

**MINUTES OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON 1ST APRIL 2006 AT THE HUNTERS LODGE INN**



The Mendip Caving Group is a Registered Charity No. 270088

Chairman: Jonathan Roberts

Full Members present: 22

Others present (non voting): 2 (1 probationary and 1 non-member)

Attendance List: Geoff Beale, Malcolm Cotter, Norma Cotter, John Evans, Tim Francis, Joan Goddard, Doug Harris, Lee Hawkswell, Julie Hesketh-Laird, Wayne Hiscox, Fiona Kempston, Roy Kempston, Louisa Minahan, Michael Norton, Bryan Pittman, Bernard Reeves, Jonathan Roberts, Martin Rowe, Yvonne Rowe, Arthur Spain, Bob Templeman, Mary Templeman, Pat Walsh and Alan Wicks.

1. Apologies for absence

Charlie Allison, Peat Bennett, Bill Chadwick, Sonya Cotter, Tony Knibbs, Pat Newman and Martin Peck.

2 & 3. Minutes of the previous AGM held on the 9th April 2005

Attention was drawn to item 2 of the meeting's agenda (i.e. the minutes of the 2005 AGM). They were accepted *nem con* as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising from the 2005 AGM

It was noted that people who are not present at an AGM, but send their apologies for absence, receive a mention in the minutes, yet those who make the effort to attend do not. It was agreed that the attendance list would be included in the minutes of this meeting (see above).

Item 3 of the 2005 AGM minutes refers to a paper to be produced by Malcolm Cotter proposing changes to the Committee structure and setting out the rationale behind them. Once drawn up, the paper will be circulated to members (but not published in the newsletter) in draft form for comment.

Further to item 4 of the 2005 AGM minutes, Fiona Kempston reported that the advice she received from her accountant colleagues was that you cannot claim gift aid on insurance payments to BCA as they constitute a personal benefit. However, it is perhaps arguable that members are not purchasing

insurance, but subscribing to BCA. It was agreed that the Treasurer and Malcolm Cotter should discuss this further away from the meeting.

5. Officers' reports and matters arising from those reports

With the exception of the Tacklemaster's report, these were circulated in advance of the meeting with the Group's newsletter. Each officer gave a brief summary of his or her report and highlighted any key matters.

Secretary's report 2005-6

Tim Francis

The Hon. Secretary re-iterated that unfortunately he has had less time to devote to the post than in previous years. He gave an update to the meeting on current membership levels; there were 102 members at 15th March 2006.

There was a general discussion on the difficulties of co-ordinating MCG and BCA membership databases. The BCA are looking to improve and streamline procedures next year.

Treasurer's report 2005-6

Martin Rowe

The Treasurer highlighted the key points in his report and took questions from the floor. The question of whether or not the cottage needs to re-valued and/or is adequately insured was put to the Treasurer. His feeling, and the general feeling of the meeting, was that the cottage is adequately covered.

To avoid confusion, it was agreed that when presenting the accounts in the future, in the balance sheet, "cottage and land" should be replaced with "cottage" only.

It was noted that the newsletter costs have reduced considerably; this was partly because the percentage of the membership receiving the newsletter via email has increased and partly because some newsletter related expenses have not yet been claimed.

There has been an increase in administration expenses this year; admin expenses cover postage, printing costs, the cost of laminating membership cards etc.

The main area of concern is the big increase in electricity costs; electricity consumption has risen (we have more storage heaters and all now work) and this has been compounded by an increase in electricity prices. The Committee is doing what it can to address the problem e.g. looking at changing suppliers, putting anti-tamper signs on the heaters etc. Joan Goddard is also helpfully checking the heaters midweek.

[Note: the examiners confirmed that the accounts have been examined and a report would go to the Hon. Secretary today.]

Caving Secretary's report 2005-6

Bob Templeman

The Caving Secretary reported that he had concentrated his efforts this year on arranging trips into the more unusual/locked caves that require 'outside'

leaders. For example, there are future trips planned for Aveline's Hole (to see the cave art), Grebe Swallet and Gough's Cave beyond the show cave.

