cave-club.org/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=245>).

The next European Speleological Congress will be held in 2008 in the Vercours, France. See <http://www.vercours2008.eu> for more details.

8.3 – Membership Issues

The Treasurer said that the Ashford Speleological Society had renewed their Direct Membership.

The Secretary said that he had received a membership list from the BCA dated 1st May 2007 with the rider that some applications/renewals were still in the pipeline. The list contained the names of 32 Clubs, of which 24 had been recognised as Members of the CSCC in 2006. SK said that there were already two Direct Members and so with the accession of the SCG and the renewal of the Ashford SS this made a total of 4 Direct Members and 28 recognised Clubs. The quorum for the AGM was thus 7 Clubs.

The Meeting noted that 8 Clubs/Bodies were seeking membership of the CSCC through the BCA. It was agreed to defer any decision on the admittance of these Clubs until Item 16.

SK said that of the *possible* 36 (28+8) Member Clubs; 27 considered the CSCC to be their *primary* Regional Council (RC), 6 considered CSCC to be their secondary RC, 1 considered CSCC to be its third choice RC, and 2 considered CSCC to be their fourth choice RC.

SK added that the BCA list also showed the CSCC to have the second largest regional membership within the BCA.

9. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

9.1 – Financial Report

The Treasurer said that the Current Account stood at £465.82 and the Reserve Account at £3695.62. He also apologised that the accounts had not yet been signed off (they have been looked at by CW's employers accountant who had suggested a couple of changes). The accounts will be issued at a later date.

CW said that CSCC funds were down on the previous year by £305, but £200 of this were due to bolting costs which will be reimbursed by the BCA. The remainder was accounted for by outstanding mileage claims.

ACTION: CW to have the CSCC Accounts signed off as soon as possible.

9.2 – Direct Membership Subscription

The Meeting agreed to leave the Direct Membership subscription at the 2006 rate of £15.

10. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

The C&A Officer presented a comprehensive verbal report which is abstracted below:

10.1 – C&A Report:

"The recent bolting hiatus swallowed up a huge amount of time and effort and at this time, almost mid-point through the year, it is clear that the proposed schedule of funded works (pre-emptively published in Descent) will not be completed by me this year. This, coupled with the failed prosecutions at Swildon's Hole (for two instances of vandalism), a further incident at Aveline's Hole, plus the ongoing uncertainty regarding access to some sites, and a solution to the bolting problem, means that 2007 is likely to be a poor year for conservation and for access. It has been frustrating to not be able to get projects to happen much more rapidly - admittedly mostly as a result of me lacking the equipment and skills, despite many generous and kind offers of

assistance and manpower. An example of this is the years spent on a, still unfinished, course of work at Cuckoo Cleeves. I am happy to report that all instances of reported problems with padlocks were dealt with within 24hrs. Pretty much the only really efficient service I have personally been able to provide.

Having completed a three year sentence in the role I am standing down with effect from today but with my enthusiasm for caving mostly still intact, despite the battering it has taken. I wish my successor all the best and will assist the transition."

Items arising since the February meeting:

Avelines Hole: The gate at the far end of the cave was cut by persons unknown sometime up to February. The police were informed of the criminal damage and a report filed (but nothing has been heard since). The gate was fixed by Dave Speed, paid for by the AONB Hills Warden (many thanks to Les Davies).

Compton Martin Ochre Mine: Many thanks go to Fred Tye for doing a comprehensive (and free of charge) report on the state of Compton Martin Ochre Mine with recommendations for remedial works to stabilise or reinforce parts of the old workings. Details have been forwarded to Chris Davies, an enthusiastic mines buff who has a good team which has demonstrated an active and responsible approach to the conservation of many other mine sites. LesW has also stated his intention to play a role in this project as he has a long standing association with the site. Thanks are due to Les for mending the entrance recently.

Coral Cave: 'Biff' (Frith), Mick Norton and friends fabricated and installed a replacement lid here following prolonged recognition that the ancient original lid was in a terminal state. CSCC refunded expenses of £100. The job is superbly done. It was suggested that an externally sited hanger at the rock face would facilitate rigging (see Item 13). Prior to the lid being installed, a report was received on 16th February that the lid was broken/unsecured. A site visit and installation of a chain/CSCC padlock took place the same day.

Cuckoo Cleeves: The landowner, Wayne Starsmore, aided by LesW, Hugh Tucker, Elaine Johnson, Carmen Smith, Phil Hendy, Doug Harris and others from the Wessex and ACG, installed a new lid (organised by WS). I have subsequently measured the damaged fencing and submitted drawing plans and await a contractor to quote and undertake the work (for which funding has previously been arranged). Some minor dry stone walling needs attention and offers of help have been received on UKCaving. A recent report of the padlock being seized was investigated and proved to be false; visiting cavers should ALWAYS take 3-in-1 oil with the CSCC key if they wish to enjoy ease of access.

