

OFFICERS' REPORTS TO DCA COUNCIL MEETING, 24 APRIL 2004

HON. SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Communications

Information Circular 2004/2, March/April 2004, (containing the list of all the DCA Officers elected at the AGM) went out to members in mid-March together with the printed DCA Annual Report for 2003. The Information Circular, (together with two late items: an update on the BCA PL Insurance for cavers and news of the withdrawal of access to Titan) was also e-mailed out to members and placed on the website in April.

The Derbyshire Caver, No. 119 was posted out to members before Easter, (my thanks to Paul Lydon for compiling this excellent issue) together with the Agenda for the Council Meeting.

DCA Handbook updates have been done, (thanks to Terry Jackson) and will be printed and posted out to members a.s.a.p. after this meeting.

Membership update

My thanks to all those who have paid their subscriptions promptly this year - nearly 86% of you. Reminders have been sent out to non-payers and there now only remain unpaid 6 Club Members, 2 Associate Members and 8 Individual Members. We have 3 applications for Individual Membership to consider at this meeting.

Financial Update since the AGM

Major items of expenditure incurred, the first 4 of which are eligible for grant aid:

£ 472	-	Payment of expenses on the Snelslow Project
£ 1003	-	Galvanised mesh for shaft Capping
£ 1060	-	Expenses for the DCA/NCA Cavers Workshop
£ 131	-	New locks for Garden Path entrance
£ 645	-	Club and Associate Members subs passed on to NCA
£ 156	-	Pre-paid envelopes

Major items of income banked have been:

£ 2187	-	Payments on E.N. Contract
£ 640	-	Income from DCA/NCA Cavers Workshop
£ 420	-	NCA Training Grant for DCA/NCA Cavers Workshop
£ 191	-	NCA Conservation grant for 2003
£ 893	-	DCA Club/Associate subscriptions (£60 to be passed on to NCA)
£ 205	-	P.L. Insurance premiums (to be passed on to Perkins Slade)
£ 179	-	Sales of various DCA publications

Note that only **major** items are listed above - there have been many smaller items of expenditure and income.

Current balances are:	Current A/c	£ 394
	Deposit A/c	£ 4126
	Total	£ 4520

Of which approximately £2000 is due to Perkins Slade at some point and £60 is due to NCA at the end of this month.

J.E.Potts, 23 April 2004

TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

It looks like I am in for a very busy time this summer, just as well I have some time coming up to do it!

DCA/NCA Cavers Workshop Saturday & Sunday February 28th & 29th 2004

Saturday

9.30am on a very cold February morning and there was a warm welcome for everyone at the centre. The **Ladder & Line** session was run by Vin Machin to an enthusiastic team. This involved both classroom work and practical sessions outside with lifeline techniques and how to climb frost-covered ladders.

The **SRT Intro** session was run by myself to an audience of very enthusiastic cavers, and as usual I covered everything from equipment, techniques, ropes to floor tile laying. The morning was entirely indoors and the afternoon allowed opportunity for people to try kit on the platform outside.

The **SRT Advanced** session was run by Iain Rennie to an audience of very hypothermic cavers and covered topics beyond just up and down the rope. Iain had ropes running all around the chimney and adjacent walls to keep people busy and warm.

The **SRT Pitch Rigging** session was run by Dave Elliot. Thanks to Dave for stepping in at short notice as Andy Sparrow had to cancel. Dave took his group away somewhere and we never saw any of them ever again.

At the end of the day kit was sold, swapped borrowed and of course stolen by me to re sell on the following day. The evening saw a very entertaining crowd gather at the Woodroffe arms for much food, drink and physical endurance including a crawling under stools competition by two very drunk young ladies to the delight of the male contingency! As the hope valley was quite dark that night on the way back to Pindale, I'm sure the campers were only too pleased when their tents were improved by the addition of chemical fluorescent light at around 1.00am!

Sunday

9.30am and a slightly warmer day was on offer. The sessions were repeated from Saturday by the same instructors. Again, the day was very active and the different tea break times allowed everyone to walk around and observe the other sessions in mid flow.

