

## **Reports for BCA AGM**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

**Chairperson**                      **Andy Eavis**

I must start this year's AGM Chairman's report with an apology. Unfortunately, over the last year I have been something of an absentee Chairman, spending nearly 50% of my time abroad on various caving related projects. During the year several BCA matters have come to a head which has caused the Council a considerable amount of discussion and my absence hasn't helped. Clearly, we suffered with secretarial changes and Damian was always going to be a difficult act to follow. The combination of Simon and Leanne working very hard has been a great help, they have done their very best. I am very grateful to them over the last year.

If you read my report to the last AGM, it outlines what was going to happen this year and I have no intention of repeating all that again.

The first thing to mention in reporting activities over the last year must be Euro Speleo. What a tremendous success it was, with nearly 1,500 delegates, 700 caving trips and an enormous amount of fun and enjoyment, not to mention pints of beer consumed. A great event which has even made a profit. Thanks to several people, in particular Damian Weare for an incredible amount of effort, both before, during and after the event, Les and Wendy Williams for again organising a "Hidden Earth on Steroids" and the financial boys Robin Weare and Dave Cooke in particular for producing the very acceptable financial result. All delegates paid a reasonable fee. Matt Wire and his IT team also did a fantastic job. Thank you very much indeed everybody.

Reorganisation within BCA training has progressed over the years with QMC coming as the professional training side and the original training committee handling recreational training. I'm sure in general this is the right way forward. As Chairman, I am very grateful and appreciate all the work put in by Graham Mollard and his team and the recreational training team.

The CRoW Officer Tim Allen has continued his work on clarifying the understanding of the CRoW Act and looking at conservation and access issues. In conjunction with Andrew Hinde, whether or not CRoW is seen by the authorities to apply to caves, we will be in a better position to look after access and control conservation in all British caves.

Andrew Hinde has worked tirelessly on the conservation side of BCA and in conjunction with Bob Mehew amongst others, has produced a range of literature, and there is more coming in the future.

Nick Williams has continued the Insurance Officer's role and sowing the seeds for insurance of caving expeditions into the future.

The library at Glutton Bridge under the auspices of Jenny Potts, assisted by Mary Wilde is continuing to improve and is of real benefit to everybody who uses it.

The Royal Geographical Society weekend is now established for 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December, it will showcase British cave discoveries both at home and abroad over the last 40 years. It will be an enormous amount of effort but I'm sure wholeheartedly worth it to promote a good image for caving in the right places.

Furthermore, I should like to thank all the BCA officers very much for their enormous amount of work over the last year. I would particularly like to thank Simon Brooks who stepped in as Secretary, into a very difficult position at a very difficult time. The act he had to follow was awesome and it was never going to be easy, and what with the aforementioned absent Chairman Simon was always going to have a much more difficult job than he (or I) imagined. With great reluctance, he has stepped down and for an interim period Nick Williams has offered to stand, subject to approval by the AGM, as Secretary, and will continue to work with Leanne Barrett on secretarial matters.



Action 184 – Constitutional amendments – involved a huge amount of work and with assistance from the BCA Exec and others such as Bob Mehew the proposed changes are tabled for the forthcoming AGM.

Action 194 – Changes have been put into place to gain 100 words describing Clubs and Organisations applying to join BCA along with their main contact point(s) that are now circulated to the National Council prior to them being accepted.

## **Treasurer (Acting)                  Robin Weare**

During 2016 some long standing financial projects came to fruition and a few more were forced by changes of legislation or circumstance.

The switch from a single deposit account to a spread of deposit accounts had been intended for some time, but in the event was forced when the bank which held our deposits gave notice that the interest rate was to be reduced to zero.

We now have three separate deposit accounts with all individual account balances kept within the limit of protection provided by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. That we managed to do this whilst maintaining the interest level at a time when deposit interest rates were falling was more than satisfactory.

The fixed asset register has been completed and a pension scheme has been set up for our employees, meaning that the necessary process was in place and approved by the time it was legally required to be activated. The implementation of the scheme occurred smoothly in April 2017 at the same time as a switch to a new payroll programme. The relevant compliance declaration has been submitted well in advance of the due date.

The 2016 accounts were prepared in good time and I am grateful for the co-operation I received. I must also record my appreciation of Katie & Mary who collect and bank our income, of Sue who runs the payroll and of Dave Cooke & Dave Gibson who between them keep the income systems running.

The accounts were subsequently scrutinised by Heather Simpson, our Independent Examiner. I am most grateful to her for assisting us in this way and for the advice she has unhesitatingly provided whenever it has been needed.

Overall, the accounts show a surplus of £10,805 which has been added to reserves. This was only a little more than half of the 2015 surplus but the reduction was in accordance with expectations.

We have also added £5,000 to reserves in respect of a provision made in 2014 towards the cost of producing the next edition of Speleology. Following the decision to discontinue the publication that provision is no longer required.

