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Welcome

.... To the [Plymouth University Adventure and Expeditions Club](#), which was accepted as a new CSCC member club at the recent February meeting. The club organises a variety of outdoor activities for students including climbing, caving, mountaineering and hiking, and slacklining. To find out more about the club visit [their website](#).

Future-proofing CSCC - Officer-Shadowing

One perennial issue faced by any organisation with elected officers is future-proofing. In the November 2024 newsletter, it was mentioned that the idea of “officer-shadowing” was being considered.

No Commitment

This scheme would be fairly informal in that anyone offering to help would not be committing to any future role as an officer and would only serve as an appointee in whatever role they thought most useful. For example, and speaking from my own perspective, someone else being aware of interesting events or news and drawing my attention to them would serve me very well in

promoting the various activities of cavers in the South of England, without you necessarily composing a news item about it or producing a newsletter. Likewise, anyone with handy practical skills might want to help with cave entrance works or installing aids in caves, providing an extra pair of hands to the C&A Officer or Equipment Officer respectively.

Other roles may well benefit from having shadows to support them – anyone is welcome to give it a go. Everyone has the potential to do something.

Please spread the word in your circle of cavers – it's only when cavers are aware of such ideas that they take off.

Familiarity

It is human nature to be wary of taking on something new. This is why it needs emphasising that there would be no commitment to being a “shadow”. But once a shadow becomes immersed in their role, it is likely that familiarity with both the people and what they do within CSCC would make moving into a specific role in the future a much less daunting prospect. If ultimately you felt making a full commitment to being an officer wasn't for you, that's fine, and simply giving some time and support occasionally to other cavers as a “shadow” would always be greatly appreciated.

Planned CSCC Summer Event – 31st May

At the November meeting, the idea of holding a revived Summer Meeting was discussed and more ideas were proposed in the February meeting. A suggestion of trying to get as many caves visited between sunrise and sunset seems to have gone down reasonably well. A date of 31st May is proposed, with the day's activities coordinated from Priddy Village Hall followed by an evening social event with disco, barbecue and a bar.

The details are being worked out and a small team is needed to put it all together. A list of caves is being compiled, and clubs are encouraged to get involved. The aim will be for a team to visit as many caves as they can within some basic rules to keep the event sensible, safe, and with due regard for the caves and landowners. There may be a modest entry fee to cover costs.

Teams remote from Somerset can also get involved and by livestreaming the ending everyone can get involved, albeit with remote teams missing out on the social elements.

As the plans come together, it is important that clubs and cavers start now by doing some simple steps. First, set the date 31st May in your events diary and start promoting the Summer Event amongst your members. Start to get involved by seeing if your club can put a team together and contact the event organiser, Dave Keegan training@csc.org.uk, to let him know. Offer to get involved on the day with running the event in some capacity. The best way to find out what help will be most welcome, speak to Dave.

10th February Council Meeting – highlights

This is a summary of the meeting. Only the minutes of the meeting should be referenced as an authoritative record. Minutes are stored at <https://csc.org.uk/wiki/documents/start> To read the full reports by officers, these will also be available on the same page.

Cave Access Developments – from Wayne Starsmore, C&A Officer

Longleat

The formalisation of the Longleat Access Agreement is, unfortunately, taking longer than expected. A first draft of the formal documents was written and submitted to Longleat at the end of November. This has been reviewed by Longleat and their comments were received at the end of January. None of the comments or suggested changes are contentious and a second draft has now been written and submitted. There are two clauses they intend to pass to their solicitors for review and we await the outcome of this.

Totty Pot

Longleat asked CSCC for assistance to secure the entrance to Totty Pot. This site, high on the plateau above Cheddar Gorge, is of more interest to archaeologists than cavers. However, to help foster goodwill with Longleat, the work was undertaken. The existing lid was re-installed using a chain and eyebolts and now has a somewhat “Gangster Style” appearance.



Harridge Woods

The Harridge Wood Nature Reserve access agreement is ready to go but is awaiting CSCC to complete the work required to provide an online permit system.



