



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Saturday 3rd December 2005

1. ATTENDANCE (8 [10], 6 [8] eligible to vote)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS/SMCC), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, Cheddar CC Obs), Andy Sparrow (CSCC Training Officer, Cheddar CC), Graham Price (Cerberus SS), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS Obs).

Dave Cooke (Wessex CC) arrived after the start of the meeting. Jonathan Roberts (BCA Treasurer, MCG) arrived much later.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4 [5])

Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC), Tim Francis (MCG), Alan Butcher (SMCC).

Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, UBSS) had indicated that he expected to arrive late; in the event he did not attend.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There were two amendments:

SK said that in light of information received from Jenny Potts (DCA Secretary and former NCA Council Member) he was proposing that Item 7.3 be amended to read (the changes are *italicised*) "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*". After receiving a short explanation from SK the Meeting agreed.

AD noted that the Minutes also incorrectly stated that the September Meeting was the AGM. SK apologised for this. The September Minutes will be amended to read Open Meeting and a revised document will be uploaded to the CSCC Website.

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

4. ACTIONS OUTSTANDING FROM THE MAY MEETING

Item 7.4 – Individual Membership of the CSCC.

Item 13.1 – Bolt placement details.

Taken under Item 14.

Taken under Item 13.

5. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Item 7.3 - Secretary to write to those CSCC Clubs that have not rejoined.

Done. (Also see Item 8.3).

Item 7.3 - Secretary to write to the BCA requesting contact details for new members.

Done. (Also see Item 8.3).

Item 7.3 - Secretary to write to the BCA regarding membership procedures.

Done. (Also see Item 8.3).

Item 8 - DC to put BCA Minutes on the CSCC Website.

May not now be necessary as a new enhanced BCA Website is under construction.

Item 8 - GM to ask Clive Owen if he will scrutinise the CSCC accounts.

Done. (Also see Item 9).

Item 9.2 - DC to provide the C&A Officer with the contact details of the Mines Inspector.

Done.

Item 9.3 – C&A Officer to keep TF informed of progress at Waterwheel Swallet.

Ongoing. (Also see Item 10).

Item 9.9 - Treasurer to contact the BCA about funding for C&A work at Gibbet's Brow.

Done. (Also see Item 10).

6. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no other matters arising.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman said that he had no report to make.

8. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

8.1 - Publications received

Minutes of the DCA Council (Jul 2005), Officers reports to DCA Council (Jul 2005), Minutes of the DCA SGM (Jul 2005), Agenda for the DCA Council (Oct 2005).

8.2 - Correspondence

The Secretary said that he had no correspondence to report.

8.3 – Membership of the CSCC

SK said that after the last Meeting he had written to the 15 Clubs that had previously been members of the CSCC but which had not rejoined by September. This exercise had been partially successful; Bracknell & District CC, East Sussex Scouts CT, and Taunton CC had all paid for *Direct Membership* of the CSCC, whilst South Wales CC had paid for *Secondary Affiliation*. In addition, SK said that the BCA Membership Administrator had confirmed *Primary Affiliation* by the Greater London South Caving Committee (also previous members of the CSCC).

Contact had also been established with the “new” BCA Member Club, Education in the Environment CC which had sought CSCC Membership. This, it had transpired, was a reconstituted and enlarged Forest Caving Group (another previous member of the CSCC). The FCG itself has, however, not been formally disbanded.

The membership of the CSCC therefore stood at 29; 23 BCA Primary Affiliates, 1 BCA Secondary Affiliate, and 5 Direct Club Members. SK reminded everyone that this was still down on the 37 Member Clubs in 2004, and 42 in 2003. He added that the majority of those member clubs that had still not rejoined were Youth Groups, University Clubs, and Company-based Clubs. The Meeting expressed concern at the reduced participation by the first two categories as both were important “recruiting grounds” for traditional caving clubs. Several possible explanations were aired, including insurance and perceived liability issues.

SK said that one hopeful sign was that he had been contacted by the University of Portsmouth CC in November. UPCC were looking to join the BCA and to affiliate to the CSCC. UPCC had previously been members of the NCA and CSCC, but internal mail problems at the University and the general hiatus with BCA membership administration had apparently compounded delay with delay in their attempt to rejoin.

It was suggested that the CSCC should proactively target the University Clubs based in its region. This found unanimous support. DC said that sales of the Access Handbook had already essentially covered the costs of production and suggested that free copies could be sent to University Clubs. This was agreed.

ACTION: SK to contact CHECC with a view to making contact with University Clubs in the South.

