



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Saturday 4th February 2006

1. ATTENDANCE (14, 9 eligible to vote)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS Obs/SMCC Obs), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, Cheddar CC), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Alan Butcher (SMCC), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC Obs), Tim Francis (MCG), Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS), Dave Cooke (Wessex CC), Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, SBSS), Rob Norcross (Moles CC), Kayleigh Gilkes (UBSS Obs), Andrew Wright (UBSS Obs), Frank Doherty (UBSS Obs).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Andy Sparrow (CSCC Training Officer, Cheddar CC), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS).

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Chris Whale's affiliation was given as UBSS instead of SBSS.

The Minutes were otherwise agreed to be a true and accurate record. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Item 8.3 - SMK to write to the CHECC Clubs in the region.

Done.

Item 9 - CW to prepare end-of-year accounts and submit to CO for scrutiny.

Taken under Item 8.

Item 10.3 - CB to confirm the Box Mine access understanding with the other parties.

Taken under Item 9.

Item 10.6 - Member Clubs to nominate Leaders for the Lost Cave of Loxton.

Done.

Item 10.8 - SMK to inform the SMCC that the Gibbets Brow capping will be funded.

Done.

Item 10.9 - CB to inform the BCA C&A Officer about the ABP initiative.

Taken under Item 9.

Item 13.3 - AA to ascertain hardware requirements of National Bolt Placement Insurance.

Taken under Item 12.

Item 14.2 - Member Clubs to consider proposals for Individual Membership of the CSCC.

Taken under Item 12.

5. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no other matters arising.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman said that he had no report to make.

7. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

7.1 - Publications received

Minutes of the BCA Council Meeting (Oct 2005), Agenda for the BCA Council Meeting (Jan 2006), Agenda for the BCA AGM (Mar 2006), Minutes of the DCA Council Meeting (Oct 2005), Officers reports to DCA Council (Oct 2005), DCA Information Circular (Nov 2005-Jan2006), Agenda for the DCA AGM (Feb 2005), Derbyshire Caver (#123).

7.2 - Correspondence

The Secretary said that he had seen some hopeful news in a CCPR Policy Update: The Compensation Bill had now been published. Part I contains a clause clarifying 'negligence' and says that where an element of risk is central to the purposes of an activity, and that removing the risk would render the activity worthless to the participants, then this must be considered by the Court if a case of negligence is brought. The CCPR believed that this should help those activities with an inherent risk.

7.3 - BCA Membership Status

The Secretary had news that at the end of the year the BCA had 139 Member Clubs and 17 Associates. He added that the number of individual cavers in these organisations was less clear, but appeared to number around 3500.

SK also said that he had posted details of the 2006 BCA Public Liability Insurance Scheme to the CSCC Mailing List on 4th January. The headlines were that the contributions due had reduced slightly and that there was now no distinction between cave diving and other types of caving in the policy. Members of the EUG will also get inclusive cover provided that they are BCA DIM's. In addition the rival DCA Scheme has withdrawn from the market, thereby potentially increasing the membership of the BCA Scheme by 800 individuals. Extracts from the PL Managers Report appear under Item 14.

The attention of all CSCC BCA Members is drawn to the fact that their 2005 membership of BCA and the BCA PL Insurance Scheme ceased on 31st January. Subscription renewal forms for 2006 were sent out in advance of this date by the BCA, but can in any event also be found on the web at <http://www.british-caving.org.uk/?page=3>. The CSCC encourages its Members to re-join.

The CSCC Treasurer has also agreed that due to the general hiatus that surrounded the 2005 subscription year, and which resulted in some very late payments, the small number of Clubs that paid for Direct and Secondary Membership of the CSCC in 2005 will be granted continued membership until 31st December 2006 at no extra cost.

8. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

As of 3rd February, the Current Account balance stood at £83.74 and the Reserve Account balance at £4373.46.

