



# DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Council Meeting, 10 am. 28 April 2007, Monyash Village Hall

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Officers:</b>	Chairman	Bob Dearman [BD]
		Vice-Chairman	Terry Jackson [TJ]
		Secretary/Treasurer	Jenny Potts [JP]
		Projects Officer	Wayne Sheldon [WS]
		Legal & Insurance Officer	Pete Mellors [PM]
	<b>Club Representatives:</b>	Chesterfield C. C.	Frank Beasley [FB]
		Eldon P. C.:	(Bob Dearman)
		Masson C. G.:	Alan Keen [AK],
		Orpheus C. C.:	(Jenny Potts)
		T.S.G.:	(Wayne Sheldon)
	<b>Individual Members:</b>	(Bob Dearman, Terry Jackson, Pete Mellors, Jenny Potts.)	

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies received from: David Webb (Conservation Officer), Iain Barker (Access Officer), Nigel Atkins (Training Officer), Dave Cowley (Equipment Officer), Paul Lydon (N/L Editor/Publications Officer), Chris Broome (Asst. Sec. Planning Liaison), Boyd Potts (Orpheus C.C.), Karen Slatcher & Elaine Hill (Ind. Membs.)

Chairman confirmed the Meeting was quorate and commenced at 10.15am.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING, 4 NOVEMBER 2006: (Previously circulated.)

BD asked for a correction to the Proposal recorded in 3.6. The correct wording for the proposal passed unanimously was:

**“That DCA funds the cost of the removal of spoil from the Titan Dig.”**

*That, subject to the above amendment, the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.*

Prop. T.Jackson. *Agreed unanimously.*

## 3. MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM:

- 3.1 3.2 **Water Icicle Shaft in the wood:** No further progress reported to JP. WS and PM would investigate. PM noted that Chatsworth were raising questions about other sites on Mr. Wells' land.
- 3.2 3.4 & 5.5.c **Garden Path Access:** See L&I Officer's Report.
- 3.3 5.2.b **Holme Bank Chert Mine:** See Cons. Officer's report.
- 3.4 5.2.d **RIGS:** See Cons. Officer's report.
- 3.5 5.5.b **Thorswood:** See L&I and Access Officers' Reports.

## 4. MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE IMPORT ARISING FROM THE AGM:

- 4.1 14.1 **Derbyshire Try Caving Day:** JP said that she had received no response from clubs to the dates suggested by the DCA AGM. Following the success of the BCA's stand at the Outdoor Show at the NEC, there had been enquiries from other Show organisers wanting a BCA "presence" but they seemed to be interested mainly in the artificial "cave" which had been the centrepiece of the BCA stand. (This belonged to the YHA and was unsuitable for any outdoor event because of its construction and the electronics incorporated in it; in addition it would also cost several thousand £s to hire and transport.) Several hundred individuals at the Outdoor Show who had expressed interest in caving had been given contact details for local clubs and the clubs had been given their details. It was felt better to leave this to the clubs to follow up with the individuals concerned and to follow up on an individual basis contacts from the Try Caving leaflets in shops and show caves in the region.

## 5. ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS:

JP reported no applications.

## 6. OFFICERS' REPORTS:

### 6.1 Secretary/Treasurer's Report: (Written report tabled.)

- 6.1.a **DEFRA problems:** JP explained the situation which had arisen over payment of Natural England SSSI conservation work contract expenses due to DCA. With support forthcoming from E.N., she still hoped to resolve the situation and obtain the £150 due to us. It was agreed that, if we were able to agree a contract with N.E. for the coming year, we must complete each project in turn and obtain the payment due before starting on the next.
- 6.1.b **Publications Costs etc.:** Following the death of Roy Paulson we would have to look carefully at costs of DCA publications: Newsletter, Handbook, Conservation Audits, etc., all of which had been printed by Roy at cost. There were also implications for BCA publishing costs. Noted also that BCRA would be advertising for a Librarian and attempting to find a suitable site to house the National Caving Library, which consisted of much more material than was on the shelves at the Matlock Library. DCA members might be uniquely placed to identify suitable premises in the region and would do what we could to help.