Goatchurch Cavern: It is disheartening that a visiting film crew (from a college near Farnham) left the main entrance chamber in a poor way following use of the cave (with prior guidance and consultation from BEC/UBSS/CSCC C&A and the Mendip Hills AONB Warden). Subsequent site visits to clear up loose rocks, sandbags and litter was undertaken and complaints were filed. It is hoped that official representations will be made expressing disquiet over this affair.

Hilliers Cave: A large (~500 kg) boulder was found precariously balanced/poised in the roof just downstream from the entrance crawl and made safe in March. On April 17th a report was received that the padlock was damaged. This resulted in a site visit and replacement padlock being fitted.

Manor Farm Swallet: Due to the dangers posed by the loose scaffold bar at the head of September Rift it is suggested that it be superseded by the installation of p-hangers (see Item 13).

Star Mine Shaft: Carmen Smith (WCC) plus one other (unknown to me, but thanks anyway!) kindly moved the blue panels away from the capping. It is understood that these items belong to the farmer. No further work is required at this site other than the possible installation of a secondary gate at the flooded level. WCC have stated their willingness that this course of work is engaged in.

Swildon's Hole: Graffiti at the Old Grotto was reported (by CSCC C&A). It was removed very efficiently and effectively by Chris Davies/Carmen Smith of WCC, to whom thanks are gratefully extended.

Swildon's Hole: Update on the vandalism at Barnes Loop, August 2006: DC Shaun Garrett (Wells CID) phoned on 16th February to say that no evidence to prosecute was available and so no further action was being taken with this case. Given the very considerable time and effort input by many cavers to make a case this was very disheartening, as it had appeared that there was enough strong evidence to progress this case.

Swildon's Hole: BBC Filming: CSCC C&A was approached by the BBC with a view to researching a forthcoming programme. A two hour meeting was held at the Charterhouse Centre (thanks to AONB for arranging this) attended by Jim Hardcastle of AONB, Dave Irwin and myself. Conservation was foremost but any concerns proved unfounded – it is understood that the filming was undertaken by Gavin Newman and his team. The programme is supposedly due to be screened in July.

The (Found) Lost Cave of Loxton: A site visit with Doug Harris, DC and LesW was arranged. WCC/ACG, with the support of CSCC, are to formulate plans to pipe the presently unstable entrance shaft/shoring. A courtesy phone call was made to Nick Richards (one of the original diggers) who stated his happiness at the proposal. He expressed an interest in attending to see the work in progress/completion. **Graham Mullan reminded the meeting that there is contemporary graffiti at the base of the entrance shaft which must be preserved. Its location is such that this shouldn't be problematic.**

Upper Flood Swallet: MCG reimbursed CSCC £26.50 for conservation tape supplies. It is fair to say that the discovery of the new extensions has provided great excitement and conservation-based thoughts which will no doubt run and run as more work gets undertaken here.

Waterwheel Swallet: Damage was noted at the Black & White Grotto and notified to Somerset County Council/Dr Stanton. Charterhouse Centre (representing the SCC) has therefore decided to introduce a more thorough access protocol requiring the names/addresses of people asking for the key. Remediation of the main dam has been successful and this cave is now fully restored.

West Twin Brook Adit: Following *yet another* report of the combination lock/chain being forced, a site visit and consultation with UBSS was made. A couple of hours work to backfill the entrance and install a new lock/chain was undertaken; this should deter all but the most determined from forcing entry. This site is now effectively closed. It is an ex-site.

“Mendip from the Air” by Hannah Frith: CSCC C&A was invited to (and attended) the launch of a new publication, largely using aerial photography and LIDAR imagery of Mendip. A copy of the book (of which there are limited numbers) can be had free of charge by contacting the Mendip Hills AONB Office (01761-462338) while stocks last. CSCC was provided with a copy.

Bat Conservation Trust Liaison: A proof copy of a non-contentious Bat Surveying guide was received from Dr Katie Rogers and which appeared to require no alterations or additions.

NT Liaison: Linda Wilson attended a meeting on my behalf during which alterations to the NT Caving Guidelines were debated and subsequently forwarded to the NT.

