

CHARTERHOUSE CAVING COMPANY LTD.  
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Held on April 14th 2018 in the Hunter's Lodge

The Meeting opened at 10.35 a.m.

**Those present:** Keith Batten (SMCC rep.); Judi Durber (ChCC rep.); Alan Gray (Director & ACG rep.); Pete Hann (Chairman & WCC rep.); Dave King (MNRC rep.); Ian Matthews (FCC rep.); Graham Mullan (Secretary & UBSS rep.); Graham Price (Director & CSS rep.); Babs Price (BEC rep.); Trevor Timmins (Director & SBSS rep.); Linda Wilson (Conservation Officer).

1. **Apologies for Absence:** None received; the MCG were absent.
2. **Minutes of the last Meeting:** These were taken as read.
3. **Matters Arising:** None that will not be taken elsewhere.
4. **Chairman's Remarks:** The Chairman stated that his first year in office had started very quietly, but the last month had been somewhat different. The relevant matter would be covered later in the meeting.
5. **Secretary's Report:** This had been circulated. It was briefly run through again, there were no questions. The meeting was reminded of the relevant organisational details concerning *CaveFest 2018* especially concerning parking on the Sunday when the MCR practice was taking place in G.B.
6. **Annual Subscription:** It was agreed that this should remain at £30 for the year.
7. **Legal Representative's report:** Linda noted that our obligations to Companies House have all been met. She informed the meeting that the likely requirement to supply risk assessments on all sites to the BCA's insurers, minuted last year had not been progressed by BCA or their insurers.
8. **Conservation Officer's Report:** A verbal report was given, as the meetings with SWT and the Charterhouse Leaders had only taken place the previous day. The written copy is being circulated with these Minutes.
9. **Report from the Charterhouse leaders' meeting:**  
A leaders' meeting was held yesterday and the notes from this meeting will be circulated along with the minutes from this meeting. Please take the time to read these even if you are not a leader and they do contain matters of general interest. It was agreed that meetings of this type should continue to be held.
10. **Dig Reports:** Received reports are appended to these minutes, see Appendix 1.

11. **Appointment of Officers:**

Chairman & Director	Pete Hann
Secretary	Graham Mullan
Directors	Graham Price, Alan Gray, Trevor Timmins
Conservation Officer	Linda Wilson

The above were proposed *en bloc* by BEC, seconded by ACG and were elected for the coming year. **Nem con.**

12. **Any Other Business:** Following legal advice from the BCA's then Legal and Insurance Officer, the Directors took the decision last July to suspend access to 16 to 18-year olds under the parental waiver scheme. This decision was notified to the clubs and the waiver was removed from the website. Enquiries at the time indicated that very few waivers had been signed since the Company was set up and so this did not seem to be a matter of any urgency.

Following an enquiry from a member of the BCA Youth and Development Group who enquired about this with the Secretary and then, in breach of the BCA's own constitution, with SWT, there followed a semi-public debate on social media, during which it became clear that some members of member clubs were systematically breaching the permit regulations and that other members were, despite the information being on the permit, unaware of the correct procedures.

A full discussion followed in which the history behind the current system was explored and a way forward discussed. The outcome of this was that all club reps present agreed that we should continue to suspend this access until anticipated "qualified and insured" legal advice is obtained by BCA. If this advice concurs then access to this group of people can be restored. The following points were noted:

That members of member clubs should be reminded of their obligations under our access arrangements. In particular it is "unhelpful" for those in breach to publicise this on social media. (*Post meeting note:* The Longwood Valley Licence explicitly states that 16 and 17-year olds need carry insurance indemnifying the landowner with an insurance company previously agreed with them. I propose to add a line on the parental waiver where their BCA membership number can be recorded.)

That Charterhouse Cave Leaders can be under no obligation to take anyone into the cave that they judge to be unsuitable. This includes their right not to take any 16 to 18-year olds, if they so decide.

That the Company needs to produce a Safeguarding Policy. This will be drafted by the Secretary and be circulated to the Directors for comment. (*Post meeting note:* BCA has a new Safeguarding Officer and the need (or otherwise) for this policy will be discussed with him.)

The Company also needs to produce a Data Protection Policy, though the advice on the Information Commissioners Office website indicates that we do not need to register with that office. This will cover the data on Club Reps and Cave Leaders held

by the Company and personal information on Permit Holders held by the Clubs. This will be drafted and circulated as above.

It was additionally noted that communication has been somewhat erratic owing to people using their own email lists and so the Secretary will initiate a mailing list for the Club Reps. This is in addition to the one for Charterhouse Leaders that was requested at their meeting. (*Post meeting note* both these lists are now operational under the addresses [club\\_reps@charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk](mailto:club_reps@charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk) and [leaders@charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk](mailto:leaders@charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk).)

13. **Date of the next meeting:** April 6th 2019 at 10.30. a.m. Hunter's Lodge.

The meeting closed at 12.46. p.m.

