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### 11<sup>th</sup> November Council Meeting – highlights

This is a short summary of the meeting. Only the minutes of the meeting should be referenced as an authoritative record. Minutes are stored at <https://csccl.org.uk/wiki/documents/start>

#### *Cave Access Developments*

Harridge Woods: A new access arrangement to be set up between CSCC and Somerset Wildlife Trust was agreed, for access to caves etc. in Harridge Woods. Details are to be finalised, but it will be similar to that set up for the Charterhouse Caving Company. Many thanks to Wayne Starsmore for working on this.

Caves at Loxton: Access control to caves at Loxton has been established between Cerberus Speleological Society and Loxton Parish Council, but it has been agreed that in due course CSS will recommend that this arrangement will transfer from them to CSCC.

Cheddar Gorge: A comprehensive access agreement between Longleat Estates and CSCC has been drafted and accepted by the Longleat board.

We are now in the process of writing up a formal definition of the agreement. This is quite a major exercise as it needs to cover Access Conditions and Procedures, the required Warden system, Conservation and Warden training plans for each cave, etc. We also need to implement an on-line “User Agreement” system and trip reporting process. It is hoped that this work will all be completed by the end of November. We can then start training Wardens, with a view to having trips starting in January 2025.

The agreement covers recreational caving, caving diving and cave digging, initially for Reservoir Hole, Spider Hole and Gough's Cave. Hopefully we can expand this in the future to cover the other sites of interest in the Gorge.

Singing River Mine: The Singing River Mine access agreement has now been in place for 12 months and is running smoothly. During this time there have been 17 trips, involving some 100 cavers.

Wookey Hole Cave: The access agreement with Wookey has run without issue over the past three months. There have been 8 trips since the August CSCC meeting, involving some 48 cavers.

Bethel Quarry, Bradford-upon-Avon: There have been problems with unauthorised access to this former stone quarry later mushroom farm. Wayne Starsmore has contacted the owner, who, it transpires, has no wish for CSCC to get involved in a resolution to this issue.

*Anchors etc.*

Mangle Hole: Andrew Atkinson informed us that someone has suggested replacing the anchors on Window and Balcony Pitches. Inspection reveals that they are fine, and there is probably no urgency to replace them. As they approach end of life, a stainless replacement might be considered.

Hunters Hole: A loose anchor has been replaced.

Swildon's Hole: The anchors between Sump 2 and Sump 3 have been replaced. See separate report below.

*New Blood*

A proposal to introduce a scheme of shadowing for CSCC officers was discussed. The idea was accepted in principle, whereby each officer could use an assistant which would provide an easy way for newer and younger blood to get involved in running CSCC. Ways to promote this idea were considered. Club reps were encouraged to invite club members to join the online council meetings as observers to break the barrier of unfamiliarity. A well-promoted CSCC event next year was thought to be another possible channel for involving more people. Assistants would not be elected officers, but appointees.

*More than just Boring Meetings*

A few years ago, CSCC would organise an event in Somerset to bring southern cavers together for a fun weekend. This has fallen out of favour since Covid, but wouldn't it be good to start something new again? There was a discussion about what sort of event we might set up for 2025.

A cave-visiting competition seemed to create the most enthusiasm amongst the reps!

If you are keen to help organise a fun event next year, please contact the Chairman with your ideas. [chair@csccl.org.uk](mailto:chair@csccl.org.uk)

*Money*

Do you know where CSCC gets money to undertake all the activities that get agreed at meetings? In a nutshell, it is primarily from the BCA. However, BCA are considering changing the

way regional councils can claim reimbursement for expenses incurred, and this created some lively debate at the meeting. It was agreed that the concerns expressed at the meeting would be taken to the BCA Finance Committee (effectively a group of Regional Council treasurers). It was felt that BCA might not be fully aware of the unintended consequences of the proposed changes, which could remove a regional council's expectation or right for claims to be met without question.

#### *Exploratory Anchor Guidelines*

Andrew Atkinson has drafted some guidelines for placing anchors in new explorations. The introduction explains the need to have such a document:

*When a new pitch or other vertical feature is found whilst exploring new passage, there is often a fever to explore and survey as quickly as possible. However, if the explorers are lucky enough to discover significant or interesting cave beyond there is a real likelihood that the obstacle will need to be passed by many other cavers in the future.*

*Good rigging often can only be done in very limited places, so the placement of the 'exploratory' anchors is important as they may reduce the possibilities for future rigging.*

The full guidelines were discussed and adopted at the meeting and will be available on the CSCC website for reference.

#### *CSCC Website news*

Moving the website away from the BCA server to Krystal, the new Internet provider, continues. Cookie has been evaluating alternatives to the mailing list software that we use as it has gone end of life and can no longer be used. Testing has been done on some software called Sympa. It does what is required and in many ways is an improvement on Mailman 2. It is not the easiest to setup so work is ongoing.

