



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the National Caving Association

Minutes of the meeting of the CSCC held on Saturday 6th December 2003 at the Hunters' Lodge, Priddy.

1. ATTENDANCE

- a) Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Tyrone Bevan (BEC), Chris Binding (CHCC, CSCC Secretary), Alan Butcher (SMCC), Dave Cooke (WCC, CSCC NCA Rep), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Tim Fell (SBSS Secretary), John Flanagan (ISG/WAYA), Martin Grass (BEC, CSCC C&A), Alan Gray (ACG, CSCC Chairman), Doug Harris (ACG Rep.), Lee Hawkswell (MCG), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Rob Norcross (Moles), Graham Price (CSS Rep.), Jonathan Roberts (MCG, CSCC Treasurer), Andy Sparrow (CHCC, CSCC Training), Tom Stearn (guest, NFU Insurance expert), Chris Whale (SBSS Chairman), Les Williams (WCC, CSCC Equipment), Linda Wilson (UBSS).
- b) Apologies: Mick Hawkins, Graeme Hope, Steve King.

2. ALTERATIONS TO MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND TOPICS ARISING.

(The italicised numbering adjoining each point below refers to the relevant numbering in the previous minutes)

- 2.1 *3.7 BANWELL BONE CAVE:* The information in the latest edition (1999) of Mendip Underground "write to Mr. Sargent or Mr. Haynes" is correct. Apologies to Messrs. Irwin & Jarratt.
- 2.2 *3.7 BLEADON CAVERN:* Chris Richards is a leader for Bleadon Cavern. However, the owners of the land (the Coles brothers) are reluctant for cavers to cross their land for two reasons - the insurance factor and also during the last year a trailer was stolen, hence a concern about strangers on their land. Doug Harris is to negotiate to see whether he can take on a role as a leader for this site since he knows both the Coles and Chris Richards.

ACTION: DOUG HARRIS

- 2.3 *3.4.11 P-BOLTING:* Another in-depth discussion took place resulting in the following points being made: CSCC reminds clubs to remind their members not to trust their life to just one bolt (always back up your rigging). Andrew Atkinson (UBSS) has kindly offered to undergo Bolting Trainer training in Yorkshire on behalf of CSCC when NCA training recommences (travelling expenses provided by NCA or CSCC). Les Williams was asked to provide written details of the bolts on Mendip.

ACTION: ANDREW ATKINSON, LES WILLIAMS

3. OFFICER REPORTS

- 3.1 CHAIRMAN: The agenda for today was prioritised such that Insurance would be the first topic dealt with, allowing those who have to leave early an opportunity to be involved.

Alan Gray read out the following letters concerning insurance and access. First, Insurance; an email from Nick Williams...

- 3.1.1 "We have managed to find an underwriter who is prepared to offer what appear to be acceptable terms to allow us to reinstate the BCRA PL scheme. It's not a done deal yet but it's looking quite hopeful. Cover is broadly in line with the previous terms and the costs look like being around GBP 15.00 per head if we follow the proposed named individuals route. The total premium is about one and a half times what we paid last year. This cover is from a new player and not from Perkins Slade/Royal Sun Alliance. We are now in the process of clarifying the details and negotiating on some of the finer points, but it's already clear that we will have to commit the full year's premium up front. This is potentially a big business risk for BCRA and before we can commit the funds we must have an indication as to how many people are still in the market to participate in the scheme and how many have now found alternative sources of cover, or have simply decided they no longer wish to be insured. Therefore I would be grateful if you would let me know as soon as possible if your club has committed to buying cover from another source, or has decided that they do not want to participate in the BCRA scheme for some other reason. **I cannot overstate how important it is for me to get an indication of the likely take up of this scheme from clubs and others as soon as possible.** As trustees of a charity, BCRA Council will be simply unable to commit to the financial risk of paying the premium if we think there is a possibility of us making a significant loss on the scheme". Nick Williams.

ACTION: ALL CSCC MEMBER CLUBS:

BCRA, The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Nr. Buxton SK17 8RG. www.bcra.org.uk

- 3.1.2 The Chairman also read out further CSCC Letters: refer to Appendix (and see below under CSCC padlocked caves)
- 3.1.3 Linda Wilson explained the VERY LATEST (yesterday, 5th) situation regarding insurance and what has been offered; this also involved some discussion and resulted in the following:
- 3.1.3.1 A policy is on offer and its terms are broadly similar with that which has gone before; the premium is around GBP 20 and even if all clubs take it up BCRA may still need to underwrite the premium. The meeting agreed CSCC should offer £500 to underwrite a BCRA insurance loss, if required. A general discussion covered numerous questions; it was noted that **sufficient numbers must take up this offer if it is not to be withdrawn and that clubs should opt in while they can.**
- 3.1.4 It was proposed (Martin Grass, 2nd: Graham Mullan) that "**CSCC recommends that all member clubs should promote and purchase this policy**". Today's guest, NFU Insurance expert, Tom Stearn agreed, stating, "All sorts of perceived risky pastimes are being shelved; if you can get insurance cover (in today's market), **bite their hand off and take it**".