*That the Secretary/Treasurer's Report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, sec. W.Sheldon. *Agreed unanimously.*

### 6.2 Conservation Officer's Report: (Not present but his written report was tabled.)

- 6.2.a **Nickergrove Bolting:** The bolts needed to be installed as soon as possible now. It is 1st. on Dave Cowley's list and BD would liaise with Bryan Hartshorn of PICA to ensure speedy action when DC returned from working away from home.
- 6.2.b **Jugholes:** Following continued discussion on bolts required to safeguard the traverse, members were coming round to the idea that this might, after all, be acceptable. The matter would be reconsidered at the next DCA Council meeting.

- 6.2.c **Suicide Cave:** There was some concern that, by blocking the lower route through the boulders on safety grounds, DCA was modifying a natural cave; something which would not normally be acceptable. Noted that DCA had placed the Eco-anchors, at PICA's request, to provide a relatively simple pitch for use with novices to ease pressure on other sites. This had had the effect of encouraging other traffic in the cave and many of those visiting appeared to be inexperienced cavers who might not be aware of the dangers of the boulder choke in the lower crawl. There was also concern at the unpleasant vandalism. A watch would be kept on the situation.
- 6.2.d **Ashford Marble Mine:** It was felt to be unfortunate that adverse comments had been made on the UKcaving web forum about taping at the Mine by someone who was ignorant of the true situation regarding Chatsworth's requirements for DCA to maintain access. Noted that the discussion had been taken forward by Paul Lydon with a statement as to the reasons for the taping and this appeared to be accepted by most people. It was not felt to be something DCA should be exercised over.  
*That the Conservation Officer's Report be accepted.* Prop. P.Mellors, Sec. T.Jackson. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 6.3 Projects Officer's Report:** *(Written report tabled.)*
- 6.3.a **Lathkill Head Upper Entrance:** WS and BD would carry out the underground check immediately after this meeting; PM would carry out the surface check at the same time. PM would then complete and submit his written report as required by Chatsworth Estates.  
*That the Projects Officer's Report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. A.Keen. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 6.4 Assistant Secretary/Planning Liaison Report:** *(Not present but his written report was tabled.)*  
*That the Assist. Secretary/Planning Liaison Report be accepted.* Prop.T.Jackson, sec. W.Sheldon. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 6.5 Legal & Insurance Officer's Report:** *(Written report tabled.)*
- 6.5.a **Thorswood & Castern Wood:** Members agreed with the line taken by PM: that the Staffs. Wildlife Trust's solicitors were out of step with the majority of landowners in refusing £2M indemnity. TJ stated that the NFU advised that £2M was sufficient for farmers having public footpaths crossing their land. It was felt to be particularly unfortunate that SWT had encouraged cavers insured under the BCA's £2M indemnity to carry out work on the Thorswood site and only when general access to sites on SWT land for cavers was asked for had their solicitors demanded £5M indemnity. Members supported the L&I Officer in his refusal to accede to the request for £5M indemnity and regretted that DCA would not be able to control access to allow entry to the sites.
- 6.5.b **Garden Path:** Details of the new access arrangements were being drawn up. It was hoped that there would be interest in one-off trips for special purposes, e.g. photography, surveying, etc., though the cave could not be open for general "tourist trips". Noted that further taping is required before access can be arranged.
- 6.5.c **Radon:** PM's comments were noted. It did not appear that progress was likely on this.
- 6.5.d **Liability Insurance:** PM was now satisfied that the correct documents had been provided by BCA to cover DCA's requirements for access agreements.  
*That the Legal & Insurance Officer's Report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. A.Keen. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 6.6 Access Officer's Report:** *(Not able to be present but JP gave a verbal report on his behalf. Note that his emailed report appeared after the meeting, having been delayed in transit for more than 2 weeks!)*
- 6.6.a **Thorswood & Castern Wood:** I.Barker supported the Legal & Insurance Officer's stance re. request for £5M indemnity.
- 6.6.b **Eldon Hole:** Noted that there was a new landowner, though IB had not met him yet. JP noted that Eldon Hole was on CRoW-designated access land. So far there had been no indication that the new owner wanted to deal with access any differently from the previous owner.
- 6.6.c **Bagshawe Cavern:** Following the death of Peter Revell, his daughter, Amanda, would be dealing with access. The address to contact is unchanged.  
*That the Access Officer's Report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. A.Keen. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 6.7 Publications Officer:** *(Not able to be present but JP gave a verbal report on his behalf.)*
- 6.7.a **Newsletter 126:** P.Lydon had said this was well in hand and JP had found a printer for this issue.
- 6.7.b **Handbook Rigging Guide:** The rigging section of the Handbook is progressing as planned.  
*That the Publications Officer's Report be accepted.* Prop. W.Sheldon, Sec. J.Potts. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 7. BCA REPORT:**  
JP had attended the BCA AGM as DCA representative and gave a brief report.
- 7.1 **BCA Membership Administration:** JP noted that the BCA Officers' Reports were already on the BCA website and she had printed out for this DCA meeting the BCA Membership Administrator's Report and also the motion relating to it approved unanimously by the BCA AGM. DCA members appreciated the scale of the problems being met and noted that the G.Jones appeared to be getting on top of the situation. Many clubs did now have their BCA CIM insurance cards and it was believed all regional councils, access bodies and clubs now had their insurance certificates.
- 7.2 **Proposal re. CIMs subscriptions:** JP explained that the spirit of this had been generally approved and a slightly amended version of the original proposal had been passed with all Groups voting in favour and only one Individual vote against. The amended proposal passed by the BCA AGM was:  
*To agree that the subscription rates are set annually so that members fairly contribute to the direct and indirect services to which they have access.*  
DCA members felt this was entirely reasonable. It had been agreed that the situation would have to be explained carefully by the BCA Treasurer to all members.
- 8. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:**  
JP confirmed this would be at Monyash VillageHall, at 10am. on 23rd. June 2007.
- 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**
- 9.1 **Caves of the Peak District:** It appeared the new publication was in its final stages and BD was looking for a printer.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.48pm.

