

## **Minutes of the Mendip Caving Group Annual General Meeting Held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2002, at the Hunter's Lodge, Priddy**

The Mendip Caving Group is a Registered Charity No.270088

**Chairman:** Geoff Beale. Present 26 full members 4 associate members 1 custodian trustee.

**1. Apologies for absence** Marcus Ward, Dave and Letti Tooke, Julie Hesketh, Mick Norton, Bill Chadwick, Nick Gilson, Doug Harris, Graham Old, Phil Elliott, Simon and Pete Goddard.

**2. Minutes of the AGM held on 7th July 2001 at the Hunter's Lodge Priddy.** Copies of these minutes were circulated to all members with newsletter no.301 (01.09.01).

**3. Agreement that the minutes are a true record of that meeting.**

**a. Paragraph 65 election of Honorary Officers** There was some dispute as to whether this point had been agreed at the meeting. It was decided that the matter is not still disputed and the matter is to be discussed later. The Committee are to fill the vacancies.

**b. Para 10.3 Annual Dinner** Malcolm Cotter wants to be noted as suggesting December as a good time based on the success of the previous meal.

The minutes were proposed for acceptance. Proposed: Tim Francis. Seconded: Richard Carey.

**4. Matters arising.** There were none.

**5. Officers Reports.** These were circulated with the newsletter except for the Cottage Warden's which was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. Each officer gives a brief summary of their report.

**Secretary** Arthur Spain proposed a vote of thanks to Tim for a job well done. This was heartily agreed by everyone.

**Editor** Yvonne stated that being on e-mail is creating more input to the newsletters. It was asked whether there were any plans to e-mail newsletters to the membership. Yvonne said that it is possible and several members expressed an interest in having their newsletters issued this way in order to save costs for the club.

**Social Secretary** Linda wants to encourage more of the membership to attend social functions. 45 people are attending the AGM dinner and Linda requested feed back from those that attend. Surprise was expressed that 45 was considered to be a good attendance, when in the past 70 plus would have been good and there is a membership in excess of 100. Cost was cited as one of the issues for low attendance. Also discussed were finding ways of attracting new and local members to attend the functions. It was suggested that local members only want keys and caving on a Wednesday and not join in or be involved. It was decided that the Christmas dinner had been a success and one will be organised this year. Summer events used to be successful. Suggestions should be forwarded to Linda. It was requested that something special be organised for the club's 50th Anniversary 2003/4. Discussion ensued along the lines of: should ex members be contacted needs to be a bigger event although not necessarily more expensive. Overseas interest has already been expressed in any 50th celebrations. It was decided that all suggestions should be forwarded to Linda as we should start to organise this now.

**Caving Secretary** Although there is no caving secretary it was noted that cavers staying away from the countryside boosted farmers moral but did nothing with regard to the foot and mouth epidemic.

**Treasurer** Less and less members are staying at the cottage. Guests are currently outnumbering members 6-1. It was asked whether the heating for the library is proving costly. Richard's response was that occupation of the cottage is irrelevant to the electricity costs as the hot water and heaters are on all the time. The accounts have not been audited. Charlie was advised in January that the accounts were ready for auditing and after many promises nothing materialised. The other person who was to audit the accounts has not done them either. There is no legal obligation to audit the accounts but it was generally felt by those present at the meeting that it is important for this to be done. Wayne has volunteered to audit the accounts. The value of the library books was queried. In the accounts the value is shown as £2,000; however for insurance purposes £14,000 is recorded. It was decided that it is all arbitrary and as long as we are well insured it isn't really a problem. Thanks were proposed for Richard and the hard work he has put in as treasurer.

**Cottage Warden** It was decided that due to the Bank Holiday the work weekend would be moved to the 8/9th June. There was a discussion regarding a couple of cavers who had turned up to stay for few days and as there were no members with keys staying for the entire length of their visit that there were no keys available to leave for their use. Should a spare set be left at the cottage for the use of visitors? In the end the suggestion was

withdrawn as being too impractical to monitor. It was also stated that the Fry's set of keys must never be used for anything other than a dire emergency. From the keys the discussion then moved onto the locks themselves and whether the Yale lock should be changed as it is sticky. Ben reckoned a replacement barrel would cost around £100, and to replace the whole system in the region of £1,000. It was asked what the purpose of the 2nd lock is and should it be changed to a mortise lock. The result of much discussion was to leave things as they are. The Cotags are failing and Ben is unable to keep up stocks. He currently has some new ones but they are not working and he will have to wait for the replacements. Ben made the point that it is the Cotags that are failing and not the Cotag system. Once all the Cotags have been replaced the system will be as good as ever. The subject of the shower and electric shocks was brought up and Ben assured everyone that the showers have been earthed. Resurfacing the car park was also a subject raised. Ben's response was that it is an on going discussion at committee meetings and it has not yet been decided whether to tarmac or use chippings to resurface with. There are also decisions to be made regarding drainage and costs etc.

**Tacklemaster** Nothing was added to the report and no questions were asked.

**Recorder/Librarian** Nothing was added to the report and no questions were asked.

**Custodian Trustee Report** Concern was raised regarding investments. Should the committee be seeking independent financial advice before proceeding with any investments? After discussing the pros and cons of making investments and the risks involved relative to the amounts being invested, plus the cost of any financial advice sought it was decided to leave things the way they are. The membership that attended the meeting are happy with the current arrangements.