The detail of the income and expenditure is set out in the accounts but I am sure that a few general comments will allow members to better consider them.

Subscription income in 2016 was less than in 2015 due to Council's decision to reduce the charge to Direct Individual Members, who no longer receive paper publications. That they still pay a little more than Club members reflects the additional administrative costs we incur on their behalf.

The decision to hold as many meetings as possible by Webex has resulted in reduced travel costs as well as huge savings in time for those who would otherwise have travelled to attend meetings.

Although the basic cost of our Public Liability insurance remained unchanged we were hit by the increase in Insurance Premium Tax and will be hit again in the current year.

Towards the end of the year an administrative assistant was employed to take on some of the workload of the Secretary. Another change was the decision to take a series of advertisements in Descent at a cost of £1,986 in the year.

A one off donation of £400 was made to the Mend our Mountains campaign.

The Conservation & Access committee published the Minimal Impact leaflet as well as the well received coaster on which the new cave conservation code was printed. There was also some expenditure on the CRoW campaign and this activity was reflected in a spend of £2,045 compared with only £120 in 2015.

The deficit on the professional training scheme was £1,286 but this compares with a deficit of £5,164 in 2015. Although a few more clubs applied for Training Grants than in 2015 the total still came to only £500. It would be good to see more applications this year, there is more money available.

General publications were the "Join BCA" leaflets which were distributed via show caves and the "Weil's Disease" cards which went to all members as part of the 2017 renewals process. The 2015 expenditure on the Newsletter was for the final printed version. Since then the newsletter has been delivered by e-mail and placed on the website at no additional cost.

Equipment & Techniques expenditure was broadly in line with 2015 but the mix was quite different. Thanks to the use of Webex the £564 spent in 2015 travelling to meetings was saved in 2016. Also not recurring was the £2,000 contributed to the cost of developing a new bolt in 2015. The big one off cost in 2016 was the refurbishment of the rope test rig (materials £1445 plus a serious amount of unpaid labour). The balance in both years was the normal cost of supplying bolts and resin for installations throughout the country.

The cost of providing internet services for BCA, regional councils and other connected organisations was offset by the amounts earned from services provided to other users.

Regional Council claims included administration expenditure but mainly related to work undertaken for conservation & access purposes.

Donations of £10,000 to support the British Caving Library and £5,000 to support overseas expeditions were in line with previous years.

The Association continues to be able to meet running costs as they fall due and the Reserves position is strong in light of current expectations of foreseeable requirements.

Robin Weare  
Acting Treasurer

**Conservation & Access**                      **Andrew Hinde**

**CRoW Liaison**                                      **Tim Allen**

Apologies in advance for both the length of this report and the criticism it poses at times. I applaud the voluntary efforts of many council members of BCA especially the chairman who works very hard on our behalf.

The BCA campaign to confirm existing rights of access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has not been as effective this year as last. The BCA has allowed the campaign to become bogged down in internal politics centred on a single sentence of the constitution. Complaints from the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (made to the April 2016 council meeting) that the campaign was unconstitutional highlighted the sentence, "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access". This, it was claimed, prevented the BCA from campaigning for CRoW to apply to caving. This is refuted by many and does not take into account the fact that the Land Reform Act (Scotland) had already taken that right away north of the border and the CRoW Act may well have already taken it away to the south. This had already been dealt with by BCA Council on several occasions when the following statement had been agreed, *"BCA Council is fully aware of the Guiding Principles as outlined in sections 4.2 - 4.8 of the constitution and always seeks to act in line with these. However, the law of the land takes precedent over a constitution. Therefore, Council is happy that sections 4.4 - 4.8 are no impediment to BCA campaigning to change DEFRA's current interpretation of the law, which by their own admission is not definitive."*

However, at last year's AGM a new, amended motion was passed. This stated,

*"To remit the issue of section 4.6 of the constitution to Council for consideration to return with a properly worded proposal presented at the next General Meeting. Meanwhile BCA will concentrate on conservation and landowner relations."*

The inclusion of the latter sentence of this motion showed a very substantive change and consequence from the original motion that had been properly tabled to the AGM. It effectively limited the campaign which was in progress at the time. Representatives of BCA groups and clubs attending the meeting could not have consulted their members on this major change and therefore it should never have been allowed. Following the AGM I received instructions from the Exec on how to proceed. These were somewhat ambiguous but never the less made it clear that I was to "play it down" until after the next AGM, avoid being proactive in the media and concentrate on conservation and access issues. This I have done.

I have assisted the C&A officer wherever possible and I appreciated the vote of thanks from the January council meeting for the "incredible amount of work getting the conservation message out." I have also had a number of dealings with some major caving landowners mostly in the north of England. Some welcome all cavers, some are ambivalent and some would prefer a managed access system. However, even those, have stated that if the CRoW Act applies to caving then they are content to abide by the law of the land. There was never any talk of recriminations against cavers for pursuing access under CRoW.