Postscript: *“As an access officer it would be remiss of me not to note the frustration experienced, and voiced to me, by many cavers who are unable to visit Rhino Rift and Hunters Hole for the foreseeable future. More news appears under Item 13, but based on information received it is hoped that the uncertainties are now largely cleared up and that the two main affected caves will reopen sooner rather than later. The CSCC padlock was put back on Priddy Green Sink on Friday morning as there was no longer any enduring compelling reason against so doing.”*

10.2 – **University Club Training Event:** This went ahead on the weekend 23rd-25th February 2007. CB said that 7 students representing 4 Universities (including Nottingham, Reading & Southampton) attended. The evening lecture at the Hunters Lodge, open to all-comers, and given by Tim Francis on the MCG’s recent discoveries in Upper Flood Swallet was exceptionally well-attended. The CSCC would like to express its thanks to CW, Tim Francis, Roger Dors and *Hidden Earth* (for providing the PA system). Thanks are also due to BCA/CSCC/Lyon Equipment for providing some freebies, Christine Hayes and Martin Torbett for assisting with loading equipment, and to WCMS members and other cavers who set out and tidied away the chairs for the evening lecture.

10.3 – **Mendip Cavers Quiz Night:** A well-attended quiz night at the Hunters Lodge on 10th February organised by Dave Irwin (BEC) and Martin Mills (SMCC) raised £138 to be put towards an as yet unspecified cave entrance project. Thanks are due to Dave & Martin for arranging this event. Given the subsequent passing of Dave Irwin, whatever project is fixed upon will have greater significance.

10.4 – **EUG Course:** By November last year 13 trainees had signed up for the proposed course to be undertaken by Demrock. This was duly submitted but, and despite a follow up email in April 2007, there is nothing further to report.

AB proposed a vote of thanks to CB for his work.

11. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer said that he had very little to report. The BCA AGM had seen a change of BCA Training Officer as Idris Williams had stood down to be replaced by Graham Mollard. AB said that the new incumbent was clearly keen to take on his new role because his first action was to schedule a Training Committee Meeting on a midweek morning! AB said that not unsurprisingly he was unable to attend, but he confirmed that he was receiving Minutes of the Committees meetings.

The Meeting agreed that it was unreasonable for amateur volunteers to be expected to take time off work to attend BCA Committee meetings except, perhaps, in exceptional circumstances.

ACTION: CSCC representatives on BCA National Council to raise this matter at the next BCA Council meeting.

12. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer said that he also had very little to report, but as noted in Item 5 the replacement chain had now been fitted on the new anchor at Blue Pencil in Swildons Hole! LesW then proceeded to prove this by showing the old chain. The wear on one link was very plain.

LesW also said he welcomed the proactive stance taken by the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee in the last year. However, he added that whilst he had mostly(!) enjoyed the portfolio he now considered it time to step aside and wished his successor the best of luck.

LesW and DC both expressed concern at the proposals in the BCA Anchor Placement Consultation to pay CIC’s to accredit amateur cavers in anchor placement techniques. The relevant paragraphs are 57- 60 of the Anchor Discussion Document (version 3) which read:

*“At the heart of the Anchor scheme is the aim to place anchors in locations which minimise the risks associated with the rigging position when they are used by other cavers. In addition, the act of placing the anchors is challenging, given that often there are no pre existing anchors or belay points from which a person can hang and gain easy access to the desired point to install an Eco Anchor. E&T consider that these facts require installers to be competent in both rigging and SRT. This raises the question of a need to assess the competence of the installer. **E&T seeks views on the need to test for competence.**”*

Within BCA, the CIC Scheme does cover SRT (Ref 13). Questions have been raised about whether a person competent at SRT means that that person is also competent at rigging. This point arises since an installer is determining the best rigging location for a pitch prior to installation. It might be argued that such competence can only be obtained by experience in rigging pitches devoid of existing installed anchors. One region conducts a meeting at the pitch to determine the precise locations of the anchors to be installed. **E&T seeks views on whether competence at SRT also means competence at rigging.**

E&T has been reminded that other persons have similar competence such as Level 2 and 3 IRATA Rope Access Technician and Supervisor (Ref 14). Potentially similar qualifications exist such as those offered by the National Access and Rescue Centre (Ref 15). It appears to E&T that persons holding such qualifications might well be suitably competent at rigging and SRT. **E&T seeks views on this presumption.**

E&T recognises that the pool of potential installers should not be just limited to persons who hold such qualifications. Indeed many current installers do not hold such qualifications; rather they have acquired competence in SRT by substantial experience, no doubt aided by some degree of training (whether formal or informal). It is also likely that there would be insufficient persons involved in the scheme if such persons were unable to volunteer. E&T therefore consider it is essential that there should be a means of determining the competence of persons who do not hold such qualifications. E&T consider that such persons could be checked against that part of the CIC scheme (see Part 6.4.4. in Ref 13) by CIC Trainer / Assessors as a means of achieving this. E&T recognise that given such persons are volunteers, it would be unreasonable for them to bear the cost of being checked and accepts that there is a sizeable cost implication to BCA, of around £750 per year (based on a demand of 5 people per year). **E&T seek views on the use of that part of the CIC scheme in this way and on the availability of alternatives."**

After some debate a motion was put to the Meeting:

"The CSCC expresses its total opposition to the proposals within the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee consultation on Anchor Placement that require the accreditation of amateur cavers by professionals."