*J.E.Potts, Recorder*

**APPENDED TO THESE MINUTES AND FORMING PART OF THEM IS THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT:****Officers' Reports to the DCA Council Meeting, 28 April 2007:**

- a. Item 6.1 Secretary/Treasurer's Report
- b. Item 6.2 Conservation Officer's report
- c. Item 6.3 Projects Officer's Report
- d. Item 6.4 Asst. Sec. Planning Liaison Officer's Report
- e. Item 6.5 Legal & Insurance Officer's Report
- f. Item 6.6 Access Officer's Report (Recd. by email after the meeting, included for completeness.)
- g. Item 7 BCA Membership Administrator's Report and Motion passed at the BCA AGM.

**DCA COUNCIL MEETING, 28 APRIL 2007 - OFFICERS' REPORTS****ITEM 6.1 - SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT****Communications**

Since the AGM I have sent out only one circulation: the AGM Minutes and Reports, Information Circular 2007/2 and the Agenda for this meeting. As always, these have been emailed where possible and posted to the 18 or so members who do not have email access or want to receive paper copies (as well as paper copies being posted to all Officers). These items have also been posted on the DCA website.

**Membership**

So far all but 18 of our 56 paying Individual Members have paid their subscription for 2007 (one paid BCA by mistake and they will reimburse DCA) - I shall be chasing the others shortly. The BCA Membership Administrator sent out an interim list of BCA Member Clubs and Associate Members on 16th. March, indicating that 23 had paid BCA out of 30 DCA Member Clubs and that only 4 out of 18 DCA Associate Members had paid at that point. These figures are sure to rise as more groups catch up with what they should be doing and I will check again when BCA put out an update. After that I shall be reminding non-payers that their membership of DCA depends on them being members of BCA - it is now BCA who are paying DCA's bills for access, anchor installation, administration, etc.

**Finances**

Since the AGM we have paid out, in round figures, about £935:

- £ 135 for conservation & access work in the Manifold Valley;
- £ 600 towards the Training Workshop;
- £ 100 Secretary's administrative expenses;
- £ 100 donation to charity re. Roy Paulson

We have received and banked, in round figures, around £2330:

- £ 100 in Individual Member subscriptions and payment for publications;
- £ 300 in Training Workshop fees (there should be grant of £300 to come from BCA);
- £1900 in payments for the Natural England contracts (see below);
- £ 30 bank interest.