The Cave Rescue and Fist Aid sessions were cancelled as numbers were low, however the man who made them famous years ago turned up this day for a brew - and stayed all day!!

Mik Starr was a very welcome sight as he has been involved with these workshops from the beginning and he provided us with an extra session of sitting with a brew and learning from other peoples adventures. Thanks Mik, you really are a starr.

My personal thanks go to the following:

Vin Machin, Mik Starr (Eldon Pothole Club), Dave Elliott, Iain Rennie, Paul Deakin, Jenny Potts, Bob Smith & Pete Bates (Chesterfield Caving Club), Becki Atkins, Alf at the Woodroffe arms and Alan Medhurst for the venue. Thanks also go to everyone who supported the event.

Ordnance Survey Outdoors Shows & Media

In February I attended the Outdoor show in London and recently the Outdoor show in Birmingham promoting caving and the DCA for which I sponsored for the stands. DCA also got a mention in the News of the World newspaper when I persuaded a local cave leader to take a reporter caving in January. Thanks to Anne Soulsby and Paul Deakin for their help with this. 2 weeks ago I roped someone in to take a reporter caving from 'Time Out' magazine and I have a TV slot for any new recruits out there!

Training Events Planned for 2004

SRT UNDERGROUND TRIP

This day will be of an informal nature with emphasis on personal techniques improvement. The trip will be run by a CIC holder and all of the ropes etc will be provided. I will sponsor these trips with insurance cover and lend any kit that you need. These trips are not an introduction to SRT, however they are perfect for newcomers or old hands wishing to pick up on techniques etc.

Date: Sunday June 13th 2004

CAVING CLUB TRAINING SCHEME

NCA Participation Statement:- One of the attractions of caving, potholing and exploration of abandoned mines is its adventurous nature. The accident rate in caving is thankfully low but from time to time serious and fatal accidents do occur. It is therefore important that beginners who seek to go caving are aware of and accept the element of risk and take responsibility for their own actions.

I will run another one day training workshop this year to 'train the trainers' and I would encourage any future training officers and potential NCA award candidates to get involved.

Date: Sunday July 25th 2004

SRT TRAINING COURSE

There is another 2 day SRT training course for those who may not be able to get training through their clubs. I have will get some more new Petzl toys to give away (or sell off depending on my mood swings!) **Date: Saturday & Sunday July 10th & 11th 2004**

PRE -ASSESSMENT DAY FOR CAVE LEADERS

This is an excellent opportunity for DCA members to test themselves out. There is no formal charge for this day to DCA members, however I will be expecting a donation made payable to DCRO. Please phone me for availability.

SRT RIGGING AND SRT RESCUE COURSE

The ease and safety of descending vertical caves relies totally on the person doing the rigging as the rope is the sole pathway up and down the pitches. When a pitch is rigged it is not just for the rigger but for the rest of the team, so it is extremely important to provide a safe and efficient hang for the rope. The pitch must be rigged fluently, safely and free from rub points etc. OR NOT AT ALL! and there can be no room for mistakes. The courses are designed and run for those who are proficient in personal S.R.T. Refresher S.R.T. days are available at low cost to people who wish to attend rigging courses.

This Course is available only for SRT proficient people and it has limited places so please book early.

Date: Saturday & Sunday June 26th & 27th 2004

FIRST AID COURSE

Nichola Pickering now has a number of first aid courses running every month. These are designed for people undertaking outdoor activities and I have just attended her last one which was good fun as well as being very informative. Nice one Nichola! She can be contacted on 01298 85688.

*Nigel Atkins, D.C.A. Training Officer
April 24th 2004*

CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT FOR PERIOD FEBRUARY 21ST – APRIL 24TH 2004

Hamps Manifold Audit.