It is difficult to see what more I can do to “concentrate.... on landowner relations”. BCA itself is unable to approach landowners directly unless permitted through the regional councils. I note with dismay the comment in the minutes of the AGM which states, “We would not wish to support anything that gives Tim Allen the chance to talk directly to landowners.” What is the motivation here when clearly I have spoken to many landowners without upsetting them? It is perhaps obvious that a landowner’s opinion is formed, in part, by the information he receives from his local caving contacts. These opinions may reflect the attitudes of those cavers and it is limited in the effect that BCA can have on this. I have asked the question below to the CSCC representative to Council at several meetings,

*“I am unable to do much to improve landowner relations in the regions due to BCA restraints, especially on Mendip where many of the problems with CRoW has been reported. Could CSCC report on what progress they have made in allaying the landowner fears they were so concerned about?”*

The reply essentially stated that the CSCC had done nothing to allay reported fears as they were content with the status quo. There seems little BCA can do to improve this situation if the regional council have no wish to progress matters. However, on the subject of landowner relations BCA Council made the following statement.

*“BCA Council has the utmost respect for landowners and recognises their right to decide how their land is used within the constraints of the law. It is now more than 15 years since the CRoW Act was introduced. At the time all sorts of potential concerns were raised by opponents of the legislation, but Council believes these have largely failed to materialise. Indeed in general landowners now seem content with the legislation and Council does not see this changing if caving is shown to also be included as a permitted activity. Furthermore CRoW legislation reduces landowners’ potential liability to the lowest level possible in law and, as such, Council believes the majority of landowners will benefit if the CRoW Act is understood to apply to caves.”*

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Reported in October, I had written a report to the exec intended to answer the question of whether the BCA has fulfilled any obligation it has in connection with the later part of point number two of the BCA poll on CRoW, namely, *“To consult with landowners and open communication with the Country Land and Business Association.”* This concluded that the CLBA had made its position clear on numerous occasions and dialogue was unlikely to be effective. However, since then the implications of Brexit are becoming more apparent to farmers and land managers who may well loose out from cuts to moorland subsidies. Establishing the recreational value of these areas is becoming of more interest where previous unlikely partnerships may now seem attractive. I shall be looking at these.

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Also at the October Council meeting I made statements to the meeting which were not reported in the minutes. The first part of the statement reminded Council of the historical support there had been for wider public access to caves from national caving bodies. The first goes back to 1949, the time of the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act (NPAC). Here the Cave Research Group are calling on individual cavers to lobby their MPs for greater access to caves. They state,

*“Although we are interested in being able to walk across the country-side to the entrances of caves, our prime objective is to be able to gain access freely to the caves”.*

In 1976 the National Caving Association and the BMC working with the Central Council for Physical Recreation instigated a statement on access which clearly backed public access for both outdoor recreations and highlighted how voluntary agreements weren’t working as intended by NPAC.

In 1998 the NCA made a detailed response to the consultation paper on the CRoW Act. Despite what others have said since it is clear from the actual submission that the NCA supported the inclusion of caves and caving in the Act.

When the CRoW Act was introduced, Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment, stated in the House of Commons that the Bill, “finally achieves the aims and aspirations of the great post-war Labour legislation the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act, fulfilling the yearnings of the British people...for full rights of access to the beauties of the countryside....and finally bringing to reality the dream of Lloyd George that nobody should be a trespasser in the land of their birth.” He went on to remind the house that, “the decision to legislate has been supported by very substantial majorities in the responses to extensive consultations and opinion polls.”

The public majority was reflected in BCAs own poll of December 2014 when members gave a clear mandate for BCA to campaign for cave access under CRoW. BCA Council has very much supported that position but a minority has worked tirelessly to undermine it.

The second part of my statement reported on the level of unpleasant personal abuse I was receiving on social media because of my BCA role. This extended to attacks on friends who came to my aid and reached a level no decent person should tolerate. The name-calling appears to come from a small group of individuals who are vehemently opposed to CRoW. It is a classic tactic, if you cannot win the argument attack the person making the argument. BCA should not be fooled by it. These are attempts to cast doubt on my integrity and to undermine my position.

More recently, ahead of this AGM, rumours are being spread questioning the validity of my BCA role. Apparently I am an imposter in the role and BCA have until recently colluded in this deception. I have asked the exec to make a statement to squash these rumours but to date their response has been totally unsatisfactory especially as comments by the exec seem to have been a contributory factor. I seem to be left to defend myself.

For the record, the position of CRoW Liaison Officer was appointed at the June 2015 Council meeting. Due process was followed in line with the BCA constitution as reflected in the minutes of that meeting. I have since carried out those duties as mandated by the BCA Council. All my efforts and reports have been accepted by Council, and we have even had a specific unanimous vote which supported the work I was doing.

Some members have suggested my efforts as CRoW Liaison Officer are not as well supported as they should be or that I am ‘hung out to dry’ by elements within BCA. It appears to me that the name-calling minority do receive undeserved attention and are pandered to with private meetings, personal communications, etc, whilst the silent majority are largely ignored. This is a problem for BCA’s credibility within its wider membership.

