



# BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

## Annual General Meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### OFFICERS' REPORTS FOR THE YEAR 2007-8

#### **Item 6 Chairman's Report**

This has been a bad year for me personally, in the sense that I have not completed even the minimum of work that would enable me to report with satisfaction; but I am still here. I did not appreciate the extent to which I was, frankly, knackered. I attended a meeting in London of the CCPR Outdoor Pursuits Division on Wednesday 10th October. I learned that ...

**CCPR** is increasingly being used by Sport England and UKSport to coordinate distribution of limited funding to Governing bodies (such as BCA) excluded from access to the main Olympic pot. Thus,

**The Impact and Improvement Fund:**£250K (Sport England). For agreed projects rather than subsidy of recurring costs. We are already too late for 2008.....

**The International Influence Strategy** (UKSport); replacing the IRIS system with a grant via CCPR; will involve more targets and projects.....

The publication of a **Manifesto: Learning Outside the Classroom** (DfES) was reviewed and contrasted with recent Govt pressures on volunteers to participate in vetting procedures and much other bureaucracy. Many GB's reported an increasing tendency to restrict age for Club memberships to 18 years or more!

**CCPR Access Policy:** CCPR has a long-standing history of supporting members' desire for increased access to land and water. One of CCPR's key strategic priorities is to secure sustainable access to land and water for sport and recreation, underpinned by good practice in outdoor and adventurous activities. The initial draft document merits further work to satisfy as wide a range of members as possible. Also, DEFRA has just (iv-2008) published the draft Marine Bill, including provisions on access to the English coast.

**BingoLotto:** launch of TV game show raising money for grassroots sport and recreation. For some time, CCPR has been working with Intelligent Gaming Solutions (IGS) on its plans to introduce into the UK its interactive TV game show, BingoLotto. The show has been operating successfully in Sweden for many years and, in the process, has generated tens of millions of pounds for sport. BCA should take advantage at least of the introductory period of this new opportunity. Members who may have seen the initial game shows on the Virgin digital channel on Friday evenings may shrink from such an objective.

*Mick Day, March 2008*

#### **Item 10: Training Officer's Report**

2007 has been an extremely busy year for NCP, CIC panel and Training Committee. NCP has seen the introduction of the new five year revalidation workshops which are organised and run by BCA, with all profits going into the training account. These have at long last centralised the revalidation process standardising the input on courses and hopefully ensuring that more people undergo revalidation.

NCP have also been proactive in producing the draft recommended "good practice" code for Porth Y Ogof deep water which unfortunately failed to receive the support of Cambrian Council or the BCA legal and insurance section, Training Committee, and NCP feel that both were being particularly obstructive in this matter. The document has been shelved as one of general release however it is in circulation in Outdoor Centres who use this system and has been well received it is also being used on LCLMA training courses. A new booklet on weather and flooding, and a new set of assessment question papers are also close to completion. The booklet on Geology is to be reworked following discussions with Prof. J. Gunn.

CIC panel have met three times in the past twelve months with much time spent looking at training course duration, content and prerequisites prior to attending training. Following much deliberation they requested that TC approved the following changes:

- Increase the length of training courses to a minimum of four days.

- That all candidates must have been assessed at LCLMA level 2 with SRT for leader prior to attending a CIC training course.
- That all candidates must submit their log book pages to the chair of CIC prior to beginning assessment.
- That revalidation should be via a one day workshop rather than two days.
- That the number of CIC trainer/assessors be increased, M. Day, J. Parker Smith and Nigel Ball to oversee.

The programme of work for CIC panel for the coming year includes re-looking at the CIC syllabus content with a possible view to streamlining it., setting up more specific module content checklists to ensure standardisation of assessments and developing a new marking system which will enable the whole four module assessment to be more integrated rather than each module being seen in isolation.