Martin Milner has made great strides towards completing the Audit for this complex and important area and it now runs to over 50 pages. There is still some way to go before the finished publication is ready to hit the shelves, but from what I have seen so far it will be well worth the wait. Paul Mortimer from the National Trust, myself and Pete Mellors are helping Martin at regular meetings held at PDMHS museum. Other people are likely to be involved at a later stage

Shaft Capping Meetings.

At the last meeting it was decided to form a Steering Group with a brief to produce an outline structure for a set of Shaft Capping Guidelines which it was hoped would be adopted by those who are responsible for dealing with our old mine shafts. Those on the steering group have been drawn from English Heritage, The Peak Park, English Nature, DCA and DCC. The remainder of those attending the original meeting will still be involved as "stakeholders" but will meet less frequently for updates and progress reports.

Ashford Black Marble Mine.

Unwanted graffiti recently appeared but has now been removed by the C&A team. The remaining older graffiti and waymarking signs must be left intact. Pete and myself paid a visit recently with John Barnatt who kindly identified what he considers to be the graffiti important enough to leave. On this visit we also cleared up a pile of spent carbide which we have to assume was left by an "experienced caver".

Knotlow Pollution Records.

Following reports of water getting into the ammo box and soaking the record book, I have temporarily removed the book and "waterproof" plastic wallet pending replacement. I have dried the pages and much of it is legible (33 entries) so have typed it up and will laminate a copy to accompany the new book underground. Information regarding this action is on the Hitch and Hike and UK Caving websites.

Conservation Material. At a recent NCA/BCA meeting Elsie Little (NCA C&A Officer) distributed a supply of stainless pegs and 20mm plastic tape which is very similar to the material we use (ours is orange, theirs is red) and I have this for allocation on request.

LCLMA Panel Meeting.

The panel expressed concern that a number of bolts used regularly by centres for additional protection have been "recently" filled in or otherwise rendered unuseable. Giants and P8 were mentioned. I have circulated all interested parties within DCA and will pass back any findings or conclusions.

Bats.

I have recently accompanied members of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Bat Group in a bat "audit" in the Via Gellia and Lathkilldale. This type of exercise provides a useful platform for the exchange of ideas and opinions. We were initially suspicious of each other's motives and attitudes towards the furry creatures but basically all they ask is that we take as much care on discovering a bat as we would if we discovered a well decorated chamber. Two main points – don't congregate beneath a hibernating bat as our body heat will rouse them, and don't shine your headlight directly at them. We found 15 in different locations in the Via Gellia, and 3 in Lathkilldale. They were all Daubenton's.

SSSI Conservation Grant.

The short amount of time given to spend last year's English Nature grant (spend it or loose it!) proved to be a bit of a headache for both Jenny and I but I am pleased to say that I have managed it by spending the balance from Snelslow on galvanised shaft capping mesh which I will store at Magpie Mine pending its use at suitable sites. Next year should be easier. The grant is available to spend only on English Nature approved projects and materials.

Do You Dig Caves.

The new improved leaflet is now available and copies should be available at the meeting. It contains common sense advice on procedures to adopt if you plan to

start a dig. English Nature make it clear that they encourage digging but they do need to know what you're planning if the site is within an SSSI. All the photos for the new leaflet have kindly been donated by local cavers Alan Keen, Robbie Shone and myself.

Lead Rakes Week

This event is planned to run from Saturday May 22nd for one week. The final programme will be out shortly, but the purpose of the event is a worthy one, to raise awareness of our region's rich legacy of lead mining remains to, for example, landowners and the general public. It is sponsored jointly by English Nature, English Heritage, the Peak District National Park Authority and others. We have an interest in maintaining as many old mines as possible for recreational and educational purposes. Please give it your support.

Dave Webb February 2004

ACCESS OFFICERS REPORT

Ashford Black Marble Mine (Rookery Mine).