The Treasurer then circulated an Income and Expenditure Summary for 2005, adding that he required one additional piece of information before he could send the accounts for scrutinising as previously arranged. The major items of expenditure in 2005 were the production of the Access Handbook (though almost half these costs have been recouped), bolting materiel, and Draeger tubes (for CO₂ monitoring). There was also an apparent 200% increase in stationary costs. *[This is primarily down to the Secretary's purchase of postage-paid envelopes for 2004 and 2005; however the invoices were only submitted to the Treasurer for reimbursement in 2005 – SKJ].*

[Note added in proof: I have now received details of the new "Pricing in Proportion" tariffs from the Royal Mail which come into effect on 21st August 2006. My interpretation is that CSCC postage costs should not increase for some time, and could even decrease. I base this on the fact that the present cost of 100 2nd Class C5 postage-paid envelopes is £31, but under PiP the cost of sending a 2nd Class C5 or under letter will be 21p. At the same time the allowed weight will rise from 60g to 100g – SKJ].

9. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

The C&A Officer presented a comprehensive verbal report which is abstracted below:

9.1 - Cuckoo Cleaves Sale

This was (finally) concluded at Christmas. The new owner is Wayne Starsmore, an ex-Member of the WCC. WS has stated that it is his intention to continue to allow access for cavers and to this end the lid remains fitted with a CSCC padlock. Cavers should note that old lid is now in a very poor state, particularly at the hinge points. Frome CG, who had previously kindly indicated their willingness to fabricate and install a replacement lid, and WS have been provided with each others contact details so that the replacement can be progressed directly. The stock fence also requires fixing and offers of help to assist with this would be warmly welcomed. CB will contact the BCA about the possibility of funding the work.

On behalf of all cavers the CSCC would like to record grateful thanks to Wayne Starsmore for his thoughtful and selfless actions in securing this site for future visits.

ACTION: CB to investigate funding for the stock fence around Cuckoo Cleaves.

9.2- Waterwheel Swallet

The replacement lid is still awaited from Dave Speed, but the Work Method Statement and supporting paperwork is ready.

9.3- Box Mine

English Nature has approached an engineer to design and install the grilles and CB has provided sketch drawings of the proposed gates. The work is scheduled to begin around April/May. Unfortunately the Hanson's contact that convened the 2005 Meeting between EN, the CSCC, and Hanson's was tragically killed in an accident shortly before Christmas. CB has forwarded his own notes of that Meeting to English Nature for confirmation of the understanding achieved. However, cavers are asked to note that the report in *Descent* #188 (Feb/Mar 2006) inaccurately represents the understanding reached on access to this site. Access is to be maintained, but it will not under any circumstances be authorised.

[Note added in proof: CB wrote to Rich Witcombe, the Descent Mendip Correspondent, about the inaccurate report. RW explained that the piece was actually penned by Chris Howes who has in turn written to explain the misunderstanding and apologise].

9.4 - West Twin Brook Adit

A meeting with representatives of Bristol Water and the UBSS has been provisionally agreed for the replacement of the padlock with a combination lock, but a date has yet to be arranged.

[Note added in proof: Site visits took place on the 17th and 21st February with CB, Graham Mullan (UBSS) and Mr Cleland (Bristol Water). The new combination lock has been fitted (number available from canda@csc.org.uk or GM) and the entrance cleared. An informal inspection took place. The site is described as "rather muddy, no bats, no major collapses; no problems" and "too easy for proper cavers"!].

9.5 - Loxton Cavern (aka "Found Cave of Loxton")

The Leaders' Induction Day took place on 7th January 2006 with cavers from WCC, Cerberus CC, SMCC, SBSS, ACG, ChCC, UBSS and the MCG. Nick Harding & Nick Richards (both BEC) kindly led two groups around to highlight features and conservation considerations. A padlock is to be fitted on 6th February and keys will be distributed to the above Clubs for safe-keeping. Since the cave is to be on a leader system (5 plus leader) a log book will be placed within the cave for recording trip date, club name and group details. Access will be reviewed in the event of any damage or disregard for the site. The entrance may need shoring and this is to be looked at and appropriate funding sought. There are also some corduroy markings in the passage floor at one point which are of considerable historical significance and need to be conserved. Suggestions aired at the Meeting included a suspended walkway with a "viewing trapdoor", or a Plexiglass walkway. This also needs investigation.