Training Committee have considered all suggestions coming from CIC panel and NCP and in the main have supported all changes. Training Committee is still poorly attended specifically by the Caving regional Councils with only DCA being present at any TC meeting in the past twelve months. We have put meetings at both Weekdays and weekends but with no improvement in attendance. I would welcome any further suggestions to improve the attendance of Regional Councils at Training Committee meetings. We do discuss topics at TC which have an impact on Regional Councils but if they do not have representatives on TC then they really cannot complain if left out of discussions.

NCP, CIC panel and TC have shown a great deal of concern during the past twelve months over HSE's and the Police's lack of contact with the NGB for Caving immediately following a major incident. I was asked by TC to try to change this situation. I approached Gavin Howat who is a senior HSE inspector with particular responsibilities for adventurous activities and who was particularly helpful with the Working at Heights situation. He agreed that as with Mountain incidents the Training Officer of the NGB should be approach and that BCA should be involved in drawing up recommendations following the conclusion of an enquiry. I realise this may not always be the usual approach by BCA, but as the NGB we should be following the same lead as BMC and BCU. All three Committees will be spending some time in the coming year looking at concerns raised during the past few weeks by Committee members, independent CIC's and Rescue Team members following the recent fatalities. I look forward to the Councils support in developing documents of good practice. One of these will be in close liaison with Steve Long from MLT UK.

The working party for the Yorkshire Dales National Park re recreational and professional use of caves and crags has yet to meet but I am in contact with the chair of this group and will keep you informed of progress, Financially I think we will just about have broken even this year, a major expense was the reprint of the LCLMA syllabus at a cost of £1598.00 for 500 but we still have about 400 in hand. Revalidations are starting to show a profit which hopefully will increase over the next twelve months. This is extremely important having lost the funding of Sport UK.

However on a more negative note Trainers and Assessors are still having problems obtaining professional indemnity insurance at a reasonable price to cover their work on behalf of the BCA. This is an area that my predecessor asked Legal and Insurance to pursue with some urgency several years ago, this matter is still pressing.

During the past twelve months there have been:

- 197 Registrations
- 66 Level 1 assessments
- 10 Level 2 assessments
- 61 Standard revalidations
- 30 5 year workshop revalidations
- 3 Core skills re-assessments
- 22 CIC registrations
- 4 CIC awards
- 17 CIC revalidations

These figures are for the period Jan. 07 - Dec.07

*Graham Mollard, March 08*

## **Item 11: Equipment Officer's Report**

The main focus for 2007 has been the Anchor program, and what has been called the Rhino rift incident. In terms of the anchor program this has had the following threads

### **Discussion paper on updated standards**

- Their application to the scheme
- Impact on existing anchors
- Testing
- Installation program

### **Testing of Anchors**

- Singing rock anchor, fisher resin, and K-mark resin
  - Results could not be matched with the DMM anchor, mostly due to recommended installation method, and poor performance of resin in Damp/Wet conditions
- 100kg drop tests in Yorkshire
  - Testing of Anchor and resin bond
- DMM anchor, and potential replacement
  - Nick Williams sources replacement anchor for testing.
- Vercors test bed for extremes of heat and cold, to see affect on anchor and resin
- Anchor testing put on hold due to the death of Stu Goodwill

### **Rhino Rift incident**

- The incident in Rhino of a repeatedly reported lose anchor, led to following actions
- Closure of the cave
- Testing of the anchors in rhino and other CSCC caves
- Closure of further caves, pending the Rhino investigation.
  - Further anchors found suspect
- Testing of anchors in the Yorkshire test beds
  - Mainly to test the pullers and calibration
- Stitch drilling of the reported anchor
  - This proved that the substrate was the issue
- Testing of anchors in Devon
  - Anchors tested with oil on them, and testing of anchors in Chudleigh, Mountbatten
- Discovery of issues caused by the anchor pullers
  - The differing angles of pulling had a dramatic affect on the results of the test
- Holes in the record keeping for the Rhino Anchors
  - 1 Anchors inspected twice and passing that did not exist
- Holes in the CSCC records
  - No record of installers being updated with latest techniques ( Notching the holes)
- Holes in the anchor scheme
  - No training given for the use of the pullers – leading to difference in the regions
- Re-opening of the cave
  - Statement produced in June and caves re-opened
- Replacement program for all affected anchors – not for safety but for aesthetic reasons

### **Presentation of results at Hidden Earth**

Bob Mehew and Andy Pryke presented the results of all the above at Hidden Earth.

