



BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting, 28th March 2009

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Item 6: Chairman's Report

I became chairman of the National Caving Association in 1982. It was a confederation of independent co-equal caving organisations, each funding its own administration but participating in schemes heavily funded by the Sport Council. In particular, Access, Training Certification and Expeditions to explore abroad were dominant, to the extent of more than £30,000 per annum. Democratic interplay between the so-called Governing Bodies of Sport (which includes NCA and its successor, BCA) found a common point of political contact through the Central Council of Physical Recreation, of which NCA/BCA is also a member. These bodies, so important financially and politically to NCA, met largely in London. The fact that I lived there and could attend these meetings at little cost to NCA first propelled me on the path of caving politics.

During the ensuing years, the entire philosophy of support and subsidy of Sport in the United Kingdom has slowly but surely been stood on its head, and the relatively trivial sums which supported NCA's major programmes have all been leached off to promote the acquisition of medals by competitive games. Simultaneously, part of the membership of NCA began to press for a radically different membership of an inclusive body, the one-stop-shop for caving. When this finally arrived on the back of drastic increases in insurance costs, membership subscriptions became the sole basis of funding for BCA. These still promote the programmes initiated under the Sports Council; BCA has a full range of Officers committed to delivery of those programmes; and a significant proportion of them have been doing this work for decades and represent a good cross-section of those who promoted change. It is a pleasure to acknowledge their contribution publicly and note the extent to which BCA administers its business at minimum cost to its membership. It is also an excuse to reiterate the fact that the way forward is the progressive recruitment of yet more members, particularly of those who subscribe for all services, thus reducing the average costs.

For myself, retirement to the Swansea Valley has negated the benefits of access once provided by residence in London. Fortunately, a successor has been tempted to take over the task of chairmanship. I wish him well and look forward to a less stressful period of peripheral participation.

Mick Day, February 2009

Item 7: Secretary's Report

When I took over as Acting Secretary in June I saw as my priority improving communication both within Council and more widely with our membership. I would like to thank those Officers and Council members who have responded to my pestering and am pleased to see that, on the whole, Council receives reports in advance of meetings.

Given that we are almost exclusively a volunteer organisation with Officers generally having multiple demands placed on their spare time, it is inevitable that there will be the occasional slip. My aim for 2009-10, though, is that we can achieve good communication as the norm.

I believe passionately that we need to improve the way we communicate with our membership and am, therefore, concerned both by the number of publications that have failed to appear over the past year, and by the apparent lack of BCA shouting about what we are doing when we do publish something. I have tried to begin to improve this by summarising Officers' Reports to Council for the newsletter. I have also begun feeding information to Descent and intend to make this more regular in 2009-10. Indeed, I would like to see a situation where Descent contains so much BCA-related information that we end up with our own regular section. Only then will members (and potential members) realise quite how hard people are working on their behalf.

My other main focus so far has been bringing our records of meetings back up to date and ensuring everything is available on the website. This is now complete but unfortunately I do not yet have the Secretary's file from the previous Secretary.

Damian Weare, February 2009

Item 8: Treasurer's Report

The Association made a healthy surplus of £29,039. This in large part (£11,900) is due to increasing subscription income and a lower cost of collection. The high interest rates contributed an extra £3,437 compared to last year. Obviously next year will not be so good. Training Services made a slight surplus. The Training Officer is to be commended in rapidly achieving the aim of running Training at breakeven having lost the Sports Council grants. Web Services made a slight

surplus. Again the aim is to achieve breakeven. I no longer cross charge the websites that BCA hosts for free, worth some £325, since there is a danger of an increased tax liability. Actual spending on the Regional Councils was some £2,065 in 2008. The figure shown in the account is lower because of advance payments in previous years. Our tax liability has increased significantly. This is in direct proportion to our increased earnings from interest.

My declared aim is to have reserves equivalent to one year's turnover. Noting that the Sinking Fund should be excluded from that calculation, that aim has not yet been realised. However, it is close so there could well be scope for reducing our subs when we consider them in October. On the other hand the economic outlook is very gloomy and we do not know yet what effect that might have upon us.

The Finance Committee comprising the Regional Council Treasurers and the BCA Treasurer met during the year to allocate funds to the Regional Councils. The Committee also produced the document "BCA Funding of Regional Councils" which clearly set out the process. It also proposes that funding is provided to those Access Bodies that are effectively extensions of the Regional Councils. The document has been widely circulated for consultation and I hope that this meeting can note it.

The BCRA has produced a document setting out the "Business Case for Support to the British Caving Library". Funding needs to be put on a sustainable basis. We need to consider what BCA's contribution should be.

An account has been opened at NatWest to pay in the cheques that arrive at Great Hucklow, this being the nearest bank. This will save the costs incurred for paying into a bank where we do not have an account. It also provides another bank to share our funds between if it becomes prudent to have no more than £50,000 in any one bank – as came scarily close to being needed.

