



# COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the National Caving Association

Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs held on Saturday 6th September 2003 at the Hunters Lodge, Priddy

## 1. ATTENDANCE:

1.1. Lee Hawkswell (MCG), Rob Norcross (Moles), John Flanagan (ISG/WAYA), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Dave Cooke (WCC, CSCC NCA Rep), Alan Gray (ACG, CSCC Chairman), Chris Binding (CHCC, CSCC Secretary).

1.2. Apologies: Les Williams (WCC, CSCC Equip), Jonathan Roberts (MCG, CSCC Treasurer), Martin Grass (BEC, CSCC C&A Officer), Andy Sparrow (CHCC, CSCC Training Officer), Steve King (SBSS, SMCC), Alan Butcher (SMCC).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING. No alterations to the previous minutes were proposed.

## 3. OFFICER REPORTS:

3.1. CHAIRMAN: Alan Gray introduced himself as the new Chairman of the CSCC.

3.2. SECRETARY: Email address list is now functional; minutes and news updates are able to be sent out at zero cost to CSCC - also, that the address list can be used to inform people of website updates so they don't need to visit the site unless it has been updated. [Post meeting note: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September – the Secretary's computer acquired at least three viruses and is therefore presently out of order – hence these printed minutes rather than the emailed version].

3.3. TREASURER: None presented. [Post meeting note: Jonathan Roberts reports that accounts information was indeed emailed to Dave Cooke prior to the meeting but DC can find no record of the mailing, perhaps due to an ISP computer failure.]

## 3.4. NCA REPRESENTATIVE:

3.4.1. It was reported that the NCA is "missing" two trustees (Frank Bagley is not well and Linda Wilson stood down) and replacements will be appointed in the near future but will not be holding the post for long since no trustees are required for the new BCA (this is purely a procedural issue - they need to be appointed so there is a sufficient number of them to vote themselves out of a job, thereby properly closing itself down).

3.4.2. Double Rope Technique (DRT): This is widely considered to be a bad idea by the caving community but the Government proposal that Double Rope Technique should be used in underground situations is now going into the final round of consultation. A proposal has been tabled to exclude caving, however it seems unlikely that this will be included. If DRT legislation does affect caving detrimentally it will then be necessary to make representations to MPs and for the legislation to be put to Parliament for amendment. It should be noted that Double Rope Technique will apply to a work situation and not to sport caving. The British Mountaineering Council are actively involved in making representations on this issue since it has a major impact on rock climbing instructors.

3.4.3. CASC (Community Activity Sports Clubs): this is a new Government initiative whereby sports clubs get treated as charities, with the attendant tax benefits that go with charity status, without the form-filling which has previously been necessary. This is considered to be more relevant to clubs with property and larger turnovers. This may be worthy for consideration by CSCC clubs and Dave Cook has more details available for those clubs who care to pursue this.

### **ACTION: Interested clubs**

3.4.4. The NCA Sport England Grant is CURRENTLY SUSPENDED since member clubs of NCA, CSCC etc. have not adequately completed and returned the Equity Policy Questionnaire which went out during the summer. It is obviously important that this situation is remedied and to this end if you or your club or your club committee members have not sent out, completed and returned forms on behalf of your membership PLEASE DO SO VERY SOON! Once the forms are returned the grant should be released again.

**ACTION: All member clubs. If your club is sending out subscription/insurance renewal letters please include a copy of the questionnaire, stating that it needs to be completed - if you have not got copies of the questionnaire please contact Dave Cooke ([nca@csc.org.uk](mailto:nca@csc.org.uk)). Check with your club secretary – all clubs have already been provided with the Equality Policy Questionnaire.**

3.4.5. The grant-aiding of training events such as First Aid may be possible, after all, through NCA; this is an issue for Training Officers to check out with NCA, probably via the Treasurer and NCA Training Committee.

**ACTION: Interested clubs and regional training officers.**

- 3.4.6. Mendip Hills AONB Services Draft Management Plan 2004-2009 continues its consultation process and September 2003 sees the Management Plan Working Group considering responses and amending the plan in advance of a Seminar to agree the Action Plan scheduled for September/October 2003 in advance of the Final Management Plan being endorsed by a Partnership Committee in November 2003; what's the relevance to caving? – page 10, paragraph 2.2.1 states "Ensure that caves, including their wildlife and geological features are conserved and not degraded by visitors, those undertaking outdoor pursuits or by inappropriate activity, such as excavation". [Post meeting note: the secretary forwarded a letter on 22<sup>nd</sup> September on behalf of CSCC member clubs requesting the removal of the final three words and received a prompt response on 24<sup>th</sup> September confirming that the Draft Plan has been amended accordingly].
- 3.4.7. BMC has done an analysis of the impact of F&M on climbing; the results may have crossover relevance to caving for anyone interested. Contact Dave Cooke for further details.
- 3.4.8. NAMHO are holding an Autumn Seminar on artefact preservation (Dave Cooke can find out the dates for anyone interested).

