



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Saturday 10th September 2005

(as amended 3rd December 2005)

1. ATTENDANCE (9, 7 eligible to vote)

Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS Obs/SMCC Obs), Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, SBSS), Dave Cooke (Wessex CC), Graham Price (Cerberus SS), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS Obs), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Tim Francis (MCG), Alan Butcher (SMCC).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, Cheddar CC), Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS), Andy Sparrow (CSCC Training Officer, Cheddar CC), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC).

In the absence of the Chairman the meeting confirmed that the Secretary should take the Chair.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

DC said that the statement attributed to him in Item 8 should be amended to read "DC said that the BCA Council *needed to appoint* a Regional Council Auditor".

The Minutes were otherwise agreed to be a true and accurate record. The Minutes were signed by the Secretary.

4. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Item 7.4 – Individual Membership of the CSCC.

Discussion was deferred to a later Meeting. (Also see Item 7.3).

Item 7.5 – Hobhouse Estate Agreement.

GM said that he, like GP, had also been unable to locate any written agreement. CW was asked if the CSCC were still paying an "annual fee" to the Estate. CW said not.

Item 9.4 – Remove NGR's for Surrey Sites on CSCC Website.

Done.

Item 13.1 – Handover of Bolt Placement Details

Ongoing. (Neither the Equipment Officer or Bolting Coordinator were present to give an update).

Item 14 – Advertise for a CSCC Representative to BCA Council.

SK said that in addition to the AGM Minutes, he had also posted an invitation for a volunteer on the CSCC email distribution list, but no replies had been received. DC had attended the BCA Council Meeting in June. CSCC Representation to the BCA Council will therefore continue on an *ad-hoc* basis until future notice.

5. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

9.7 – Access to Little Neath River Cave & Bridge Cave, South Wales

SK said that the Cambrian Caving Council had now reached an agreement with the landowners and access to these caves was again possible. Cavers are still required to pay a "parking fee" to Blaen-nedd-Isaf Farm but unfortunately will no longer be permitted to park in the farmyard; parking will only be permitted near the bridge – an area that has been the subject of thefts from vehicles in the past.

One change to the access procedures is that centres and other organised groups, but not *bone fide* caving clubs, visiting these caves must now demonstrate to Cambrian Caving Council officials that they have appropriate insurance cover and risk assessments in place. If this means your organisation, please contact Elsie Little (elsie@abercrave18.fsnet.co.uk) or Bernie Woodley (woodley@smartemail.co.uk) as soon as possible.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman was not present (Axbridge CG were participating in Bristol Open Doors Day at Redcliffe Caves) but had no report to make.

7. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

7.1 - Publications received

Minutes of the NCA SGM (Mar 2005), Minutes of the NCA AGM (Mar 2005), Minutes of the BCA AGM (Mar 2005), Agenda for the BCA Council (Jun 2005), Report of the BCA PL Insurance Scheme Manager (Jun 2005).

DCA Annual Report (2004), Minutes of the DCA AGM (Feb 2005), Minutes of the DCA Council (Apr 2005), DCA Information Circular (Apr/May 2005), DCA Training Bulletin (Spring/Summer 2005), Agenda for the DCA SGM (Jul 2005), Agenda for the DCA Council (Jul 2005), DCA Information Circular (Jun/Jul 2005).

SK said that the PL Insurance Scheme Manager's Report made interesting reading and presented some "highlights" to the Meeting:

"The scheme has continued to function although I am prepared to admit it has not been administered as efficiently this year as last. A combination of factors has contributed to this..."

"...there have been considerable delays in getting the membership cards to some clubs. This process should be completed by the end of this month, but this is not an acceptable timescale in the longer term. We have been discussing ways to streamline the process in future years, and the key will be to start making arrangements for renewals in the early part of the fourth quarter of the year."

"One thing we have not done this year is acknowledge receipt of payments before the cards were issued. I did not do this since it is an additional expense and workload... but in retrospect this was a mistake. Confirmation by e-mail and/or letter that a cheque has arrived and is being processed is essential."

"...the scheme is solvent, but...more resources are needed to try to administer it..."

"I have...taken an executive decision to employ [X] (who administered the scheme...for most of last year...) to assist with the process again."

"I have agreed to pay [X] on the same rate as [the BCRA Membership Secretary] but I have made no long term commitment and there is currently no contract of employment in place...there are no tax implications at this stage... Since BCA is not a charity there are no legal implications from not having invited tenders for this work, and in any case the appointment is clearly to cover an administrative emergency. However, if the position is that we need to supplement the effort which [the BCRA Membership Secretary] can provide in the longer term then the Executive will need to decide if it advertises the post and invites tenders."