On the issue, raised at the previous Meeting, of whether the CSCC could reject a BCA Member Club seeking CSCC affiliation, SK and DC said that the DCA had already altered its Constitution to grant itself this right. Prospective new DCA Member Clubs now have Provisional Member status until their membership of the BCA is confirmed, whereupon they become Associate Members until elected into full membership at a DCA Council or General Meeting. No one present knew if similar procedures were being operated by the CNCC, CCC or DCUC.

As the DCA had apparently set a precedent, the Meeting noted that the CSCC did have the power of veto over applications to membership of the Council.

9. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

As the Treasurer had not arrived by this juncture this Item was postponed.

10. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

The C&A Officer presented a comprehensive verbal report:

10.1 – Cuckoo Cleaves sale

The sale had not yet gone through, but was described as “imminent”. Until contracts are exchanged the buyer – a caver – wishes to remain anonymous to the wider caving community.

10.2 – Waterwheel Swallet

Dave Speed, who has agreed to make the new lid, has been very busy but hopes to have it ready sometime in January.

10.3 – Box Mine

CB had attended a meeting with Hanson’s (the owners of the mine) and English Nature Wiltshire (the statutory body charged with protecting the bats). In what seems to have been a feat of diplomatic guile he succeeded in reversing their opening position to secure unlimited, unrestricted, *but unauthorised*, access for cavers and mine explorers. The currently open, commonly used, entrances will now be gated in April/May 2006. All other entrances will either be permanently filled in or fitted with bat grilles with no pedestrian access as previously indicated (see CSCC Minutes, February 2005). The gates will require an Allen/Hex key to open from the outside, but not from the inside, and will close under gravity. EN is paying for the works.

SK asked if CB had a record of this understanding. CB said he had taken notes. LiW suggested that CB send copies of those notes to Hanson’s and EN to ensure that all parties understood what they had agreed.

ACTION: CB to confirm the understanding reached with Hanson’s and EN in respect of Box Mine.

10.4 – West Twin Brook Adit

Lawyers for Bristol Water (who “own” the adit) have deferred access arrangements to the Landowner. GM and LiW speaking for the UBSS, in whom the Landowner at Burrington Coombe has entrusted caving rights, said that the Landowner would not grant any *explicit* permission to cave. Therefore all that really needed to happen was for the Bristol Water padlock to be replaced with one controlled by a caving body (the adit is only gated because it was mined). They proposed that a combination lock controlled by the UBSS be fitted (as at Foxes Hole in the Coombe) rather than a CSCC padlock. This was agreed. CB said that he would seek the approval of Bristol Water for this course of action.

ACTION: CB to seek approval from Bristol Water for the change of lock on West Twin Brook Adit.

10.5 – Poor Air

The return of inclement weather appears to have improved air quality in those caves that were affected.

CB also said that Hannah Sargent, a final year student, had been doing some research into CO₂ levels in Mendip caves over the Autumn. She was now in the process of writing the work up. In addition, another student, Gina Moseley, has been researching cave climates.

10.6 – “Found Cave of Loxton”

Nick Richards of the BEC has provisionally agreed to run a “leader induction day” on Saturday 7th January 2006. CSCC Member Clubs are invited to nominate up to two candidates. Potential leaders should make themselves known to CB before 2nd January.

ACTION: CSCC Member Clubs to nominate potential leaders for the “Found Cave of Loxton” to the CSCC C&A Officer before 2nd January.

10.7 – Surrey Mines

DC reminded the Meeting that the Council needed to reconsider its decision to remove the NGR’s for the Surrey Mines from the CSCC website (see CSCC Minutes, May 2005). SK related the discussion he had with Peter Burgess, the WCMS Mines Agent, at Hidden Earth in September. Basically, the situation reported in May had not improved, if anything it had deteriorated, and there seemed little likelihood of a resolution in the near future. The Meeting agreed to continue to withhold the NGR’s from the website. The situation will be reviewed as and when circumstances change.

10.8 – Gibbet’s Brow Cave

SK said that following the Treasurer’s approach (see CSCC Minutes, September 2005), Elsie Little (the BCA C&A Officer) had referred the matter of what C&A works were eligible for reimbursement to the BCA Council. This was because although a policy had been in place under the NCA, no such policy had yet been formally adopted by the BCA. However, Elsie had indicated to the BCA Council that she considered works of the type in question should be funded, and indeed they would have been under the NCA. SK went on to explain that no policy in this regard would now be formalised until the next meeting of the RC Treasurer’s with the BCA Treasurer and that this would not take place until the Spring. Consequently SK recommended that, as the works were all but complete and the Council already given agreement in principle, the CSCC should proceed to reimburse Alan Butcher/the SMCC from its own reserves in the anticipation of recovering the money from the BCA at a later date. This was agreed.

ACTION: SK to inform Alan Butcher/the SMCC that the CSCC will fund the work at Gibbet’s Brow.