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The proposed constitutional amendments to section 4.6 is not something that I wished to become involved with. I had confidence that the exec or council itself could come up with appropriate wording to satisfy the need. The chairman assured me on several occasions that this was the case. However, nothing appeared on the October meeting agenda and a mix up ensued nothing appeared for the January meeting either. When the exec proposals were made available it was immediately obvious that there was little understanding of the problems involved. The Legal Officer immediately made this very clear in a number of detailed reports but by this time the timetable for proposals was already running late.

As a result, on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, I put forward my own modest solution to this problem by submitting two simple motions to the June 2017 BCA AGM. (I later sent in a third clarifying motion).

I have looked into the origin of the first sentence of section 4.6 of the BCA constitution. It has been impossible to discover the exact reason it is there, other than the fact it was transferred across from

the constitution of the NCA. I'm sure the spirit of that sentence is clear though – that cavers should respect the law and be courteous to tenants and landowners. Left alone I'm sure it could have sat quite harmlessly in the constitution as a reminder of that spirit.

Unfortunately this expensive and time consuming reform has been forced on the BCA for the wrong reasons by the minority who are unwilling to accept the democratic vote of the membership on a CRoW campaign. It should be made clear to the landowning community that this change shows no disrespect to them. It merely deals with an issue that must now be dealt with, correcting an inaccuracy and most importantly allowing the BCA to pursue policy which it has a mandate to follow.

We do not need to be reminded in our constitution that we must obey the law. We should respect landowners' rights, but then, must we respect the rights of quarry owners and other businessmen who may wish to damage caves? They are within their rights to apply for planning permission to destroy or develop caves in ways which BCA may wish to oppose. Does our constitution allow us to fight and oppose that? What about our Human Rights or the rights we all hold to challenge the decision of a public authority by Judicial Review. Should that not be in our constitution? We should respect the speed limit, parking by-laws, decency laws, laws on drinking, drugs, public behaviour, and the environment, etc, etc. Are we to include these in our constitution too? No, of course not, let's just remove the troublesome sentence and move forward.

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Where are we at now? This year I have attended some meetings, notably with Natural Resources Wales at the request of Cambrian CC. My parliamentary contacts have kept in touch and I have monitored Government changes since the Brexit vote and latest election. I have avoided doing any media and concentrated on conservation and landowner relations where that is possible.

Essentially little has changed since last year. The situation is that the CRoW Act may cover caving, it may not and it has been impossible to clarify this one way or the other. On the one hand DEFRA, together with NE and NRW, state that in their view it does not apply. They make it clear that this is only their VIEW and their VIEW is not definitive. They say that in the end only a court can decide. They also state that they have sought no Barrister's opinion to arrive at this view. On the other hand Dinah Rose QC offered her opinion that CRoW did apply to caving. The BCA Legal Officer has presented a strong case to show that this was parliament's intent when introducing the Bill. In addition a number of other outdoor organisations have supported BCA's campaign, for example; The Sports & Recreation Alliance, Outdoor Industries Association, British Mountaineering Council, British Canoeing, British Orienteering, Land Access & Recreation Association, Campaign for National Parks, Friends of the Peak District, together with individuals such as The Rt Hon David Davis MP, David Rutley MP, Chairman of Mountaineering All Party Parliamentary group and Lord Chris Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency 2008-2014. We have a strong and well supported case.

The reality is that any caver can claim a right of access to caves on access land. The tone from government agencies is that they are not going to challenge cavers or settle the matter in court. A landowner who wishes to clarify trespass or a citizen challenging for access under Judicial Review will be in for an uncertain outcome and significant costs. Consequently there is almost nothing to stop cavers accessing most caves on CRoW land and that is a fact.

So where do BCA go next? To continue a campaign to have caving more widely recognised as coming under the CRoW Act is one thing, but it does look like that boat is already sailing. BCA have procrastinated for ten years or more on this issue and have been behind the moves of ordinary cavers at every step. Now, whilst we have spent the last year mulling over a single sentence of the constitution the subtle tones of CRoW have moved on again.

As always, I look forward to receiving Council's direction.

Tim Allen  
BCA CRoW Liaison Officer

## **Equipment & Techniques      Nick Williams**

- Bob Mehew continues to support my role as Committee Chair by acting as a very able Secretary; thank you.
- Meetings held (by Webex) on 20 March 2016, 1 December 2016, 6 March 2017.
- Activities continue to be focussed on anchor scheme.
- Around 200 anchors plus associated resin and placing equipment issued to regions.
- Testing for qualification of new anchors continues, with mixed results.
- CEN have started work on a new standard for rock anchors which will update/replace the current EN 959. BCA have been given a place on the BS mirror committee.