"Following the discussion at the AGM about introducing a class of individual membership which does not include any element of insurance cover, I have made some further investigations into the requirements of the Financial Services Authority. The proposal from DCA at the AGM was to introduce a class of Club individual member which did not include insurance since DCA club members are insured through the DCA scheme (although clearly it is not only DCA clubs who could potentially benefit from such a category). For obvious reasons, I decided not to raise this issue directly with the FSA. Instead this has been discussed with...(our broker) and with my own company's broker who runs a similar size of operation. The answer has come back clearly that if insurance is included as an integral member benefit, then we will not be seen to be selling insurance and hence have to be regulated as an insurance broker. However, if we introduce a class of membership which is not insured alongside others which are, then we will be seen to be selling insurance and will have to establish a scheme which is regulated by the FSA."

"Over the course of this year I have come to realise that we can further distance ourselves from the FSA by being more careful in our use of terminology. I have hence stopped referring to 'insurance premiums' and started to use the term 'contribution'. This is the phraseology which is used in the shortly to be published BCRA newsletter, which will be sent to all BCA and BCRA members...This situation leaves open the possibility of us setting any contribution we see fit for any class of membership we choose. However, for the avoidance of doubt, all individual members of BCA must be considered to be covered by its insurance in order for the scheme to be outside of the FSA's definition of selling insurance."

7.2 - Correspondence

SK said that the Sports Council had now officially recognised BCA (as the successor to NCA). Sport England had awarded BCA £5k to "support its development program for 2005/06", and UK Sport had awarded BCA £11k to support the "financing...[of the]...Business Plan" (for the Training Scheme).

7.3 – Membership of the CSCC

SK said that since the CSCC AGM he had been gently pressing the BCA for details of those Clubs that had joined the BCA and indicated that they wished to be members of the CSCC. Information had finally come through in the week leading up to the Meeting. SK presented his analysis of that information:

- As of the start of September, 126 Clubs had joined the BCA and another 3 had applications pending. A further 11 organisations had joined the BCA as Associate Members (all but 2 of these were outdoor organisations in the Peak District).
- Of the 126 BCA Member Clubs, 40 had not stated a regional affiliation on their BCA Membership application. However 2 of the 40 were previously members of the CSCC and 1 of these has already told SK that they wish to be members of the CSCC. Another 4 of the 40 Clubs are probably *potential* CSCC members.
- Prior to the inception of the BCA, the CSCC had 42 Member Clubs in 2003, and 37 in 2004.
- As of the start of September, just 17 Clubs had joined the BCA and had stipulated the CSCC as their regional affiliation. Another 2 had stipulated "CSCC/CNCC", and another 1 had its application to join the BCA (& CSCC) pending. {Note: since Clubs are only actually entitled to free membership of one Regional Council as part of their BCA membership I do not know at this stage how the BCA will administer the two Clubs above that have stipulated two Councils, but both of these Clubs were previously members of the CSCC – SK}.
- The number of Clubs that had joined the BCA and stipulated another Regional Council was (including joint stipulations); CNCC: 29, DCA: 19, CCC: 17 & DCUC 3.
- Of the 17 BCA-CSCC Clubs above 1 was not previously a member of the CSCC.

- 3 Clubs have elected not to join the BCA but have decided to join the CSCC directly (and have paid the £15 subscription).
- Of those Clubs that were members of the CSCC in 2003 (2004), 16 (15) have elected not to join either the BCA or the CSCC in 2005.

The current CSCC membership is thus $(2+17+2+1+3)=25$.

The Meeting expressed grave concern at these figures, in particular that so many CSCC Member Clubs had decided not to rejoin the CSCC. AB said that when he had been a member of the old NCA Council, the NCA had about 360 subscribing Members. Of these 188 were NCA Member Clubs. The take up of BCA membership amongst Clubs was therefore equally poor. The Meeting instructed SK to write to the CSCC Clubs that had not yet joined either the CSCC or the BCA one last time inviting them to join the CSCC. The Meeting further instructed SK to include a SAE for their reply in an attempt to encourage them to respond.

SK was asked about the BCA Member Club that was not previously a member of the CSCC but which apparently now wished to be. SK said he had no details other than the name. The Meeting expressed concern at this; the BCA should at least consult its Regional Councils on prospective applicants. AD pointed out that the BCA Membership Application form did state that Clubs that were not Members of the BCA in 2004 would have to have their applications ratified by the BCA Council. DC said that he could not remember the Club in question being discussed at any Council meetings he had been present at.