Many thanks for the support of the committee, and in particular to Bob Mehew, Les Sykes, Andy Atkinson, Stu Goodwill and Glenn Jones for all their practical support and to Fisher resin, Total Access, & Nick Williams for providing free materials (Anchors and Resin), to help take the programs forward.

*Andy Pryke, April 2008*

### **Item 11: Rope Test Officer's Report**

In 2007 some 46 samples of rope were tested and results provided to their owners. Unfortunately, 35 of these samples had been received in 2006, a reflection of the poor quality service which has been provided, though all samples received in 2007 have been tested by the end of the year. The rope test rig was taken to Hidden Earth at Tewksbury in September and thanks to its location, provided an attraction to many people. A number of useful discussions were held as a consequence. The rope test rig was also taken to a CIC workshop in late September where a lecture was given and samples of tape were tested. Contrary to expectations, the type of tape tested showed considerable strength to the drop test and indicates a potential area of further work. No progress was made on the remaining 2 ropes returned under the Long Term Rope Test program nor on a proposed program of work on new rope which has the aim of characterising the rope test rig's testing procedure. (The procedure departs from that used in the British Standard in several ways which it is thought give rise to a more severe test.)

*Bob Mehew, April 2008*

### **Item 12: Newsletter Editor's Report**

Only having been in the post since January 2008 and not having produced a newsletter to date, I have little to report as yet. However, I can confirm that I have received a disc of previous newsletters and Adobe Indesign CS desktop publishing software from Jim Cochrane. Having reviewed the software, I have decided to produce the newsletter in Publisher as I am far more familiar with this.

I am aiming to have the first newsletter finished by the end of April 2008 and Emma Porter has been busy chasing regional contacts and others for articles.

I would like to thank Jenny Potts, Bob Mehew and Steve Holding for their contributions.

*Mike Clayton, March 2008*

### **Item 12: Handbook Editor's Report**

The 2007-8 Handbook was the first to be published under my editorship. In a departure from previous years, following the unfortunate death of Roy Paulson, it was necessary to have the Handbook published professionally at a unit cost of £1.35. Combining this with postage brought the overall cost to just over £1,000. As this is one of the main methods of communicating with our membership, it is my view that this represents good value.

For 2007-8 it was decided to attempt to increase the availability of the Handbook by providing it as a free download from the website and also by making it available in the main caving shops. In order to facilitate the latter, we donated 10 Handbooks to each of the main shops. This did not prove to be very successful in terms of sales and, as such, I intend to give only a couple to each shop next year. To reduce costs further, these will be delivered by hand rather than post.

As there is now a downloadable version of the Handbook, it has been possible to update it as and when changes occur. A list of these updates has been included on the website to help users of paper-based versions.

Apart from changes created by this AGM and some other small additions, the 2008-9 version of the Handbook is almost ready for proof-reading. The greatest change over the 2007-8 version will be the inclusion of a more substantial section on Mining. It is my hope that the Handbook will then better reflect the membership of the BCA.

