

BCA Newsletter

Number 18 - November 2014

This newsletter was originally only published as a web page but has been re-created as this PDF in July 2019.

CRoW and Caving

A motion was passed at the BCA's 2013 AGM that created a working group to identify the cave sites on CRoW land in England. That working group is headed by Jenny Potts who reports:

Work continues on this and there is now information from every caving region and at least an indication of the status of around 4500 caves and mines in England and possibly another 1700 in Wales. So far some 2700 entrances appear to be on access land and, of these; only about 20 have a locked gate.

"CRoW Access Land" status is proving not to be as simple as at first believed, there being complications with some "designated" access land and possibly with some common land, where restrictions have been placed on the type of access allowed.

Meanwhile a legal opinion was obtained by independent cavers which strongly suggested that CRoW gave a right of access underground as well as above ground. Another opinion by independent cavers with contrary views strongly suggests the opposite.

The matter was discussed at the BCA's 2014 AGM and passed to the Conservation & Access Committee. At its meeting in August it asked the BCA Chairman, Andy Eavis, to seek an informal meeting with representatives of DEFRA and Natural England to discuss CRoW. Andy reported on the outcome of that meeting to the BCA Council Meeting on October 16th and it was decided to hold a poll of all members on this key issue.

Voting papers will be posted to all members shortly and the deadline for return will be **noon on Thursday 18 December 2014**. The question is: **"Should BCA, on your behalf, campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground?"**

As the voting period coincides with the busy Christmas post, members are urged to post their votes as early as possible.

Results of the poll will be reported to BCA Council's next meeting on 9 January and also via the BCA website shortly afterwards.

Euro Speleo 2016

The British Caving Association (BCA) is to host the 5th European Speleological Congress from 13-20 August 2016. This will be a huge event and will be based in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales.

It is intended to pre-rig large number of the popular Dales caves and the Gaping Gill winch meet will also be extended to cover the event.

As well as trips underground, there will be a full lecture programme and various workshops and training sessions on all aspects of caving, as well as evening entertainment throughout the week.

Camping will be available on site with plenty of bunkhouse and B&B accommodation locally as well.

The event will utilise the expertise of the Hidden Earth team who have run the UK's very successful annual conference for many years now.

It is hoped that we will also host Pre- and Post-Congress caving camps around the UK and Ireland, giving everyone - and particularly our overseas guests, the chance to visit some of the other well-known caving regions around the country.

Hidden Earth 2015

Will be held from 25-27 September 2015 at Churchill Academy, Churchill, near Bristol. Competition Results and Staff Credits for 2014 are now <http://hidden-earth.org.uk/history/winners.2014.html>

Members' e-mail addresses

Traditionally, contact with Club-based members (CIMs) has been through their club. This has worked to a greater or lesser extent but the modern world allows for very cheap mass communicate. In 2014 we asked clubs to request members' permission to give us e-mail addresses as part of the membership renewal process. This was extremely successful and we now have about 2,500 addresses accounting for about 45% of our total membership.

We are now almost in a position to begin regular e-mail newsletters, similar in content to this. So, if you did not do so in 2014, please ask your club to add your e-mail address to our database. We promise it will never be passed to third parties or used for anything other than sharing news and maybe the occasional online vote.

An important pre-cursor to going live with e-mail newsletters is developing a system for users to individually amend their details and opt in and out of e-mails. This has been developed by our IT Working Party and is currently undergoing thorough testing.

2015 Membership Fees

We are pleased to announce that 2015 membership fees will continue at the same level as 2014 for all categories.

BCA Structure & Democracy

It is not only Clubs and Direct individual members who are eligible to attend and vote at general meetings. Club individual members are also full members of BCA and have full attendance and voting rights. In addition members are also welcome to attend Council and standing committee meetings as observers.

The BCA meeting structure is:

General Meetings (AGMs, SGMs and EGMs) – at which all Individual and Group members are entitled to attend, speak and vote. Anyone else is entitled to attend and speak at the Chairman's discretion.

Council Meetings - Council members (with a vote) are elected by the AGM, or are appointed directly by the Organisation they represent. The list is: Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Conservation & Access Officer, Equipment & Techniques Officer, Training Officer, Legal & Insurance Officer and Publications & Information Officer, plus 4 individual member and 4 club reps.

Those who can send a voting representative are: the 5 Regional Councils (CCC, CNCC, CSCC, DCA, DCUC), and the 7 Constituent Bodies (ACI, ASCT, BCRA, BCRC, CDG, CHECC, WPCST). Council then makes a few other non-voting appointments: Newsletter Editor, Handbook Editor, Webmaster, Web Services, Rope Testing, Youth & Development, 2016 Co-ordinator. Also BCA's main employees (i.e. Training Administrator and Membership Administrator) are invited.

Beyond that anyone else is welcome to attend and speak, at the Chairman's discretion.

Standing Committees - Each of the Standing Committees meet with varying degrees of frequency. Training has sub-committees which also meet. Each Committee is made up of a voting representative from each of the Regions and the Constituent Bodies, plus the Officer themselves and anyone the Committee appoints.

So, You want to go Caving

This new and completely updated leaflet has been produced by a team headed by Youth & Development Officer, Hellie Brooke. Copies are making their way to the main caving regions, but if anyone has a specific need for some, they should contact Hellie directly. It is hoped that we will have an up-to-date pdf version on our website shortly.

Expedition Funding

With application deadlines approaching it is worth a reminder that funding may be available for eligible parties from the Welsh Sports Council and FSE as well as the better known grants from the Ghar Parau Foundation.

Welsh Sports Association funding has been available in recent years for expeditions which include a high proportion of Welsh people (fairly loosely defined) and can be as high as 50% of the cost of travel and equipment.