**ACTION: Budding archaeologists**

- 3.4.9. Scouts/Training; the NCA Training Committee and Scout organisation still haven't reconciled this issue; again, further details can be obtained from Dave Cooke.
- 3.4.10. Insurance: Nick Williams has written to every club on this issue with details also on the DCA website; to summarise insurance costs are rising and to avoid multiple insurance payments each individual caver will become insured in their own right with clubs and their committee members getting separate indemnity insurance cover (the larger the club, the larger the cost); individual cover has yet to be negotiated by N. Williams but will be imminently as present cover expires on 1st October 2003. Clubs will need to work out how they approach this topic with regard to their subscriptions etc. Caving clubs will have to decide how to administer the insurance to ensure that all cavers in their club(s) are insured - the meeting was assured that cover will continue to be in place even if BCA could not meet the 1st October deadline; the hint on the scale of cost was between £10-£15 per individual but in order to obtain insurance the individual will also be required to be a member of BCA, possibly at further expense but this membership also confers a copy of the new handbook (very comprehensive) and Speleo Scene magazine - the further cost of BCA membership may be combined as a single payment within the insurance charge at a later stage.

**ACTION: All member clubs**

- 3.4.11. P-Bolting: There followed an in-depth discussion which resulted in the following points being highlighted: a P-bolter must be retrained every year or place a bolt every year; the inspection of P-bolts is as follows - upon installation, after one, two and five years; further information on P-bolting regulations can be found on the NCA web site; it is understood that no Mendip P-bolts are "out of inspection date". The article in Descent 173 was highlighted to the meeting regarding "loose" P-bolts on the twenty in Swildons which also stated they will be replaced in due course and their condition should be checked before using them. (which again raises the question "How can you check them and state they are OK if you aren't qualified/authorised to do so?"). The following way ahead was agreed:- CSCC is to write to Les Sykes and request that he visits Mendip to hold a P-bolting course for five or six P-bolters and if a volunteer can be found a Mendip P-bolting trainer although Les Williams is still prepared to stand for this position if required). NCA should be approached to fund LS's expenses (failing which, CSCC will cover them: voted unanimously at meeting).. When the new P-bolters have been trained the P-bolt/s in Swildons will be inspected and replaced if necessary; all Mendip P-bolts to be inspected; a list of all Mendip P-bolts and inspection dates to be provided and a schedule of inspection established; in future the re-qualification of the Mendip trainer should not be allowed to lapse.

**ACTION: Volunteers/Clubs: contact Chris Binding (secretary@csc.org.uk) or Alan Gray (chair@csc.org.uk)**

- 3.4.12. BCA/HUB: It has been accepted that there has been a problem of doing "too much, too soon" and so there are now two stages proposed instead of one; the first stage only involves the creation of a BCA Constitution, Insurance cover and a handbook; stage two will address BCRA and regional council issues. There is a tandem meeting occurring on the same date as this CSCC meeting to create a BCA Constitution and this will be followed by a meeting on 1st November 2003 to approve that Constitution, resolve to close down NCA and start BCA - the expected "birth" of BCA is now 1st January 2004. With regards to the voting structure, it is very important that club representatives attend the meeting on 1st November if there is strong feeling about this element of BCA (there will be a prior session at the Hidden Earth Conference 3rd-5th October 2003

covering this too). In order to get insurance cover it will be necessary for individuals and clubs to join BCA. The last meeting of the Hub resolved that regional councils will not retain their right of veto. A very comprehensive handbook has been produced and will go to all BCA members and this involved some discussion at today's CSCC meeting about the inclusion of some information on local caves. Alan Gray and Dave Cooke are to review the CSCC Constitution and propose any changes due to the formation of the BCA (including allowing individual membership of CSCC).

**Action: all member clubs.**

**Action: Alan Gray & Dave Cooke.**

3.4.13. NCA has purchased a block of web space for caving related topics - contact Les Williams for more information and costs. If your club is looking to create or transfer its web presence this is an excellent opportunity to get top notch hosting.

**ACTION: clubs/organisations considering websites**

3.5. EQUIPMENT: No report presented.

3.6. TRAINING: No report presented.

3.6.1. A vote of thanks was made in light of the successful Mendip 2003 event; thanks go to Andy Sparrow and Les Williams for making the event so successful. A surplus of £138 was donated to MRO funds.

3.7. CONSERVATION & ACCESS: No report presented.

3.7.1. Rob Norcross has been working on the updated CSCC Access Handbook and he reported that it is almost complete and access arrangements for some Mendip caves have changed or were uncertain:-

- Banwell Bone Cave. Mrs. Haynes died five years ago and people still keep writing to her; Mr. Haynes or Mr Sargent can still be contacted for access however.
- Bleadon Cavern. Alan Gray is to contact Chris Richards and ask if he is still controlling access here.
- Brown's Folly Mine. There is a new gate/door on and although there is still some uncertainty about which padlocks are placed on which gates during which part of the bat hibernation/breeding season(s), it is believed that during the winter months an Avon Wildlife Trust key (donation required for access, please!) will be in situ whereas during the "open season" a standard CSCC padlock will be in situ (or at least "this is what is supposed to happen").

3.7.2. Alan Gray reported that there had been **another break-in at Redcliffe Caves**, this time the group involved used a petrol disc cutter to cut through a 2.5ft thick wall to gain access; this has been reported to Bristol Council who will once again repair the breach.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003.**

**All meetings convene in the back room of the Hunters Lodge, Priddy, for a 10:30am start. Please arrive early so as to minimise disturbance of the meeting once in progress, thank you.**