The new Harridge Woods access agreement requires a permit system similar to the one Cookie wrote for the Charterhouse Caving Company. This has now been done. Once the wording of the permit and associated text has been agreed it will go live. It will be available at <https://hwpermits.csc.org.uk>.

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## **Obituary – Tony Boycott**

### **ANTONY BOYCOTT**

1st April 1951 - 7th June 2024

Antony Boycott, known as Tony to his many friends, was born in Westminster Hospital, London. Tony went to Emanuel School in Battersea, south London, then came to Bristol in 1969 to study biochemistry but after a year, he changed direction to study medicine. He joined UBSS in his first year and remained a member for the rest of his life. His first caving trip (other than to showcaves with his parents) was on 4th October 1969 to Sump 1 in Swildon's Hole.

While a student, Tony also took up cave diving. In July 1975 he became the first person to extend a cave by diving in Scotland, passing two sumps in Cnoc nam Uamh to discover over 60m of passage. Much of his diving at that time was as part of the UBSS's exploration of the Little Neath

River Cave. He was also involved in discoveries made by cave diving in Morocco, in the company of Peter Glanvill and the late Ray Stead.

On graduation, Tony took a series of hospital jobs in Cornwall and then in Swindon. He moved back to Bristol to join a GP practice in Bedminster, eventually becoming senior partner, but disliked the administrative side of the job and so became a full-time locum in Bristol, able to step into surgeries anywhere in the city with ease. This change allowed him the freedom to spend more time caving abroad. He was an active member of Mendip Cave Rescue and was regularly called on for incidents in South Wales as well, including the two-day rescue of an injured caver from the far end of Southern Stream Passage in Agen Allwedd. Tony's competent pragmatism meant that he was always in demand as an expedition doctor, going on many trips to places like Megalaya in India and the Blue Holes of the Bahamas. UBSS member Charlie Self nicknamed him AB(Dr) and that stuck.



*Photo: Linda Wilson*



Mark Lumley, who caved frequently in Ogof Daren Cilau with Tony said that his combination of skills as a rescue doctor and the holder of an explosives licence made him the ideal companion on long digging trips.

Tony became UBSS Librarian when he returned to Bristol and he worked tirelessly for many years in that role and as Sales Manager and Archivist. He was made an Honorary Member of the Society in 2014. Tony was an extremely competent and thorough researcher and contributed to many papers in UBSS Proceedings, with the final one appearing in the latest issue. He also produced the information on the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> in caves that can be found on the CSCC website.

Tony had a long association with caving in Ireland, particularly Co. Clare, and he visited there as often as he could, exploring, diving, surveying and documenting the caves. He made enormous contributions to all the guides that UBSS produced from 1981 onwards. In later years he spent much time digging there, often with Pat Cronin who nicknamed him 'Popeye' owing to his strength and skill in manoeuvring heavy objects in and out of cave digs.

Tony's caving logs run to several volumes in which he recorded all his underground trips, many of which involved the use of explosives in search of new cave passage. He was involved in numerous breakthroughs, including to the Frozen Deep in Reservoir Hole on Mendip and he made significant contributions to exploration under Llangattock in South Wales. Tony remained an enthusiastic digger throughout his caving career. Away from Britain and Ireland, he caved and dived in Morocco, India, Greece, Slovenia, France, Romania, Sulawesi, America, Thailand, Pakistan, the Maldives, Malta, Patagonia, Egypt, the Galapagos and Madagascar.

Tony caught covid early in the pandemic, which led to considerable physical and mental fatigue, now recognized as long covid. This exhaustion unfortunately passed into the symptoms of his brain tumour, a diagnosis in April 2022 that came as a shock to everyone, although perhaps not so much to Tony himself. He faced the knowledge of an incurable cancer with the same calm pragmatism that he brought to all medical matters. As far as his condition would allow, he continued to be an active caver and digger even after his surgery to remove the tumour, followed by radiotherapy and eight months of chemotherapy. On Tony's last caving trip in June 2023 down Upper Canada Cave on Mendip, he enthusiastically pointed out the entrance scaffolding that he had worked on, describing it as his 'favourite scaffolding' a phrase that few cavers could lay claim to with such ease. He insisted on crawling and wriggling almost to the end of the cave, whilst effusively describing its geology and mineralogy as well as insisting that the squeeze wasn't really worthy of the name.

The treatment gave him two valuable years that he otherwise would not have had and he remained free of the cancer at the time of his death from an infection, although he had become increasingly tired as time wore on. Tony was admitted to the Garden House at St. Monica's Care Home in May 2024 and died peacefully there.

Tony was one of the kindest, nicest people anyone could wish to meet. He was an excellent caving companion, a good friend to everyone who knew him and he will be missed by many. Tony was, in the words of one of the lively songs played at his funeral, a 'caver to the core'.

**Linda Wilson (UBSS)**

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## **Some News in Brief**

### **The Mendip Hills Fund - now open for applications**

The following invitation has been received from the Mendip Hills Fund – get your applications in quickly!