The Projects Officer is currently holding some cash in hand to fund ongoing work. There may be some expenses claims due in from Officers, which I shall expect to pay at this meeting, and I also have £17 in cheques not yet banked. So we have a very healthy balance in the bank amounting to:

Deposit A/C	£6662.31
Current A/C	<u>£ 560.33</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7222.64</b>

**Payments on Natural England Contracts re. SSSIs**

Since the change from English Nature to Natural England last October, funding for all N.E.'s work now comes from DEFRA - who made a 10% cut in N.E.'s budget as soon as they took over. Attempting to obtain payment for our N.E. contract work on SSSIs calls to mind blood and stones! It has taken over 2 months for the £1000 refund for the Slop Moll work to come through and I am currently fighting a faceless DEFRA bureaucrat to obtain the remaining £150 due to us for the Carleswark project. Our paperwork and invoice have been returned to me twice now, with a pro-forma letter containing nonsensical tick-boxes and a request to "contact the requisitioner" - who is, of course, Natural England. The Finance Officer at N.E. has done her best to help us, having passed and forwarded on the original claims paperwork from DCA. She has spoken on the phone to DEFRA to explain and rung me to assure me that if I re-submitted the papers "it should be paid OK now" - only to have the invoice inexplicably returned yet again. The saga continues!

Clearly, this is a warning for next year that we shall have to complete one N.E. Contract SSSI project at a time and ensure we are paid before moving on to the next one.

*Jenny Potts, 27 April 2007*

**ITEM 6.2 - CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT (FEBRUARY - APRIL 2007)****PICA**

A few points from the meeting held 6th February 2007.

**Holme Bank Chert Mine** - concern re. large visiting parties.

This issue, which arose out of a comment made in the mines inspectors report, has now been satisfactorily resolved. The "coach loads" referred to are in fact well-managed parties who park at the mine and then split into smaller groups to visit various points in the area as well as the mine.

Items still awaiting attention include:

- Hillocks:** Wall still to be extended.
- Nickergrove Mine:** The bolts on the traverse have still not been installed.
- Oxlow Caverns:** The loose slab in the entrance shaft has not yet been located.
- Jugholes:** Bolting of the "bad step" still to be re-assessed.

**SUICIDE CAVE.**

At a recent visit it was noted that the rocks blocking the crawl at the base of the choke, and the warning notice, had both been removed; two piles of human excrement had been deposited in exchange! (The National Trust kindly agreed to remove it.)

DCACounMin070428

The rocks have been replaced and work to permanently block this route will be put in hand as soon as time permits.

I have notified John Beck and COPD is to be updated with this information.

### **RIGS GEOCONSERVATION PROJECT**

I have visited Tony Gibbs and we spent an evening sorting through and exchanging information on RIGS sites that Tony had amassed over the years. I have written to Iain Thomas at the stone centre who will find the information very useful to the project. He informed me that during a reorganisation of the office at the Stone Centre all the records that Tony had provided and that had been thought lost - had now been found. Thanks to Tony for all his help.

### **EARTHWATCH**

Conservation work at Stanley Moor is still to be actioned. I understand that Sam Townsend is to organise the work and several of us have offered to help. DCA is holding the grant for this work.

### **DERBYSHIRE MINERALS SITE APPLICATION**

Chris has written regarding several concerns regarding proposed existing quarry expansions that need watching from the potential impact on historic mines standpoint. He has suggested that DCA are put on the list of consultees.

### **BCA CONSERVATION AND ACCESS MEETING MARCH 17th 2007**

The main points arising from this meeting (at which I was the only Regional Conservation officer present!)

1. Links between NAMHO and mining organisations and regional councils at BCA C&A meetings was to be encouraged.
2. Access to the Coast - Natural England - new proposed legislation. Although there are relatively few caves around our coastline our caving interest needs to be represented in discussions. Increased access to inland waterways is also being proposed and cavers should be encouraged to attend EA meetings to state our interest in the value to us of caves in riverbeds and in river banks.
3. Consultation on National Park Road Traffic Orders. Aims to bring in powers to restrict vehicular access along tracks within Parks. Response sent requesting that we be kept informed of developments - however the meeting felt that the proposals were for the common good and would not seriously affect our access to cave sites.
4. BTC (Bat Conservation Trust) Draft Guidelines for Bat workers. In common with others at the meeting I responded to the draft document pointing out the omission of any reference to the value to be obtained from close liaison between local bat workers and cavers. There was also a serious lack of sensible safety advice. The BTC have since responded positively and we are to be kept informed of progress of the revised draft.
5. National Trust. A thorough revision of the draft document on access to mines and caves on NT land was made and our proposals submitted. NT has since responded positively.
6. Minimum Impact Caving Code. Several conservation guidelines and documents were brought together for simplicity and greater impact for presentation to BCA Council.