ACTION: ALL CSCC MEMBER CLUBS

[Post meeting note: Clearer details of this policy are expected during this coming week so by the time you receive these minutes there should be an officer/address to whom you should send your club cheque(s) etc.].

- 3.1.5 In the event that this policy fails to materialise Alan Butcher proposed (2nd: Graham Mullan) that "**If another policy is available at reasonable cost which covers officers of CSCC this should be pursued**".

A vote of thanks went to Tom Stearn for attending today's meeting and for his invaluable input.

- 3.1.6 CSCC PADLOCKED CAVES: The kind offer made by CSS (thanks for this generous offer were specifically asked to be minuted) regarding the reopening of CSCC locked caves (see Appendix for correspondence) raised the following points:
- 3.1.6a) The insurance issue will be resolved one way or another within a few weeks...
- 3.1.6b) Opening a handful of caves during the next fortnight may send out confusing messages...
- 3.1.6c) Therefore it was agreed to defer this topic
- 3.1.7 LANDOWNERS: Martin Grass reported that he had spoken to some landowners but that it is important to resolve the insurance issue and then take it from there. Tom Stearn reported that NFU continues to provide PL cover to farmers with caves on their land, even if the farmers don't realise it (!).

- 3.2 SECRETARY'S REPORT: None presented.

- 3.3 TREASURER'S REPORT: The Current account (including six subscriptions for 2004 received to date) stands at GBP 252.45 while the Reserve account is GBP 3,542.44.

- 3.4 EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT: Les Williams gave a spoken report during the P-Bolting discussion.

- 3.5 TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT: There will be a first aid course toward the end of 2004, run by Stuart Marshall of Marlin Training; the cost of which will probably be similar to last time (around GBP 60); NCA funding may be available for attendees and will be checked out beforehand [the previous course provided by Marlin was conducted over two days; it is recognised by MLTB leadership level courses, BCU, RYA, PADI, CCPR and AALA; it also meets the recommendations laid down by the HSE for "Appointed Persons in the Workplace"]. Andy Sparrow will be the contact for any clubs or club members who wish to sign up for attendance on this course. Alan Dempster reported that he understands the HSE are intending to push for annual renewals for first aid certificates rather than the present three yearly renewals.

ACTION: DAVE COOKE, ANDY SPARROW, MEMBER CLUBS/INDIVIDUALS

- 3.6 CONSERVATION AND ACCESS:

Another case of Conservation = good, Access = bad. Martin Grass intends to liaise with the landowner for Lamb Leer since the English Nature SSSI checklists have been produced and there is a statutory requirement for the listed caves (of which LL is one) to be inspected in due course.

ACTION: MARTIN GRASS

- 3.6.1 GOATCHURCH CAVERN: Recent problems with litter etc. have been reported; local outdoor pursuits organisations are to keep an eye on the place; Chris Whale (SBSS, the "Adopt-a-Cave" group for the site)

reports that they have had a clear-up at the site and recently collected a quantity of litter etc.; UBSS have done similarly also.