A question arose as to whether the CSCC could reject a potential affiliate. DC said he doubted it, in his view the CSCC Constitution was now subservient to the BCA Constitution. However, he agreed that this was an issue that ought to be clarified.

The Meeting instructed SK to write to the BCA to clarify the procedures for admitting Clubs into membership and whether Regional Councils could reject Clubs, if they felt it necessary, that wished to become Members of that Council.

ACTION: SMK to write to those CSCC Clubs that have not rejoined.

ACTION: SMK to write to the BCA requesting contact details for the new CSCC Member Club.

ACTION: SMK to write to the BCA regarding membership procedures.

8. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

CW reported that the CSCC current account stood at £57.74 and the deposit account at £4338.49. He said that the current financial reserves of the CSCC compared very favourably with the preceding two years (year ending 2003: £2800 & year ending 2004: £4080), however CW noted that there had in fact been very little expenditure in 2005; the most significant item to date having been the production of the CSCC Handbook. At this point DC passed over a cheque for £79 in respect of sales of the Handbook at Bat Products!

CW also said that he had internet-enabled the CSCC accounts so that he could manage them more efficiently.

Looking ahead, CW said that he was still waiting for information about the date of this year's Regional Treasurers Meeting. In the meantime he said that he needed to prepare a forecast of CSCC needs in the next financial year, and asked all officers to provide him with details of any foreseeable expenditure.

GP asked what areas could be funded? DC replied that there was an approved list of "core activities". GP said that from the perspective of an ordinary BCA Member it would be nice to be able to see such information. SK said that part of the problem was that documents such as those GP would like to see ought to be available from the BCA Website, but the site needed a lot of work done to it. DC suggested that until the BCA Website was fully functional he could put the Minutes of BCA Council Meetings, etc, on the CSCC Website. This was thought to be an excellent idea.

ACTION: DC to put BCA Minutes on the CSCC Website.

{Note added in proof: The list of "core activities" may be found in Appendix 2 of the Notes on the Meeting between BCA and Treasurers of the Regional Caving Councils on 28th November 2004, at Alvechurch - SK}

DC returned to the issue of auditing Regional Council accounts (see Item 3 above). He said that when he had raised this at the June BCA Council Meeting the Council had responded that it was *the CSCC* that needed to appoint its own auditor. AD and GM queried whether DC meant "audit" or "scrutinise"? DC confirmed that he actually meant scrutinise.

LW suggested that the most straightforward procedure would be to get another Regional Council Treasurer to act as scrutineer. GM said that he acted as such for the Cambrian Caving Council and suggested that he approach Clive Owen to see if a reciprocal arrangement might be possible. This was agreed.

ACTION: GM to ask Clive Owen if he will scrutinise the CSCC accounts.

{Note added in proof: Clive Owen has agreed to act as scrutiner - GM}

DC added that the statement on Regional Council accounting that the CSCC had put forward in May (see Item 8 in the May Minutes) had been "taken as read" by the June BCA Council Meeting.

9. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

The C&A Officer was not present (he was working) but had sent a comprehensive written report:

9.1 – Cuckoo Cleeves sale

“All previous offers fell through for various reasons but a...caver made an offer out of the blue to purchase Cuckoo Cleeves and fingers crossed this will go through; we have been in contact and he confirms that his intention is to secure access for cavers and wishes it to remain accessible via the CSCC standard padlock key... Frome CG...have a new lid to install and this will literally top off the whole project nicely...Also worth mentioning is a report of poor air in Cuckoo Cleeves with additional observations from the reporting cavers regarding the stock fence...which has fallen down in places...which allows animals in to shelter from wind and poor weather; this has led to the ground frequently becoming a quagmire with mud flowing down and blocking off the old entrance and airflow. Also...the right hand hinge on the old entrance is rusted through (so care is needed when opening!).”

9.2 – Box Mine

“There is still a lot of work to be done meeting landowners and access groups – this is to be done before any installation work goes ahead. I was asked if I knew of an independent Mines Inspector since one is needed to oversee work at the site and provide risk assessment/work method statement. Worth noting however was EN stating that their involvement is solely to protect the resident bat population and that they were not looking to be a future access controlling body; also mentioned were concerns of the landowner re liability. I said any landowner liability concerns were present here and now and also pre-existed this whole topic so future concerns are presumably therefore a non-issue; also I said I understood that there are case histories which show landowner liability to be unfounded although I do not have the rulings to hand. Emphasis was also made of the need for access to be simple and not based on a prerequisite for insurance. CSCC C&A has already submitted 24 pages of feedback from interested parties on this topic. Work is not expected to commence in the short term and further update on the meetings should be available, apparently, by the CSCC December meeting.”

