

# **BCA Newsletter No 28**

## **January 2017**

Edited by Robin Weare



### **Chairman's Introduction**

Happy New Year everybody. I hope you had a very good 2016, which certainly was an interesting year!! By lots of considerations 2017 could be even more interesting. In this newsletter, very ably produced by Robin Weare, there are a number of things I as Chairman should mention.

First of all, we are all appalled at some of the acts of vandalism that have gone on in our caves recently, some of them very difficult to explain and understand. As cavers, we should go out of our way to protect all caves and convince everybody around us that caves should be protected for future generations. The item in this newsletter on the theft from Joint Mitnor Cave is appalling and not really of the normal nature of cave vandalism. Andrew Hinde and his conservation and access committee are doing very good work on conservation pointing out that a very important factor is education, and the idea of signs, web information, leaflets, brochures etc., educating everybody into having a real conservation attitude is to be hugely encouraged.

We are working with our brokers on an expedition insurance policy to be available through BCA. We hope this will be available in the not too distant future and hopefully will bring foreign caving insurance to a much more affordable level.

I should like to thank our new BCA Administrator Leanne Barrett for the considerable amount of BCA administration work being done behind the scenes and making BCA Executives lives much easier.

The weekend at the Royal Geographical Society and the BCA Annual General Meeting weekend are mentioned later in this newsletter. I would encourage everybody interested in caves and caving to attend. In addition the International Congress in Australia from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017 is something nobody interested in caves and caving could possibly miss, get your flights booked!

The draft changes to the constitution of BCA are outlined in this newsletter, I would urge everybody to look through them carefully and the BCA's Executive would be delighted to hear any comments from individuals.

Andy Eavis  
BCA Chairman

## Caving Conference at the Royal Geographical Society

*A big prestige boost for British Caving is that BCA Chairman, Andy Eavis, has been asked to organise a weekend conference by the Royal Geographical Society.*

This will take place in London at the Royal Geographical Society over the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and will showcase British caving discoveries, both at home and abroad, during the last 25 years. The event will consist of a public lecture on the Friday evening, jointly organised by ourselves and the RGS, lectures all day Saturday and Sunday and an RGS Fellows lecture on Monday evening as part of their normal Fellows Lectures programme.

## Annual General Meetings

*Yes, it's that time of year, and as one of the Regional Councils asked me to publicise their event I decided to do the lot. Attend your local meeting – and be amazed at how much effort a few people put in on your behalf. Even better, turn up and offer to help. [Editor]*

You'll have plenty of time to clear your diary in advance of the AGM of BCA which, this year, will take place during the Party Weekend at the Rotary Centre, Castleton between 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> June. There will be more about what will be a fantastic weekend in the next newsletter. **For now please note that the Annual General Meeting of the British Caving Association will be held at The Rotary Centre, Robinslands Lane, Hope Valley, Castleton S33 8UB on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2017 starting at 10.30am.**

The Derbyshire Caving Association AGM is at 10am in the Monyash Village Hall on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February.

The CNCC Annual General Meeting is Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at Hellifield Village Institute, starting at 10am.

The AGM of the Cambrian Caving Council will take place on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group Headquarters, Cinderford, starting at 12.00 noon.

The AGM of NAMHO will be held in the Peak District Mining Museum at 11am on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March.

CSCC will be holding their AGM in the back bar of the Hunters Lodge at 10am on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May.

DCUC plan to set the date of their AGM during their next council meeting.

## Draft changes to the BCA Constitution

*At the 2016 AGM there were two proposals to amend the constitution. The constitutional requirement to hold a postal ballot makes this a very costly exercise and the proposers of these motions agreed to withdraw them to allow Council to consider whether any administrative amendments were appropriate and, if so, put them all to the next AGM. Drafts of the additional proposals will be discussed at the next council meeting and BCA Secretary, Simon Brooks, asks that comments and suggestions from the membership be made either via their Regional Council's representative or any other Council Member.*

The two proposals which were deferred are, after some minor amendments

### Proposal 1

That the following section of item 4.6 of the Constitution “That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access.” be amended to “That any rights held by the owners or tenants of property or mineral rights, to grant or withhold access, be respected.”

