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Cave The Sun – 31st May – Report and Accounts

Whilst the numbers weren't exceptional, those who turned up had a great evening enjoying good company and a very tasty hog roast. Overall, the event made a small loss of £80.32. The caving part of the event during the day didn't seem to resonate with cavers, with no teams entering.

It is important for CSCC should run events like this to promote itself, but some thought needs to be given to attracting more people.

I would like to thank the volunteers who put in a great deal of time and effort: Faye Litherland and Ann Cooke on catering, Dave King, Kat and Sue Hargraves, Nick Powell running the bar, Helen Dear ordering the cups and finally but by no mean least Dave Keegan for managing the entire event.

David Cooke

August 2025

Income

Door	125.00	
Hog Roast	210.00	
Bar	242.00	
Cups (28 sold)	56.00	
Pork Sales	50.00	Total Income 683.00

Expenditure

Hall	220.00	
1/2 Pig	140.52	
Calor Gas	47.50	
Rolls, Stuffing, Sauce, etc.	58.83	
FL Travel	36.00	
Beer	129.30	
Wine etc	32.39	
DK Travel	49.05	
Cups	49.73	Total Expenditure 763.32
		Surplus/(Loss) (80.32)

Conservation & Access Report to the CSCC Meeting 18th August 2025

Longleat (Cheddar caves)

A final draft of the Access Agreement was submitted to Longleat and their Estates Director confirmed it was acceptable. A CSCC EGM was held to ratify the agreement and elect two officers to sign it. Following this, a date, the 8th August, was set with Longleat to sign the agreement. In the meanwhile, an inspection trip was arranged to Lloyd Hall in Gough's cave. The purpose of the trip was to inspect the various fixed aids and platforms installed some years ago by the Cave Diving Group. The Technical Officer of the CDG, Mike Thomas, accompanied me. All the bolts and fixed ladders were found to be in good order. The wooden decking on the Hauling Platform seems solid but probably needs replacing and the decking on the Diver's Platform definitely needs replacing (once the several tons of silt have been removed from it). The CDG will undertake this work once access is restored. Dave Cooke and I attended the signing meeting on the 8th but, unfortunately, Georgia Verdon (Longleat's Estates Manager) explained that the legal review of the agreement has not yet been completed and thus they could not sign the agreement. She is hoping the review will be completed during the week commencing 11th August 2025.

Eastwater Cavern

A report was received of a broken ladder. This is the one mentioned in the Mendip Underground that leads down to the balcony overlooking the Chamber of Horrors. A CSCC bulletin was sent out to warn people. Having reviewed the situation, with a number of different cavers who have recently visited this area, it transpires that the ladder is rarely used and thus there is no intention to replace it.

Stoke Lane Slocker



A report was received from Pete Hall that a large boulder has been deliberately dropped into the entrance of Stoke Lane Slocker. He managed to move it to one side but it was severely restricting access. An inspection visit was undertaken. The boulder was quite large (triangular 1m by 0.5m at the base and around 0.5m thick). Judging by the scuff marks around the entrance, the boulder had been forced in rather than being washed in. The boulder succumbed to plug and feathers and the resultant pieces were used to form a rough wall to the right of the stream sink. Whilst there, the opportunity was taken to remove a lot of debris from the stream sink and this was stashed behind

the new wall (see picture below).



Thrupe Lane Swallet

An assessment visit to Butt's Chamber, in Thrupe Lane Swallet, was completed. The purpose of the visit was to look at the options to stabilise the large boulder that was on the move and threatening to block access from Perseverance Pot. It was decided the best approach would be to build a wall up, underneath the boulder, to support it. Three working trips were undertaken. A large quantity of sand and cement (some 300kg of materials) were transported through Hobnail Hole and used to complete the wall. The CSCC contributed £50 towards the materials. A report from Atlas is being prepared for publication.