The motion was carried nem con.

ACTION: Secretary to notify the Chairman of the BCA E&T Committee (check with DC first).

13. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator was not present as he, and Linda Wilson (UBSS, CCC Ltd) were attending a Meeting of the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee specially-convened to discuss the findings of the investigation into the Rhino Rift anchor failure and the issues arising (see below).

13.1 – Comment on the Recent Problems with Mendip Eco-Anchors (SK/CB):

As explained in AA's written report below, on 25th March there was an incident in Rhino Rift whereby a sizeable piece of resin mortar came away from one of the Y-hang Eco-anchors on the first pitch whilst a caver was on rope. The anchor remained in place and so, fortunately, the caver was unharmed.

At the request of the Charterhouse Caving Company, the CSCC (with the full support of the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee) immediately launched an investigation. As part of that investigation the anchor was subjected to an approved load test and failed (though it again remained in place). This was highly significant because it was the first known failure of an Eco-anchor placed under the BCA (ex-NCA) Bolt Placement Scheme anywhere in the country. The ramifications were wide-ranging (over 4000 anchors have been installed nationwide, over 100 on Mendip alone). It was thus essential that the investigation was thorough and taken seriously. Meanwhile the CCC closed Rhino Rift. The initial findings of the investigation then raised the disturbing possibility of a 'common mode' failure mechanism. At that point, with the Easter holiday looming, with the CSCC Bolting Coordinator and Equipment Officer out of the country, and acting in good faith on the advice they were receiving from many quarters, the CSCC Chairman, Secretary and C&A Officer collectively took the decision to issue a recommendation that cavers not use CSCC-placed Eco-anchors at a number of sites (Hunters Hole, Swildons Cowsh Avens, GB Ladder Dig, and Split Rock Quarry). The lock was changed on Priddy Green Sink to ensure that cavers could not descend without first being given an explanation of why the lock had been changed. Roger Dors and Robin Main, the landowners for Hunters Hole and Swildon's Hole respectively, were also informed. A programme of visual inspection and load testing at these and other sites (for comparative purposes) then commenced and gradually a much more complex picture began to emerge. It is that picture which the BCA E&T Committee were debating at the same time as the CSCC AGM. The scheduling was unfortunate (as a member of the BCA E&T Committee had originally agreed to attend the AGM to answer questions), but unavoidable. A speedy resolution was clearly in everyone's interests.

In an unfortunate coincidence, in 2006 the manufacturer of the currently used, typed-tested, and approved, Eco-hangers had announced that it would cease production of the anchors. At the same time the BCA had just a small handful of anchors left. Some of these will be required for comparative type-testing of any new anchor and so the number available for remedial anchor placements on Mendip is very limited. Replacement anchors were one of the issues the BCA Anchor Installation consultation launched in December, and reported at February's CSCC Meeting, was seeking to address.

The latest news (as of 17th May) is that a new anchor is now being tested for possible introduction into the national scheme and that a quantity of anchors of the current type (32 in total, 20 in the interim – being re-imported from France – and 12 from Wales) are being collected by AA at the BCA E&T Committee Meeting. This should allow some remedial bolting to take place in the very near future. It is also understood that the E&T Committee are likely to conclude that there is no common safety issue with the anchors at the sites identified above. Accordingly the CSCC padlock was replaced on Priddy Green Sink on the morning of 18th May.

CB has noted that the assessment of the various representations made to him (as C&A Officer) over this matter is that the national anchor scheme should be scrapped on the basis that "Cavers should be able to make up their own minds whether or not they wish to trust an anchor". That is a facile argument: cavers should never blindly trust an anchor no matter what the type or the circumstances under which it was placed.

AB expressed concern about the indirect way that some landowners were, or were to be, approached and requested that a personal face-to-face approach be used wherever possible. This was noted. SK thanked AB for talking to Robin Main.

AG enquired about whether and how anchors that were to be replaced would be removed. CB replied that removal was not a straightforward process and each anchor would probably need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Some might just have to be left in place but permanently disabled.