On behalf of all cavers the CSCC would like to extend its grateful thanks to the "Two Nicks" for these arrangements.

[Note added in proof: A site meeting was held with Nick Richards and a new padlock installed. An ammo box and log book were put in place the weekend 11th-12th February in readiness for the start of the new access regime. Surveys have also been printed and guidelines for leaders drawn up for distribution along with the keys to Club Leaders by the weekend of 25th-26th February. Remedial work (involving 6 bags of Postmix) to stabilise the loose slope at the base of the entrance was

undertaken on 20th February. However the sides of the entrance are still loose and work will be necessary to shore them up, possibly also incorporating a new grilled gate].

9.6 - Avon Biodiversity Partnership

Dr Lucy Rogers, the ABP Coordinator, confirmed that the previously notified work involving the gating of “several sites in North Somerset” has no impact upon cavers or mine explorers since the sites in question are actually ice houses and cellars!

9.7 - Swildon’s Hole

The Blue Pencil chain has long been noted as being in need of replacement and the WCC has had the materials ready for a long time (a new chain was donated by the MCG but the problems with the Mud Sump prevented access). LW confirmed that the WCC would approach Alison Moody with a view to organising the work as soon as possible. AA suggested that the undertaking could be used to re-certify Alison’s bolt placement skills (see Item 12). Meanwhile, a University Club had apparently “assisted” with a psychology experiment in the cave. The experiment involved leaving numerous “signs” (in the form of round “faces” cut from carpet and hung on washing line) in various locations. Other, rather more conservation-minded, cavers had taken a dim view of such matters and had removed the objects. CB will attempt to contact those responsible for the placements.

[Note added in proof: Contact has been made with the student responsible and the matter has been resolved – CB].

ACTION: Blue Pencil chain to be replaced as soon as possible.

9.8 - Fairy Cave Quarry

Cavers should note that due to vandalism the combination lock to the Car Park has been replaced with a CSCC Padlock; so a key is now required even if the cave being visited (e.g. Hillwithy, or Fairy-Hillier’s through-trip) does not require one! Cavers are also reminded that there is a winter curfew on these caves to avoid unnecessary disturbance of the bats.

9.9 Manor Farm Swallet

Descent #187 (Dec 2005/Jan 2006) published a worrying letter reporting adverse physiological reactions experienced by a number of cavers following one particular trip in this cave during “wet” conditions. The CSCC had no prior knowledge of this letter and its publication set alarm bells ringing. However, with the assistance of *Descent* contact was made with the correspondent, whereupon it transpired that the report was based on a trip that took place back in 2003! After much, and difficult (given the timing, the week before Christmas), correspondence between several CSCC Officers and other parties and a visit to the site by CB on 31st December 2005, it was eventually decided that no presumptive action would be taken at the present time. Instead it was decided to issue to cavers a reminder of the published guidelines for visits to this site and to strengthen the warning in the access information on the CSCC Website. The text of the reminder reads:

“Following reported concerns with regard to Manor Farm Swallet, CSCC would like to point out that for many years guidelines have been in place for cavers visiting this site (and other caves within the Mendip Hills); CSCC recommends that cavers wear rubber gloves, suitable caving gear, observe published visiting seasons and take responsibility for ensuring their own well-being. People with sensitive skin have reported experiencing discomfort following trips here.”

The CSCC will maintain a watching brief for now. Cavers experiencing adverse reactions in the wake of trips in this cave are asked to supply details, including date, time and ground conditions, to the CSCC C&A Officer as soon after as possible.