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## Appendix 1 - Dig Reports for 2017/8

### **Timber Hole**

Following the acquisition of a high lift submersible pump, we were able to empty the 2 m deep lake at the bottom of the dig. At teyh bottow a narrow joint is being followed pretty much vertically down and widened by blasting. To enable spoil removal, an electric winch is being used. At present we have reached the cable limit on the winch and consideration is being given to using another underground. As we have had an exceptionally wet winter, digging is on hold until conditions improve as it is necessary to transport a lot of equipment to the dig. However, good progress has been made and work continues.

### **Polar Burr**

Most effort has been concentrated on Timber with work on Polar Burr usually being done while waiting for fumes to clear. Work continues.

Graham Price  
April 2018

### **Longwood Valley Sink Digging Report – April 2018**

Work continues at LVS and last spring/summer a considerable amount of flood debris was removed to the surface from the bottom of Main Rift and Tennis Ball Rift. Main Sink was also cleared by the team. Unfortunately the floods of winter 2017/2018 have washed a vast amount of new debris down the cave and it is estimated that it will take numerous digging sessions just to get back to the status quo. This winter the LVS gate required clearing of debris after every spell of heavy rain. The stream continued towards Black Rock Gate on several occasions, causing serious damage to the track and closing the Cheddar Gorge road for a few days after one bad flood. Unless measures can be taken to prevent flood debris entering the cave there is a very good chance that the cave will become completely backfilled in the future, resulting in the Longwood stream regularly continuing down to Black Rock Gate and presumably causing frequent road closures during the winter months.

The main real digging this year has concentrated on enlarging the bottom of PSS Rift with the aim of evaluating whether this would be a better project than Triassic Tunnel. However, this work determined that the rift closes down to a tiny choked crack a few centimetres wide and it is not thought worth pursuing. Cementing has started on stabilizing the draughting boulder pile halfway down Main Rift and the aim for this year is to continue both with this and with enlarging the end of Triassic Tunnel.

Ali Moody

### **Toothache Pot dig report.**

**No report has yet been received. This is being chased up by BEC.**

### **Rhino Rift dig report**

No progress has been possible during the past year, but the digger wishes to continue the permission unless there is a serious request from another team.

Rob Harper

### **Charterhouse Cave**

No progress in the past year, but plans are in hand on several fronts for the coming season

Ali Moody/Andrew Atkinson/Pete Hann

### **GB Bat Passage**

No progress has taken place over the past year.

**Tynings Great Swallet**

No progress has taken place over the past year. Excess scaffolding has been removed from the cave.

Graham Mullan

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## Appendix 2 - Timeline of events.

1994

Changes in the law mean Bristol Water (BWW) no longer needs own land in order to control water quality

1995

Conservation plans for both Longwood Valley/Velvet Bottom and Gruffy Field agreed with both English Nature (now Natural England, NE) and BWW  
Gruffy Field put up for sale. BWW decide that sale must be to “a conservation body” but state that cavers should be allowed access under no more onerous conditions than before.

CCC Ltd set up by the members of the old Charterhouse Caving Committee, as the new owners, Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) agree to grant a 150 year lease to the land ‘under’ Gruffy Field.

1998

BWW sell Longwood Valley and Velvet Bottom to SWT. Cave access under the previous licence, determinable in three months is continued. This licence remains in force to date.

2000

The conservation plans for Gruffy Field and for Longwood Valley/Velvet Bottom are renewed without amendment.

2005

The conservation plans are, again, renewed without amendment.

2015

The conservation plans are renewed, with some minor amendments after details discussions with both SWT and NE and consultation with clubs. At NE’s request these will now be renewed at 10-year intervals..

2017

In July, advice is received from the Legal and Insurance Officer of the British Caving Association that parental waivers for 16 and 17-year olds cannot necessarily be relied on. This advice is forwarded to the Company Directors who take the decision to suspend access for 16 and 17-year olds, the matter to be discussed at the next AGM. It is not deemed to be an urgent issue as enquiries with the club representatives show very few instances of the parental waiver – and hence access for this age group - being used.

2018

In February, an enquiry is received by the Secretary from an individual on the British Caving Association (BCA) the Youth and Development Working Group querying the recent change in the regulations. Before this correspondence has finished, he bypasses us completely and takes his query directly to SWT and to NE. This is in direct breach of the BCA's own constitution, which states:

*11.1. The Association shall not interfere in the affairs of a Member unless specifically requested to do so by that Member. The Association shall not mediate between Members unless requested by them in writing to do so.*

Fortunately, our good working relationship with SWT prevents this blowing up into a problem with them.

On March 1<sup>st</sup> we receive an email from the BCA Secretary which includes: *"This has the potential to have a profound impact on BCA member clubs and ACB's so I think we need to seek a qualified and insured second opinion."*

This statement confirms the Directors in the view that they need behave cautiously. The evening before the AGM we are informed by the BCA Secretary that he intends to report this to BCA Council on 14<sup>th</sup> April and recommend that such advice is sought.

Having taken soundings from Charterhouse Cave leaders at a meeting the previous evening (13<sup>th</sup> April), the Company AGM agreed that if this advice from Counsel allows, then the Company will revert to the prior policy of allowing 16 and 17-year olds access on the production of a parental waiver in support of their signed permit. It is agreed that Charterhouse Cave leaders can be under no obligation to take anyone into the cave that they judge to be unsuitable. This includes their right not to take any 16 and 17-year olds, if they so decide.