**GARDEN PATH:** *See Pete's report*

### **ASHFORD BLACK MARBLE MINE.**

John Barnatt and myself (accompanied by two surveying batworkers) responded to a request to tape the old inscriptions and look at reported additional white paint markings. We were unable to locate the extra paint but recorded several late 19th and early 20th century chalk inscriptions, including the patriotic statement below!

The date does not coincide with any known wars - there is a further illegible inscription below and we believe that the date may well refer to this, and that the statement below was written at the time of the World War 1.

***Boys be men and fight for your flag freedom & King and Queen.  
God save the King. (nearby) Walter Pursglove April 2 1904***

More details on request.

There has been adverse comment on a website called "UK Caving" suggesting that there is an excess of unsightly and "unnecessary" tape in Ashford Black Marble Mine. I have responded (but not to the site) and my views have been reflected in a robust response to the site by Paul Lydon.

I would be interested to hear the views of the Council on UK Caving.

*Dave Webb April 2007*

### **ITEM 6.3 - PROJECTS OFFICER'S REPORT**

It doesn't seem like five minutes ago we had the last meeting and nothing much has gone on under my remit. The taping in Lathkill Head Top Entrance still waits to be done but hopefully this will be done after this meeting. The White River re-taping is definitely planned for this year and will hopefully start in June.

We haven't had confirmation of a budget from Natural England for this coming year yet but myself and Dave Webb will arrange to see Jo Poll to discuss this. I have few projects in mind from the SSSI Monitoring list of projects that I intend to do this year and ideas of teams who may be interested, assuming we get the money.

Rowter Hole will be recapped this year, I have had one interested party offer to help and I am sure we will find other willing participants. A plan of action needs to be drawn up, I will visit site with a few others as soon as lambing season is over and the land is open again to draw up this plan.

*Wayne Sheldon, 20 April 2007*

### **ITEM 6.4 - PLANNING LIAISON OFFICER'S REPORT**

Nothing really to report for the meeting on the planning liaison front - am looking out for DCC Minerals applications for Mid/South Derbyshire; I think Terry was covering High Peak area. However, if I do spot anything that may be of interest in the High Peak area I'll notify Terry (and Dave Webb). There are a couple of current applications we perhaps need to keep an eye on and I've attached the Link to the relevant page on the DCC Website.

Dave, as Conservation Officer will need to be aware of these sites and satisfy himself that the development proposals are not going to affect any known cave or historical lead mine workings. The two in question are at Middleton Mine (Via Gelia) and at Brassington Moor Quarry. Re the first site, it looks like mining has stopped for the time being at Middleton Mine but they are wanting to keep the high quality reserves for future mining when the market dictates. The area of potential future mining is quite extensive and is shown on the maps attached to the

application. There is a RIGS site very close by and Ancient Monument Sites etc. May be worth a check sometime as there are quite a few mines in the Gelia area as you know. The application was submitted in Sept. last year and the Council are awaiting further information from the applicant.

The 2nd site, at Brassington Moor Quarry, is an application, first made in Dec 2005, for an extension at the quarry. I haven't downloaded the EIA to find out the details but the current status is 'awaiting consultation responses'. Again, may be worth a quick check.

I noticed that on all limestone mineral applications on the DCC website, DCA is not on their consultee list. Perhaps we should write and ask to be notified of all developments in the DCC area which involve limestone extraction to enable us to make representations on these applications? It would save me the chore of scanning all the applications to find those we may be interested in. Any views? Don't even know if they would be prepared to add us on to their consultee list or not but we could at least ask I suppose.

Nothing further to report on the Derby & Derbyshire Minerals Site Allocations DPD but we should now be on their consultation list for any future issues arising on this. Dave Webb responded to DCC last September on behalf of DCC. I will continue to liaise with Dave.

*Chris Broome, 22 April 2007*

## **ITEM 6.5 - LEGAL & INSURANCE OFFICER'S REPORT**

### **Liability Insurance**

I now have certificates to hand for DCA and for any landowners in our region who require, as a condition of access, to be named on a certificate as proof they are indemnified under the policy.