## **Rope Testing      Bob Mehew**

I have found it difficult to provide an adequate level of service for an admittedly small number of enquiries owing to other demands on my time by BCA. I did manage to take the rig to EuroSpeleo event and also hold a day's field trip to the instrumented dynamic and static rope test rigs at the Bradford Pothole Club's headquarters.

## **Training      Nigel Ball**

The following data is from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

LCML registrations	157
LCML Level 1 assessments	50
LCML Level 2 assessments	19
LCML Level 1 revalidations	52
LCML Level 2 revalidations	18
LCML Level 1 Core Skills Reassessments (CSR)	1
LCML Level 2 core Skills Reassessments (CSR)	2
CIC registrations	20
CIC assessments	1
CIC revalidations	24
Active CIC holders	79
Active LCML Level 1 holders	480
Active LCML Level 2 holders	270

Nigel Ball  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017.

**Publications & Information      Les Williams**

**Webmaster                      David Cooke**

**Web Services                      David Cooke**

**Newsletter Editor              Robin Weare**

Four newsletters were produced during 2016 and two have been produced since.

All have been published on the BCA website and circulated by e-mail to those members who have elected to receive direct copies.

Following a request from the UIS supported Karst Information Portal it has been agreed by BCA Council that they may add copies of our newsletter to their archive.

I have continued to try to provide timely information and to bring to the attention of our membership some of the work which goes on behind the scenes for their benefit.

However hard I try and however long the newsletter it cannot be possible to reflect all of that work. I do hope, however, that I have at least been partially successful.

I have also continued to try to inform the wider membership about some of the work done by our constituent bodies.

Robin Weare

**Speleology                      David Gibson**

**Legal & Insurance              Bob Mehew**

Since taking up the post at the last AGM, I have had several enquiries for which I have been able to provide some advice regarding the explicit inclusion of clubs' Trustees in the insurance policies and on advising persons with significant medical conditions to declare them directly to the trip leader rather than as part of the club membership process which would result in onerous information safekeeping requirements. I have also contributed towards a revision of the professional caving disciplinary procedure and as a consequence revised BCA's disciplinary procedure contained in the Manual of Operations. (I am unclear as to what has happened to this revision.)

I have contributed towards a request by the broker for Access Controlling Bodies to conduct 'risk assessments' but my approach has not found favour. Similar work on winch operations resulted in only one person (in addition to the Bradford and Craven Pothole Clubs) declaring that they conduct

man riding winching activities. That individual made a most useful contribution but the pressure of other work has not allowed me to move forward on that topic.

I made a substantial set of comments on various proposals to change the constitution in January but am disappointed to realise that they were effectively totally ignored. The consequences of this has caused me to have to spend a substantial amount of effort in trying to help sort out the mess surrounding the proposed constitutional changes such that I am giving serious consideration to resigning from the post of Legal & Insurance Officer.

## **Insurance Manager                      Nick Williams**

I have dealt with approximately 40 assorted enquiries about the scheme during the year, each of which required a chain of typically 5 - 10 e-mails.

- No claims, I'm pleased to say.
- Premium unchanged from last year except for rise in IPT.
- Broker still providing good follow up and support although service has taken a dip in the last three months or so because our main contact has been on long term sick leave. A new contact was appointed last week.
- Travel insurance on the back burner due to pressure of other commitments. Needs a volunteer to pursue this.
- Ditto club/ACB risk assessments
- More clubs taking up hut insurance; feedback generally satisfactory.
- Still need to ensure we have up to date records of property/land owned/leased by BCA member clubs/ACBs
- Not strictly a PL matter but need to note than Glenn Jones continues to provide a fast and reliable membership administration service, a matter in which he is ably assisted by Katie Eavis. Our thanks are due to them both.

## **Membership Administrator                      Glenn Jones**

*DIMs (Caving):532 (Non-caving):70 (DIMs incl. BCRA: 292 (includes 14 student discount),Honorary (BCRA): 6*

*CIMs (Caving): 3754 (Student): 560 (Non-caving): 815*

*Clubs: 157*

*Associates: 3*

*Access: 8*

**Membership Trends:** *The table below shows membership trends since BCA's formation. It is important to note that data for 2004 and 2005 is presented in a different format to that currently employed, but I believe the figures for those years are accurate enough for comparison. There is no reliable data for 2006.*

1006 new membership numbers were issued during 2016: 15838 – 16844

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>DIM's</b>	93	185		437	432	397	487*	505*	507*	513*	535*	562*	612
<b>CIM's</b>	3,523	3,909		4,965	5,216	5,115	5,296	5,435	5,397	5585	5564	5505	5536
<b>Groups</b>	89	140		153	152	160	166	189	159	186	190	195	185

\*Including 21 CIM Plus members in 2010, 12 in 2011 and 9 in 2012 and 7 in 2013 and 3 in 2014 and 5 in 2015

- The CIM Plus option has been discontinued for 2017 due to low take up.