Rickford Farm Cave

The owner of Rickford Farm got in touch, via Jude Vanderplank, to ask if it would be possible to arrange for her to visit Rickford Farm Cave. A date was set and the trip took place without incident. The cave is only some 50m long but is very well decorated in parts. There were no conservation issues and the landowner very much enjoyed the experience. Due to the location of the entrance (in the garden of a private residence – under the flower trough in the picture), the landowner does not want to allow general access. However, anyone with a valid reason may be allowed access and should contact the CSCC C&A Officer to seek permission.



Waterwheel Swallet

A report was received from Ruth Revell that the traverse rope, beside the lake at the bottom of the cave, was in a very poor state. An inspection visit was undertaken and, indeed, the rope was worn down to the core and only a few of the cores were still intact. The old rope was removed and a replacement has been put in place.

Hilliers Cave

The padlock on Hilliers Cave, in Fairy Cave Quarry, was vandalised and a replacement padlock has been provided. I believe Dave King has installed it and also took the opportunity to grease the hinges and slide bolt.

Stock Hill Mine Cave

The exploration of Stock Hill Mine Cave has been completed. Over the last 7 years, some 1.5km of passageway has been discovered by the diggers. The cave offers a rather sporting trip with some unusual geology on display. A survey is available and a full description has been written for the forthcoming version of Mendip Underground. The diggers would like the CSCC to takeover access control and they are happy having a CSCC padlock installed. *[This was approved at the August meeting]*

The entrance is in Stock Hill Woods and thus falls under the existing access arrangement with the Forestry Commission. The existing lid is fit-for-purpose but would benefit from having a mechanism to allow it to be locked and unlocked from the inside. I will approach the BCA to see if they would be willing to fund this.

Harridge Woods

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

Pressure Washers

The Wealden Cave and Mine Society have borrowed the CSCC pressure washers, along with a supply of pig tail risers and conservation tape for a clean-up project. We look forward to receiving a report of their achievements in due course. *[see latest update in this newsletter]*

Miscellaneous

A few minor tasks have been completed. These include:-

- A new style CSCC key was sent to the South Wales Caving Club as they appear to only have had to older “Pipaz” style key.
- The locks at Wookey Hole Cave have recently been changed. This shouldn’t be an issue for official trips, as the keys are collected from the hotel for each visit. A copy of the new set of keys has been collected on behalf of MCR.

Future Priorities

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

- 1) Agree a formal access agreement for the Caves of Cheddar Gorge
- 2) Arrange and complete the training of wardens for the Cheddar Caves
- 3) Finalise the access arrangements (on-line facilities) for Harridge Woods
- 4) Seek BCA Funding for Stock Hill Mine Cave lid modifications

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

Wayne Starsmore, C&A Officer

CSCC BCA REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORT TO THE 2025 AGM

Since our last meeting, the BCA AGM has taken place. I was unable to attend due to a domestic crisis (looking after a dog recovering from a broken leg). I gather that attendance was poor, despite attempts to return to an in person event but with hybrid attendance via Zoom. In total I think there were 15 present, with about a 50:50 split between in person and Zoom. Set against the number of members BCA has, that is a minuscule number and disappointing for the officers who worked hard to make it a success. Low attendance can be read in different ways. One possibility is that cavers are simply not interested enough to attend a meeting of their national body and that the national body is somehow at fault for not engaging them enough. Another possibility is that as cavers are still able to go caving, there aren’t enough burning issues to bring them out to a meeting. In other words, there’s nothing that they want to complain enough about to do it in person. I’ve been in or around national and regional ‘politics’ for more years than I care to remember, and based on that experience, the latter explanation is the most likely one. I chaired CSCC for around 12 years and we only had packed meetings when, for whatever reason, a cave was closed or there was a significant perceived or actual threat (even the suggested installation of a spiral staircase to turn Bar Pot into a show cave was enough to pack a meeting in the Hunters!). Experience across a range of organisations I belong to shows that this holds true whatever the subject matter, so I certainly don’t feel that BCA are in any way to blame for low engagement at the AGM.