### **Thorswood & Castern Wood**

Negotiations with Staffs Wildlife Trust for access to these sites have hit a snag over the limit of indemnity offered by DCA. The BCA national liability insurance scheme, to which DCA subscribes, provides cover up to £2M, and most landowners throughout the country continue to find this figure acceptable as part of access agreements they enter into with cavers. Staffs Wildlife Trust insists on £5M. There will no doubt come a time in the future when paying the extra premium for £5M cover will be necessary for us to keep access open to most of our caves. At present, however, that day hasn't arrived, and I have pointed out to Staffs Wildlife Trust that they are out of step with the majority of landowners in refusing access on the grounds of inadequate indemnity. They feel DCA is being unreasonable on this point.

### **Garden Path**

Work is ongoing to revise the access procedure here in such a way as to encourage more visits without straying from the scientific purpose for access is granted under the terms of our licence from Chatsworth.

### **Ashford Black Marble Mine**

I hope some of the negative views expressed on line recently on taping and "nannyng" are not typical of DCA members. It should be remembered that DCA took control of the mine at a time when no one else was interested and the entrances were threatened with obliteration because they were considered a hazard by Ashford villagers and the Peak Park Authority (as owner of Rookery Plantation). The access agreement with Chatsworth places a legal obligation on DCA to prevent casual entry and ensure the mine stays safe for all visitors, the majority of whom are young novices under supervision enjoying their first visit underground. The situation at Holme Bank Chert Mine is not strictly comparable as permission there is by way of the occupier and DCA is not under any legal obligation to ensure visitors' safety.

### **Radon**

The number of lung cancer deaths among cavers in recent years raises the question of whether radon is a contributory factor. I have discussed this with Clark Friend who chairs the BCA Working Party on Radon. Because of the difficulties to be faced in getting access to medical and personal records and of actually proving a radon link, there appears to be little prospect of launching a serious inquiry.

*Peter Mellors, 26th. April 2007*

## **ITEM 6.6 - ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT**

The annual inspection of the Lathkill Upper Entrance is still awaiting completion. I'm still awaiting surgery and I can't find anyone who will pop down there and have a look for me. Surprising. Eldon Hole has changed hands, and as yet, we can't find out who the new owner is. When we do I'll go over to see him and get him on-board. DCA may be getting a credit on the BBC "Escape to the Country" programme soon. They wanted to film down Giant's so I sorted out access for the crew. (Who wants to live down Giant's!)

The main issue in this report is that Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have effectively put a total stop to the access agreement at Thorswood by insisting on five million pounds public liability insurance. To raise the existing cover of two million to that amount would cost thirty thousand cavers four pounds each on their current insurance per year. Totally impractical and absolutely out of the question. Historically, SWT have done this before, over a decade ago at a different site. It is very upsetting that certain individuals, particularly Mike Salt of the Eldon and our own Pete Mellors, have put in an enormous amount of work on this project, and that while people have been working there capping shafts, providing SWT with surveys and photographic records of the mine, the existing insurance cover was adequate; now we want an access agreement it isn't.....I leave the members of the DCA and general caving community to draw their own conclusions.

*Iain Barker, 26/04/07*

## **ITEM 7.1 - BCA MEMBERSHIP ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT TO THE BCA AGM - REPRINTED HERE FOR DCA COUNCIL**

### ***(Item 15 OF BCA AGM REPORTS - MEMBERSHIP ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT)***

I have been in post from 1st September, and as part of my "on the job training", my main "background task" continues to be making sense of the huge amount of information held on the BCA PC. I am also documenting the "end to end" process for membership administration, so that future job holders will be able to understand the role more easily.

A significant amount of time during late 2006 was spent in discussion with all Regional Caving Councils (and also David Gibson) requesting information on what is required from the membership database, in what format and frequency, so that I could re-design the membership database (based on output requirements) in readiness for 2007 membership renewals.