**Cave Registry Co-ordinator      David Cooke**

**IT Working Party                  David Cooke**

**Youth & Development              Rostam Namaghi**

**International Representative      Andy Eavis**

On the world caving front and the International Union of Speleology in particular, the main work has been aimed at the forthcoming international congress in Sydney, July 20<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>  
<https://www.speleo2017.com>

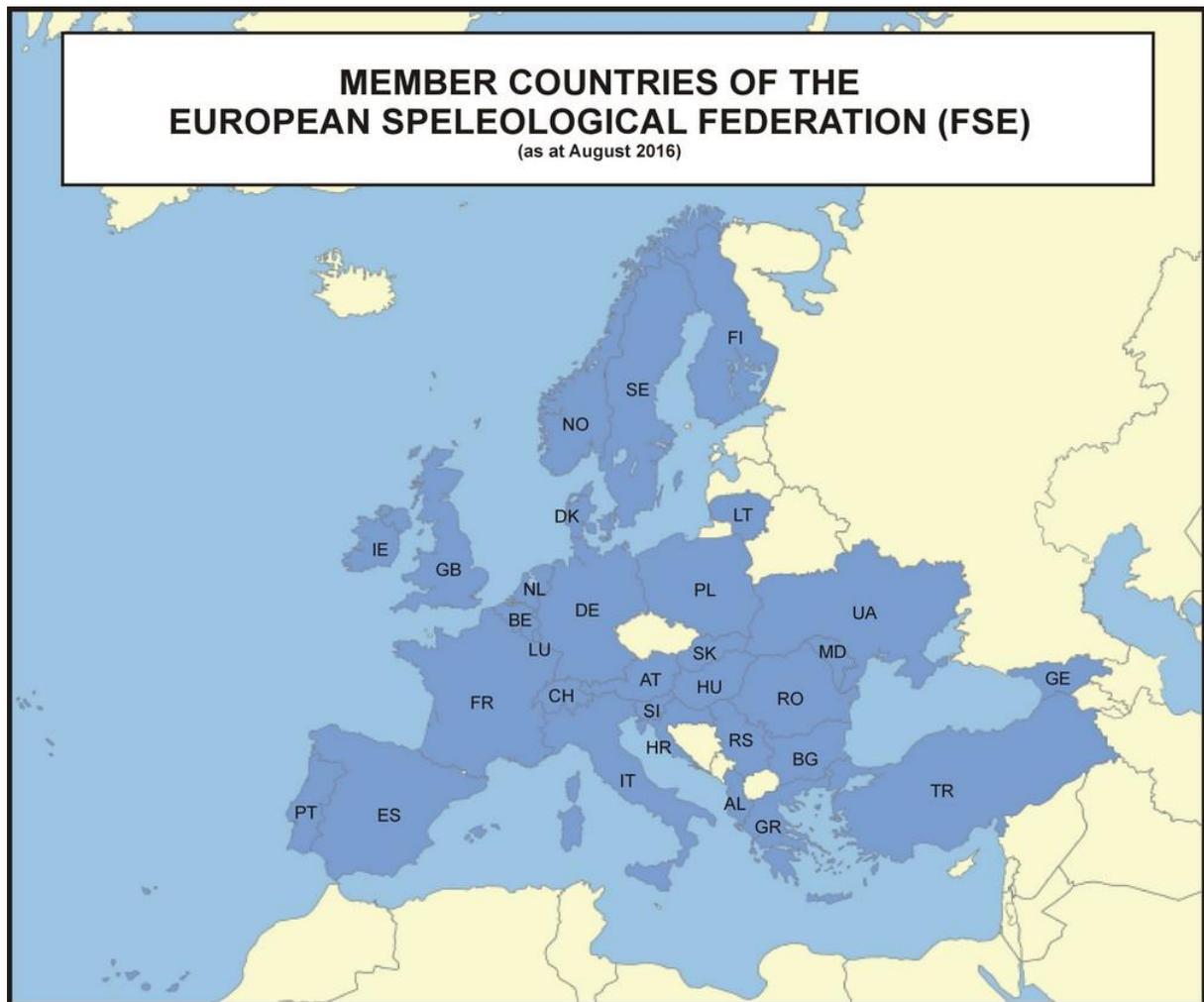
The organisation of the congress is now coming together and looking like a very good event. There will be cavers from all over the world and a huge amount of exploration and cave science being discussed. A great and very enjoyable event for people interested in exploring caves. There is also an excellent programme of pre and post congress excursions, including most of the caving areas in Australia and even trips in New Zealand.

There will be the election of the new UIS officers. My next international report will concentrate on the congress, I am sure you will find it very interesting.

**FSE Representative                  Ged Campion**

**FSE Membership**

The FSE currently represents 31 countries representing around 38,000 cavers. A total of 17 countries were in attendance or represented at the General Assembly Meeting (GAM) at EuroSpeleo congress in the Yorkshire Dales in August last year.