I am considering putting some of our funds in Income Bonds in the National Savings Bank – a safe location for our funds with a reasonable interest rate. The complication is that BCA cannot open an account in its name. The possible solutions are a joint account held in, say, the Chairman and Treasurer's names. The other option is to set up a trust for the purpose.

Dave Cooke, February 2009

Item 9: Conservation & Access Officer's Report

The long-awaited Marine Bill is close to being finalised. We have made the most of opportunities to influence its progress and it does indeed make one significant improvement for us – the liability of landowners for man-made features is likely to be reduced so that it will not provide an obstacle to access.

While there will be a right of access in the coastal corridor for walking, there is no assumption of access to the underground. We will still need to arrange for permissions as in the past.

Sadly, while the legislation covers England and Wales, Wales is unlikely to adopt the rights to an access corridor. There, the only move is towards a defined coastal footpath.

I hope that in time the greater freedom and reduced liability for man-made features will 'spread' to be accepted in other upland areas (CROW land). The general move as regards liability and responsibilities is to the individual bearing more responsibility for himself than was the case formerly.

As a unit, cavers and miners have been working with the National Trust, a major landowner and access provision, to create mutually acceptable Guidelines for Access. The negotiations have been continuing for some years and have been finalised centrally. The National Trust intranet does, I am assured, display the agreement but it is not yet on the internet site. The result has been that there has so far been no improvement in the regional negotiations but the central officers have offered help in remedying this and apologies for the delay in updating the website.

With those two major areas completed in this year, I hope there will be opportunity for the C&A Officers to adopt other areas of work in the near future.

Elsie Little, February 2009

Item 10: Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report

At the first meeting of the committee in 2008, the membership was expanded by co-opting several notables and other interested parties. In addition, it was agreed between the Training Officer and myself that we would sit on each other's committee in an ex officio capacity to ensure maximum information transfer between the two committees. The committee also reviewed its potential span of work and links with other bodies such as the BMC and British Standards.

Whilst the remit of the Equipment and Techniques Committee covers all equipment used in caving and their associated techniques of usage, work undertaken by the committee during 2008 has focused on anchors and SRT ropes. The grand plan to undertake a range of tests on anchors was completely overturned by the tragic death of Stu Goodwill early in 2008

in an unrelated caving accident. Stu, who was a member of the CNCC Technical Group, built a substantial and very flexible anchor test rig some years ago as part of a final year project for his degree in response to the need of the group to be able to test anchors. (It should be recognised that the BCA (formally NCA) anchor scheme was based upon the work of CNCC Technical Group in developing the DMM Eco anchor as the replacement for spits and other anchors which were wearing out in the Dales.)

Stu's rig was used in 2007 to test some of the range of anchors being investigated to replace the DMM Eco anchor which is no longer being manufactured. Plans to complete this work in 2008 have been put on hold until the rig can be obtained from Stu's widow. However, another tester was "borrowed" and tests on the Peco anchor show that it performs to similar standard in axial pull out tests to DMM Eco anchors and has the same safety features in that the anchor shows deformation of the head before being released from the resin (see http://www.cncc.org.uk/tg_test_5.html for more detail). On the basis of these tests, BCA has now acquired some 200 Peco anchors which have BCA's name engraved on them and is negotiating the purchase of a large batch to cover several years of anticipated usage.

Work on revising the BCA Anchor Scheme has made slow progress during the year. Following the consultation process which finished in 2007, a paper was presented to the Committee on the results (see <http://british-caving.org.uk/?page=129>). Two key areas needing improvement were identified and a host of useful supplementary information was acquired by the consultation process. The areas of concern were what did validation of SRT competence cover and an objection to the use of CICs to assess the competence of trainee installers. It was accepted that perhaps the coverage of what was to be validated was not clear. The committee clarified that SRT competence covers in detail the ability of the person to perform the SRT technique, to rig a pitch and to identify the location for new anchors. Following discussion, the Committee was adamant about retaining the right by the trainer to check the competence of the trainee in SRT technique, rigging, identifying new anchor locations as well as installing anchors. Drafting of the revised scheme continues.

Glenn Jones gave a lecture at Hidden Earth 2008 on some anchor work he had undertaken in France. This included the setting up a test bed for Eco anchors to provide information on their capability of withstanding extremes of temperature in both summer and winter.

I must record my thanks to members of the committee for their efforts on both the physical and paper based work fronts, as well as making positive contributions to some complex discussions.

Bob Mehew, February 2009

a) Rope Test Officer's Report

A translation of a French Report on testing Cows Tails was undertaken by Damian Weare and placed on the BCA web site (see http://british-caving.org.uk/rope/lanyard_tests_v6.pdf). The report indicates that peak shock loadings using some types of used Cows Tails from a Fall Factor 1 could exceed 15kN, a worrying level given that the safe shock loading for a human body is considered to be around 6kN. However, Cows Tails based on knots and which have not been previously shock loaded, should provide a reasonable shock absorption capacity. The results demonstrate the need to relax knots after a fall if one wishes to reduce the shock loading in any subsequent fall. An article based on the translation was published in Speleology.