The two motions put the membership by electronic vote after the meeting both passed, with about 250 people engaging in the voting process.

At the last BCA Council meeting, Council had to consider two matters of particular and linked importance, namely the Business Risk Assessment and the proposed fee increase. I was one of the small group who worked with Chris Bolton, BCA Treasurer to read and comment on the drafts. I did this on two occasions and thought this was an excellent document and I agreed with the assessments and the conclusions. Tied to this was the question of the level of reserves BCA needs to

hold, which is also inextricably linked to the question of the membership fees. BCA appreciates that our member clubs had very little time to digest these documents when I was cleared to send these out, as Chris wanted Council to have seen them first. In future, the executive will aim to send out major papers out in advance of the formal meeting agendas to allow time for more consideration by the clubs.

I received a query from one member club (the BEC) in advance of the meeting, which I passed on. I also received a request from our chair to seek deferral of the decisions on the Risk Assessment the level of reserves and, by extension, the fee increase. I raised these points, as requested. The short answer was that the Risk Assessment, once adopted, could always be revised by later discussion and agreement, but the one thing Chris as Treasurer was unwilling to compromise on was the level of reserves as BCA can't keep high reserves without a further increase beyond the one already proposed. He also stated that it would not be possible to offer discounted rates to club members as on that basis, the rates for direct individual members would need to increase further. On that basis, I voted in favour of accepting the Business Risk Assessment and the proposed fee increase.

Chris commented that he intended to make it clearer that clubs receive more benefits through BCA than simply insurance and he was putting together information for further comms in that regard.

Following the meeting, Chris sent me, as promised, a longer reply to the points raised by the BEC regarding fees, and in particular the fees relating to the 'non-caving' members. I circulated this to all clubs as all clubs had seen the initial comments. Following this, I had further dialogue with the BEC regarding Chris' reply and I have passed all the comments on to him as he was keen to have the feedback. He is still considering several of the points that I passed on.

The only other feedback I received was from a member club (White Rabbit) who are not a member of BCA and felt that Chris' response in some way implied that membership of BCA for clubs was a necessity. I confirmed that this was not the case and that Chris' reply was in the context of members, not non-members. I accepted their comments that an effective insurance monopoly is not necessarily healthy but this has always been the case apart from a brief period many years ago when DCA had its own insurance scheme and unless someone is able to set up another viable scheme, the insurance monopoly will remain with the national body, which is not dissimilar to the situation for other outdoor sports.

Following the last CSCC meeting, Joshitha Shivkumar came forward and offered to shadow me in the BCA role. I was delighted by the offer and this was accepted by the officers. Joshitha has now been added to the mailing lists for CSCC officers and BCA Council. She attended the last BCA Council meeting as well. BCA are also keen to bring in some form of officer shadowing or 'deputy' roles and are watching how this works out for CSCC with interest.

The length of time it has taken to deal with both this report and the correspondence before and after the meeting have made the comment in my last report that 'the job is not onerous' something of an underestimate! I hope Joshitha hasn't been put off by this, but honestly, the job isn't usually this time-consuming ...

As ever, if you have any questions or issues relating to BCA, please contact me and I'll do my best to respond/help where I can.

Linda Wilson

Joshitha Shivkumar

BCA Representative(s)

Footnote: a letter from Chris Bolton to all BCA members follows:



British Caving Association

Dear BCA member,

treasurer@british-caving.org.uk

26 August 2025

As BCA Treasurer, I would like to explain why it will be necessary to increase membership fees for 2026. To put it in context, I'll first summarise what the BCA does for British caving, and why it needs money. BCA membership is sometimes seen as just an addition to club membership fees for 'insurance', but there's actually a lot more to BCA than insurance.

BCA was set up as an overall national body to collect membership fees on behalf of all its constituent bodies, disburse funds out to them and negotiate a much cheaper 'bulk buy' insurance policy. Much of what it pays for doesn't have BCA on the label.