The complicated situation in Spain is now resolved. The former federation 'Federacion Espeleo Espana' (FEE) legally ceased to exist in 2015. Two new national speleological organizations were founded in Spain: the 'Asociación Española de Espeleología y Barrancos' (ASEDEB) and the 'Confederacion de Espeleologica y Canones' (CEC). The two organisations were unable to reach a decision on which would constitute the countries national body. Representatives of CEC joined the 2016 GAM and declared that their organisation had bought the library, archives and the trademarks of FEE. It represents 11 of the 13 Spanish regions. About 7.600 Spanish cavers were said to be members of CEC, which represents about 80% of the Spanish caving community. The CEC is now the recognised national body of Spain represented on the FSE.

#### **Information & Publicity.**

The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by Henk Goutier (Netherlands), is continuously visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>. Also, with the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organisation keep the FSE website updated on a regular basis.

#### **The work of the ECPC commission**

The FSE, through the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) is now a member of the Board of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels and thus directly involved in the EEB decision-

making. Bärbel Vogel occupies this job for the FSE. ECPC is active in the EEB workgroups “Water” and “Biodiversity”. The “Nature Alert” campaign of EEB, is striving to maintain the strong European nature protection standards. ECPC was present at the EEB General Assembly in Vienna in September 2016 with a representative and an FSE/ECPC poster presentation. The FSE will be actively supporting the International year of Caves & Karst 2021 an initiative led by the UIS.

### **The European Cave Rescue Commission**

The post of chairman of the European Cave Rescue Commission (ECRC) was up for nomination. ECRC chairman, Christian Dodelin, (France) wished to stand down. Ms. Antonia Vlaykova from the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology (BFS) applied for the post. There were no other candidates the GAM elected Antonia Vlaykova for a 4-years term as ECRC chairwoman (until 2020).

### **The International Caving Expeditions database (ICE db)**

Treasurer Henk Goutier maintains the contact with WikiCaves. The ICE db is steadily growing. The idea is to provide all speleologists with data and contact information about caving areas world-wide. This is done in collaboration with the UIS. All reports of EuroSpeleo Projects are now also available on the WikiCaves website. WikiCaves currently provides major translation assistance e.g. for the FSE Newsletter

### **Change of role on the FSE bureau**

At the last GAM Vice-President Michael Laumanns (Germany) resigned from vice president and moved to the position of Vice-Secretary which had been vacant since 2014. He was already managing the EuroSpeleo Projects, part of the vice secretary’s job description. This forced a vacancy for the post of FSE Vice-President. One candidature was received from Mladen Garasic (Croatia) who was elected by the GAM as Vice President.

### **Eurospeleo Projects**

EuroSpeleo Projects form a big part of the of work for the FSE. Work continues to encourage more applications from the UK.

The table below shows EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP) and EuroSpeleo Forums/Congresses supported by FSE between June 2016 to present.

<b>Name and number of ESP</b>	<b>Applicant country</b>
ESP 2015-13 Cleaning and 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gouffre Berger	France
5 <sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Congress in Dalesbridge / Austwick	UK
ESP 2016-01 Dao 2016 (Thailand expedition)	Belgium
ESP 2016-02 Exploration of Grotte de Chamois	France

ESP 2016-03 Expedition to Zverinjacke Rupe (Montenegro)	Slovenia
ESP 2016-04 International Youth Camp	Germany
ESP 2016-05 International Female Caving School	France
ESP 2016-06 Expedition to Myanmar (Shan and Myeik)	Germany
ESP 2016-07 Explo-Laos (expedition to Khammouane)	France
ESP 2017-01 Continued Cleaning of Gouffre Berger	France
ESP 2017-02 Training Course in Bosnia	France
ESP 2017-03 Expedition to Serra da Bodoquena (Brazil)	Germany
ESP 2017-04 Expedition to Alay Mts. (Kyrgyzstan)	Serbia
ESP 2017-05 "Speleozistan" expedition to Kan-i-Gut (Kyrgyzstan)	France
ESP 2017-06 11 <sup>th</sup> European Cave Rescue Meeting	Bulgaria
ESP 2017-07 International Female Caving School	Romania

**Timetable of Eurospeleo events & General Assembly Meetings over next 2 years that involve the FSE.**

ES Forum 16<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Ferrieres Belgium  
 ES Forum 2018 will be in Sazkammergut, Upper-Austria.