The remaining rope from the Long Term Rope Test was returned and testing of the ropes was completed. A brief note on the results was published in BCA's Newsletter 10 (see http://british-caving.org.uk/publication_information/Newsletter_10_12-08.pdf) and a lecture was presented to Hidden Earth. The results showed that a dramatic drop off in the performance of an SRT rope in terms of drops survived even for as few as 100 usages. The 5 ropes spanned between 89 and 799 usages. The samples from each of the 5 ropes averaged between 2 and 3 drops survived. (The British Standard BS EN 1891:1998 requires a new rope to survive at least 5 such drops.) The committee spent some while discussing these results without achieving a conclusion on a way forward.

Dave Elliot has supplied the results of some of his 1980's rope test work. These have been tabulated and graphed and, as has been reported, show a consistent trend in reduction in static strength, peak force and number of drops survived between new, clean used and muddy used ropes. (However, some of the ropes would not have met BS EN 1891:1998 even when new!) Les Sykes undertook an ascent on one 10m rope followed by a top of rope transfer to descend on a separate 10m rope and repeated this 80 times, equivalent to an 800m pitch! The abseiled rope showed definite sheath slippage. Drop testing indicated a reduction in strength from this usage compared to the new rope and the ascended rope; a result which is not as pronounced as that obtained from the low usage Long Term Rope Test.

The Rope Test Rig was taken to the Mendip Caving 2008 and Hidden Earth during the year. The rig was also loaned out to a CIC workshop weekend though owing to clashing demands (a caving-club dinner) the rig was used by the workshop. 21 samples were received during the year for testing. All have been tested and the results have been returned to their owners. Perhaps worryingly, 5 of these ropes only managed to survive one drop. Whilst a fair number of the ropes

brought for testing were claimed to have been retired some while ago; one is forced to wonder why the rope was continued until it got to that stage.

A paper is being prepared for the next Committee meeting to suggest the next steps on rope testing.

Bob Mehew, February 2009

Item 11: Training Officer's Report

Some of this report is the same as that presented to Council at their January meeting because it presents to the AGM the full picture of what went on last year. Registrations, revalidations and assessment are at present in line with last year's figures presented below.

Numbers: 216 registrations for LCMLA; 23 registrations for CIC; 39 persons have undertaken assessment at level 1; 12 persons have undertaken assessment at level 2; 84 persons have revalidated at level 1; 31 persons have revalidated at level 2; 7 persons have done a level 1 core skills assessment following an out of date award; 1 person has done a level 2 core skills assessment following an out of date award.

Revalidations: LCMLA revalidations in the new format appear to have been quite successful this year raising a net profit of £1,915, and CIC revalidations have raised £810 net profit. This give BCA a total net profit of £2,725.

The overall gross deposits for 2008 are £19,129 with a small amount of income still outstanding.

The system of panels informing the Training Administrator of at least three revalidation dates twelve months in advance has not been well received in some panels, who would be happier running the system as it was. However, all but one panel has come in line with the new procedures. This will probably mean that this year I have to insist that the panel and the Trainers and Assessors of that panel abide by the BCA procedures or cease to be Trainers and Assessors, which would be unfortunate.

Finance: Training Committee agreed to raise registration fees by £5 at all levels, feeling this would be sufficient this year. Personally I disagree. We have raised the fee we are paying Trainers and Assessors for running revalidations from £150 to £175 plus a maximum of £25 for hire of rooms etc.

Child Protection: Following the October Council meeting Idris Williams and Jenny Potts asked that this issue be discussed at Training Committee. It was in fact already an agenda item. Idris agreed to look at changes necessary to ensure that the policy was an all-inclusive policy covering both recreational club caving and professional led activities.

Appendix 1 shows the changes recommended to Council in January 09, which were accepted.

Porth yr Ogof: The document which dealt with recognised good practice for deep water was presented yet again to Council in January 09. It again met with a great deal of opposition from Cambrian Council and I withdrew the document from the floor.

Ironically the Secretary saw fit to publish the entire document (clearly marked "Draft" – Sec!) with the minutes of the last Council meeting in January putting the document firmly in the public sector. This has led to considerable positive feedback from cavers saying it is about time BCA recommended good practice. I personally cannot help smiling.

Flooding: During the past twelve months there have been a large number of near misses, some that have required rescues and others that have escaped by the skin of their teeth. Both the led groups who had to be rescued from Lower Long Churn had very strong warnings via weather forecasts and the weather at the time that it was unwise to proceed with the trips but went ahead. Either one of these incidents could easily have resulted in the worst caving tragedy in British caving history far outweighing the Mossdale tragedy. Both leaders and centres were extremely lucky to escape prosecution by HSE.