The planned Upper Flood Open day has been put on hold for the time being. It is not considered appropriate/timely to run such an event given the current digging activity in the cave.

Cottage Warden's report 2005-6

Doug Harris

The Cottage Warden confirmed that the Committee are already looking into ways to minimise electricity costs and consumption, however any specific suggestions are welcome. [There followed a general discussion on the feasibility of generating, and using, renewable energy at the cottage].

The Cottage Warden again thanked all those that had assisted with the laying of the new lounge floor. Members and guests were requested not to bring axes into the lounge.

Tacklemaster's report 2005-6

Peat Bennett

Peat Bennett was co-opted to the post of Tacklemaster mid-year following Martin Peck's resignation. In his absence, the Hon. Secretary gave a verbal report on his behalf. Work is in hand to assess what new equipment needs to be purchased. He is happy to stand again.

Editor's Report 2005-6

Yvonne Rowe

The Editor was pleased to have received many positive comments about the newsletter; it is generally considered to be lively and interesting. She would be happy to see someone new (with fresh ideas and good IT skills) become Editor, but, if nobody else steps forward, she is happy to continue to fill the post.

Recorder/Librarian's Report 2005-6

Louisa Minahan

Nothing extra to report.

Social Secretary's Report

Linda Milne

The Social Secretary reported that attending the fireworks in Priddy – for last year's half-yearly social event – went well, but next year it will be skittles. Around 50 people have tickets for this year's Annual Dinner (at the City Arms, Wells) and members of the MNRC will be acting as guest speakers. The coach is booked for 7pm.

There is the general issue of how to encourage new members (this is also looming as a topic at national level) and a special weekend for novices is to be held. Adverts need to go out to universities and colleges of further education etc. We continue to receive membership enquiries via the website and there is now also a link to the MCG site on Blagdon.org.

Guest groups need to meet existing members and we need to consider whether a higher standard of accommodation is expected.

Other Officers' reports

a) Trustees' Report

Malcolm Cotter

Investments have performed well in the last financial year. The Custodian Trustees recommended that the policy of re-investing dividend payments should continue. The example of the Bristol Water dividend was given.

It was noted that the Group has potentially another £5,000 that could be invested.

b) Gift Aid Report

Malcolm Cotter

The Gift Aid Administrator reports that the current system is working well, matters are up-to-date.

c) Conservation and Access Officer's Report

Lee Hawkswell

The Conservation and Access Officer has kept in touch with Les Davies (Senior Warden for the Mendips Hills A.O.N.B.) over the past year. There has been discussion regarding a formal dig at Blackmoor Shaft, he has spoken to Doug Harris and Malcolm Cotter.

He reported that the padlock on the Fairy Quarry car park now takes a CSCC key; a lid has been placed on Lime Kiln Dig; and the Waterwheel lid is no longer going to be replaced.

The replacement chain for Blue Pencil purchased by the MCG more than 10 years ago has not yet been fitted. This is now urgent and the SBSS, on behalf of the CSCC, have volunteered to do the work.

d) Rescue Warden's Report

Keith Knight

Keith Knight not present – nothing extra reported.

There was a request from the floor for MRO dates to be posted in the newsletter.

e) 2005 Guest Bookings Report

Joan Goddard

The Guest Bookings Report generated general discussion on the reasons why the cottage was failing to attract university groups (e.g. location), the need to meet health and safety standards (e.g. fire extinguishers are regularly checked) and the accommodation requirements of youth and scout groups.

The idea of splitting the Foreman's lounge (to enable male and female youth leaders, and their male and female charges, to sleep in separate rooms) has been noted by the Committee.

It was clarified that when the cottage bookings page on the MCG website says 'guest bed available – none', it does not mean there are no beds available for members. There are always 6-8 beds available for members.

6. Election of Honorary Officers for 2006/7

The following officers were elected:

Treasurer: Martin Rowe
Editor: Yvonne Rowe
Caving Secretary: Bob Templeman
Cottage Warden: Doug Harris

The following agreed to be considered for co-option at the next meeting
Social Secretary: Linda Milne
Tacklemaster: Peat Bennett
Hon. Secretary: Tim Francis
Recorder/Librarian: Louisa Minahan

7. Election of non-Committee Posts for 2006/7

The following were elected:
Rescue Warden: Keith Knight
Conservation Officer: Mick Norton
Gift Aid: Malcolm Cotter

8. Election of Examiners for 2006/7

Anne Pittman and Fiona Kempston were elected.