[For the record, several cavers have queried why the CSCC does not just collect some water samples for analysis. Informal scientific advice was sought on this point. The response was that in order to test for some potential pollutants samples would need to be collected according to a specific protocol and analysed within a few hours, and that very few laboratories – outside those of Government regulatory agencies – were likely to be equipped for the necessary analyses. – SK]

9.10 - SSSI Audit for English Nature

This was completed and submitted on schedule; 92% of the sites tasked were covered, the exceptions being Lamb Leer and Lady Park Wood Cave in the Forest of Dean.

9.11 – Longwood Valley

A site meeting was held with the Somerset Wildlife Trust in Longwood Valley Nature Reserve following reports from a WCMS Member of a new swallet opening beyond August Hole during the floods of early November 2005. Permission was sought for a dig to investigate further. The SWT had no objections to this providing work was sensibly done and that it did not involve mechanical digging equipment. The CCC Ltd has been notified. The padlocks on Longwood Swallet and Rhino Rift are also being overhauled and should be easier to operate in future. In addition, in Rhino Rift a warning sign has been affixed to the reported “loose” bolt (furthest of the two) on the 1st Y-hang until it can be tested/replaced (see Item 12). AA also noted that the gate on Rhino Rift was in need of repair.

9.12 - Goatchurch Cavern

Human excrement had to be cleared from the main entrance on 19th January 2006. Cavers are asked to report any further such unpleasant instances, if found.

9.13 – Cow Hole & Ubley Hill Pot

Reports on both Cow Hole and Ubley Hill Pot were received from the MCG. Contrary to popular belief, both sites are still accessible, though both are in a poor state. An update to the CSCC Access page was recommended.

At this point TF provided a verbal overview: Cow Hole – the farmer has cut the top off the entrance pipe so that it is now at ground level. The lid is very difficult to lever open (also note that an adjustable spanner is required to undo the bolt) and is

not currently fixed to the top of the pipe. The passage from the bottom of the entrance pitch to the next pitch head requires great respect and is essentially a continuous boulder choke of dubious stability. The pitch head is solid but lacking in anchors/spits. With some considerable effort and engineering this could make a good SRT cave. Ubley Hill Pot – the cave is blocked by a massive mud slump at the bottom of the entrance pipe. The air quality is very poor.

ACTION: CB to send DC some appropriate wording for the CSCC Access Guide & Website.

9.14 - Surveying Equipment

The BCA is providing further equipment for the conservation of new discoveries, to add to the Laser Distance meter for surveying without engaging in unnecessary trampling of chamber floors. It is understood that the new acquisitions will comprise a clinometer, tape, waterproof surveying paper, etc. Any CSCC Member Club which would like to make use of this equipment should contact canda@csc.org.uk.

9.15 - CSCC Standard Padlocks

There are only four remaining in store and more should be ordered. Previously these have been organised by Graham Price and ID stamped by Brian Prewer.

ACTION: CB to liaise with GP & BP on the supply of additional padlocks.

9.16 – Burrington Coombe

The damaged “Cave Rescue Only” sign in has been notified to the Mendip Hills Warden for repair.

CB was asked if there were any developments at Brown’s Folly Mine. He said not, but did add that it now appeared the Avon Wildlife Trust were less concerned about receiving the outstanding Mines Inspectors report than they had previously indicated. Concern was expressed that a situation was being engineered to exclude cavers/mine explorers and bat workers from the mine. CB did not know if there were actually any physical barriers to entry.

10. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer was not present and had not sent a report.

11. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer said that he had spoken to the National Convenor who, having now moved house, had indicated that he now felt able to take on his role more earnestly. However a number those present expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the enduring situation. It was the view of the meeting that the national body of an inherently technical sport must require its technical committees to be proactive and vibrant if that national body was to successfully fulfil its mission. The Meeting instructed the Secretary to convey these sentiments to the BCA Chairman.

ACTION: SK to write to the BCA Chairman on the subject of the BCA Equipment Committee.

12. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator presented a verbal report:

AA first asked LW if he would get the bolt placement diagrams soon. LW said that he would.

