

MINUTES OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 5TH APRIL 2003, AT THE MCG COTTAGE

The Mendip Caving Group is registered charity No.270088

Chairman: Wayne Hiscox

Present:

1. Apologies for absence Marcus Ward, Nick Gilson, Pete Matthews, Geoff Beale, Peat Bennett, Denise Knibbs, Pete Goddard and Roger Wallington.

2. Minutes of AGM held on 13th April 2002 at the Hunter's Lodge, Priddy.

Copies of these minutes were circulated to all members with newsletter no.

3. Agreement that the minutes are a true record of that meeting Yvonne Rowe proposed that the minutes were a true copy of the meeting. Ben Cooper seconded the proposal.

4. Matters Arising It was asked whether the accounts had been examined. They have been examined by Charlie Allison.

5. Officers reports These were circulated with the newsletter except for the Recorder/Librarian's, which was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. Each officer gave a brief summary of their report.

Secretary John's point about the geographical spread of the Committee and the problems associated with being able to hold quorate meetings was raised. John was asked for his ideas on what he thought the solution to the problem would be. In the past meetings have been held in officers homes, or the Hunter's. It is thought that distance does not seem to be the problem but that other commitments are cited as the reason for non- attendance. Once a meeting is missed things start to slip, for example new members are not approved for membership. Fewer meetings was put forward as an option but was dismissed as un-workable. It was asked whether the membership numbers are increasing. Our membership remains static. Payment of subs and how far do we chase members for money was also a question asked. Linda Mime proposed a vote of thanks to John for his work during his time as Secretary.

Treasurer Mike Lovell praised Richard for a job well done as the task is onerous. He thought the cottage booking sheets were much improved. It was asked whether our investments going down is consistent with other investments. The response was that because we invested for the long term it shouldn't be a problem. No one can predict what the future holds but as we have no immediate need to draw on the investments we just need to sit tight. Malcolm Cotter commented that the Telegraph report recommending the Credit Suisse and other funds that we have invested in are not doing too badly. As all investments have taken a knock, and we didn't buy at the top of the market it is hoped that our investments will recover in 3-4 years. The income from our investments went up last year. Wayne Hiscox asked whether inflation had been added on to the valuation for the land and property. It is only relevant to add it on to the insurance value as the cottage can't be sold. Issuing membership cards was proving difficult now that members receive e-mailed newsletters. Richard will be standing down as Treasurer in July as he is going to Argentina to work. He asked for volunteers to take over his post at that time.

Caving Secretary Tim was asked whether there was a meet programme planned for this year. The response was that none is planned. The next point that was raised was regarding new members, which sparked off a whole debate. Linda wants to get new members together, so that they can go off and explore. It seems that "bonds aren't being forged" at the moment, which isn't encouraging new members to join in. The active cavers felt that the new members had a mentality of wanting to be "led" everywhere, which then limits the active cavers in their own activities. It was asked whether caving was the "in" thing and how do we "sell" caving. It

was suggested that we ask new members what they expect from the club. Apparently most new enquiries about membership don't get beyond the probationary stage. The responsibility for new members needs to be shared so that not just 1 or 2 core members are left to take people underground. The most popular solution was to give new members copies of the surveys and let them go!

Cottage Warden Ben was asked where the new radiator in the lounge is going to be positioned. It has not yet been decided. There are only 30 amps to heat the whole cottage so the heating system is not being upgraded yet, just improved with more efficient storage heaters as the old ones are not as effective as the new models. The question of upgrading the electric cable was mentioned. 8 years ago this was quoted as costing £15,000 and there is no easement across the Fry's land just an agreement with Jim. Joan Goddard thinks that if we were cut off from the supply the electricity board would be obliged, at their cost to supply the same amount of electricity. Ben will be able to stay in his post until August when he wants to stand down. Thanks were given to Ben for a job well done.

Tackle Master

There were no questions.

Editor Yvonne was asked how many members receive their newsletter by e-mail. The response was 45-50. It was suggested that we e-mail all the newsletters and anyone who wants a hard copy could request one. There was also a suggestion of a reduction in subs for those who had their newsletter e-mailed by possibly £5. It was finally decided that the cost of the newsletter probably is not an issue and to leave things as they are. Thanks were given to Yvonne for her dedication to the job.

Recorder/Librarian No questions were asked.

Social Secretary Linda was asked the whereabouts of the rounders bat. As she did not know others chipped in with suggestions such as was it put on the fire or is it now a trophy? Mike Lovell put forward an alternative idea to a formal 50th dinner. How about a buffet in the Hunters? The Star was also put forward as a venue as it had been popular in the old days. However this has now closed or been renamed. Linda asked for some kind of indication of what members would be prepared to pay for a meal for the 50th reunion/get together. It was also asked whether the Group would/could subsidise the event. The response was that the charitable status does allow a subsidy, but the covenant would be invalid. On the whole it was felt that value for money was more important than the cost. The venue should have a "wow" factor. It was agreed that a lot of work would have to be put in to tempt members to attend the function. A list of past and present member is available which is to be distributed to longer serving members to contact anyone they think might be interested. Proposed 50th celebrations have been drawn up by Linda, as per the attached schedule. August was decided as a good time for the Slovenia trip.

Gift Aid Administrator All the investments have been transferred into the names of the Custodian Trustees due to legislation by the government re terrorism.

Custodian Trustees

It was asked whether the Custodian Trustees ever meet. They communicate once in a while.

6. Election of Honorary Officers for 2003/2004 There were no objections to those standing for the posts.

Secretary

There was a big discussion about the Secretary's job. Such a high profile job cannot remain unfilled. Lee Hawkswell was put forward as a good candidate. After thinking about it for a while he agreed to take the Job on. His appointment was proposed by Malcolm Cotter and seconded by Linda Mime.

