

OFFICERS' REPORTS TO DCA COUNCIL MEETING, 17 JULY 2004

5.1 - TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

I am in the middle of a very busy time this summer, so this report will be short and sweet.

DCA/NCA Cavers Workshop February 2005

I will be putting in for a training grant for this. I will also be looking at possible venues and ideas for topics.

Ordnance Survey Outdoor Shows & Media

In April I attended the Outdoor Show in Birmingham promoting caving and the DCA for which I sponsored the stand.

SRT Underground Trips

This day was run on June 13th. with 5 people. I will sponsor another of these trips with insurance cover and lend any kit that you need in the autumn. These trips are not an introduction to SRT, however they are perfect for newcomers or old hands wishing to pick up techniques, etc.

Date: **TBA**

Caving Club Training Scheme

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

SRT Training Course

This was run on Saturday and Sunday July 10th. & 11th. 2004. I will arrange another 2 day SRT training course for those who may not be able to get training through their clubs later in the year. Date: **TBA**

Pre-Assessment Day for Cave Leaders

I have no plans to run this in the near future, however I will set one up if demand requires.

SRT Rigging and SRT Rescue Course

This was run on Saturday & Sunday June 26th. & 27th. 2004. I will look into setting another up later. This course is only for SRT proficient people.

Bolting Programme

I have been speaking with Alan Walker of DCRO with regard to fixed anchors and the placement of bolts in Giants. I have volunteered to set up a training day to look at how we move forward in conjunction with DCRO.

Nigel Atkins, 17 July 2004

5.2 - HON. SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Communications since 24 April

Only one postal circular has been sent out, on 8th. July, consisting of:

- Minutes of the 2004 DCA AGM,
- Minutes of 24 April Council Meeting & Officers' reports,
- Agenda for Council Meeting 17 July,
- Information Circular 2004/3,
- Handbook updates - 8 sheets,
- NCA/BCA Letter re. Parliamentary Bill "EDM 1125 Promotion of Volunteering" (to those without email addresses)
- Hidden Earth 2004 circular/booking form,
- For DCA Individual Members only, the final issue of NCA SPELEOScene.

I have sent out 5 emailed circulars to all members for whom I have email addresses:

- On 3 May - notification of DCA Training Events (text format),
- On 18 June - Notification of Derbyshire Dales District Council draft "Abseiling Licence" (text format)
- On 22 June - DCA Information Circular 2004/3 plus NCA/BCA Letter re. Parliamentary Bill (PDF format),
- On 8 July - Agenda for Council Meeting 17 July (PDF format),
- On 16 July - Request on behalf of DCA Newsletter Editor for contributions to No. 120 (text format)

I am in discussion with the DCA Webmaster re. the possibility of placing DCA Minutes and Officers' Reports on the Website as well as information Circulars and other information documents. If we take this approach it has the potential to save DCA between £700 and £800 a year in postage and printing but we have to be careful that we do not exclude those who do not have internet access. We would expect still to post DCA Newsletters, the DCA Annual Report and printed Handbook updates. At present I do not have email links for one Officer, 8 out of 39 Club Members and 19 out of 61 Individual Members. (All Associate Members have email links.) If this meeting approves, I intend to send out a (postal) questionnaire to all DCA members asking for their views on this approach.

I have been able to re-establish communications with PICA and have ensured that their Chairman, Bryan Hartshorn, now receives all DCA papers in addition to continuing to send information to Dave Edwards, who is currently ill. Bryan is now aware that there are two DCA reps. who should be kept in contact with PICA matters so Dave Webb and I hope to be able to attend their next meeting.

DDDC Draft Abseiling Licence

A request for comment re. a draft "Abseiling Licence" (dated 9 June) was forwarded on to me by the NCA/BCA Secretary on 16 June along with a DDDC Report dated 11 March 2004 - this had a deadline for responses of 25th. June. The NCA/BCA Secretary circulated the information to other NCA/BCA Officers and I have since circulated it to all DCA members and to Tom Redfern, (Chairman of Assn. of Caving Instructors) to the Derbyshire office of EN, the local BMC Access Officer, Derby Mountain Rescue Team, DCRO, PICA and to the Derbyshire County Council and DDDC Officers who head sub-committees concerned with the promotion of outdoor recreation - **none** of them knew anything about this proposal. Following my circular, a number of DCA Associate and Individual Members and others have been in touch to voice their concerns, in particular, Doug Jones (Principal at White Hall and also Chairman of the Mountain Leader Training Board UK). I have kept NCA/BCA, ACI, the Chairman of DDDC's Community & Environment Committee (who agreed in March on the requirement for an Abseiling Licence) and all those in DCA who expressed concern in touch with subsequent communications.

Doug Jones and myself have carried on a lively correspondence with the DDDC Planning Policy Manager tasked with implementing this directive to seek to persuade him that this is a fundamentally bad idea and likely to create problems for DDDC as well as setting a precedent for similar restrictions elsewhere. We can call on support, if required, from NCA/BCA and I am grateful to the NCA/BCA Treasurer and Legal &

Insurance Officer who have provided "ammunition" in the form of information on case law to fight this. At present I am dealing with the correspondence because I live in the DDDC area and have links with various DCC/Peak Park and DDDC Committees and local Councillors. I know I can call on DCA's Legal & Insurance Officer for help if required.