Note added in proof: The following statement was issued by the BCA E&T Committee on 21st May:

"Following a report of loss of resin from an anchor in Rhino Rift, an investigation was put in hand by the Equipment Committee.

As a result, precautionary measures were taken where appropriate to restrict access to certain sites pending a full investigation of the problem.

As a result of this investigation the Equipment Committee have concluded that there is not a safety issue in the caves concerned.

The Equipment Committee have, however, identified some failings in the Eco Anchor program procedures and have agreed changes which are intended to prevent these problems re-occurring.

It was also agreed that the disadvantages of using a puller as part of routine testing outweigh the advantages and as a result the Equipment Committee no longer recommend that Eco Anchors be pulled as part of routine testing."

*Andy Pryke
Chairman Equipment & Techniques Committee
British Caving Association
19/05/07*

13.2 – Bolting Coordinators Report:

"Alison (Moody), Chris (Binding) and myself revalidated in December in Gough's Cave. Many thanks to Chris Castle for arranging the access. Three more anchors need to be placed there (at least) so it is hoped we can use this site again, later this year. This meant we could place and inspect anchors again.

With the exception of the anchors in [Thrupe] High Atlas and Split Rock Quarry, all anchors that needed inspection have been done, thanks to the team. The former because I forgot my oversuit on the trip I intended to do it on, and the latter because I do not have a clue where they are!

Anchors were placed this year in: Gough's (one end of the oxbow), Thrupe Lane (completing Perseverance, Lateral, Ledge and Slither), Star Shaft Mine, and Swildons (one anchor for the new chain in Blue Pencil). Things were going well...

In January there was another report of loose anchors in Rhino Rift, on the second pitch. As CSCC had a new puller from the BCA, to put the safety beyond doubt, I duly went down with Jon Telling and tested every one. They were all within the testing standard at the time.

A month later another report came in (placed on the UKcaving Forum) and within 24 hr I was back down the cave with the puller. This time an anchor failed on the first pitch. At this time all I am able to say is that the rock was cracked next to the anchor, which meant that a potentially dangerous failure was possible.

Bob Mehew [from the BCA Equipment & Techniques Committee] came down as BCA representative and investigations led to a possible common mode problem, which meant that as a precaution Rhino Rift, GB, Thrupe Lane and Priddy Green Sink, had some restricted access placed on them or anchors disabled. After that I spent a 'lovely' day in a Yorkshire quarry testing anchors and the procedure for testing anchors. At the moment I am at a meeting hopefully finalising the outcomes.

One question that I can answer is why the suspect anchors were not just replaced. The answer is that there are only a very few anchors left in the country and the CSCC had used its stock doing the work mentioned earlier."

13.3 – **Anchor Placement Proposals:** Requests for anchors to be placed in two caves had been received: in Manor Farm at the 2nd Pitch (September Rift) and 3rd Pitch (Curtain Chamber), and at the entrance to Coral Cave. The Meeting considered that the old and loose scaffold bar on September Rift should be examined to see if it could be fixed better or replaced. The other requests were turned down (there is a bypass for the Curtain Chamber pitch, and a site visit to Coral Cave suggested that there were adequate existing belays).

DC suggested that in future those proposing anchor installations should explain their thinking.

13.4 – **Star Shaft:** DC sought clarification of the insurance situation for the two Eco-anchors installed for protection in the concrete at the lip of Star Shaft. They could not formerly be part of the Anchor Placement Scheme because no placements had been type-tested in concrete by the BCA (though this was an intended commercial application). Were they therefore a fixed aid, and if so what was the insurance situation?

ACTION: AA to look into the insurance cover for the Eco-anchors at Star Shaft.

14. WEBMASTERS REPORT

The Webmaster said that as noted in Item 5 photographs of the capping of Star Shaft were now on the website - they were perhaps just a bit hidden! DC added that the access data was all now in a database and integrated with Bill Chadwick's Google Earth Map. DC also said that it was still his intention to broaden the ability to edit the CSCC Website to registered users.

15. BCA MATTERS

There had been the AGM and a Meeting of BCA Council on 24th March. DC, LesW and SK had all attended.

SK said that the AGM had confirmed DC as the new BCA Treasurer. Simon Froude (BPC) had agreed to take over as Secretary (subject to some assistance) from Jenny Potts (who had been filling the position in an acting capacity). SK himself had agreed to take over a vacant Individual Member Representative position on National Council for one year.

The BCA stand at the Outdoor Show in early March was by all accounts well received and generated much interest. Over 200 names and addresses were collected from people 'interested' in trying caving. **If any CSCC Member Clubs entertain or recruit anyone as a consequence of the BCA's presence at the Outdoor Show, please will you let the CSCC Secretary know.**

SK said that he had been copied a chain of emails which noted that some 18 of these contacts were Scout Leaders looking for help to run caving trips. As it was not clear to him how this was being picked up by either the BCA or the Scout Association he had forwarded the list to AD in case ASCS could offer any assistance to its brethren.