FSE grants of 400 Euros and equipment are available to expeditions with participants from a minimum of 4 European countries (3 if to Africa, Latin America or the Middle East).

Applications for FSE Grants must be submitted at least 4 months before the beginning of the project. **WSA** funding for 2015 has yet to be confirmed but based on last year's cycle applications must be submitted by **3rd March** for expeditions leaving between 1st April 2015 & 31st March 2016.

The closing date for the next round of **Ghar Parau** applications is **28th February 2015**.

BCA Training Grants

A leaflet has been produced by the Training Committee which promotes the availability of training grants for BCA member clubs.

British Caving Library

The British Caving Library (BCL) is a national research and reference library based in the Peak District, staffed by a Senior Library Assistant. It is funded by the British Caving Association (BCA) and the British Cave Research Association (BCRA) and run by the BCRA on behalf of all cavers.

The BCL is your library, if you have an interest in caving, cave science and related areas. It is for you whether you are a member of BCA or just a member of the public with a general interest in caves and caving. It is for you whether you are based in the UK or abroad.

Services and materials include:

- 11,563 catalogued items including 866 books, 10,014 journals, maps, surveys, DVDs etc.
- Over 150 non-UK journal titles including Spelunca, Speleologia, Jaskinie, Helictite.
- Over 300 UK journal titles and club bulletins including all CRG / BCRA publications and complete runs of The British Caver and Descent.
- We participate in a journal exchange scheme with many foreign and UK organisations
- Photocopying and computer facilities
- Enquiries are welcomed via phone, email or personal visit.

Simple enquiries or requests for specific articles can be emailed direct to the librarian. However, if you have a complex, general or vague literature request, it would help us if you would download and complete the literature search form. This will allow us to respond to your request more effectively.

Library location

The library is based in Glutton Bridge, near Buxton in Derbyshire. Note that the library is not permanently staffed, so it is important to contact us in advance of your visit (preferably by email) to ensure we're there to welcome you. Details of the location can be obtained by clicking on the menu button labelled "How to find us".

Charges

This facility is paid for by BCA. Members may have up to 20 photocopies per request for free, with additional pages being charged at 10p per sheet. Postage will normally be free, although the librarian may need to make a charge for bulkier packets. Scanned images may also be emailed, saving postage costs.

Non-members may browse and use the facilities for free by prior arrangement with the librarian, and one hour of the librarian's time is available at no charge. Additional time will be charged at £15 per hour. Photocopying and printouts will be charged at 10p a sheet for black and white A4 sheets, and 50p for colour A4 sheets. The librarian can advise on costs before undertaking any work, so please contact her before submitting your request.

British Caving Audio Archive

The British Caving Library holds a web-based archive of audio recordings relating to British caving and cavers. Although much of the material recounts exploits which are well documented elsewhere, the immediacy of the spoken word brings them to life. Some of the recordings are also a poignant reminder of the friends who have since died.

Ten new interviews have recently been added to the archive.

Cave Access Update

OGOF CRAIG-A-FFYNNON (South Wales)

Since the rock falls that prompted the suspension of permits to Ogof Craig a Ffynnon about 18 months ago the state of the cliff outside the cave entrance has been closely monitored. There have been further occasional rock falls from higher up the slope above the cave but, as far as can be ascertained, nothing else from the roof next to the gate. Nevertheless, the cliff in the vicinity of the cave cannot be considered to be stable, and it is inevitable that further rock falls will occur from time to time in the future as they have done periodically over the last 4 decades – especially after a thaw following freezing winter conditions.

On the basis of the above it has been agreed to resume the issuing of permits, but parties visiting the cave should be vigilant to the possibility of falling rocks from anywhere along this section of cliff, and not remain in the area of the cave entrance longer than necessary.

BIG SINK (Forest of Dean)

The rockfall in the entrance series has been cleared and access is now available once more.

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE (South Wales)

On Saturday 27/9/2014 the cavers' entrance to LNRC still smelled strongly of diesel. This problem subsides the further that you go in, and at the Bridge Cave confluence it is only slight. Bridge Cave itself is not affected. Visits into

LNRC at the present time are not advised for safety reasons and further announcements will be made when matters improve

TUNNEL CAVE (South Wales)

Until further notice Tunnel Cave will only be accessible from the top entrance, as the airlock doors have developed a fault and have now been sealed.

PROVIDENCE POT (Yorkshire)

CNCC volunteers, with the support of Natural England, have restored the entrance to Providence Pot. The work included deepening, widening and moving the stream bed east to keep it further away from Providence Pot.

SKIRWITH CAVE (Yorkshire)

New access details for Skirwith Cave (White Scar area) have been added to the CNCC website following recent discussions with the landowner. The landowner requests could cavers kindly provide written notice before a visit (including the date and a contact telephone number); however, there is no need to include an SAE or await a reply. Please contact the <http://www.cncc.org.uk/contact> if you have any questions.

WHITE PIT (Mendips)

Now that the gate has been repaired and it can be opened from the inside the access conditions have been updated. See the <http://www.csc.org.uk> for details.

BOX QUARRY (Mendips)

It appears the site was locked after several high profile incidents concerning groups getting lost and having to be released by the police and emergency services. The site owners have indicated that they want to work with the caving and mine exploring community to maintain legitimate access but are concerned about their liability.

CSCC is in discussion with the owners and will report back as soon as there is more information. Check the <http://www.csc.org.uk> for updates.

TWLL CLOGFAEN (South Wales)

CCC now has an access agreement to this cave which is gated with a 'Derbyshire' bolt and chain. Take two large adjustable spanners to get in.