### **Key highlights during this period (mid September '06 - mid January '07):**

- (In response to DCA and CNCC) I collated and issued an up to date "paid up" list of all 2006 BCA member clubs, DIMs, Associate Members and Access Groups

- (In response to CCC) I have put together a list of all clubs, whose indicated "prime" caving area is CCC and also updated that list with current contact information
- Created a new Club and CIM proforma spreadsheet (based on the new membership database) and emailed to as many clubs as possible, given that there was no electronic distribution list (that I could find) on the BCA PC
- Produced a mailing list for BCA newsletter. I updated the September mailing list that NW pulled together, checking for duplications and adding new members as appropriate.
- Produced a mailing list for C&KS: I was fortunate to "find" a C&KS mailing list for May 2006 buried in the BCA PC. As far as I could, I have checked the mailing list for duplication and other obvious errors. The mailing list was sent in the format that it was created in, however, I have saved a duplicate version in a more manageable format which I intend to use in the future.
- Produced a mailing list for BCRA newsletter which needed to be sent to as many current and "lost" members as possible. To do this I combined four separate spreadsheets, (latest BCA newsletter list, latest C&KS list, 2004 BCRA members list that I "found" in the BCA PC, and a list of all 2006 BCA DIMs) removing duplications, and amending address fields (the BCA DIM list was all in one column). This list was also used for the BCA/BCRA renewal letter (combined with the BCA AGM agenda). The amount of effort required to produce this mailing list was ridiculous, due to the lack of maintenance of the membership database during 2006.
- Assisted in the envelope stuffing for the AGM agenda - a very labour intensive task

Since mid January, my main task has been processing membership renewals. This process is tedious but necessary in order to build an up to date membership database. It involves "cleaning up" the incoming club and CIM proformas (the "IT literacy" of some clubs is disappointing, and very frustrating!), checking membership numbers, building a file for card printing and finally linking the individual spreadsheets to the master database. Until I have completed the build of my new office (shed at the bottom of the garden - I'm not making any money out of this!) cards are printed at Great Hucklow (I email the file to Great Hucklow and then drive over in order to feed the card printer). Currently there is a 4 to 6 week turn around on card production as it is simply not worth travelling to Great Hucklow unless there is a significant number of cards to print (see below - looking to the future).

DIM card production has a (worst case) 6 to 8 week turn around, as the DIM applications and cheques go direct to Great Hucklow and I receive a CD of the previous months applications early in the following month (e.g., I receive a CD of the January applications early/mid February). I then have to manually copy the DIM information from the scanned original on the CD into the master database, which is then copied and sent to Great Hucklow in time for another visit to print the cards (see below - looking to the future).

#### **Current membership status (as of March 15th):**

- DIMs: 68 based on cards issued (there are more in the "pipeline")
- Clubs: 108 based on banking information and spreadsheets received (not always the same thing!)
- Joint: 4 (couples) based on cards issued
- CIMs: Approx. 1600 cards have been issued, but there are at least that much again waiting to be printed
- Access Bodies: 4
- Associates: 4

I continue to receive around 20/30 emails a day, the majority of which I can deal with without checking with NW. I am also sending insurance certificates on request. Whilst I have been able to answer many of the emails received, those emails with specific insurance queries I am forwarding to Nick for an "official response", but keeping the replies in an "Insurance FAQ" folder, so that in future I shall be able to answer similar queries myself.

Looking forward: I anticipate that most of March and April will be taken up with producing membership cards. Once this activity is reasonably complete, I will continue to integrate the individual club spreadsheets into the "master" membership database.

As mentioned previously, I am building an office and when complete, I will move the BCA PC (and several boxes of "stuff", currently in my garage), into the office. At that time I intend to move the card printer from Great Hucklow to my office, and issuing cards can then be on as "on required basis" rather than the bulk processing that happens at the moment.

Although these last few months have been a bit manic due to the amount of work required to re-build and populate the membership database at the same time as the membership renewals, I'm confident that the effort spent will make the renewals process much more streamlined in the future.

I feel that I am becoming reasonably familiar with the day to day management of the membership administrator role, but there are some outstanding issues which still need to be agreed and processed. These include:

- subscriptions for publications
- electronic fund transfer
- on-line membership renewal
- agree and document process for "missing" publications

*Glenn Jones, 16th. March 2007*

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#### **NOTE FROM J.POTTS:**

At the BCA AGM (at which the Membership Administrator was not able to be present) the following proposal was agreed unanimously after lengthy discussion:

***That BCA Council acknowledges the problems encountered in administering membership, it apologises to its membership (now) for the difficulties that they have experienced and Council will investigate ways of improving the situation and will report back to the membership by July.***