Waterwheel Swallet

Several reports were received that the padlock on Waterwheel Swallet had seized and could not be opened. The padlock was inspected the next day and the lock barrel was found to be full of mud. Flushing this out allowed the padlock to be opened and it was changed for a new one. The old padlock has been cleaned, lubricated and put back in stock. Please could everyone make sure their keys are clean before inserting them into the locks.

Denny's Hole

Andrew Atkinson has very kindly visited Denny's Hole on Crooks Peak and removed the suspect blue polypropylene tow rope reported previously from the entrance.



Sludge Pit Hole

The landowner of Sludge Pit has reported that persons unknown had emptied the money from the collection bucket and changed the padlock. This is the second time this has happened, the first being November 2023. He has stated that if this happens again he will seriously consider closing the cave.

Following a lengthy discussion with him, several actions have been agreed and actioned. The padlock has been changed and the money that was in the bucket has been collected and banked. The Cheddar Cave Club have undertaken to empty the money from the bucket on a regular basis. Also the log book has been changed for a waterproof one.

New Access Fees

The goodwill fees to visit the following four caves have been increased to £2.

- Swildon's Hole
- North Hill Swallet
- Eastwater Cavern
- Sludge Pit Hole

CSCC Access Guide

Many updates have been made to the CSCC Access Guide including:-

- An updated telephone number for Rocket Drop
- Updating 14 sites to include a link to the CSCC maintained bolts list
- Sludge Pit access information
- Swildon's goodwill fee

Singing River Mine

The Singing River Mine access agreement has now been in place for 18 months and is running smoothly. During this time there have been 21 trips, involving some 125 cavers.

Wookey Hole Cave

The access agreement with Wookey has run without issue over the past three months. There have been 7 trips since the November CSCC meeting, involving some 36 cavers.

Pressure Washers

The CSCC Pressure Washers haven't been used since the summer. Please email canda@csc.org.uk if you would like to borrow them.

Future Priorities

In the coming months I will be concentrating on the following priorities:-

- Write the formal access agreement for the Caves of Cheddar Gorge
- Arrange and complete the training of Wardens for the Cheddar Caves
- Finalise the access arrangements (on-line facilities) for Harridge Woods
- Discuss and agree the required Cow Hole entrance work with the landowner

If anyone has anything else they would like progressing then please let me know.

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Treasurer's Report, Tom Harrison

If all BCA clubs renew, we will have 40 CSCC affiliated clubs, 1 non BCA.

One new club was accepted into the CSCC at the meeting – Plymouth University Adventure and Expeditions Club.

I'm currently working on the end of year accounts which are nearly complete. The Core Claim to BCA will be £187 for this year.

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Equipment Officer's Report, Andrew Atkinson

CSCC Anchors etc.

The work listed below was approved at the meeting.

G.B. Cavern – Devil's Elbow route - The stalagmite column that is currently used is worn to a large extent. At some point it will become too weak and not be able to hold the load. This point is impossible to determine, the current state does not look good. Subject to a more detailed site examination, anchors set in a pull through configuration should be possible.

Rhino Rift – 4th Pitch - A new anchor has been requested for the 4th Pitch in Rhino Rift.

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Other Business

- New Blood

A proposal to introduce a scheme of shadowing for CSCC officers was again discussed. There is a separate invitation for CSCC cavers to get involved elsewhere in this newsletter.

- CSCC Sumer Event

The idea of running a Summer Event this year was given more consideration. There is a separate item in this newsletter about this excellent idea.

Vertical Gardening in Hobbs Quarry

Gloucester Speleological Society



Throughout the summer months Gloucester Speleological Society (GSS) social meets are sometimes above ground often visiting areas of geologic interest and incorporating a BBQ afterwards. In July '24 they had a tour of Huntley Quarry Geology Reserve, then Hobbs Quarry, which is north of Longhope in the Forest of Dean. Hobbs is an SSSI site that has several bioherms also known as 'ballstones' that formed in Wenlock Limestone of the Silurian period, about 430 million years ago. They are very unusual and internationally important, about 2 meters across and are draped over by thinner layers of shale limestone.