However the mistakes are not confined to led groups. On one weekend recently forty seven people had to be rescued, again caving in appalling conditions.

There are no excuses for many of these near misses. They appear to stem either from a complacency that it will never happen to me or from a total lack of understanding of how the hydrology of the caves you're in can and will seriously affect your health. In the last eighteen months we have seen three fatalities due to mistakes being made. Cavers cannot continue with this cavalier attitude towards safety.

- Know your caves and their hydrology.
- Know how quickly they respond to flooding.
- Know if and where there are safe sit-out positions if you do make an error of judgement.
- Get good quality weather forecasts from the met office or met check or others.
- Take responsibility for yourselves and your decisions.
- **IF IN DOUBT STAY OUT. THE CAVE WILL BE THERE TOMORROW. YOU MAY NOT BE.**

Unfortunately a CRO representative wrote an article for Descent which appeared to say that two thirds of the fifteen rescues in the Dales in the past year were 'led groups'. This is not the case. What the author should have said was that there were three flooding incidents in Long Churn and two of these involved led groups.

Training Administrator: Mrs Mary Wilde has been appointed as the new Training Administrator to replace Karen is from a short list of four. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen for ensuring a smooth and supportive transfer.

Meetings: I have represented BCA at the Yorkshire Dales Rocksport access committee where the review of CRoW Act was discussed and its implication for cavers, BMC pushed very hard initially for crag access to be included in the original act which it was. It appears that at review cave access may be able to be included with the right representation.

I attended a meeting of all NGBs and users in London hosted by Skills Active. Skills Active seems to be controlling some of the funding available through UKCC. But are still pushing only Coaching Awards. There may be a way forward in that BMC have suggested a meeting of interested NGBs to possibly develop a coaching unit that may be interchangeable between awards.

Graham Mollard, March 2009

Item 12: Publication & Information Officer's Report

No written report provided.

Les Williams, February 2009

a) Webmaster's Report

No written report provided.

Les Williams, February 2009

b) Newsletter Editor's Report

In my first year as newsletter editor I have managed to produce two newsletters (with another imminent, following this AGM).

In light of the previous frequency of publications, this is an improvement. Whilst it would be good to produce four publications a year, the availability of material does not allow for this. More articles supplied to the editor equals more newsletters.

I am willing to continue as the newsletter editor but from September 2009 I shall be travelling abroad for 12 months. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to request that someone takes over the role for the year whilst I am incommunicado.

If there is someone who wishes to take on the role on a more permanent basis, I will not stand in their way.

Mike Clayton, February 2009

c) Handbook Editor's Report

The 2008-9 Handbook was the second to be published under my editorship. Its net cost, taking into account printing and postage costs plus advertising revenue, was something in the region of £800 for 650 Handbooks. This continues, in my view, to be good value in terms of the information it provides to members.

I have tried to keep the downloadable version up-to-date and, this year, have altered the e-mail addresses in an attempt to reduce spam. I am, however, advised that this is not enough and fear I may need to replace the e-mail addresses with a message telling the user to "see website". Hopefully, though, someone will be able to provide me with a workable alternative.

Apart from changes created by this AGM and some other small additions, the 2009-10 version of the Handbook is almost ready for proof-reading. It is very similar in design and layout to the 2008-9 version.

Damian Weare, February 2009

Item 13: Legal & Insurance Officer's Report

New and Proposed Legislation that Might Impinge Upon our Activities: I try to keep an eye open for any proposed legislative changes that might be coming along that could possibly upset 'our applecart', or affect the way that we look after it.

The big push in recent months has been the Access to the Coastal Strip 'thingy'. After long consultations, (including a press day organized by the BMC/National Trust at Brean Down, Gloucestershire, a Draft Marine Bill was eventually

published last November. This was a huge draft bill containing a final section on Access to the Coast. It is still unclear whether our interests, (particularly in the NAMHO area) are going to be protected, current noises being “the devil will be in the detail” (possibly the secondary legislation or “Regulations”). Further consultations at the drafting stage of the Bill proper appear to be bringing up the issue about possible free access to ALL natural features of the landscape, with a view to a possible amendment to the CRoW Act.

I am taking our position as being unchanged from that which we arrived at through considerable discussion and broad consensus during the evolution of CRoW, back in the 1998-2000 period. That is that we are broadly happy with the status quo, whereby we control our own access arrangements to caves and would not welcome a free for all, especially at our most popular caves, e.g. Gaping Gill, O.F.D., Lost Johns, Lancaster – Ease Gill, etc.

Once the Coastal Strip has been ‘sorted’ Inland Waters appear likely to follow. Derbyshire seems to be of greatest concern here, but are there other areas? There are, for instance, long standing issues in Upper Wharfedale, but it might be that the consensus will be to remain with the status quo (for reasons similar to those covered above)?