Your membership fees fund all the Regional Caving Councils, who in turn fund access and conservation, stabilising and improving entrances, training for cavers, and fixed equipment such as anchors and ladders. BCA makes a contribution to the costs of the British Caving Library and the Ghar Parau Foundation, which assists caving expeditions. BCA's Youth and Development team works with student groups and others to ensure that there are young cavers coming into the sport. Qualifications for professional caving instructors are managed by BCA but are self funding.

For clubs and non-caving members, the main benefit is insurance, at a cost much lower than obtainable directly. The insurers insist that, for a club to be insured, all members including non-cavers must be BCA members.

Ten years ago, BCA had spare money in the bank and decided this would be better spent on improvements for cavers. Membership fees were reduced, so have been artificially low, and should really have been raised several years ago. The spare reserves have been spent, income is less than expenditure and nothing can be cut without reducing what we do for cavers. Over half our income is spent on insurance. Internal costs are mostly for IT and part-time staff, as everything else is done by volunteers. The tight budget I had to apply for 2025 is squeezing the funding for Regional Councils.

We have initiatives to make BCA more effective and more efficient but can't do that without funds. To put our fees into context, the individual member rate for 2026 will be £32, the same as when BCA was founded 21 years ago. Compared to our sister organisations, £32 is low. Renewal of adult membership of Paddle UK is now £49 and for BMC it's £53.

If you'd like more detail, the proposal that was approved by the July meeting of BCA Council can be read [here](#). I will be at Hidden Earth and happy to talk further.

Your support keeps caving funded, helping staff and volunteers to do the necessary work to sustain our sport and move the organisation forward.

Yours in caving,

Chris Bolton, Treasurer (BCA)

CSCC Treasurer's Report - August 2025

2024's completed and examined accounts are published below.

2025 Spending Since May 2025

A further, £654 was spent on costs towards Cave the Sun Event, on top of the £220 spent as reported to the last meeting.

The Conservation Officer was reimbursed £50 for construction materials for Thrupe Lane and the Equipment Officer was reimbursed £57 for a Resin Purchase. We have also made the £25 Harridge Woods, Somerset Wildlife Trust donation.

Proposed New Clubs

No New Clubs

Tom Harrison August 2025

CSCC Accounts Summary 2024

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st December 2024

		2024	2023
		£	£
Income			
Subs		30.00	30.00
Donations		-	-
Net Interest		2.28	1.46
BCA Funding	note 1	836.00	5,188.00
Sundry		-	-
Somerset Community Fund Grant for Maine's Barn		-	2,000.00
Gate Sale		-	100.00
Key Sales		30.75	40.00
Total Income		899.03	7,359.46
Expenditure	note 2	Core	
Officer Travel Expenses	note 3	74.75	-
Web Server		23.07	23.07
Resin		64.99	64.99
C&A – Harridge Wood		25.00	25.00
2022 Photography Course		-	50.00
Singing River Gate		-	800.00
Maillons		-	36.00
Maine's Barn Renovation		-	1,984.50
Total Expenditure		187.81	113.06
Surplus / (Deficit)		785.97	4,488.96

Statement of Funds Available as at 31st December 2024

	2024	2023
Balance brought forward from previous year	£	£
Current account	4,654.17	206.67
Reserve account	147.42	105.96
Cash	-	-
	4,801.59	312.63
 Surplus / (Deficit)	 785.97	 4,488.96
 Balance carried forward to next year	 5,587.56	 4,801.59
 At 31st December		
Current account	5427.11	4,654.17
Reserve account	160.45	147.42
Cash	-	-
Accounts Payable: Travel Exp. Note 3	(74.75)	-
Funds Available	5,512.81	4,801.59

Notes

1. Previous year's BCA claim paid in full.
2. Core expenditure is claimable from BCA. The 2024 claim will be £187.81.
3. Travel expenses claim received but not yet paid.