**Tax Recovery Report** Malcolm thanked Richard for being so efficient.

**6. Election of Honorary Officers for 2002/2003.** Malcolm proposed that the nominations stand and Roy Kempston seconded the proposal. There was a vote and only one person was against the proposal so it went ahead. There were 2 volunteers for the post of Tacklemaster, Julie Hesketh and Brian Snell. The committee will decide at a later date who to co-opt to the post. A Secretary desperately needs to be found.

**7. Election of Rescue Warden and Election of Conservation and Access Officer.** Pete Bennett has put his name forward to be considered for the post of Conservation and Access Officer. Brian Snell stated that he would continue for one more year as the Rescue Warden and then step down. He raised the question of whether the MCG should be more involved with the MRO with regard to the rescue practices rather than operate independently. The advantages would be that there would be access to more modern and up to date equipment and a real life rescue would involve multiple clubs. Our contact network would increase. Wayne proposed that we should proceed along those lines with the next practice and Yvonne seconded.

**8. Election of Examiners** Wayne Hiscox and Mike Lovell volunteered to examine the accounts next year and were accepted at the meeting.

**9. Proposed Amendment to the Constitution and Rules** It was proposed by Ben Cooper and seconded by Linda Milne that point 4 be deleted, and replaced with a new point 4. Proposed new wording as follows:-

**PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP** All classes of membership are entitled to use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, use of Group equipment and the library, free publications, and advice of meetings and activities. Full members may stand for election to the Committee, vote at general meetings and hold keys for the tackle store and library. Associate members have similar privileges except that not more than one at a time may hold office on the Committee, they have no vote at general meetings, and they may not hold keys for the library and tackle store. Probationary members may have the same privileges as associate members except that they may not stand for election to the Committee.

The current wording for point 4 is as follows; -

**PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP.** Use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, use of Group equipment and the library, free publications and advice of meetings and activities. Full members may stand for election to the Committee and vote at general meetings. Associate members have similar privileges except that they have no vote at general meetings, and not more than one at a time may hold office on the Committee. Probationary members may have the same privileges as associate members except that they may not stand for election to the Committee.

Strong objections were received. Tony Knibbs put forward several objections, which are précised as follows:- He felt that it was a pointless reduction in the value of associate status and also demeaning to associates by withdrawing benefits, which have been around for a long time without objection or problem. The original definition of associate membership as he saw it was to give ageing or less active members a way of staying in touch with the Group, giving them recognition of the contribution made to the Group in the past. Without a full member present at the cottage associates find themselves with two "no go" areas as they haven't any keys. Without a vote

associate members are unable to signify how they feel about the proposed change to their status. The cost of recalling keys and replacement with guest keys was also a factor to be considered. Tony suggested a revised wording for the clause, which is:-

"All classes of membership are entitled to use the Group's cottage at reduced rates, use of Group equipment and the library, free publications and advice of meetings and activities. Full members may stand for election to the Committee, vote at general meetings and hold keys for tackle store and library. Associate members have similar privileges except that not more than one at a time may hold office on the Committee, at general meetings they may only vote on matters which concern the constitution. Probationary members have the same privileges as associate members except that they may not stand for election to the Committee."

Several other people spoke up about associate members paying their way, and there was a lengthy discussion on the exact definition of an associate member. Longer serving members felt that the associate member category had originally been set up for spouses who did not want to cave but still wanted to be part of the Group. There was mention of it being for people who were living abroad together with Tony's previously mentioned definition.

Tony then proposed two counter proposals. He respectfully asked the proposer and seconder to withdraw the motion. He proposed the previously mentioned amendment, which he feels will redress the current absence of what would appear to be essential voting rights for associate members. Ben responded by saying that the Committee believed associate members to be non cavers who want to keep in touch and that the amendment was not about depriving people of their rights but to clarify the constitution and rules. Tim proposed that the Committee go away and draw up a definition of associate membership so that there is no over lapping of categories. Richard seconded Tim's proposal and the original motion was withdrawn.

**Proposal to alter the Constitution and Rules to avoid the Committee being unable to co-opt substitute officers.** This is specifically in the instance where the Committee no longer has a quorum due to an insufficient number of elected officers. Under point 8 COMMITTEE MEETINGS replace "Five officers shall constitute a quorum" with "The quorum for the Committee shall be more than half the number of posts filled." This was proposed by Martin Rowe and seconded by Richard Carey. A vote was taken on this and there was 1 against 2 abstentions 23 for. Proposal passed.

**10. Motions. Clarification of the primacy of the Annual General Meeting in directing the Committee with regard to co-option of Committee members.** Malcolm Cotter and Tim Francis. Malcolm's view is that a general meeting has the power to co-opt. It was asked whether people would just not bother to put nominations in for Committee posts and just get co-opted at AGM's. It was stated that the ability to vote against a candidate in a postal vote would be lost. Martin opposed the motion and it was decided that the Committee should resolve the issue. The motion was withdrawn.

**Creation of a new elected non-committee post responsible for administering the Gift Aid scheme and reclaiming tax on all donations and subscriptions.** Malcolm Cotter and Tim Francis. A vote was taken 18 for, 2 against. Motion carried.

**Reinstatement of a season ticket for cottage fees to replace the bed nights sticker scheme.** Richard Carey and Tim Francis. It was proposed that the annual rate should be £30 for as many nights as members like, subject to no more than a 15 day stay, in a 30 day period without prior consent from the Committee. A vote was taken, 15 for, 1 against, and 5 abstentions.

**11. Any Other Business** It was felt that the need for a Secretary to be found was rather glossed over under point 6 and that without a Secretary the Committee would be rudderless. John Puddock volunteered to become the new Secretary. The Committee will consider this at the next meeting.

**12. Date and Venue of the next AGM** 5th April 2003, 10.30a.m. at the Hunter's Lodge