### Proposal 2

add a Section 8.16: ‘8.16 An Individual or Honorary member (the 'voter') who is eligible to vote at a General Meeting may choose to appoint a proxy to vote for them. This proxy (the 'nominee') must be another Individual or Honorary member who is also eligible to vote. The form of proxy, determined by National Council, will be provided with the notice of the meeting. The voter must provide the completed form of proxy to the Recorder at least 7 days for any General Meeting before the relevant meeting excepting an Emergency General Meeting where 48 hours shall be sufficient. Voters may indicate how they wish their nominee to vote or allow their nominee discretion. Council is empowered to limit the number of voters who may be represented by each individual nominee to as few as two, excepting the Chair who shall have no such limit (or the maximum number of voters may be represented by each individual nominee is limited to two). Proxy voting is not available to Group Members.

The additional proposals to be discussed are:

### Proposal 3

clause 5.1.b to read

Constitutionally established National Bodies (hereinafter referred to as Constituent Bodies); constitutionally established caving, mining and other related Clubs; constitutionally established Regional Caving Councils; Cave Rescue Organisations and Access Controlling Bodies, hereinafter known as Group Members when referred to collectively.

In 6.2, 6.4, 7.2 the words “National Body” or “National Bodies” be replaced with “Constituent Body” or “Constituent Bodies”

*Purpose: To correct the anomaly whereby what are generally referred to as Constituent Bodies are referred to as National Bodies in the constitution*

### Proposal 4

Clause 6.1 to read

The Association shall have the following officers: a Council Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer together with the Chairmen of the Standing Committees (Section 7), who shall be elected from the membership of the Association at an Annual General Meeting, by a show of hands of those present

who are eligible to vote. Here the two house voting system outlined in clause 8.9 will not apply. Each officer shall serve for a term of three years from the AGM. One third of Officers' posts in turn shall be eligible for election or re-election each year and those elected shall serve for a term of three years from the AGM.

*Purpose: To avoid the potential impasse of one house voting for one candidate and the second house voting for another*

### Proposal 5

Clause 6.3 to read

Representatives from the classes of Individual and Group Membership shall be elected at an Annual General Meeting, by a show of hands of those present who are eligible to vote. Only Individual and Honorary Members shall vote in the election of an Individual Member's Representative and only Group Members who are not entitled to appoint a representative to Council under clause 6.4 shall vote in the election for a Group Membership Representative. Each representative shall serve for a term of two years from the AGM. Here, the two house system outlined in clause 8.9 will not apply.

*Purpose: To avoid the potential impasse of one house voting for one candidate and the second house voting for another*

### Proposal 6

In Clause 6.15 the words "The post of President shall run for a period of one year from the Annual General meeting" be amended to "The post of President shall run until a new President is elected".

*Purpose: to avoid the need to re-elect a President at every AGM*

### Proposal 7

Clause 9 Procedure for Postal Ballots be redesignated "Procedure for Ballots"

Clause 9.1 be amended to read

A constitutional amendment adopted by a General Meeting will require ratification by a ballot.

Clause 9.2 be amended to read

The General Meeting may refer any other successful motion that it deems appropriate, for ratification by a ballot. The General Meeting shall instruct the Executive to arrange such a ballot and shall specify any wording for the ratification of the motion and associated material, as the General Meeting considers necessary. The Executive may add additional associated material as it thinks fit. The ballot shall be held as soon as is reasonably practicable after the General Meeting. The ballot will normally be conducted as an online ballot and if so shall be issued to all members entitled to vote who have also elected to receive communications by e-mail. National Council shall ensure sufficient time is given from the dispatch of the papers to the closing date, normally one month or more, for receipt of returns. The counting of the votes shall be conducted as for a General Meeting.

In Clause 13.3 the word "postal" be deleted.

*Purpose: To avoid the costs associated with a postal ballot*

A copy of the current constitution is available on the BCA website and can be downloaded [here](#)

## **Membership Applications**

It has been agreed by Council that any club applying for membership should, as well as providing a copy of their constitution, in future be required to add a short statement (c 100 words) about themselves to their application. A succinct overview such as this will provide the council with more information about each club and enable the council to welcome clubs into the BCA fold more appropriately.

## **BCRC Rescue Conference**

*The 2017 conference will be hosted by the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team on Friday 16 to Sunday 18 June 2017.*

Following on from the success of last year's BCRC Conference in the Forest of Dean, the next conference take place in South Wales. During the conference there will be a full programme of lectures, workshops, above-ground demonstrations and below-ground exercises in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.