The National 'Try Caving' weekend on 26-27th May 2007 is going ahead although there appear to be wide variations in the vigour with which different regions are participating. **The CSCC is not mounting any events itself, but would be pleased to learn of any being run by its Member Clubs and will offer what assistance it can.**

AB remarked that the SMCC had recently been looking at reducing its age limit for membership but was finding the requirements of the Protection of Children Act rather complicated. The SMCC had therefore been looking at formulating its own policy. Some others present expressed surprise at this, saying that their Clubs now admitted children and had opted to do so without much issue. AB said that this seemed to reinforce his view that there was a lot of confusion. He acknowledged that whilst the NCA had drawn up 'Guidance Notes' – now adopted by the BCA - these were more an interpretation of the PoCA rather than a clear set of instructions to a Club on what it needed to do. DC, LesW & SK agreed that this was something that they could bring up at BCA Council. SK said that he had heard that the Guidance Notes might need revision anyway, due to changes in legislation since they were first written.

ACTION: CSCC Representatives to raise the need for clearer guidance on the PoCA for Clubs at BCA National Council.

DC said that the BCA AGM had adopted an amendment to a resolution proposed by himself and Jenny Potts (DCA). The adopted resolution read:

"To agree that the subscription rates are set annually so that members fairly contribute to the direct and indirect services to which they have access".

DC explained that the basis for this motion, which altered the arrangement in place since BCA's foundation, was a financial necessity if the BCA was to survive the loss of grant aid from the Sports Council. Originally the subscription income from CIM's was only intended to cover their insurance and associated costs, with the remainder being borne out of the subscriptions of Clubs and DIM's. Unfortunately this would no longer be possible. The BCA will therefore run at a deficit in 2007/8 and subscription levels will be reassessed in the Autumn 2007.

There will be a Meeting of the BCA Finance Committee on 10th June.

16. MOTIONS

At its February Meeting the CSCC debated - but chose not to make a decision on due to time constraints - a proposal from DC which called for the CSCC Secondary Membership subscription to be reduced from the present £3 to £0 in order to bring the CSCC in line with all the other Regional Councils. However concern was expressed at the time at some of the possible consequences of doing this. The Chairman & Secretary agreed to go away and consider how the issue might be tackled and whether any Constitutional changes might be necessary to accommodate the proposal and/or protect the Council.

The following set of proposals, numbered 1 – 4, were drafted by the Secretary with the aim of tightening the CSCC Constitution and preparing a 'framework' under which the intent of DC's original proposal could ultimately be accommodated (in Proposal 4b). Only Proposal 1 was a Constitutional change, the others were policy statements for adoption. Proposal 5 was a separate Constitutional change being proposed to recognise the sad reality that it is increasingly difficult to fill posts on the Council from amongst the membership of the Member Clubs.

These Proposals were published in the Agenda for the Meeting, and were circulated to the Officers for comment ahead of the Meeting. The evening before the Meeting DC circulated a document outlining his vision of how the BCA should deal with the issue of Clubs that wanted to affiliate to more than one Regional Council. As far as the CSCC was concerned this only required the abolition of the Secondary Membership category and its subscription.

The Meeting considered each Proposal in turn:

Proposal 1:

That the CSCC amend its Constitution as follows (changes in **bold type**):

- a) renumber Rule 5 to Rule **5a**;
- b) amend Rule 5a to read “*A club becomes a member club by signifying to the Council its wish to do so and by paying the appropriate subscription for the membership sought*”;
- c) adding Rule **5b**: “*Membership shall be conditional on acceptance by the Council. The Council reserves the right to reject an application for membership or to expel a member club after due process.*”

[The sole purpose of this proposal was to clarify the existing conditions of membership and to formalise the de facto conditions that the Council already presumes and which give it its autonomy within the national structure. The last part of Rule 5a made provision for different types of CSCC membership, now or in the future, e.g. the Direct Members, without actually stipulating those types of membership.]

The Meeting recognised this as a sensible clarification of the existing Rules but chose to accept an amendment from the floor:

That Rule 5 to be amended to read “A club becomes a member club by signifying to the Council its wish to do so and by paying the appropriate subscription for the membership sought. Membership shall be conditional on acceptance by the Council.”

Proposed: AB, Seconded: GM. Carried *nem con*.