Appeal Court and Law Lords’ decisions can of course also effectively amend legislation. The Hampton Heath decision, in 2007, appears to have finally removed Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 from harms way (duty to others). What the Law Lords’ judgment in Godmanchester did for the Public Rights of Way dedication issue I have yet to comprehend, but the appellants, substantively the Ramblers’ Association, appear to regard it as even better than the proverbial ‘cat’s whiskers’.

I am particularly grateful to Bob Mehew, Paul Deakin, Les Williams and others for keeping vigilant and bringing press cuttings and other reports to my attention from time to time, or asking me leading questions that require answers!

Child/Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults Considerations: I am pleased that others have now picked up this area of responsibility and are looking in detail at our policy and guidance note documents and trying to relate them more closely to Training Committee considerations. I will be happy to maintain a legal overview of these activities but would rather not be drawn into the minutiae.

Porth-yr-Ogof and Other Site-Specific Issues: I am happy to look at such issues as these and in close co-operation with others offer our best advice to landowners and other concerned parties, but feel strongly that we should only do this in close co-operation with the appropriate Regional Council, and never in opposition to their agreed views or stated positions.

L&I Special Committee: I am aware that this Committee only meets rarely, but would be happy to call a meeting whenever there is a broad consensus for it. Otherwise it would merely be a waste of resources. If there are issues that do properly need the consideration of representatives from all or several regions, then I trust that I will hear of them, either directly or via The Executive.

David Judson, February 2009

Item 14: Youth & Development Officer’s Report

Since the creation of this role in 2007 I feel things have improved dramatically and that caving numbers have turned a corner. A general shift in attitudes has helped this with clubs realising the importance of attracting new members and running events to take people underground. BCA’s position of supporting and encouraging this has help tremendously.

Caving in the media has also helped this and figures for the website show a dramatic jump whenever caving features on TV. In the future the BCA might consider the importance of this fact and how it is positioned to interact with Television and other media, to make best use of this.

Clubs have continued to run try caving weekends with the YSS leading the way. Chris Tate from the YSS has even started using the Facebook group I created to get more people to their events.

Website: Compared with last year the website is doing more or less the same volume of traffic.

However I recently lead a revamp of the website. These recent changes made have improved the average time on site and the number of pages viewed per visit. In other words I’m happy that people are spending more time on the site and using it in a more in-depth fashion.

	Visits	Av. Time	New Visits
Feb 2007- Feb 2008	8302	3.06mins	76.12%
Feb 2008- Feb 2009	7910	2.57mins	79.71%

Our main source of traffic is still from the Google adwords although it is my hope to ensure a naturally higher rank on Google to remove our reliance on this source of traffic to the website.

Reciprocal links: I have worked to raise the number of reciprocal links to the website and will continue to do this.

Facebook: There is a Try Caving page on Facebook which currently has 33 members and is starting to generate a bit of interest.

BCA at Outdoor shows etc: We have not had a request from the Outdoor show to attend this year. There has been a change of management and I suspect this is the reason. I've not pursued it this year as feel that we would be better off sorting out our own cave and attending in 2010. Constructing our own cave is a large project and one which I feel would stand the BCA in good stead in the future.

Scouts: I cannot claim to have made any great advances myself here but it does appear that the new creation of an association of scout teams will improve things. Idris Williams and I have been exchanging emails recently and I look forward to assisting this new association in anyway I can.

Leaflets: Jenny Potts has 2/3 of a box left and I have 3/4 of a box remaining. I estimate that we have 2125 leaflets approx remaining.

Chris Jewell, February 2009

Item 15: Membership Administrator's Report

2008 BCA Membership:

- DIMs caving: 388 (DIMs plus BCRA: 195)
- DIMs non caving: 43
- BCRA Honorary: 9
- CIMs caving: 4035
- CIMs non caving: 1186
- Clubs: 152
- Associates: 13
- Access: 7

2009 BCA Membership (at March 27th 2009):

- DIMs caving: 243 (DIMs plus BCRA: 172)
- DIMs non caving: 29
- BCRA Honorary: 8
- CIMs caving: 3499
- CIMs non caving: 1024
- Clubs: 143
- Associates: 13
- Access: 4

During March the 10,000th membership number was issued to Rosie Hadfield of SUSS. I am arranging a small presentation (and photo session for Descent). To date, the current membership number is 10,105, that's over 3,000 new members through the books since September 2006.

New Clubs: The following new clubs have applied for membership. They have submitted the correct paper work, payments and constitutions: York Caving Club; Underground Overground Club; Cornwall Mine Explorers Club.

Admin: I have recently upgraded the BCA PC to a more useable specification (increased RAM and an additional screen). With thanks to Cookie, the BCA PC has now been re-directed to the new BCA mail server. As reported previously, there is a time overhead in having to input the paper DIM applications to conform with the new on-line GUF, but it's definitely worth the effort. I have also (hopefully) improved several aspects of the supporting paper work that goes out with membership cards, although there is still room for continuing improvement.