Accommodation will be available in the SWCC Penwyllt cottages, the camping field for tents, and with parking available for camper vans.

Please note the conference weekend in your diary. Further information will be circulated later in 2016.

For more information contact Peter Dennis, E-mail: [pdd@aber.ac.uk](mailto:pdd@aber.ac.uk)

## **BCRA Field Meeting – Gower Peninsula**

The first British Cave Research Association field meeting for 2017 will be held at Port Eynon on the Gower Peninsula, South Wales, over the weekend of 19-21 of May. The meeting aims to provide a full weekend of walks, caves and talks about the geology, geomorphology, archaeology and speleogenesis of the caves of Gower. The second circular, which gives the provisional schedule, can be downloaded [here](#)

For any other query about travel, bookings and the meeting's program please contact [pktrimmis@gmail.com](mailto:pktrimmis@gmail.com)

## **Cave and Karst Science**

Cave and Karst Science 43(3) is now available online at <http://bcra.org.uk/cks> .

## Bone theft from Joint Mitnor Cave

*An initial report on the theft of bones from Joint Mitnor Cave appeared in the October 2015 edition of the BCA Newsletter. The cave and contents are under the care of the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust and Alan Finch, the Honorary Secretary, brings us up to date:*

The Buckfastleigh cave, Joint Mitnor, was forcibly entered by trophy hunters in September 2015. The perpetrators were able to break the two inside locks of the steel door and gain access to the show cave. Once inside, part of the display area containing mammal bones estimated to be about 100,000 years old was damaged and a number of irreplaceable exhibits stolen, including a straight tusked elephant tooth.



The WPCST in collaboration with the Natural History Museum, Natural England and two Universities began a programme of restoration. It was decided that, as the bones were unlikely to be recovered, replicas would be constructed which could be put back into the display area. As a result of a meeting at the Natural History Museum in London several bones which had been stored at the museum after earlier excavations in Joint Mitnor during the 60's, and almost identical to those taken, were set aside for possible 3D scanning. After several months, taking into account copyright issues, the scans made by the NHM were released for the next stage.

An offer of help from Birmingham University to print the bones into 3D models from the scanned examples was taken up and we are currently awaiting that outcome. The next stage, after due consent from Natural England, is to have the 3D models replicated in a suitable material compatible with the cave environment. Once that has been achieved they will need to be painted, again with suitable pigments, before being placed in the display area of the cave.

In the meantime part of the damaged area has been re-sectioned by Manchester University and preparation is underway to have the final area rebuilt as near as possible to the original. Additional security has been organised with a strengthened locking system for the steel door and the provision of infra-red cameras inside the cave.

What was hoped to be a fairly straight forward restoration project is taking much longer than originally envisaged. Whilst it is frustrating to be working under a number of constraints, both official and conservation (the cave is a winter roost for greater horseshoe bats and closed from September to April), it is possible the cave will be restored and open by summer 2017.

## **A Review of BCA's Child Protection Policy**

*Bob Mehew, BCA's Legal & Insurance Officer tells us about the work he is doing towards an update of BCA's policy – please note that he'd welcome help from anyone with experience in this area.*

The recent reports on the football world's troubles with historic child abuse allegations has refocused attention on safeguarding as it has now come to be known.

Whilst originally concerns were expressed about safeguarding children from sexual and other abuse, this was formally linked up with similar safeguarding actions applying to vulnerable adults in the 2006 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act.

BCA's Child Protection Policy was adopted from that produced in 2001 by NCA and was last reviewed in 2013 after the implementation of the Protection of Freedoms Act in 2012. There was also a comment at last year's BCA AGM about the BCA policy not being very user friendly. So it seems appropriate to undertake a review.

One feature missing is an equivalent policy and guidance material for vulnerable adults. A reference was made in the updated guidance notes to vulnerable adults but perhaps there should be a clear policy statement. Another point is whether to switch terms from child and vulnerable adult protection to safeguarding.

One area of possible concern is the application of the legal requirements. Fortunately the law does provide a specific exemption which allows a family friend undertaking an activity with a child or vulnerable adult to avoid some of the legal demands. The law does also exclude irregular activities (no more than once per 30 days). However the law does catch all activities which take place between 2am and 6am – which obviously includes sleeping in a caving hut!