12.1 – Hardware Requirements

In response to the query about the types of eco-hanger covered by the National Bolt Placement Insurance raised at the previous Meeting, AA said that his enquiries had concluded that stainless steel P-hangers were covered, but not DMM hangers. AA said that he had also been having great difficulty in getting in contact with Les Sykes (who supplies the Regional Councils with bolts and resin; it is not economic for individual Regions to buy the resin themselves). AA had some bolts but no resin. He acknowledged that the withdrawal of the existing resin supplier from the market in 2005 had caused difficulties, but now understood that a new supplier had been located. He said that he also understood that the BCA were buying more bolts. LW and CB said that they had both had recent contact with LS and would pass on the contact details they had in case they differed from those AA had.

ACTION: CB & LW to pass Les Sykes’ contact details to AA.

[Note added in proof: AA has made contact with Les Sykes and should have fresh supplies of resin by the middle of February].

12.2 – Recertifications

None of those trained by AA in the last year have so far been re-certified. AS and CB had lapsed as of the date of the Meeting. Alison Moody would lapse on 5th February. AA also highlighted that he had still not had a “certificate” confirming his eligibility to train new bolters. Consequently he was reluctant to issue “certificates” to those he trained. The Meeting agreed that this was a most unsatisfactory situation with potential legal implications. The Secretary was instructed to raise this matter with the BCA Chairman.

ACTION: SK to write to the BCA Chairman on the subject of Bolting Certificates.

12.3 – Bolting of Thrupe Lane

This was awaiting bolts and resin. See Item 12.1 above. But an offer of help with portering, etc, had been received from Noel Cleave, Graham Candy and John Hurst of the “Wessex Geriatric Group”.

12.4 – Diamond Chamber SRT Facility

This was awaiting bolts and resin. See Item 12.1 above.

12.5 – Longwood Swallet

Linda Wilson (Charterhouse CC Ltd C&A Officer) had contacted AA to suggest that a 2nd bolt be placed at Swing Pitch. AA explained that he had merely replaced an existing spit when he had placed the present P-bolt and that bolting guidelines indicated one bolt was sufficient for a pitch of up to 4m where there were acceptable natural belays. However, AA said that he had no objections to placing another bolt.

12.6 – Swildons Hole

The chain on Blue Pencil Passage needs to be replaced. The anchors are also badly worn and would also benefit from replacement. This will be done once resin is available. But AA noted that there might not be space to use a drill.

12.7 – Hunters Hole

A formal request to bolt Rover Pot in Sanctimonious Passage had been received from Mick Norton (ACG/MCG/BDCC). In accordance with published procedures this had been considered by the C&A Officer who had consulted with AA and also AS. Their deliberations had concluded that there were plenty of other places that were far more deserving of AA's time and expertise, and that in any event the placement was difficult to justify. CB asked if there was support for this assessment. Those present agreed. The request was therefore turned down.

12.8 – Rhino Rift

On 4th December a report was received that one of the P-bolts on the main Y-hang on the first pitch was loose and that it came out of the rock by some 3-4 mm. A warning was circulated to the CSCC email distribution list on 5th December and a warning has been attached to the bolt until such time as it can be properly inspected and tested.

12.9 – Anchor Tester

SK said that the BCA had kindly purchased a Hydrajaws Anchor Testing Kit for the CSCC. This was warmly welcomed. SK formally handed the Kit over to AA who undertook to test the loose bolt in Rhino Rift before the next Meeting.

At this point in the Meeting CB, AA, KG, AW and FD left for other appointments leaving 9 (7 eligible to vote).

13. DEBATE ON INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE CSCC

SK opened the debate by recapping on the background behind the issue: The idea for Individual Membership was first mooted within the CSCC back in 2004 (during the many discussions on the proposed organisation of the BCA). At least two other Regional Council's (the DCA and the DCUC) already admitted Individual Members (in the case of the DCA, since 1960!) and the BCA followed suite by establishing two categories of Individual Membership - Direct & Club. The 2005 AGM asked DC to draw up a discussion document; this was circulated at the CSCC Meeting in December 2005. In the brief but ensuing discussion a modification to the proposal in DC's document was suggested. DC revised his document accordingly and posted it on the CSCC website two days after the Meeting. Subsequent emails from some Officers, and others present at the December Meeting, suggested some clarifications to the terminology used so DC revised his document again and re-posted it to the web.