Proposal 2:

That, *en masse*, the CSCC recognise all those Clubs in Schedule 1 of the Agenda as having signified their wish to join the Council, and that it accept them into membership subject to their continuing to pay the appropriate annual subscription to the BCA or the CSCC, according to their type of membership.

[The sole purpose of this proposal was simply to clarify that there was no need for all the ‘regular and established’ CSCC Member Clubs to write to the Council formally requesting membership in accordance with the new Rule 5. But membership will be presumed to have lapsed where a Club does not pay its subscription.]

That Proposal 2 be accepted and minuted.

Proposed: AB, Seconded: GM. Carried *nem con*.

Proposal 3:

Proposal 3a:

That henceforth from the AGM, the right to a CSCC key will no longer be a benefit of membership of the Council for any new Member Club. Any Member Club shall instead be free to make a request to the Council for the right to hold a key. The Council shall be required to consider that request and to make a decision.

Proposal 3b:

That henceforth from the AGM, and where determined by the Council, a CSCC key shall only be issued on receipt of a refundable deposit.

Proposal 3c (only if Proposal 3b is carried):

That henceforth from the AGM, the amount of the refundable deposit for a CSCC key shall be £12.

[The purpose of proposals 3a - 3c was to decouple CSCC membership and key ownership. This would allow the CSCC to expand its membership – for example by recognising all those Clubs that state ‘CSCC’ on their BCA renewal/membership form - without incurring exorbitant costs or risking cave conservation. The amount of the key deposit was calculated as the cost of replacing a padlock (£410 in 2006 divided by 50 locks/order), plus a nominal charge for cutting a key, plus a small allowance for inflation over the next 5 years.]

The Meeting viewed Proposals 3b & 3c as too prescriptive and instead chose to accept an amendment to Proposal 3a from the floor:

“Any Member Club shall be free to make a request to the Council for the right to hold a CSCC key. The Council shall be required to consider that request and to make a decision. In normal circumstances this power is delegated to the C&A Officer.”

Proposed: AB, Seconded: GM. Carried *nem con*.

Proposal 4:

Proposal 4a:

That henceforth from the AGM, any BCA Member Club that stipulates the CSCC as one of its regional interests shall be known as an *Affiliate Member* of the CSCC. Affiliate Members shall have the right to attend CSCC Meetings and to be heard, but may not vote and will not have the power of veto that is invested in Member Clubs.

[The purpose of this proposal was to automatically make any BCA Club that puts the CSCC down on its membership/renewal form an Affiliate Member, and that Club would remain as such until they specifically set about asking the CSCC if they can be a (full) Member (as detailed in Proposal 1).]

Proposal 4b:

That henceforth from the AGM, Secondary Membership of the CSCC shall no longer exist. All those Clubs previously subscribed in this category of membership shall automatically become full Members of the CSCC subject to their continuing to pay the appropriate annual subscription to the BCA.

[There were 3 Secondary Members in 2006.]

The Meeting chose not to endorse Proposal 4a, but did endorse Proposal 4b. The CSCC therefore no longer has a category of Secondary Membership.

Proposal 5:

That the CSCC amend its Constitution as follows (changes in **bold** type):

Adding Rule 6c: “**Where the Council cannot fill necessary offices with nominees of Member Clubs it may appoint individuals to serve. Such individuals will not be eligible to vote and will have no right of veto.**”

[The sole purpose of this proposal was to give the Council some flexibility and to provide it with the option to use any voluntary effort that may be forthcoming, and which it saw as fit for purpose, in the execution of its mandate.]

The Meeting decided it was content that its existing Constitution and Rules afforded it this ability and therefore chose not to endorse Proposal 5.

The Meeting then considered 8 BCA Member Clubs/Access Bodies that had requested CSCC affiliation on their BCA Membership Applications. They were:

CDG (Welsh Section)
Glasgow University Potholing Association
Gosport Caving Club
Newbury and District Caving Club
Pen Park Hole Access Committee
Shropshire Scouts RCC
Surrey Scout Caving Group
Yorkshire Subterranean Society

The Meeting agreed to accept all of these Clubs/Bodies into membership of the CSCC.

ACTION: DC to raise the issue of multiple Regional Council affiliations with the BCA National Council.

17. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

SK, CB, and LesW all indicated that they intended to step down from their current portfolios. However, LesW volunteered to stand as C & A Officer, and AA had indicated in writing to SK that he was prepared to stand for a recombined Equipment & Bolting portfolio.

SK said that at the BCA AGM he had become an Individual Member Representative to National Council for 2007/8. Consequently he said that he was prepared to continue to represent the CSCC at BCA Council for another year if necessary, though he would not be able to vote in both capacities. There were no other volunteers for this portfolio.