- 3.6.2 DRAFT CONSERVATION CODE, MINIMAL IMPACT & PARTICIPATION SCHEME: CSCC has been requested to make amendments, suggestions etc. in time for these documents to be finalised at the NCA 11th January meeting. Interested groups will be able to check out the details on the CSCC website although the details as presented are fine.
- 3.7 NCA REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT: The CSCC Ballot paper on the BCA Constitution is due to be returned tomorrow and the meeting was asked to vote on this. Some debate occurred and the club representatives were asked to cast their votes. **Yes: 5, No: 3, Abstentions: 3; therefore the vote carried as "Yes"**. Alan Butcher asked that it be minuted that there "should be a special meeting of the CSCC convened if the insurance issue fails".
- 4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:
- 4.1 Andy Sparrow outlined his case for a new central policy of any future national governing body for caving. His primary question was, in the face of declining numbers (with its commensurate impact on insurance premiums), **"Should caving be promoted?"**. He acknowledged there were good arguments both for and against this but that many objections occurred in the past when caving was much different and the numbers far greater; however, the future of caving may depend upon it. AS asked whether this was a problem or not as he believed that the minimum number of UK cavers should be gauged as the number required to maintain in a healthy condition clubs, shops, magazine(s), insurance premiums etc.. AS also believed that cavers have little, if any, control of publicity and that negative coverage and misleading stereotypes are promoted via the Media; he urged the meeting (and clubs etc.) to make this a topic of discussion with the possible creation of a Caving PR dept/role.
- 4.2 Linda Wilson agreed. Declining numbers are a problem and impact upon insurance. The average age of UK cavers was guessed at being around 45 whereas in Eire many meetings there comprise 50% of under 30s even though the demography of the two countries is similar. However, Irish symposia have priorities which appeal to younger audiences (alcohol).
- 4.3 Andrew Atkinson stated his experience of caving organisations (such as CSCC) as being too complex, daunting, political and argumentative to appeal to younger cavers.
- 4.4 Alan Dempster reminded the meeting of the role played by Scouts' groups and the impact of clubs closing to under 18s; Andy Sparrow mentioned NSS's Youth Section and whether a similar pattern could be followed here.
- 4.5 Graham Mullan said he believed Andy Sparrow's recent film "A Rock and a Hard Place" was excellent and could be used to promote caving in a positive light and he believed it worthy of TV airing, alongside other "good news" caving films in the pipeline. It was acknowledged that the student contingent of UK caving may be overlooked and the possible role of a CSCC "Piss up officer" was mentioned; also that there was only one stomp during 2003.
- 4.6 Chris Binding suggested to Andrew Atkinson that if he thought of any requirements or events which would be welcomed by student cavers during Mendip 2004 he (and anyone else) should shout out.
- 4.7 Andy Sparrow said he was surprised and pleased at the reaction (broad agreement) to his suggestion and hoped that the topic provokes further discussion throughout clubs; he offered to host a debate/forum "Should caving be promoted?".

ACTION: ANDY SPARROW

5. CONFIRMATION OF THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: Saturday 7th February 2004: All meetings convene in the back room of the Hunters Lodge, Priddy, for a 10:30am start. Please arrive early to avoid disturbing the meeting once it has begun; thank you.

APPENDIX

CSCC LETTERS (see CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 3.1 above)

CSCC has now sent letters to Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation requesting them to come up with some suggestions for insurance cover particularly with regard to club officer insurance (I have been told that this is an "off the shelf package") which is common to many different sporting organisations. Only the CCPR have replied stating that - "Caving is not the only national body in this situation". The CCPR are well aware of the situation and are looking into it. The Government has set up a Home Office Working Group to investigate and advise clubs on insurance. The CCPR has set up a Risk Working Group (including Perkins Slade) to discuss the whole issue of provision of insurance to clubs. The next meeting is in two weeks' time. CCPR has not come across an insurance (policy) that offers cover specifically for club officers.

OFFER BY CERBERUS SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY TO RE-OPEN THE CSCC LOCKED CAVES:

Due to the lack of insurance, as a precaution CSCC locked caves were closed. CSCC have discussed the provision of insurance with the DCA scheme and a cheque has been forwarded; however it appears that insurance from this route will not be available. The following CSCC locked caves have been closed - Brown's Folly Mine, Coral Cave, Cuckoo Cleaves, Loxton Cave, Loxton Quarry Cave, Singing River Mine, Swan Mine. Since the Cerberus Spelaeological Society is a member of the DCA insurance scheme they are still insured and have discussed with the DCA organiser temporarily taking over access arrangements for these caves. DCA have agreed that this is possible under the terms of the insurance.

CSCC replied to CSS:

Dear Graham,

Many thanks for the kind offer made by CSS to take over the responsibility for access matters relating to caves where such access has been previously arranged or is under the control of CSCC. This has been discussed by the CSCC officers and the following points have been raised: the decision to hand over these access arrangements should be made at the CSCC meeting scheduled for 6th December 2003. These arrangements were made between CSCC and the landowners and does CSCC have the authority to transfer this to a third party? Finally, if this hand over is approved a written "hand back" procedure should be put in place. Once again thank you for this offer. Alan Gray.

In readiness for the meeting the following letter was presented by CSS to CSCC (at the meeting):

Dear Alan, (6th December 2003)

In view of the insurance problems presently being experienced within the caving community, and whilst these continue, Cerberus Spelaeological Society agrees to take over responsibility for access matters relating to caves where such access has been previously arranged by or is under the control of CSCC. Responsibility for access will be returned to CSCC upon request. CSS is able to provide appropriate indemnity under its current public liability insurance and will be able to provide proof of such cover to landowners if required.

Yours sincerely, Graham Price.

Note: CSCC secretary has the original letter on file since this offer "remains on the table" subject to the resolution of the insurance cover issues over the coming weeks.

End of minutes & Appendix. Chris Binding, Hon. Sec. CSCC, 6th December 2003. secretary@csc.org.uk