*Damian Weare, March 2008*

## **Item 15: Membership Administrator's Report**

### **2007 Membership as of 31st December 2007:**

**DIMs:** 351 (299 caving and 52 non caving) 288 of which are also BCRA members

**Joint:** 86 (75 caving and 11 non caving) 50 of which are also BCRA members

**CIMs:** 4977 (3964 caving and 1013 non caving)

**Clubs:** 154 (73 of which are also BCRA members)

**Honorary:** 9 (all BCRA members)

**Associates:** 13

**Access Groups:** 6

### **2008 Membership as of 4th April 2008:**

**DIMs:** 301 (208 caving and 93 non caving) 167 of which are also BCRA\* members

**Joint:** 64 (not had time to break down these numbers)

**CIMs:** 4452 (3372 caving and 1080 non caving)

**Clubs:** 144 (47 of which are also BCRA members)

**Honorary:** 7 (all BCRA members – 2 are yet to confirm)

**Associates:** 7

**Access Groups:** 6

*\*BCRA DIM's also receive a BCRA "Gold" card*

As previously advised, in late October I commissioned my new office (shed at the bottom of the garden) and relocated the card printer from BCA HQ to the shed. I have also relocated the BCA laser printer from its box in my garage to the shed and set up a Royal Mail Smartstamp account. I now consider that I am working in the self contained office environment I envisioned over 12 months ago. Apart from being an enjoyable work environment with few distractions (other than watching the squirrels in the hedge), the main benefit is that of card production/membership processing. I am considerably ahead of processing compared to the same period in 2007. In part, this is due to the paperwork being processed (at BCA HQ) on a weekly basis, which has helped considerably and has resulted in a turn around time for cards of no more than 2 weeks. At the time of writing, all applications received up to 1<sup>st</sup> April have been processed. Applications received today (April 4<sup>th</sup>) will be processed early next week.

DIMs continue to join at very short notice urgently wanting proof of membership for the following weekend as they "have a trip planned to OFD, D-Y-O, Milwr Tunnel, Titan" (delete where not applicable). I do my utmost to satisfy these requests, but sometimes the lead time is really too short, so I email membership numbers as applicable. Feedback suggests members are happy with this.

We have also had an alarming number of people attempting to join BCA as DIMs when really they wanted LCMLA registration. Karen and Les have spent some time re-arranging the BCA website home page to remove any perceived confusion.

**Vercors 2008:** Of the allocation of 40 full and 10 "partner" registrations, I have "sold" the following:

Full 28

Partner 8

*Glenn Jones, March 2008*

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

In terms of enquiries this was a typically quiet year.

The HPA (NRPB as it was then) still intends to have an Advisory Committee report on the various risk factors associated with radon exposure and associated Action Levels. However, that the work of this body is still delayed is testament to the amount of work that the Polonium contamination in London has generated. Much of this work is now long-term monitoring to see how radioisotopes decay and how they may be excreted in humans. The report has thus been put off again. Although there are plans to revisit all of the recommendations, part of the brief of the Committee will include those for recreational caving. It is still the case that because of the delay there may be a modification of the brief as we are not seen as a high priority. None the less, as of February, the agreed annual limit of  $10^6 \text{ Bq m}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$  is still considered to be appropriate as this approximates to a value in mSv that is below the IRR (1999) limits for workers exposed to radiation.

The most significant part of the activity this year was carrying out two random surveys for the Countryside Council for Wales in Eglwys Faen and Agen Allwedd, two adjacent caves on Llangattock escarpment. Eglwys Faen is a small, multi-entrance system that is widely used by outdoor groups. Some radon data gathered by individual leaders exists that suggested the concentrations in Eglwys Faen were low. Agen Allwedd is a large, single-entrance (gated) system that is a major bat roost and which had no previous radon data. The monitoring was carried out during September/October 2007. The data recovered were a big surprise because in both systems it was very high. The Eglwys Faen data diverged significantly from that previously obtained, while Agen Allwedd returned the highest system values currently known in Wales. In this system, at the values measured, the annual limit of 1 mSv is reached in roughly 23 hours, which causes concern, particularly for long trips and for potential search rescues. However, it is plausible that because of seasonal variability, the extraordinary readings could have resulted from the peculiar climatic conditions that persisted over the summer and early autumn. Further work is now required in order to evaluate this. An article for the caving press explaining the data is being prepared.

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

*Clark Friend, January 2008*