Membership

I have contacted all non-payers with a final reminder of subscriptions owed and with a deadline of 17th. July for payment. Only two Clubs and three Individual Members have now not paid and I seek approval from this meeting to remove them from the DCA Members List.

Financial Summary

The £1000 Greenwatch Award was a brilliant surprise - many thanks to Dave Webb who put together the application for this and to those cavers whose work on SSSI monitoring was the basis for the application. The money has been placed in the DCA Deposit Account and earmarked for conservation work.

Aside from this, there have been no major payments into or out of the DCA accounts. We have paid for the printing of more copies of the Masson Audit, Jug Holes and Cumberland/Wapping Publications for sale and orders continue to come in for these. Almost all DCA subscriptions are now in (see Membership item above) and only one club subscription due to NCA remains to be forwarded on. The only major amount due out of our savings is the approximately £2,200 due to Perkins Slade at the end of the Insurance year.

Current Balances are:	Deposit a/c	£ 5228.01
	Current a/c	£ 229.13
	Total	£ 5457.14

Jenny Potts, 16 July 2004

5.3 - CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT

£1000!

The headline item for this report has to be the success of a 21 page entry I submitted to this year's "Greenwatch" Awards based upon the work of the SSSI Cave Conservation Monitoring Team. I have written several different versions of the award presentation which should be widely reported on caving websites and in the press; all good publicity for DCA and cave conservation. My thanks go to team members who made the award possible, and to Bob who encouraged me to enter in the first place! Whereas the grant from English Nature for conservation work can only be used for work above ground, I am pleased to say that this money comes with no strings attached and can be used for surface OR underground conservation and access. We have agreed that the money exists as a separately identifiable sum and have placed it the Cave Conservation Emergency Fund.

SSSI Cave Liaison Meeting July 2004

The main points arising out of this year's meeting are as follows.

- Sidetrack Cave. The issue of the pursuit of a formalised access agreement between Chatsworth and DCA came up again (matters arising from the 2003 meeting). Its has SSSI status as part of the quarry but needs to be afforded protection as a scheduled site. This, coupled with its geological importance and vulnerability prompted the meeting to ask that I contact Pete Mellors to request that he follows up any work that he may have already done in this context. This I have done.
- Yatestoop Sough. For safety reasons Enthovens have withdrawn their permission for cavers to access the sough with immediate effect. The entry in the DCA Handbook is now out of date.
- Speedwell. Additional and recent graffiti is threatening to obscure the ancient and archaeologically important "Miners Toast" inscription. As a short-term measure steps will be taken to draw attention to the inscription either by means of a laminated sign, or if possible by taping. In the longer term attempts will be made to "educate" visiting cavers to respect the inscription. These measures have the full support of the cave owners.

Note: Whereas in general I do not support the erection of notices in caves I believe the exceptional value and need to save the inscription for future generations justifies this action in this case. A detailed study with expert advice is to be made of all the graffiti in the immediate area of the "Toast" and consideration given to removing or covering up some of the more intrusive initials.

- Cumberland Wapping. The warning signs produced by English Nature erected at the entrance and inside the mine seem to be working since no mineral collecting has taken place since I put them up two years ago. The Masson Caving group has recently completed a massive clean up campaign at this site, which included the removal of a huge bundle of barbed wire.

Hamps Manifold.

Audit work continues. The document is now more than 60 pages long and promises to be a first class reference work for this important area.

- Darfar Ridge Cave. A second visit has almost finished the task of re-taping and cleaning the cave, and one more visit to re-assemble some of the broken stal and finish cleaning should suffice.

Pollution.

- Knotlow Records. I have now replaced the book and furnished John Gunn with a list of records up to when I removed the book earlier this year. I am asking for details of what is happening outside, such as muck spreading and weather conditions, and the new book is a page per entry to allow for more info. I have notified web sites and caving press.
- Youds Level. I have been fortunate to enlist the help of Dave Ottewell from the Environment Agency in sorting the problem with pollution in the entrance series and we are to visit the site this week.

Shaft Capping.

The work of the Shaft Capping Steering Group is progressing very well and we are now awaiting approval by Derbyshire County Council before preparation of the Guidelines by a professional engineering consultant. is put out to tender. The cash has already been raised to pay for this.

- Prefabricated and galvanised mesh panels have now been delivered and are based on existing examples of shaft capping at Magpie Mine and advice from Terry Worthington. The panels are stored at Magpie Mine and I have thanked PDMHS on behalf of DCA for their help with storage. The panels are for use on SSSIs only, and prior approval from English Nature is required.

Lead Legacy Week.

Bob and I attended the opening ceremony for this joint conservation initiative at Magpie Mine. The project is intended to draw attention to the plight of our rich mining heritage of which 75% has disappeared. A superb free book covering our county's mining resource is available on request from the Peak Park or the Mining Museum.