The essence of the proposal was that: **1) A Club would become a member of the CSCC by signifying its wish to do so and paying the current subscription** – as at present; **2) Every member of a Member Club would automatically become an individual member of the CSCC** – at present a Club was only represented at the CSCC by its authorised Representative; **3) Any other individual, Club Member or otherwise, could become an individual member of the CSCC by signifying their wish to do so and paying the current subscription**; **4) All Members would have to be elected by a Meeting of the CSCC**; **5) All Members, Club or Individual, would be entitled to a vote** – at present only the authorised Club Representative could vote; **6) A Member would only have one vote** (eg, a Club Representative could not vote as both a "Club" and an "Individual"); and lastly **7) A Club would have the power of veto** (though this would reside with its authorised Representative) – as at present. SK added that if the proposal was adopted the CSCC Constitution would need to be amended.

DC said that the issue of whether to admit Individual Members had been dragging on for two years and now needed to be laid to rest, one way or another. He argued that the CSCC, and indeed the BCA nationally, needed new volunteers and enfranchising more individuals and making them feel more involved in the mission of the CSCC was, in his opinion, a sensible course of action. He highlighted that the CSCC currently had no Representative to the BCA Council. AB was less convinced. He thought Club cavers were only interested in the CSCC as an access control/access liaison body and that the only time they wanted to hear from their Club Representative was when there was a change in circumstances that affected their ability to go caving, otherwise they were happy to leave "politics" to their Club Committee. LW said that whilst he personally was neutral on the proposal, he knew some Clubs saw it as a threat to their historic domination of the caving scene – particularly on Mendip. SK said that he had received correspondence from a member of a CSCC Member Club who was opposed to the introduction of Individual Membership. LW said that he was also concerned that the proposals actually disenfranchised a Club Representative from having his/her own say on an issue. TF asked what benefits a CSCC Direct Individual Member would get; an Access Handbook, keys to caves? DC said certainly the former, but probably not the latter, though this was of course a matter for debate. TF replied that the benefits of membership were probably the key to the debate.

Attention shifted to procedural matters. The proposal needed to be approved by an AGM or an EGM if it was to come into effect. SK said that if the intention was to lay it before the AGM on 6th May then the Constitution required that it be distributed to the Member Clubs by 8th April. AB thought this was too short a timescale for Club Representatives to discuss the matter with their Clubs. DC did not understand why this should be the case given the background to the proposal. AB then suggested a compromise; that the CSCC canvass opinions from cavers in its Member Clubs and an EGM be called later in the year to vote on the proposal. The Meeting endorsed AB's compromise with the proviso that wider opinion should be sought. It was suggested that a questionnaire be drawn up to find out what cavers view of the CSCC was, what they thought it should do, and what more they would like to see from the CSCC. CW offered to draft such a questionnaire. The others present said that they would also input. AG said that he did not want to see this

become a delaying tactic and asked for some prompt deadlines. It was agreed that the draft questionnaire should be circulated by the end of February. TF offered his professional advice (in market research) on the exercise.

ACTION: CW to draft a cavers questionnaire and circulate it to those present at the Meeting.

14. BCA MATTERS

14.1 – Report on the BCA Council Meeting, 14th January 2006

DC and LW had attended in their capacities as a Club Representative and the BCA Publications & Information Officer, respectively. LW described the Meeting as “very positive”. The principal message was that (for a change!) BCA had money to spend. Marketing and Youth policies are being developed. A new revised and updated Legal & Insurance booklet is now available. On the C&A front, Elsie Little had said that some recent “difficulties” now suggested that the fact caving was *not* specifically included in the CROW legislation was beginning to look like a possible problem; cavers may need to become more vocal about this. And in the wake of the telegraphed withdrawal of Government funding to underpin the Training Scheme, the costs of, and possible routes to, self-funding the Scheme were discussed.