**Ged Campion FSE Delegate for the BCA.**

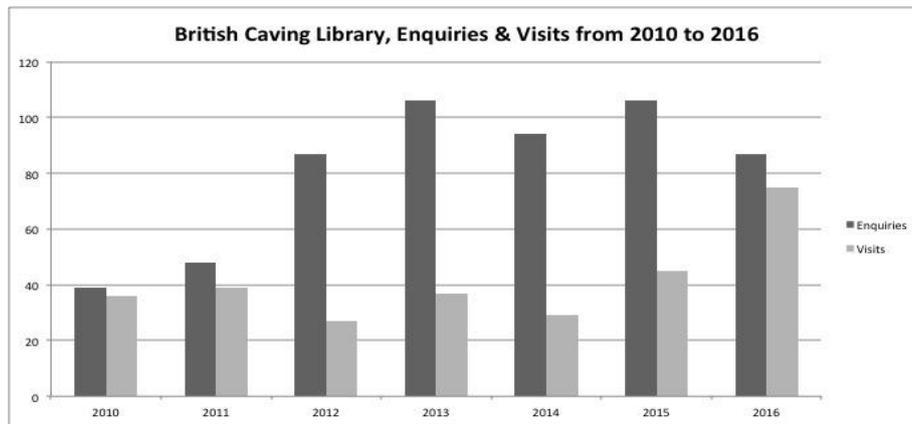
**British Caving Library                      Jenny Potts**

**Library Use**

The use of the Library continues to increase steadily, particularly the number of visitors who appreciate the facilities we provide: use of a computer, scanning, printing, copying, WiFi, etc; help in finding items in advance of a visit to save time and on-site help for our visitors.

The chart shows the progress in enquiries and visits for the years 2010 to 2016. Additionally, during the first 4 months of 2017 we have welcomed a further 27 visitors to BCL and answered 38 more emailed enquiries. Last year for enquiries the ratio of straightforward copies to items requiring research was 65:35; this year it is approaching 50:50. We receive an increasing number of enquiries from abroad. Enquiries are handled by the Librarian, Mary Wilde.

The Library is also used for meetings of BCRA Council and BCA Training Committees and is able to accommodate meetings of up to 12 people.



### **Increases in Holdings**

We now hold over 400 runs of UK periodicals and also periodicals from 51 different foreign countries (with over 400 titles), including 35 received in regular exchanges for BCRA Caves & Karst Science. We have over 1750 books and now hold collections of unpublished cave science theses, sets of documents from caving organisations, International Congress Proceedings, expedition reports, DVDs, etc. We also have an increasing number of archive items: log books, photographic collections, etc. and have recently received a donation of a number of cave surveys of varying vintage to add to our existing collection, which already runs to well over 1000.

We are gradually integrating the John Beck collection into the Library holdings and this includes probably yet a further 1000 cave surveys, as well as journals and books. The Doug Nash collection of items of mining historical interest has been passed to the Peak District Mines Historical Society or, in the case of original records, to the Derbyshire Record Office.

In order to house all this we have increased our shelf length from its original 70m (when BCL was "the BCRA Library") to 250m, the maximum we can fit in the space currently available at Glutton Bridge, and we also now have 6 map chests holding surveys and maps as well as 2 cupboards and 4 filing cabinets.

We receive regular donations of books, journals, surveys and other material and, where these are duplicates of our own holdings, we try to pass them on to other caving libraries or else to the general caving public by "lucky dip" at caving events, the proceeds from which are spent on library acquisitions. (The Lucky Dip at Eurospeleo2016 raised over £400, much of it from our foreign visitors; some overseas Librarians were particularly pleased to find we could supply items from their country which they did not have themselves.)

More recently we have acquired some archive material from the late Robert Leakey, though this was fragmentary and unsorted, and we are grateful to Andy Chapman for going through this for us and creating a preliminary catalogue.

### **The Library On-line**

BCL has an increasing on-line presence, firstly with the on-line catalogue and bibliography, which is maintained by Martin Laverty from update records from the Librarian and me, which are emailed on to him.

John Gardner has steadily increased the holdings of the very popular on-line Audio Archive, comprising over 30 hours of fascinating interviews with cavers past and present. John is also responsible for the BCRA Archives, a collection of digitised archive material, which is also gradually being added to. More recently he has created and maintains an on-line Register of Caving

Collections, allowing researchers to track down not only BCL's and BCRA's archives, but also various collections of interest to cavers available on-line or, in some cases, as collections of log books, documents, etc. held by museums or other libraries. Where possible there are links to other online collections, including the BSA/Eli Simpson archives held by BGS.

All these facilities are accessible via the Library website: [caving-library.org.uk](http://caving-library.org.uk)

### **Where we are now**

The British Caving Library now has a far higher profile and is far more part of the mainstream of the British caving world than ever before. We have an international presence, contributing to the UIS Informatics Commission Publications Exchange Working Group. An expression of faith in our perceived permanence is that a Derbyshire caving club last year transferred their entire Library to us. The Library Facebook page, set up by the Librarian, now has over 900 followers, including a number from abroad - that means over 900 people in the caving world who are actively interested in what we are doing.

*Jenny Potts, BCRA Library Co-ordinator,  
3rd. May 2017*

### **Child Protection (Acting) Bob Mehew**

Following a comment at the last AGM I raised a question over the updating the existing Child Protection policy and guidance. (Notable omissions include no substantial reference to vulnerable adults and the value of friends of family being able to step around the otherwise onerous demands of child protection.) As I had no responses, and the in the light of other demands on my time, I have left the policy alone for the time being.