Treasurer Jacky Ankerman volunteered for the post of Treasurer. Tim Francis proposed her and Yvonne Rowe seconded.

7. Election of Gift Aid Administrator Malcolm Cotter was proposed by Richard Carey and seconded by Jacky Ankerman,

8. Election of Rescue Warden Keith Knight was proposed by Dave Tooke and seconded by Brian Snell.

9. Election of Conservation and Access Officer. Peat Bennett was proposed by Tim Francis and seconded by Julie Hesketh.

10. Election of the Examiners Mike Lovell was proposed by Wayne Hiscox and seconded by Linda Milne. Ben Cooper was proposed by Tim Francis and seconded by Wayne Hiscox,

11. Motions

Amendments to the Constitution and Rules

1. Proposal to alter Paragraphs 3(c.) and 4.

3 (c.) ASSOCIATE MEMBERS i.e. persons who wish to be associated with the Group but do not wish to be full members, and who have been approved by a majority of the Committee.

4. PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

- a. Use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates
- b. Use of Group equipment
- c. Use of the library
- d. Free publications
- e. Advice of meetings and activities
- f. Stand for election to the Committee
- g. Vote at general meetings
- h. Public liability insurance
- i. An annual Charterhouse Caving Company permit
- j. Hold a key to the Group's cottage
- k. Hold a key to the library
- l. Hold a key to the tackle store

FULL MEMBERS: are entitled to all privileges of membership.

PROBATIONARY MEMBERS: are entitled to privileges (a), (d), (e), (h), (i), (j) and (b) and (c) only under the supervision of a full or honorary member.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER: are entitled to privileges (a), (d), (e), (f), (j).

HONORARY MEMBERS: are entitled to all privileges of membership.

The aim of the proposal was to tighten up the categories of membership and lay down the exact privileges of each category of membership. Martin thanked the Committee for the work they had put into the wording, however he is against the wording being introduced. The categories of probationary and full membership are to stay. Ben cooper suggested that a category called affiliate should be used to replace Associate, and that anyone could be an affiliate member. It was noted that there are currently 20 people in the Associate category of membership. Lee Hawkswell proposed that b and c only under the supervision of a Full or Honorary member be added to Associate/Affiliate member. This was seconded by Dave Tooke. The thorny issue of whether Associate/Affiliates require liability insurance and if so whether their current level of subs could sustain this. It was decided to discuss liability insurance as separate issue in respect of the whole Group later in the meeting.

A vote was taken on whether there should be an Affiliate category of membership. The results were, 21 for, 3 against and 1 abstention. So the motion was carried. A second vote was taken on whether the wording proposed by Lee Hawkswell should be added. The results were, 21 for, and 4 against. A third vote was taken to decide whether after point (f) to add "as not more than one can be on the Committee at one time". The results were, 25 for. A fourth vote was taken whether to accept the amended motion. The results were, 16 for, 8 against, and 1 abstention, As any vote requires a four-fifths majority the motion failed.

2. Proposal to substitute Paragraph 7 for the new Paragraph 7.

Proposed By Malcolm Cotter and seconded by Norma Cotter.

7(a) The Groups jobs to be undertaken by the following elected Honorary job holders: Secretary; Treasurer; Caving Secretary; Cottage Warden; Property Maintenance Agent (Land Agent); Tackle Master; Editor; Recorder (Minutes); Librarian; Social Secretary; Rescue Warden; Access and Conservation Officer; Tax Claimant; Web Master.

(b) The Groups business shall be regulated by a committee of 7 members. They will normally be elected at the annual general meeting to serve until the next annual general meeting. The secretary, treasurer and recorder will automatically be members of the committee. The four remaining members shall be chosen from the elected job holders by a secondary ballot in the way specified under para 9 (e), (f), (g). Each full member may have one vote for each contested post up to a total of four cast in the secondary ballot. Should two or more candidates for different posts receive equal votes all may serve and the committee expanded to accommodate (c.) All co-options can be made at a general meeting. (d) If a job falls vacant, at a time other than a general meeting, the committee may co-opt a new job holder. (e) If the committee numbers fall below seven, at a time other than a general meeting, the number may be made up by co-option by the committee from the elected job holders. A job change will be required in the case of resignation by the secretary, treasurer or recorder in order to co-opt an elected post holder. (f) Failure to fill the three posts from elected job holders will need to be resolved by calling a general meeting.

Arthur Spain wondered what was wrong with the current system. Tony Knibbs thought the idea was OK. Lee Hawkswell didn't based on his experience with a similar system. Dave Tooke wasn't in favour of the system. Julie Hesketh thought the system was a good idea because it allowed flexibility for smaller jobs to be available for members who can't commit huge amounts of time. The up shot of it all was that the motion was withdrawn and an agreement was made to discuss it at the half yearly. Comments to be sent to Malcolm who will do an article for the newsletter.

10. Any other business

BCRA Insurance The BCRA insurance is now £5 and potentially could go up to £20 per head in the next few months. The question was raised whether we should keep public liability as part of the subs or do we work out another way to charge members. One suggestion was maybe split those who cave and those who don't. Another question asked was whether members have to be insured to be a member. It was decided that we would need to seek legal advice on this. Jonathon Roberts thinks we should separate out the cost of liability insurance from the subs Ben Cooper proposed that the subs next year should be £25 with the insurance cost on top. This was seconded by Lee Hawkswell. It was finally decided to hold a general meeting in the Autumn to discuss this, because by then we should have a better idea of how much the insurance is likely to be and therefore the implications to the Group. The Committee is to decide the date for the meeting. A vote was taken and the results were, 21 for, 1 against, and 3 abstentions.

11. Date and venue of the next AGM 27th March 2004, at 10.30, in the Hunter's Lodge.