CS said that she had come to the Meeting to volunteer her services as Secretary.

The officers of the CSCC for 2007/8 are therefore:

Chairman	- Alan Gray (ACG)	Proposed: GM,	Seconded: LesW	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
Secretary	- Carmen Smith (WCC/CPC)	Proposed: GM,	Seconded: AG	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
Treasurer	- Chris Whale (SBSS)	Proposed: GM,	Seconded: DC	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
C & A	- Les Williams (WCC)	Proposed: AB,	Seconded: AG	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
Training	- Alan Butcher (SMCC)	Proposed: AG,	Seconded: DC	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
Equipment	- Andrew Atkinson (UBSS)	Proposed: GM,	Seconded: AG	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
BCA Rep	- Steve King (SBSS/SMCC)	Proposed: AG,	Seconded: DC	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>
Webmaster	- Dave Cooke (WCC)	Proposed: GM,	Seconded: AG	<i>Elected nem. con.</i>

GM requested that a list of the officers contact details be circulated to the CSCC Club Representatives. LesW said that he was happy for the Webmaster to put his full contact details on the website.

ACTION: Secretary to circulate the CSCC officers contact details to Club Representatives (see Appendix 1).

ACTION: Webmaster to update the contact information on the website.

ACTION: Webmaster to redirect the CSCC federal email addresses.

[Note added in proof: These last two actions were completed the day after the AGM].

18. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BCA ‘Try Caving’ Weekend, May 26th-27th 2007 - <http://www.trycaving.co.uk/>

BCA Council Meeting, June 9th 2007.

Bristol Open Doors Day, September 8th 2007 - <http://www.bristoldoorsopenday.org/>

CSCC Meeting, September 15th 2007.

Hidden Earth 2007, September 21st-23rd 2007 - <http://hidden-earth.org.uk/>

BCA Council Meeting, October 13th 2007.

BCA Council Meeting, January 5th 2008.

BCA Annual General Meeting & Council Meeting, April 5th 2008.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

DC said that the *Mendip Cave Registry* was nearly ready to be published. This will be in an online format and contain the name, NGR and length of the cave, along with a short description. The details of approximately 2000 speleological sites are included. AG added that he has proposed a change of name to the *Mendip Cave Registry & Archive*, the latter section to contain many scanned photographs. It is intended that these will be made freely available. **It was proposed, and agreed, that the CSCC – preferably with reimbursement by the BCA – should bear the recurrent costs of the domain name (estimated at around £30/year).**

GP remarked that he had not received a set of Minutes from the February Meeting. SK apologised and said that the present situation was that all Agendas and Minutes were posted to the CSCC Website and their availability then ‘announced’ with an email to the CSCC Mailing List (they were not issued as email attachments as this had caused some List Members problems in the past). In addition, some Clubs and Individuals continued to receive paper copies of the Minutes (only) by post. *[Note added in proof: Cerberus SS are one of the Clubs that is sent the Minutes by post]*. GP said that he did think he had been experiencing problems with emails from the CSCC List. CS said she would review the means by which Meeting Agendas and Minutes were distributed in the future.

ACTION: Secretary to review the distribution of Agendas and Minutes.

20. DATES OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETINGS

(all at the Hunters Inn, Priddy, 10:30)

September 15th 2007

December 2007 (tbc)

February 2008 (tbc)

May 2008 (tbc)

Appendix 1

Contact Details for CSCC Officers for 2007/8:

Chairman: Alan Gray, 42 Maynard Terrace, Clutton, Somerset. BS39 5PW.
chairman@csc.org.uk

Secretary: Carmen Smith, 12 Harbour Road, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 4AN
secretary@csc.org.uk

Treasurer: Chris Whale, 247 Coronation Road, Southville, Bristol, BS3 1RL.
treasurer@csc.org.uk

Conservation & Access: Les Williams, 51 Churchill Road East, Wells, Somerset, BA5 3HU.
Tel. 01749 679839(h), 07941 029707(m)
canda@csc.org.uk

Equipment & Bolting: Andrew Atkinson, 31 Priory Avenue, Westbury Upon Trym, Bristol, BS9 4BZ.
equipment@csc.org.uk

Training: Alan Butcher, Priddy Green House, Priddy Green, nr. Wells, Somerset, BA5 3BE.
training@csc.org.uk

BCA Rep: Steve King, Thyme House, South Row, Chilton, Oxfordshire, OX11 0RT.
mailto:bcarep@csc.org.uk

Webmaster: David G Cooke, 3 Starrs Close, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2BZ.
webmaster@csc.org.uk

<http://www.csc.org.uk/Officers.htm>