- I assisted the National Trust in a Monyash Lead Mines walk for the local village population which was well attended. On behalf of the DCA I also attended the opening ceremony of the recently restored Bateman's House in Lathkilldale. Its well worth a look if you're in the area, as the shaft top beneath the house can now be accessed via a permanent fixed ladderway. My small but hopefully useful contribution was to ensure that caver access to the shaft and sough was maintained and this is now the case by means of a "Derbyshire Spanner".

PICA.

Following a period "in the wilderness" during which no communication was received from them at all, I have now re-established contact with their new chairman Bryan Hartshorn. I hope to be attending their next meeting.

SSSI surface conservation work.

Following the completion of Snelslow clean up earlier this year I have been asked by EN to supply a list of projects for the remainder of the year (EN grant-aided work). I have provisionally listed Gautries and other swallets in that area in need of a clean up but others will follow. I have not yet started a work schedule so dates are not yet available. Offers of help are always welcome.

Dave Webb, July 2004

5.4 - ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

Waterways Swallet

My thanks to the Orpheus team for such an excellent job sorting out the car park; cheers all.

Giant's Hole

Following three rescues in quick succession in the spring of this year, all at the same point within the cave (Garlands Pot), the need for a warning sign at the pay-point was mooted. Following discussion on the UK Caving Forum it was decided that this course of action would be unpopular. Amicable relations with the landowner continue as before.

Titan

Following a rescue where an oversized team with some inexperienced members attempted a descent, resulting in one becoming "hung-up" at the Event Horizon, access to this site is now closely controlled by the original digging team. As work is continuing at the site this is in my opinion perfectly reasonable. When work is complete, an approach for access will be made.

Sidetrack Cave

Regarding 6.5 (b), page 2 of the minutes of 21st February 2004; as far as I was aware, no access agreement is in place and after discussion within the meeting it was decided that none would be initiated. It appears that this was discussed at a recent Cave Liaison meeting and it was decided to push ahead with approaches to Chatsworth Estates. With all due respect to those concerned, DCA policy can only be formulated by DCA officers at a DCA meeting, not by E.N. and the Limestone Research Group.

My own opinion, as stated before, is that an approach for a formal access agreement would result in loss of access at worst, and a bucketfull of trouble for the DCA at very best. The matter needs careful discussion at this meeting to clarify the direction DCA wishes to take.

Iain Barker, 13 July

5.5 - LEGAL & INSURANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Chatsworth Licences

These are legal agreements that bind DCA to complying with strict conditions in exchange for access. Given the choice, I would avoid them. Over the years we have all seen formalization of access grow inexorably, and I have done my best to limit the growth of it in our region. At present DCA controls access to two locked sites (the Ashford Black Marble Mine and the Garden Path) under licence from Chatsworth. We are also required to monitor access to the Lathkill Upper Entrance which, because of my insistence, is accessed by means of a spanner and not a key. In the case of all three sites DCA is required to check and maintain gates, lids, frames and fittings, produce an annual written safety report, and comply with any Health & Safety regulations that may apply. In considering adding to the list of licensed sites (as with Sidetrack Cave, for example), members should bear in mind the extra expense, labour and responsibility involved not only to start with but on a continuing basis, as well as any likely implications of formalising access. The situation at the Garden Path is for some cavers a source of grievance; a repeat at Sidetrack Cave could be equally contentious.

CRoW 2000

The Rural Affairs Minister has ruled out for the time being any regulations that would make new open access land exempt in any way from existing legislation (such as the Mines & Quarries Act). The government's decision is in line with the case I submitted in April on DCA's behalf for leaving things as they are, especially with regard to making old mine entrances safe. I still recommend DCA maintains close liaison with landowners and local authorities in case our labour and expertise are needed to treat sites not already made safe against public curiosity (or owners' fear of it). As I understand it, the right of the public to roam on open moor and heathland is due to come into effect in September. The Act will not give cavers any right to go underground, regardless of whether a caving site is on open access land or not.

Liability Insurance

DCA and its members have been offered renewal of the present policy but at higher rates. The picture now is complicated by BCA's plans to make its own insurance part of its national membership package. If the plans materialise, BCA gets its own cover free, assuming it is offered renewal, which in turn would mean free cover for DCA too (as a constituent body of BCA) but not for DCA members. They would have to pay the going BCA per capita charge. Before then BCA may want to explore the possibility of a new approach to Perkins Slade with a view to improving on the present Francona provision. Clearly it makes financial and administrative sense for DCA to be subsumed into a national insurance scheme. On the other hand DCA is the sum of its members and they must weigh benefits against shortcomings and decide whether the Francona scheme is best for all of us. Our next meeting isn't till after the present DCA liability policy expires, and I need to know whether to renew the cover we have enjoyed for the past four years or let it lapse.

Peter Mellors, 15 July

5.6 - NEWSLETTER EDITOR/PUBLICATION OFFICER'S REPORT

I'm just getting together the material for No. 120 of "The Derbyshire Caver". There isn't as much material as I would like just now but providing articles and photos are sent to me by August 14th they should make it into this issue.

Contributions 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.

Paul Lydon, 15 July