10.9 – Bats

CB said that at the end of September he had received a communication from the Avon Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator, Lucy Rogers, intimating at an intent to grille two caves (names not stated) in North Somerset to protect bats. However, when contacted by CB intentions seemed less clear! SK pointed out that the CSCC locally, and the BCA nationally, had a good working relationship with the Bat Conservation Trust, and suggested that CB flag this new development to the BCA C&A Officer.

ACTION: CB to inform the BCA C&A Officer about the Avon Biodiversity Partnership.

SK then added that he had been provided with “goodwill literature” from the BCT by the BCA C&A Officer that he would hand out at the end of the meeting.

10.10 – Other News

CB reminded everyone that the SSSI Audit of caves in Southern England was due for completion in December 2005. The caves awaiting reports are: Lamb Leer (where entry has been refused by the landowner), St Cuthberts, Stoke Lane, Eastwater (for which it was suggested Alison Moody might be able to assist), Wookey Hole (for which CDG assistance is required), Thrupe Lane, and Lady Park Grove in the Forest of Dean. Any Clubs or individuals willing to help with the audit – which involves visiting the cave and completing a checklist – are asked to contact CB. CB said that he doubted that the December deadline was a hard deadline.

Tim Francis had provided news that, barring another collapse, the MCG hoped to have Ubley Hill open again quite soon. Attempts to locate Cow Hole, however, were less successful. Another attempt is to be mounted.

11. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer said that he did not have anything to report. However AS telegraphed his desire to step down from the role of Training Officer at the AGM in 2006. **Applications are therefore invited for the position of Training Officer. Applications should be forwarded to the Secretary.**

12. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer was not present and had not sent a report. However DC said that from a conversation with The Equipment Officer he did not think there was anything to be reported.

13. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator was not present but had been in recent contact with SK & CB.

13.1 – Recertification of AS & CB

The Meeting noted that neither AS or CB had recertified in bolt placement within the 1 year requirement of the National Bolt Placement Insurance Scheme. However they can requalify at any time simply by placing a bolt under the supervision of the Bolting Coordinator.

13.2 – Bolting of Thrupe Lane

It had been intended to use the bolting of Slither Pot as a means of recertifying AS and CB, but this could not be arranged in time. Thus Slither Pot is still waiting to be bolted. AS said that it would actually make more sense to bolt Atlas Pot first and indicated that he could be motivated to assist with this.

13.3 – Diamond Chamber SRT Facility

Whilst checking the Eco-hangers on the Lloyds Hall Route in Gough's Cave, AA was asked by Chris Castle if the CSCC might replace the ageing spits in Diamond Chamber with Eco-hangers. CB added that the CDG had asked him if the "hairy traverse" to the pitch head to the subterranean river beyond Lloyd Hall could also be Eco-hangered.

AS said that Diamond Chamber afforded a superb SRT training area that could be used by Clubs in the evening (if a member of the show cave staff was willing to open up), but that on occasion access had been granted during the day for special training workshops. The facility was not, as a matter of routine, used for commercial activities though it was possible that any hangers that were installed might get used by, for example, film companies. But AS also noted that there was no guarantee of continued access to the facility; in that respect a bolting project in Diamond Chamber would be something of a gamble.

The Meeting agreed that if the Showcaves agreed the CSCC will begin a gradual programmed replacement of the spits in Diamond Chamber. This could also be used for revalidation.

A question arose as to whether the CSCC had sufficient Eco-hangers for the project. AS said that he had some DMM hangers that he would be willing to donate to the cause. This raised a question about whether hangers *not* supplied by the BCA could be used and still be covered by the Insurance Scheme. SK said that he or AA would look into this.

ACTION: AA / SK to ascertain from the BCA what, if any, requirements are imposed on the origin of materials for Eco-hanger placements by the National Bolt Placement Insurance Scheme.

13.4 – Bolt Placement Details

A list of those Eco-hangers placed with the authorisation of the CSCC and therefore covered by the National Bolt Placement Insurance Scheme has been added to the CSCC Website. Rigging topos associated with these bolts will be added in due course.

{Note added in proof: The day after the Meeting a report was received that one of the Eco-hangers on the main Y-hang on the first pitch I Rhino Rift was loose and that it came out of the rock by some 3-4 mm. A warning was circulated to the CSCC email distribution list on 5th December. The bolt will be re-inspected as soon as possible. – SK}

At this point JR joined the Meeting.