*As a previous applicant to the Mendip Hills Fund, I thought you might be interested to know that the Fund is once again open to grant applications for requests of up to £2,000.*

*More information on the Mendip Hills Fund can be found here*

*<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/grants-funding/details/mendip-hills-fund/>*

*If you would like to consider applying please make sure your group meets the criteria and read through our FAQs*

*<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/grants-and-funding/faqs-for-groups/>*

*Applications need to be submitted by 5pm on Monday 2 December. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.*

*Kirsty Campbell (she/her), Senior Programmes Manager*

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### **Caving items in The Mendip Times to continue**

Since Phil Hendy passed away the MCRA is continuing on from his caving articles in the Mendip Times. They can be viewed online. A link to them is

<https://www.mcra.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=articles:mendiptimes>

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## The J-Rat Digging Award for 2024

The poster below speaks for itself.....



**16<sup>th</sup> Year!**

*J Rat*

# Digging Award 2024

Saturday  
23<sup>rd</sup> November  
From 19.30 hrs

**Long Room  
Hunters  
Lodge  
Inn**

Annual competition  
for the longest  
new discovery  
under Mendip or  
Scotland between  
Nov 1 2023 and  
31 Oct 2024.

Presentations on  
the latest finds  
and digs that  
haven't gone  
... yet!

Submissions over  
50m in length by  
4th November to:  
[m.grass@btinternet.com](mailto:m.grass@btinternet.com)

*Keep on diggin'*

Graphics by Gonzo



## Reigate stone for the Tower of London

Having been approached by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), Wealden Cave and Mine Society (WCMS) has successfully provided two large blocks of Reigate stone from the quarries at Godstone, Surrey, for a major restoration project at the Tower of London. This was with the site owners' enthusiastic support. It was due to WCMS's earlier collaboration with HRP (or HRP as they used to be) over the past 25 years that the club was contacted.



*Removing the first block. Sadly, no quarry ponies were available. Photo: Steve Woolven CPAGB*

The new stone was required to replace the lowest part of a cruciform arrow slit window, which being of Reigate stone was barely recognisable as such after many centuries. The stone was found in the quarry in the form of two sections of pillar which had become detached some decades ago, so they were not of historical or archaeological significance, but could be identified with absolute certainty as being from the right stone bed and not from the roof beds.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, a team gathered at Godstone to extract the required blocks. Each block was reduced to a manageable size using SDS drill and

wedges, and then loaded onto a wheeled dolly and then dragged to the entrance. Each block was then transferred onto a sled and hauled up a makeshift ramp to land just outside the entrance. A HIAB truck then lifted the blocks onto the vehicle deck and they were driven away to the mason's yard to be dressed as required for the job.

Three WCMS members were invited in September to visit the conservation work at the Tower of London. It was a privilege to see the work being done overall as well as the results of our efforts. Two blocks were requested by HRP to mitigate the risk of the first one being unsuitable or breaking during carving, but only one was needed. This means HRP have a spare block for any future work necessary at the Tower.

Caving gets you into some interesting places!

**Peter Burgess (Wealden Cave and Mine Society)**

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## **Report – CSCC Representative to the BCA – October 2024**

I believe that as a region we should support the BCA treasurer's proposal regarding how regional funding for C&A should work. The ability for regions to spend up to £3000 without prior approval is incompatible with the need to have sensible budgeting which the organization needs to remain afloat.

The BCA's Youth and Development Officer has stood down and there is a proposal before council to co-opt Isaac Neale. I fully support this and believe that Isaac will do a good job in the role.

I also support the increasing involvement of paid staff in the work that goes into keeping the insurance scheme running as this will allow the continuity the role has come to need.

The BCA's new membership system has gone live thanks to sterling work by Kate Eavis. Clubs can now manage their own membership on the system. Full details of how to do this have been sent to club contacts. If you have not received this, please contact Katie. I encourage everyone to engage with the system as much as possible.

**Linda Wilson**

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### **Renewal of anchors – Swildons Hole between sumps 2-3**

On Monday 14th October Pete Hall and Andrew Atkinson, visited Swildons Hole to replace the anchor that had been reported loose, between sumps 2 and 3. The sheath of the original anchor was found to be corroded and had to be extracted in pieces. With this in mind, it was decided that as we had the waterproof drill and the rest of the paraphernalia, we would replace the other anchor as it too was likely to be corroded. As it happened it was in good condition, however it was already out, so a shiny new one was placed. Thanks to Pete for his help and his return trip later in the week to confirm that the resin had set. It was the use of his waterproof drill that made the job significantly easier.

**Andrew Atkinson (Equipment Officer)**

Photos:



1. Removing old anchor



2. Using submersible drill



3. Placing resin for new anchor (Great Bell)



4. New anchor with white dive line to Sump 3 and red back-up line to natural belay and Sump 2 (St John's Bell)





5. New anchor with Sump 2 dive line (Great Bell)