At the year end, membership was 40 clubs of which 39 were also BCA members.

Honorary Scrutineer's Report

I have examined the above accounts. In my opinion they are in accordance with the Council's accounting records and explanations provided.

Graham Mullan

CSCC Equipment Officer's Report - August 2025

Anchor(s) were reported loose on the Sago's Pot in Hunters Hole. Matty and I check and although there is movement it is within the acceptable limits, but only just, it probably should go on the non-urgent replacement list.

Longwood Valley Swallet has had another 16 anchors placed, in various different locations, thanks to Matty and Pete Buckley.

An attempt has been made to change the anchors on Gladman's and Lolly Pot in Eastwater Cavern. It did not go well. The anchors that were in there snapped with a very low force. Currently it is unlikely that the pitches can be rigged safely.

Andrew Atkinson, Equipment Officer

Footnote: The problem with Gladman's and Lolly Pot are now resolved. Mainly, the spits were drilled out and an anchor placed in the same hole, with additional anchors added to meet modern standards.

There are four anchors on Gladman's, two backups and two main hangs. Three on Lolly, two backup and one main hang. At some point in the future a further anchor may be added to Lolly, however the 10mm spit caused problems, the core bit was not long enough to remove it and then snapped.

Shadowing the Communications Officer

Now that the concept of shadowing CSCC Officers has been accepted and adopted in the cases of BCA Representative and Equipment Officer, I would like to invite you to consider whether you are interested in shadowing the Communications Officer. It is possibly the least onerous of the various roles, especially if you enjoy, or are interested in, writing and compiling newsletters, emails, news items etc.

There are several tools at my disposal, none of which are particularly hard to use. We have a handy tool for writing news items for direct inclusion into the CSCC website, Mailchimp is a handy system for putting out emails to the CSCC mailing list (this is just a list of newsletter/email subscribers which anybody can sign up for regardless of club status etc), we have a Facebook page, and CSCC has an account with the UKCaving forum where simple notices can be posted very quickly. There is also a Distribution List for emails that are sent directly to all club representatives.

There are four newsletters which are published as soon as possible after each of the Council meetings that are held throughout the year. Any notices which need to be distributed with greater urgency can be sent to any or all of the outlets listed above, as is appropriate.

A shadow for my position would have access to each of the channels described and would be encouraged to distribute communications on the occasions when I am not available, and likewise attend and report to Council as required.

No printed communications are distributed nowadays.

It would also be very useful to have someone to come up with ideas for short news items for the newsletter. In this respect, someone with a good feel for what southern cavers get up to would be ideal, but not essential

Please consider whether you would be interested in getting involved and get in touch with me directly.

Peter Burgess, Communications Officer,

comms@csc.org.uk

Mine Conservation Work in Surrey – Graffiti-Cleaning



CSCC pressure-washer used to remove new graffiti. Photo: Peter Burgess

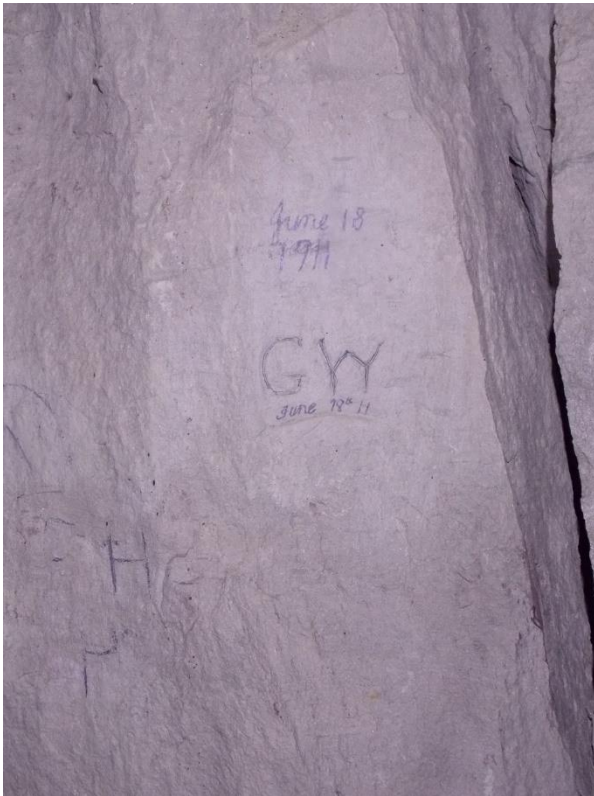
In the previous issue of the CSCC Newsletter, I described the Wealden Cave and Mine Society plans to restore some localised areas of stal floor in a mine at Merstham using the CSCC pressure washers. The plan was to continue with this into the summer and to tape off the restored floors using pigtail risers and new tape.