DC added that the BCA had decided to raise its mileage rate to 20p/mile and proposed that the CSCC should do likewise. The Meeting agreed.

14.2 – Extracts from the Report of the BCA PL Scheme Insurance Manager, 14th January 2006

“...[BCA] obtained an offer of renewal terms from our existing broker. The policy wording is almost identical to last year...It is clear that the market has eased somewhat and we are hopeful that we may have more than one offer to choose between at renewal time in 2006. The main difference in the policy...is the removal of any distinction between cave divers and normal cavers...They now have exactly the same benefits as any other scheme members...Following (justifiable) complaints from members last year about how long it took to get the cards out, and the lack of subscription reminders, we put a lot of planning and effort into getting this properly sorted in late December and early January. I am delighted to report that we have now sent out cards for all clubs and reminders to all individuals in the scheme. A big vote of thanks is due to [the Membership Administrator] who worked hard on this in the run up to Christmas...The scheme has made a significant surplus in 2004 and 2005. This was as a result of the costs being overestimated and the number of members being under estimated. As a result, we have costed on the basis of a reduction in the contributions from all membership categories for 2006...The figure discussed...also included a contribution of £10.00 for full time students and £50.00 for holders of explosives licences. I would like this meeting to reconsider these proposals in the light of subsequent comments and events. Most significant is the fact that the DCA have decided to wind up their scheme and recommend all their members join the BCA scheme. This represents an additional 800 individuals’ income to the scheme. Also significant is the obvious need to be doing all we can to encourage students and other young people to join the caving community. It was pointed out to me that it was inconsistent to reduce the rates to individual members without also reducing the contribution for full time students. My recommendation is therefore: That the contribution from full time students should be £8.00...With regard to explosives licence holders...I am hoping that...Council [will] agree that the differential contribution for licence holders should be scrapped. This would simplify the administration, improve the security of users...and, (last but not least) recognise the significant financial commitment which most explosives users already make on behalf of the UK caving community. As Secretary of the BCRA EUG, I must, of course, declare an interest in this.”

15. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

“What to do before help arrives”, a talk by Paramedic Richard Marlow. Hunters Lodge, Priddy, Saturday 4th February 2006 at 20:00.

MRO AGM, Hunters Lodge, Priddy, Saturday 11th March 2006.

BCA AGM, Baptist Church Hall, Alvechurch, Saturday 25th March 2006 at 10:30. *[Any caver is welcome to attend, but only Direct Individual Members and authorised representatives of Constituent Bodies or Member Clubs will be entitled to a vote. Anyone intending to act as an authorised representative must take evidence of written authority to do so].*

“Caving and the Law”, a talk by Tony Rich. Hunters Lodge, Priddy, tbc. Contact Gonzo at markcreativeedge@btconnect.com.

MRO Rescue Practice. Swildon’s Hole, Saturday 22nd April 2006. Contact Gonzo at markcreativeedge@btconnect.com.

MRO Rescue Workshop. GB Cavern, Saturday 3rd June 2006. Contact Gonzo at markcreativeedge@btconnect.com.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LW noted that a new website had been launched with the aim of reuniting those taking part in sports and leisure activities with lost kit and equipment. The address is <http://www.lostkit.co.uk>.

LW will be convening a Meeting of the BCA Publications & Information Committee in the near future. If anyone has anything they would like to raise, or if they wish to volunteer their services, they should contact les@les.williams.name.

LW is also looking for a new Publications & Information Manager for the *Hidden Earth* conference.

AG drew the attention of the Meeting to the Editorial published in *Descent* #188 regarding the *lack* of joined-up thinking in some parts of Government.

17. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

(all at the Hunters Inn, Priddy, 10:30)

Saturday 6th May 2006 (AGM)