DC said that he had been given details of a Mines Inspector by the BCA and that he would pass on the details to CB.

ACTION: DC to provide CB with the contact details of the Mines Inspector.

9.3 – Waterwheel Swallet

“Dave Speed has been very busy...the new entrance will be fitted before the end of September. Risk assessment and Work Method Statement has been written and provided to Somerset County Council via Charterhouse Centre.”

TF asked to be kept informed of progress with the new lid as he had been getting a lot of enquiries.

ACTION: CB to keep TF informed of progress at Waterwheel Swallet.

9.4 – West Twin Brook Adit

“After over seven months of regular telephone calls and emails trying to add this site to the CSCC padlock list Bristol Water have responded. I await the views of their legal department after a scheduled meeting to be held on 12th September.”

9.5 – Poor Air

“During July and August poor air was noticed and recorded at numerous Mendip sites with measurements being taken at GB Cavern and Swildon’s Hole. The recorded levels were sufficiently high at (maximum) 2.5% to be significant and deserving of monitoring but sufficiently low (below 3%) for no restrictive or other action to be necessary beyond informing the wider caving community of the presence of poor air. This was done via Descent website, UKCaving.com & Cheddar Caving Club website. The air seems to have now improved as the weather cools and rain returns.”

See Annexes 1 & 2 for details of the monitoring.

Very poor air was also experienced by a group visiting Honeymead Hole on July 2nd, the trip was abandoned but the cavers said that they needed half an hour on the surface to recover fully.

9.6 – Other News

*“Alison Moody reported the **Nettle Pot** and **Ubley Warren Pot** locks were seized. A recce visit confirmed that the UWP lock had been wilfully damaged and it needed replacing but the NP one was just ancient and seized; both were replaced.”*

“As from Sunday 28th August CROW Access Land officially opened to Right to Roam.”

9.7 – Surrey Mines

The Surrey Mines Agent from the Wealden Cave & Mine Society had sent the following update:

“The situation regarding access to the Quarry Dean and Football Field mine sites at Merstham has not changed. Access is not permitted by the owners for anyone.

With regard to the owners' dispute with the Wealden Cave and Mine Society, we have not received any further direct communication either from them or from their solicitor since May. However, we are aware that they are still aggrieved, and have been making their views and opinions known in internet news groups.

We will keep interested parties informed of progress, or otherwise, with the matter."

9.8 – "Found Cave of Loxton"

The report from CB indicated that he had no further information about this cave, but SK said that since the AGM he had received enquiries from members of at least two CSCC Member Clubs who wished to visit the cave.

{Note added for the record: At the present time access control resides with the diggers from the BEC. However, almost a year ago they indicated to the CSCC that they would set up a leader system and make keys available to the major Mendip Clubs. To the knowledge of the CSCC, this has yet to happen.}

9.9 – Gibbet's Brow Cave

AB gave a report on this SMCC dig near Lamb Leer. Initially digging down in a backfilled mine shaft, the shaft had subsequently broken into natural cave. A recent extension has given good cause for optimism that further extensions will be forthcoming. Following congenial discussions with the land owner, AB said that the SMCC wished to cap and gate the shaft, and install two pedestrian gates to the site from the road. He offered to put the site on a CSCC padlock if the CSCC could assist with the cost of the lid and gates and requested a sum of £450.

The Meeting approved the request, but instructed CW to contact the BCA C&A Officer, Elsie Little, with a view to seeing if the CSCC would be able to claim any monies back from the BCA.

ACTION: CW to contact the BCA about funding for C&A work at Gibbet's Brow Cave.

10. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer was not present and had not sent a report.

11. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer was not present but had given DC a verbal report to make on his behalf: There was nothing of import to report on the regional front, but LW indicated that he expected that the BCA Equipment Officer, Andy Pryke, would be able to take up his role in earnest in the very near future.

12. BCA REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

DC had attended the BCA Council Meeting in June in his capacity as a Club Representative. He said that he had little else to report, given the preceding discussions, but did "flag" two items that might affect caving clubs:

- The CCPR is running a scheme that reduces the cost of Criminal Records Bureau checks for any volunteers in Clubs that need them to comply with Child Protection legislation, and
- The new Licensing Laws mean that it is now necessary to go to the local Council and not the Magistrate's Court for licenses.

13. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator was not present (he was in Mulu) but had been in recent contact with SK & CB. Two issues had arisen since the last CSCC Meeting:

13.1 – Resin

The BCA Equipment Officer had reported to the June BCA Council Meeting that Resifix, the manufacturers of Resifix 3+ resin used to place ECO hangers, was to cease production of the resin, and that he was consequently pursuing a possible alternative manufacturer. SK and others pointed out that given the limited shelf life of the resin, and the likely timescales for getting any new resin approved (for use under the National Bolt Placement Insurance Scheme), careful thought and timing would need to be given to bolting projects in the near future.

13.2 – Recertification

CB had reminded AA that November 27th would be the anniversary of his and AS's bolt placement training and that to requalify they would need to place bolts before then. Though they could place bolts above ground, in the light of Item 13.1 it seemed sensible to do as much as possible underground. SK had reminded them that Thrupe Lane Swallet (including "Slither Pot") was on the To-Do List.

14. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Hidden Earth 2005, Friday-Sunday September 23rd - 25th 2005, Churchill School, Churchill, Mendip, www.hidden-earth.org.uk

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

15. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETINGS

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

Saturday 3rd December 2005

Saturday 4th February 2006

Saturday 6th May 2006 (AGM)

ANNEX 1

POOR AIR TESTING: 14th July 2005. GB & SWILDON'S

Dr Tony Boycott carried out tests recently in GB Cavern and Swildon's Hole to determine more accurately the level of CO₂ in light of recent poor air suspicions. The results are:

Cave	Location	CO ₂ Reading
GB Cavern	Dry Way/Gorge junction	1.5%
GB Cavern	Below Ladder Dig	2.5%
Swildon's	Water Chamber	1.75%
Swildon's	20' (top)	2.25%
Swildon's	Below Tratman's Temple	2.1%
Swildon's	Sump 1	2.0%
Swildon's	Old Grotto, top end	2.0%

NOTE: Normal CO₂ concentration in air is 0.03% so from the above it is easy to see that the levels are about 75-85 times higher than normal. Air with concentrations this high is classed as "Foul Air" and the standard response by cavers should be to make an orderly exit from the cave in a steady and prompt manner. Neither Swildon's Hole nor GB Cavern are shut to cavers but the decision to enter should be weighed against the knowledge that presently the air within is sub-standard and liable to make your trip less than enjoyable.

{More information about the effects of various CO₂ concentrations can be found in the article "CO₂ Levels Explained" by Tony Boycott under the News section on the CSCC Website - DC}

SWILDON'S HOLE

Thursday 23rd June: A flame test (match/candle) was conducted in Long Dry Way, Swildon's Hole Upper Series; eight matches lit and immediately died, on the ninth attempt a candle was lit but the flame was unimpressive. Breathing was notably quicker. VERY HEAVY RAINS fell the following morning.

UPDATE: Monday 27th June - flame test carried out again; results worse than before. Air noticeably poor in the dry ways - improves significantly in wet way and near entrance. Flame very small and candle failed to stay alight.

UPDATE: Tuesday 28th June - flame test carried out again today; results improved - the candle burnt with a 1" flame and lit first time. However, the air in the Wet Way and in Water Chamber was notably poorer.

UPDATE: Thursday 30th June - the candle lit OK today and the air seems OK too; however, the air in the Wet Way and Water Chamber was a bit "puffy".

UPDATE: Saturday 9th July: AIR CONSIDERABLY WORSE - matches fail to light and unable to light candle at all. POOR AIR WARNINGS PUT ON LINE at Descent's website and also on UKCaving forum.

UPDATE: Monday 11th July. Beyond 20': air noticeably poor throughout the streamway with matches failing to ignite from Tratman's Temple and further downstream. Headed back after reaching end of streamway but before reaching the sump since only half the match-head lit before it extinguished. Breathing laboured and slight headache until surfacing with continued headache for half an hour afterwards. Air was noticed as being poor from the moment we entered the cave and went down the short wet way. Candle did light, however, at Water Chamber but the flame was small; similar just below the 20'.

UPDATE: Saturday 6th August: Poor air still present. Beyond sump 1 matches failed to light but on returning through sump 1 the air was noticeably WORSE and a steady exit was made; heaving breathing and mild headaches.

ANNEX 2

Sites where poor air was noticed/expected during Summer 2005:

Poor air reported in GB Cavern, Swildon's Hole, Honeymead Hole, Cuckoo Cleaves, Wookey Hole (beyond showcave).

Poor air predicted/expected in: Manor Farm Swallet, Tynings Barrow Swallet, White Pit, Little Crapnell Swallet.

N.B. Poor air was reported by a group at Rod's Pot but on investigation this was not proven and on consultation it was considered highly unlikely (the site has no prior history of such a problem).