Glenn Jones, February 2009

Item 16: Insurance Manager's Report

No written report provided.

Nick Williams, February 2009

Item 17: Convenor of the Radon Working Party's Report

In terms of enquiries from external people or bodies this was the first year in which there were none. This is rather unusual and thought needs to be given as to why this might be.

The update of the Radon booklet has progressed and is presently with Bob Mehew. He is going through it with his ex-HSE hat on ensuring that we are as accurate and explicit as possible. Hopefully, the new edition will be ready for use this year.

I have been liaising with the HPA on two matters. First, there is still the intention to have an Advisory Committee report on the various risk factors associated with radon exposure and associated Action Levels. It would appear that this must be low on their priorities as yet again this has been delayed. Equally, it would seem that the agreed annual limit of $10^6 \text{ Bq m}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$ is still considered to be appropriate for recreational caving. I have checked the method of calculation of dose from the concentration data and the HPA are adamant that the nationally applied method is the one that we should be using rather than anything else. The method is the standard for all data in the UK.

Second, I have been carrying out further radon monitoring in Wales for the CCW using detectors supplied by the HPA. The results of the 2007 radon concentration experiments carried for the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in Agen Allwedd and Eglwys Faen, two adjacent caves on the Llangattock escarpment. The CCW were happy that the data had as wide an audience as possible because they were so different, much higher, than the previously publicised data from the Eglwys Faen cave (which is widely used by outdoor groups). These data appeared in *Descent* 163. Because of the high concentrations it was agreed that a second set of experiments should take place. The goal was to monitor the two caves over a period of 6 months, end June to end November 2008. The experiments involved monitoring three positions continuously over that period, the detectors being changed each month. This has provided a data set that shows similar behaviour in both cave systems, although at different concentration levels. The new data confirm those collected in 2007 and importantly, a new finding is that the winter values are controlled by ingress of fresh air and are considerably lower than the summer/autumn concentration values. This evidence bears out the data retrieved in earlier private studies that were all carried out during the winter months. It is intended that the results of these experiments will also be written up for wider dissemination after reporting to the CCW.

I have been convenor for some time now but, if it is the wish of the AGM, I am happy to continue.

Clark Friend, February 2009

Item 18: Cave Registry Co-ordinator's Report

During the year I produced the software and helped Gary Evans put the Cambrian Cave Registry online. The website went live in July '08 and can be found on the Cambrian Caving Council website.

I also gave a talk at Hidden Earth giving a roundup of the many registries that are appearing on the web. I went on to suggest some ways of co-ordinating this effort, moving towards a national registry.

Dave Cooke, February 2009

Item 19: International Representative's Report

There were various UIS meetings during 2008, largely aimed at preparing for the next international congress in Kerrville, Texas, in July 2009. During the first part of the year, there was a great deal of international discussion mostly by email/internet with the UIS online forum being used for the first time.

There were a number of UIS commission and regional meetings.

The first one, which I attended, was the European congress in Vercors from 23rd to 30th August. This was a grand affair, involving 2000 cavers with a lot of cave excursions including (it is reported) 500 people bottoming the Berger. It is suggested this may be the template for future 8 yearly congresses to work out of phase with the main UIS Congress which was traditionally held in Europe every eight years. A more detailed report on this meeting has already been submitted and also included here.

My next involvement with UIS was a Bureau meeting to coincide with the two-yearly meeting of the volcano speleological commission of the UIS in Jeju, South Korea, from 3rd to 9th September. Again, a detail report has already been submitted. The intensive two-day business meeting was dominated again by preparations for the International Congress but the importance of regional bodies and commissions was gently getting more prevalent. At the moment, there is a particularly good UIS Bureau which behind the scenes has been very involved with karst protection including setting up new world heritage sites in karst areas.

It is my endeavour as UIS president to try and expand on this into the future, to try and improve the general standing of the UIS in political, scientific and general caving circles. A great deal of email discussion has taken place along these lines with the Jeju meeting being followed up by a business meeting in Postonja, Slovenia from 3rd to 6th December where essentially the secretary, treasurer and myself reorganised some of the financial arrangements and planned suggested improvements in the structure of UIS to be progressed at the International Congress in July.

At the International Congress, the venue for the 2013 Congress will be decided. Traditionally this would take place in Europe. As 12 months notice has to be given of an intention to apply for the Congress, the UK put forward an application

as did the Czech Republic. Before the extended deadline, these were the only two applications received. My opinion at the moment would be that on the back of the undoubted success of the Vercors European Congress, we should consider hosting one of these in seven to eight years time and leave the very keen and well prepared Czechs to do the main international Congress in 2013.

A European congress could be a lot of fun with less science than the international congress, more caving and would fit politically.

I look forward to further discussions on this in the future.