Hobbs quarry stopped working more than 100 years ago and became heavily overgrown hiding the key geology features. In August 2023 ownership was transferred to Hobbs Nature Reserve Trust and is now run by a local group of volunteers who are

also experts in conservation and geology. They have managed to get some of the large vegetation on the quarry floor cleared mechanically and further work has been done to clear the quarry face using stepladders exposing the bioherms again. This has enabled them to start using the site for geological education, research and nature wildlife conservation. They couldn't reach the upper levels of the quarry with the ladders though which remained heavily overgrown. While discussing the problem with the volunteers it was thought the GSS SRT skills could be used to see if we can clear some of these upper areas.



The 2nd of October found a group of GSS members back at the quarry equipped with various garden implements, scrapers, trowels and secateurs, dangling off ropes working their way down the quarry face. The weather was good and a convivial afternoon was had, we made steady progress from left to right, Some areas cleared quite easily but scrubby bushes proved more difficult, especially long, deep roots. At the end of the afternoon it was obvious that a lot had been cleared but there was also a fair bit left to do.

After 3 ½ hours the GSS volunteers; Mark Tringham, Judi Durber, Adam Fletcher and Andy Ley, took photos & packed up for the day promising to come back for another session.

A second visit took place on 26th November '24, Mark Tringham, Adam Fletcher and Judi Durber

donned SRT kit and used their skills, scraping away superficial soil and loose stones, cutting away bushes and brambles and pulling out whatever moss and roots they could. The awkward dogwood suckers that have proliferated in some areas took more effort to clear.

Helpfully, Mark had been the day before to clear the top ledge above the quarry face of scrub & bushes and driven in long stakes borrowed from the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG). This gave a more reassuring anchor for the ropes we used to belay off.

Around 4 hours were spent there with a short break in the middle for a rest. It was good fun and good exercise, but quite exhausting! There was a satisfying pile of debris at the bottom of the cliff for the local volunteers to clear away at the end of the day. As ever there is more to do, so another visit before spring comes is likely, to try and complete clearance of the entire upper cliff along the designated area so that it may be easily viewed by all visitors to this special internationally important geological site.

Judi Durber, GSS



NAMHO Conference, 27th to 29th June 2025



Thiobacillus strands in Cae Coch sulphur mine, near Llanrwst. Photo: Peter Burgess

Details of the 2025 NAMHO Conference are being put together, but more help would be very much welcomed. The event will be held at Llanrwst Rugby Club in North Wales. Special camping facilities will be available from 25th June to 2nd July to facilitate an extended stay for delegates wishing to enjoy a longer break. The programme of mine visits will be available from early March and will be accessed via the NAMHO website. If you can lead an underground or surface trip, please contact Peter Jackson, NAMHO Chair, as soon as possible - email is petesmine@gmail.com or phone 07718385646. The organisers also require talks about mining in North Wales and elsewhere. The Conference will be very much a joint effort including NAMHO Officers, members of UCET and other clubs, and supporters from other well-known organisations. Lectures, Food, Bar, Camping, Camper Vans, car parking will all be on the same site.

Hidden Earth 2025, 26th-28th September



Hidden Earth will again, as in 2024, be held at the Llangollen Pavilion, in Wales, on the weekend 26th to 28th September. Please put the date in your calendar and come to the UK's premiere national caving event. There will be something for everyone to enjoy as you meet your fellow cavers from around the UK and beyond.

BCRA Science Symposium, Saturday 11 October 2025

**BCRA Cave Science Symposium, AGM & Field Trips
11th/12th October 2025**



**School of Geographical Sciences
University of Bristol
Field Trips including Pen Park Hole, Bristol**

The 2025 BCRA Cave & Karst Science Symposium and AGM will take place on Saturday 11 October 2025 at the University of Bristol. Street address: School of Geographical Sciences, University Road, Bristol, BS8 1SS.

This will be hosted by David Richards, Fiona Whitaker and Linda Wilson.

As details become available they will appear on the [BCRA website](#).

This will be a live event but, hopefully, will also be streamed.

A call for papers will be circulated shortly with details to follow of field trips/workshops on Sunday 12 October.

BCRA's Annual General Meeting will also take place on Saturday 11 October 2025 immediately prior to the lunch break.