14. BCA MATTERS

14.1 – Report on the BCA Council Meeting, October 15th 2005

SK had represented the CSCC at the recent BCA Council Meeting. He said that there was much recognition from those present and from correspondence circulated, that the BCA had been very poor at communicating with its members in 2005 and that much needed to be done to improve matters. The Insurance Manager had also recognised that the system of issuing insurance cards was unsatisfactory (and he had indeed taken steps to address this in the late Summer). The Executive are to take steps to make the BCA Newsletter a more regular (but not more frequent) occurrence. *{Note added in proof: A completely revamped BCA Website was launched the week after the Council Meeting (though it presently lacks a lot of content) - SK}*.

There was also much discussion of the 2006 subscription rates but no decisions were taken because the terms of the Public Liability Insurance Scheme renewal were unlikely to be known before mid-December; obviously not ideal timing for a organisation with a membership year tied to the calendar! In the short term there appears to be little that the BCA can do about this, other than to ask for its Members understanding and try and streamline its own procedures as best as possible. However it was thought that the cost of the 2006 insurance renewal might actually be reduced in which case the savings will be passed on to BCA Members. JR said that his view was that the BCA subscription rate should not go up in 2006.

There had been no meeting of the RC Treasurer's with the BCA Treasurer. *{Note added in proof: This will now take place in the Spring – SK}*.

The HSE is to take over the AALA within the next 2 years. AS said that this was purely organisational and that in all other respects it should be "business as normal".

Just prior to the Council Meeting UKSport had signalled its intention to withdraw its funding from a number of National Governing Bodies, mostly those for *non-Olympic* sports. The loss of the UKSport grant had implications for the viability of the BCA Training Scheme. A number of possible scenarios/options had been circulated by email to Council Members, RC Training Officers, etc. However the BCA Chairman said that he, and the Chairs of a number of other similarly affected NGB's, were due to meet UKSport under the auspices of the CCPR in late-October/early-November where they would attempt to convince UKSport to change its mind. Crucially, it was thought that the AALA/HSE could be persuaded to lobby for the NGB's.

The next BCA Council Meeting is on Saturday 14th January. The BCA AGM will be held on Saturday 25th March.

Concluding, SK said that at its AGM at Hidden Earth 2005, the BCRA had voted in favour of a proposal that will restrict future membership of the BCRA to BCA Members.

14.2 – Individual Membership of the CSCC

With the advent of the BCA, the CSCC EGM in September 2004 indicated that it wished the CSCC to follow the example of some of the other RC's by bringing in a class of Individual (as opposed to Club) Membership of the Council. The rationale for this was that it would make the Council more inclusive. It would also, of course, open up another income stream which the Council would be foolish to ignore. That said, it is important to understand that the Council has no reason to suspect that there would be a flood of applications for Individual Membership if such a class was brought in.

The issue was again raised at the AGM in May 2005 and DC, as prime mover, was asked to draw up a proposal for consideration at a subsequent Meeting. It was against this backdrop that DC circulated to those present copies of a document entitled "Possible Voting Structures to Accommodate Individual Members". The introduction of a class of Individual Membership would, of necessity, require changes to the CSCC Constitution. In the document DC proposed four alternative voting systems:

1. One Member, One Vote (the system used by the BCRA and at DCA Council Meetings);
2. Banded Voting (the system previously used by the DCA);
3. Two-Houses (the system used at DCA General Meetings);
4. BCA-style Two-Houses

AS said that he favoured a system in which as many people as possible could have a say in the running of the CSCC, provided that Individuals could not subvert the wishes of the Member Clubs. DC said that this lent towards system (4). Several people then said that they thought Clubs had the right of veto under the CSCC Constitution. After a brief investigation the Secretary confirmed that this was indeed the case; the first part of Clause 8 reads: "*at all meetings each paid up club shall have one vote and the right to veto*". This seemed to suggest that the Council could adopt a voting structure where every directly-subscribed Individual Member of the CSCC and every *bona-fide* member of a CSCC Member Club could have one vote, along with every duly-authorized Club Representative to the CSCC. But the Club Representatives would *also* have the right to veto.

DC said that he would go away and redraft his proposal along these lines and put it out for discussion.

{Note added in proof: DC's new document, entitled "Discussion of Individual Membership at the Meeting on the 3rd Dec 2005", is available for download from the CSCC Website, or in hard copy on application to the Secretary. Please take the opportunity to read and comment on it. The proposals will be discussed further at the February Meeting of the CSCC with a view to their adoption at the AGM in May. – SK}

ACTION: CSCC Member Clubs to consider the proposals for Individual membership of the CSCC.

9. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT (revisited)

The Treasurer was still not present.

GM said that, as requested at the previous Meeting, he had asked Clive Owen if he would scrutinise the Council's accounts, and CO had agreed.

ACTION: Treasurer to prepare a set of end-of-year accounts and forward to CO as soon as possible.

15. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

There were no forthcoming events to advertise.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

17. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETINGS

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

Saturday 4th February 2006

Saturday 6th May 2006 (AGM)