Another possible area of concern is a need to clarify the duties of an appointed Child Protection Officer. Does this mean such a person has to be present when children or vulnerable adults are present without parent, guardian or family friend? And that they have gone through the disclosure and barring system?

Whilst there is no intent to undertake an investigation into past practices, if persons do have such concerns then they can make contact with me. Such approaches will be treated in confidence. However it should be noted that BCA's policy clearly states that it will treat any allegations "...as a potential criminal activity and report it to the police". It has been suggested this policy should be modified to using the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) route as that is less intimidating. One thing which has come out of the reactions to Jimmy Savile and the football scandals is that a history of having ignored concerns makes things worse for those that did so.

Comments are therefore sought on BCA's policy and guidance which can be found [here](#). Suggestions for improvements and areas for further clarification would be welcomed as would any offer of support from persons experienced in this topic.

## Conservation Signage at Cave Sites

*Andrew Hinde, the BCA Conservation & Access Officer, writes*

The BCA Conservation and Access Committee have concluded that appropriate conservation signage should be available at a few sites selected by Regional Caving Councils. This is to ensure that a conservation message is delivered to cave visitors who cannot be reached via the usual caving community channels. These would be cave sites which have a high level of casual visitors or novice cavers. BCA can reimburse Regional Councils for this work through their annual grant.



I would encourage Regional Councils to work with partner organisations to share the costs which can be considerable in a National Park using their planning specifications.

For more details contact [conservation@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:conservation@british-caving.org.uk)

## Training Schemes

After many years without an increase higher costs have led to the charges for the professional training schemes run by BCA being reviewed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. Full details of the new rates will be found [here](#)

## CNCC's new website

*When CNCC Secretary, Matt Ewles, told me about this I rushed to have a look and I was certainly impressed by what is a fantastic site just bursting with useful information. A personal "well done" to all concerned. This is a must visit before every trip to Yorkshire and an amazing resource for the local cavers. [Editor]*

After several months of development, the new CNCC website was launched in December. There are loads of changes and useful features. The general appearance has been modernised and freshened up a little and the website is now fully compatible with mobile devices (smartphones, tablets).

For the past few years, the CNCC has had an active presence on Facebook and Twitter. The website has been more closely integrated into these social media sites. All those involved in northern caving are encouraged to follow us on Facebook and Twitter to receive news updates about access, conservation, training and any hazard warnings.

The cave descriptions that were written specifically for EuroSpeleo have been modified and made available on the CNCC website cave info pages to download.

For larger systems, such as Ease Gill and Gaping Gill, the description covers the entire system in one long document but has been broken down into subsections (by entrance or by route). Hopefully the way we have done this will allow you to pick just the pages relevant to your planned trip.

Thanks to the kind permission of the CNCC Technical Group, all the rigging topos featured in the former CNCC rigging guides (and the more recent excellent book, Northern Caving) are now available on the website to download or print. Furthermore, with thanks to the IC anchor team, their rigging topos and descriptions can now be downloaded via the CNCC website as well as their own website.

The new map function in the cave info section will help you to search for caves by area; just click on any of the cave pegs to take you to information about that cave and to access information on any cave just search on the website homepage or caves list – you'll find that the layout of each individual cave information page has been redesigned, partly to include the rigging topos and descriptions, but also to put greater emphasis on any warnings cavers should be aware of, which now appear in a red box at the top of the page.

The website now has a dedicated fixed aids section, which predominantly includes lots of information on anchors, including history, types and locations, as well as safety recommendations for when using anchors.

## Environment Agency Consultation

*BCA's Legal & Insurance Officer, Bob Mehew, has been preparing a formal response to the Environment Agency consultation on changes to the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations*

It appears that work has been in hand to make changes to the Environmental Impact Assessment regs for some years since the consultation is about implementing changes to the European Union 'Environmental Impact Assessment Directive' made in 2014. To quote the consultation, the aim is to "reduce the burden on developers, by aiming for: fewer projects being subject to assessment; and reductions in the size and cost of environmental statements; and where assessments are required. The focus should now be on those environmental factors that are significantly affected and not any potential impact." So it is belatedly recognised that the major change has already taken place, namely from "any potential impact" to "significantly affected".