Andy Eavis, January 2009

Item 19a: FSE Report

The year commenced with a bureau meeting in Paris in February which prepared the ground for the 2008 Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting (XGAM). The main items focused on were:

- The change of name of the FSUE in view of the integration and incorporation of the non EU countries following an earlier GAM in Sweden.
- Agreement on a mechanism for proportional membership fees that would take into account the size of the caver population in each country and increased capacity through a 'voice system' to influence decisions at GAMs.
- Working agreement between Federation of Caribbean and Latin American Cavers FEALC and The FSUE

1. Vercors 2008

Vercors 2008 took place in Lans-en-Vercors in August was an extremely successful event bringing together many cavers mostly from Europe. Two bureau meetings, an (XGAM) and a Public Meeting took place at the event.

Representation at the XGAM is shown in the table on the right.

Other EU countries not members of the FSUE in attendance were: Austria, The Czech Republic (had a stand at Vercors 2008), Denmark, Slovenia (present as observer), The Netherlands (present as observer).

Glenn Jones attended the XGAM as UK representative and reported back to the BCA Council in October. The main decisions made at the GAM were as follows;

- The FSUE name was changed to the FSE
- The proposal of a proportional membership scheme was rejected. A 66% vote was required. Only 50% of GAM members voted in favour.
- The FSE-FEALC agreement was voted unanimously

The FSE now has 22 members (including Denmark's recent membership).

Bureau Officers: Juan Carlos Lopez (President), Ged Campion (Vice President), Olivier Vidal (Secretary), Manuel Freire (Treasurer), Alexey Zhalov (Vice Secretary),

2. FSE Finance

The Budget Plan for 2008-2009 submitted at XGAM :

EuroSpeleo Forum 2009	500
EuroSpeleo Projects 2008-2009	2,500
Meetings	200
Stamps, Office, Copies	400
EuroSpeleo Newsletter	600
Commercial items (stickers)	500
EuroSpeleo Protection Commission	500
Internet	100
15th ICS presence, stand	100
Total in Euros	5,400

Belgium	Jean-Marc Mattlet
Bulgaria	Petar Beron
Switzerland	Patrick Deriaz
Germany	Stephan Marks / Christiane Grebe
Spain	Juan Carlos Lopez
France	Olivier Vidal
Great Britain	Glenn Jones
Greece	To be voted by GA
Hungary	Szabolcs Leél-Össy
Italy	Michelle Sivelli
Lithuania	(Proxy) Jean-Claude Thies, LU
Luxembourg	Jean-Claude Thies
Macedonia	Marjan Temovski / Oliver Gichevski
Poland	Ditta Kicinska
Portugal	Manuel Freire
Romania	Viorel Lascu
Serbia	Uros Aksamovic
Sweden	Thomaz Gustavsson
Slovakia	Peter Magdolen / Peter Bella
Monaco	No rep
Ireland	no rep

3. Euro-Speleo Projects

This is a grant award system where applicants must demonstrate at least 5 nationalities attending an expedition/major speleo project. The awards to date are as follows:

Date	Name	Country	Request Date	Grant amount	Report Date
Jan-07	Expédition Siphon sous la jungle	France	05/01/2007	500	-
Feb-07	3ème Congrès International de Plongée Souterraine	France	10/01/2007	350	26/06/2007
Mar-07	Sampling & analyzing of brown bears remains in caves.	Germany	15/03/2007	250	15/03/2008
Apr-07	Remapping of Tabara Humpleu	Romania & Switzerland	27/04/2007	200	21/12/2007
May-07	Stage européen de perfectionnement technique en Serbie	France	17/07/2007	370	07/02/2008
Jun-07	Italian Congress Apuane 2007	Italy	27/07/2007	0	N/A
Jul-07	Alpine Underground	Germany	28/07/2007	430	01/02/2008
Jan-08	Exploration of River Caves Laos 2008	Germany	18/09/2007	500	21/04/2008
Feb-08	4ème Congrès International de Plongée Souterraine	France	10/10/2007	400	07/08/2008
Mar-08	Remapping of Tabara Humpleu	Switzerland	07/05/2008	250	04/09/2008
Apr-08	Balkan camp	Greece	09/06/2008	0	N/A
May-08	Special edition of International Journal of Speleology	Italy	01/07/2008	450	19/12/2008
Jun-08	Expedition Iran 2008	Belgium	22/08/2008	400	
Jul-08	Rescue Seminar Proteus 2008	Russia	08/10/2008	0	N/A
Jan-09	Exploration of River Caves Laos 2009	Germany	04/10/2008		
Feb-09	Alpes Spéléo	France	04/12/2008		

4. WD 66

Since August a considerable amount of time has been spent preparing the ground for public campaign behind the WD 66 Declaration (Written declaration on protection of caves as a cultural, natural and environmental heritage). This has been worked on by a Cave Protection Commission legitimised by the FSE. (The FSE has a number of commissions working on various cave related issues).