9. Amendments to the Constitution and Rules

a) Proposal to alter the Constitution and Rules with regard to the application procedure for new members.

The following motion was put to the meeting:

“Under point 3(b) PROBATIONARY MEMBERS delete “who have been advertised in the newsletter or notice board (together with their sponsors) for at least one month and”

The new point 3(b) to read as follows:

(b)PROBATIONARY MEMBERS, i.e. people who have been proposed by two full members, who have attended at least one Group meet where Committee members were present, and who have been accepted as probationary members by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.”

Members voted as follows: 14 votes for, 1 vote against and 3 abstentions¹.
Motion carried.

b) Proposal to alter the Constitution and Rules to clarify the circumstances upon which a member may apply to the Committee for reduced subscriptions from three to two.

The following motion was put to the meeting:

*“Under point 6 SUBSCRIPTIONS:
delete: “(i) Members aged 60 or over,”*

¹ Re: numbers of votes cast - please note not all those on the attendance list remained present for the duration of the meeting.

replace: “(iii) Members on low income” with “(ii) Members experiencing financial hardship.”

The substitute text to read as follows:

...“Members may apply to the Committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription, in two circumstances:

Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year,

Members experiencing financial hardship.””

At the meeting an additional interim motion was put forward to amend the above proposal by the insertion of the word “annually” between ‘apply’ and ‘to the Committee’ (i.e. Members may apply *annually* to the Committee...). This was carried unanimously.

Members voted on the amended proposal as follows: 17 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention. Motion carried.

10. Other Motions

Cottage Usage

Cottage fees cover background heating only (to be topped up by wood and coal which is provided). Where members use additional personal electric heaters, then they should contribute by putting a donation into the box.

We do not want to discourage members from using the cottage, but they should be aware that electric heaters are expensive to run, especially during peak times.

There was some confusion as to why this matter had been raised as a formal motion rather than simply A.O.B. The Committee took the point and a note should be placed in the newsletter.

11. Any Other Business

a) Roman Rake / Lime Kiln Dig

The Conservation Officer enquired as to the current situation at Roman Rake/Lime Kiln Dig with regards to spoil removal. The Hon. Secretary informed the meeting that he is still having discussions with English Nature. They are aware of the new lid and have requested a site visit.

The Hon. Secretary and Conservation Officer to take matters forward and to inform the membership of English Nature’s decision via the newsletter.

b) Cotag deposits

The Cotag system is very important; it provides additional security and leads to lower insurance premiums. At present, a deposit of £15 is paid for a key and cotag (this is refunded if a member leaves the club). If the battery in the cotag fails, a replacement is provided for no additional charge (unless the member only paid £10 originally). In effect the club’s policy is to fund the replacement of cotags. However, it is questionable whether this is a feasible long-term policy as more cotags begin to wear out.

The membership needs to be aware that the Committee are currently reviewing this matter.

c) Number of guests per member at the cottage

It was asked whether the Group has a policy regarding the number of 'free' guests a member may bring to the cottage without prior booking with the Cottage Warden (or the Hon. Secretary).

During the day members may bring as many guests as they like to the cottage. However, for overnight stays members are restricted to two guests only (unless pre-booked).

d) Developing and enhancing the MCG website

The Treasurer explained the work he was doing to develop and update the MCG's website (e.g. adding new borders to existing pages). He exhibited some proto-type webpages.

Some present at the meeting expressed the desire to see the current MCG newsgroup on the website rather than Yahoo.

e) Privileges of membership

The point was raised that some Associate and Probationary Members would like to be able to vote at AGMs, but do not want to become Full Members (because they cannot, or do not want to, undertake a training trip). The Committee was asked to look at this.

12.Date and Venue of the next Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will be held on Saturday 24th March 2007 at 10am in the back room of the Hunters Lodge Inn. The half yearly meeting will be on the 7th October 2006.