2 instructors from Thornbridge Outdoors noticed writing and markings on certain walls in Ashford Black Marble (Rookery) Mine. The markings were throughout the mine notably in blue / yellow and white chalk ? and included arrows and 'doodles' such as skull & crossbones etc. A group from Thornbridge visited the mine on Thursday 4th March - where there was no apparent sign of graffiti, but by the following week (Tuesday 9th & Wed 10th March), two instructors reported signs of graffiti and what looked like a track appearing to the other entrance? On inspection of the other entrance, he didn't think anyone had got through this way. Bob Dearman and myself cleared up the damage within a week of notification and I took a few photos. Most of the markings appeared to be crude survey stations etc. The problem is that inspection proved that only the gated entrance is accessible and so someone issued with a white card (which gives the holder "one off" access to a key) must be the culprit. The access arrangement for the site at present is that a few trusted "regular users" and DCA Officers hold green cards, these can be shown at the village shop in return for a key which must be returned that day, the card is retained by the holder for future use. Other visitors must apply for a white card which gives them a limited amount of time to collect a key from the shop, visit the site and return the key. The white card is only used once and is retained by the shopkeeper for DCA to collect.

The current access arrangements for the mine have until now proved adequate in protecting the mine but after collecting the white cards from the shop and Pete Mellors checking his records it appears that far too many white cards have gone awol. These have either been retained by users or lost, so the system is now compromised. A new system is proposed for "unknown" visitors.

Bob Dearman has offered to hold a key at Chelmorton. After application to visit the mine has been received a visitor will after prior arrangement with Bob, call at his home, provide proof of insurance for all members of the party, leave details of identification in the log book and collect a key. This can be dropped through Bobs' letterbox after the trip.

A key will be left at the shop for the "regular users" with green cards to carry on as normal.

It has also been mooted that the historical graffiti in the mine be identified and the modern scribbles be cleared up, this should be discussed.

Peakshill Farm.

With regard to speaking to Steve Baldacci about gaining access to all sites on Peakshill land, I've been out to see him a couple of times and drawn a blank - not to worry, I'll catch him sooner or later!

Iain Barker, April 11th 2004

LEGAL & INSURANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

CRoW 2000

I have compiled and submitted a response on behalf of DCA to a Consultation Paper from DEFRA. The paper presents arguments for and against introducing regulations to differentiate between places currently classed as open to the public and the impending new open access land provided for under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (CRoW 2000).

My response argues the case against introducing regulations that could upset the goodwill on which our access will continue to depend. Among other things, it draws attention to the established contacts that exist between DCA on the one hand and landowners, local authorities, and the statutory conservation and heritage bodies on the other in the matter of securing old mine entrances. DCA's response is probably best put on our website. I understand no NCA response is being made.

Liability Insurance

Late applications to join the DCA scheme continue to trickle in. They are mostly from DCA member clubs. There have also been several late renewals. The latest information I have from the Broker is that our Insurer, Royal & Sun Alliance, feels unable to make a decision on renewal till July when a fresh look at the state of the liability market will be taken. I have not yet received a copy of the BCA Policy to enable me to compare in detail its terms with ours.

Ashford Black Marble Mine

I have worked with the Conservation & Access team to identify and remove the offending graffiti without erasing either the much older and archeologically valued scribbles or the established names given to parts of the Mine. I have also provided details of all access cards issued, to help in identifying the likely culprits. I see my remit here as primarily to ensure that nobody has had an extra key cut for unauthorised use and that no visits are made by uninsured groups using a key of their own or a stray access card.

Peter Mellors, 22 April

NEWSLETTER EDITOR / PUBLICATION OFFICER'S REPORT

Starting with the latest issue, No. 119, of "The Derbyshire Caver", we have the ability to include colour photographs on 2 separate pages.

Luckily there are still enough contributions to produce a reasonable content, with some extra material gleaned from various sources, but these are almost without fail from "the usual suspects". It would be nice to have some other DCA members (or non-members for that matter!) to contribute something.

"Caves of the Peak District" - as discussed at the AGM, it has been decided to go ahead and start work on a re-issue of this definitive guide book. Sam Townsend of Eldon P. C. has agreed to head up the team and has started work on the project.

Paul Lydon, 23 April