Having said that, the consultation does cover a number of topics which do have some link to caves. Two of particular note are afforestation projects which might involve griping and the definition of cultivation. Whilst the former is obvious, the latter may seem subtle. But Derbyshire cavers will recall from 2000 that Peak Cavern was covered by paper waste as a consequence of storing so called land improver by a shake hole, it was not that subtle an impact; one which still is visible in places today.

BCA will make a response to this consultation before 31 January when it closes.

## More Cave Archaeology

A new collaboration between the National Trust and the University of Nottingham Archaeology Department is examining the archaeology of Dovedale from the Ice Age onwards. Sparked by the discovery of a coin hoard in Reynard's Kitchen Cave in 2013, they have been investigating what is known from the caves in the area before forming a plan for further study. To contact the project, please email Dr Hannah O'Regan: [Hannah.oregan@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Hannah.oregan@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Audio Archives

Added to the archive in recent months is an interview with Frank Rayner about the Mossdale incident and three with Dave Nixon.

To find the recordings, go to [www.caving-library.org.uk](http://www.caving-library.org.uk) and then click on **Audio Archive**.

## **International Affairs**

*A joint update from our FSE representative, Ged Champion, and Andy Eavis, who represents us at the UIS.*

The next big international event is the UIS International Congress in Sydney, Australia from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Full information will be found on the [Congress website](#)

Work continues to advance the proposal for a UNESCO year of Caves in 2021 which would celebrate everything to do with caves and caving, particularly cave conservation.

The conservation theme was emphasised at the recent meeting of the International Show Caves Association where there was a great deal of discussion about a code of practice for show caves.

The European organisation (FSE) now has a [facebook page](#) and currently has thirty member countries with an application from Georgia pending approval. Through the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) it is now a board member of the European Environmental Bureau and active in their Water and Biodiversity workgroups.

## **Cave Access Update**

### **Rowter Hole Rigged (Derbyshire)**

The Rowter Hole extensions have now been fully resin bolted. In total, 68 anchors have been placed and all pre-existing rigging removed. The cave is now 'ready for use' and a rigging topo will be published in due course.

### **Minera Quarry (North Wales)**

The latest Cambrian Newsletter has a detailed report on this exciting site where North West Wildlife Trust (NWWT) is currently in the process of buying the quarry from Tarmac with a view to managing it and improving access. The site now a significant nature reserve with a good mix of wild flower species, cliff nesting birds and several species of bats which roost in the old lime kilns and some mine shafts. Conservation work to remove scrub, manage grassland and fence off dangerous areas will be needed before access other than by the existing public rights of ways can be allowed.

### **Christmas Pot (Yorkshire)**

It has been reported that during a trip in late November 2016, there may have been a serious collapse of the ledge above the second pitch in Christmas Pot. Cavers are urged to take extreme care and to assess the situation carefully throughout the cave. Please report any observations to CNCC.

### **Penyghent Pot (Yorkshire)**

Cavers are asked to be particularly vigilant if descending Penyghent Pot; the entrance scaffolding is approaching retirement and should be treated with care. Discussions are ongoing towards installing the next generation of entrance.

### **Holme Bank Chert Mine (Derbyshire)**

All back entrances, including the oil drum emergency exit have now been capped off and landscaped, with the approval of Chatsworth Estate, so avoiding the continual problems of local children getting into the mine. A new route to the entrance is now in use (No. 2 Entrance) following the withdrawal of access to the former entrance (No. 1 entrance) by the owner of Holme Hall. Access is, as before, by permission of Mr. Oldfield and a map giving full details of the new route, parking arrangements, etc. is now on the DCA website.

### **Eyam Dale House Cave (Derbyshire)**

The new route to Eyam Dale House Cave has been sorted and access is now possible again. Please check the details on the DCA website for the exact route and procedure. Just at present there is no lock on the cave gate following problems with the combination lock originally installed, so the cave may now have a new combination lock (check the website for the code) or it may be accessible using the “Derbyshire Key” spanner system.

### **Parking in Matlock Bath (Derbyshire)**

The parking situation in Matlock Bath for cavers visiting Devonshire Cavern or Wapping Mine is now clarified. The space at the side of New Bath Road (opposite the New Bath Hotel swimming pool), is owned by the New Bath Hotel but the manager has no objection to cavers parking there during the day. (The cones were placed in October last year to stop people parking for the evening for the Matlock Illuminations.) Just make sure that you don't block anyone off when you park and everything should be fine.

**Please note:** The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the formal view of the British Caving Association.