Results of WD66 (by Country)

Country	No. of MEPs Signed	No. of MEPs	% of total MEPs
Belgium	4	24	17
Bulgaria	12	18	67
Czech Republic	1	24	4
Denmark	3	14	21
Finland	4	14	29
France	9	78	12
Germany	16	99	16
Greece	10	24	42
Hungary	6	24	25
Ireland	3	13	23
Italy	13	78	17
Latvia	1	9	11
Lithuania	3	13	23
Luxemburg	1	6	17
Netherlands	2	27	7
Poland	11	54	20
Portugal	7	24	29
Romania	11	35	31
Slovakia	2	14	14
Slovenia	6	7	86
Spain	5	54	9
UK	10	78	13

No signatures from Sweden, Austria, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta

Although the draft was published in June it was only available internally in the European Parliament. It was initiated by cavers but driven by MEPs from Germany, Hungary, and Spain. The impetus was from the experience of Praileaitz Cave in Spain which despite containing Palaeolithic drawings failed to get sufficient protection. The declaration was subsequently converted into a report requiring 393 signatures by MEPs to be successful.

Despite requests to all European caving organisations/bodies for support and a well-organised campaign in November and December in Brussels to raise the profile of the issues surrounding cave conservation insufficient signatures were obtained. The results are shown in the table on the right.

The table demonstrates the wide disparity between countries like Slovenia which returned support from 86% of MEPs and Austria, for example, providing no signatures at all.

The Cave Protection Commission will continue to raise the profile of cave protection in the following ways:

- To form a new working group of MEPs (to include existing three from Hungary, Spain and Germany)
- Encourage cavers/organisations/bodies in countries to showcase 'best practice' re cave protection
- Organise a workshop on cave protection for newly

elected MEPs in Sept 2009

- Encourage cavers to lobby their respective MEPs for support in future.

The next meeting of the Cave Protection Commission will take place on 20-24th June in Antalya, Turkey.

5. Euro-Speleo Forums 2009 & 2011

The next (2009) Eurospeleo Forum will take place at the Italian National Conference in Sardinia (29th April -5th May). The 2011 Forum will take place at Hidden Earth subject to further discussions. The 2009 GAM will be held at Hidden Earth in September this year.

Ged Champion, March 2009

Item 20: Reports from BCRA, Regional Councils etc

For DCA's Annual Report, please see the DCA website.



BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



This Child Protection Policy document, and the accompanying Guidance Notes, are issued strictly for the guidance of caving and mining clubs and societies and individual members that constitute the main membership of the Association. Members and Organisations controlled by Local Authorities and other non-member Organisations are expected to have their own polices, guidance and working rules and arrangements that are entirely their own responsibility for developing, administering and updating within the same legal framework as the Association.

1.00 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 1.01 The British Caving Association (BCA) recognises the requirements of the Protection of Children Act 1999 (PoCA) and subsequent legislation affecting children, young persons and vulnerable adults.
- 1.02 PoCA includes “children”, that is under 16’s, and “young persons”, that is 16 to 18s as well, (further referred to here with equal meaning as “young persons” or “children”).
- 1.03 PoCA takes in sexual, emotional and physical abuse and also “neglect” (which includes all aspects of failure to ensure the safety of young persons and vulnerable adults).

2.00 POLICY STATEMENTS

- 2.01 BCA recognises the importance of the welfare of young persons and their right to protection from abuse as set out in section 1.00 of this document.
- 2.02 BCA recognises its duty of care to young persons, for the actions of its trustees, officers & agents.
- 2.03 BCA will take all allegations of child abuse seriously and will respond to such allegations quickly.
- 2.04 BCA considers that in any caving or mine exploration activity safety of the participants and conservation of the cave are of paramount concern at all times.
- 2.05. BCA wishes to encourage the participation of children and young persons in caving and mine exploration, provided that:-
 - a. The introduction of caving to these persons is carried out by suitably experienced adults.
 - b. The introduction is done in a progressive manner attuned to the physical and mental capacities of the participants.
 - c. During this introduction the conservation requirements of this unique environment are stressed as part of the ongoing development of the individual.

3.00 BCA: ITS TRUSTEES, OFFICERS AND AGENTS

- 3.01 If BCA receives an allegation of child abuse against one of its trustees, officers or agents, then it will treat it as a potential criminal activity and report it to the police.
- 3.02 In addition, one or more members of the Executive (Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer) will immediately be informed and will then take prompt action, as an Executive Body, to consider such matters as suspension of awards/benefits and all necessary further actions.

4.00 BCA: RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBERS

- 4.01 BCA recommends that in any activity involving children, whether training or caving or preparing for caving, there should be at all times at least two adults present.
- 4.02 BCA recommends that where **regular** caving and/or caver training activities involving children are planned, then guidelines such as those set out in *Child Protection in Sport Unit, Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport* should be followed for the selection, vetting and recruitment of the participating adults.
- 4.03 All adults involved in **regular** activities with children should be made aware of best practice in responding to alleged or possible child abuse as set out in the above publication (see 4.02).