In the event, the exceptionally dry season caused our only convenient water source to dry up, and this is unlikely to be restored for a few months, once the drought has properly broken.



In the meantime, an unfortunate incident occurred during a guided visit wherein some important inscriptions had new scribbles plastered over them. These were made using some pieces of badly rotting wood and the new graffiti, we judged, would be easy to remove, but this would still need care to avoid damaging the original pencil inscriptions. The washers have a high and low pressure setting so obviously we chose the low setting for this task.

New graffiti daubed over interesting inscription from 1911. Photo: Peter Burgess



As the damaged graffiti is fairly close to the entrance and would probably not require a huge volume of water to clean, it was a simple matter to carry in a portable water container along with one pressure washer and some tape and pins to protect the area once restored.

The restoration was quickly achieved but only by using the washer very judiciously so as not to dislodge the original pencil writing. A small area of the old writing was inadvertently removed in the process but as there were good photos of it, this was an easy thing to restore.

The main routes of the system have suffered in previous years from spray painted yellow arrows and since there was plenty of water left the opportunity was taken to see if the pressure washer would be capable of removing one of these. Unfortunately, this was only partially successful, despite using the higher pressure setting.

Restored panel of 1911 graffiti. Photo: Peter Burgess



Before and after – painted arrow mostly removed but still visible. Photos: Peter Burgess

Footnote: the graffiti dates from 1911 which is when the mine-workings were revealed by a deluge on 31st May – the Derby Day Thunderstorm. The current entrance was washed open by the storm and the mine was explored by some local people in the following months. As such the inscriptions are a nice survivor from the early years of exploration.

Peter Burgess, Wealden Cave and Mine Society



1911 graffiti panel protected by new taping using pig-tail riser pins. Photo: Peter Burgess

Forthcoming events

26-28 Sept 2025 Hidden Earth, Llangollen

Sat 11 Oct 2025 BCRA Cave Science Symposium, Bristol

Proposed Future meeting Dates

Monday 10 Nov 2025 19:00 GM Zoom

Monday 02 Feb 2026 23:59 Notification to members of AGM, [This is the notification.](#)

Monday 9 Feb 2026 19:00 GM Zoom

Friday 13 March 2026 23:59 Deadline for AGM nominations

Friday 13 March 2026 19:00 Deadline for AGM constitutional amendments

Tuesday 1 April 2026 23:59 Notification to members of AGM nominations

Friday 8 May 2026 19:00 AGM Zoom

Hidden Earth 2025, 26th-28th September – Bookings Open



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.

You can now submit your lectures, film presentation or workshop for Hidden Earth 2025!

We wouldn't have an event if we didn't have lots of exciting lectures so we encourage all cavers to submit a talk, film or workshop. You can submit your abstract online and at the time of writing there were still a few lecture slots available.

It doesn't have to be about exploration or something new, any interesting cave or mine related topic is always great to have!

Submit online now: <https://hidden.earth/lectures/>

Bookings for the event can be made at: <https://hidden.earth/tickets/>

**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.

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