Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter and Journal
April 2015



Photo: Toby Roberts

Issue Number 157

Editorial

This Newsletter has been difficult to put together due to the lack of articles. A number of members have offered articles but in the end it was Craig Holdstock who came up trumps and ensured our Easter edition. I do not plan another Newsletter until at least the autumn so, hopefully, the summer will inspire more of you to put pen to paper, or preferably key board to computer.

Since the last Newsletter the club has continued to gain new members and we also held one of most successful AGMs for many years with a number of newish members taking up committee positions. Part of the success was a magnificent compilation of our 2014 activities by Wayne who produced a very professional 30 minute film that was very well received by all who attended the AGM. He is already working on the 2015 version and has been roped in to do something similar for the Pengelly AGM.

Anyway, until the next Newsletter enjoy your trips underground.

David Jean

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Plymouth Caving Group
Annual General Meeting
Moorcroft Quarry Offices
Wednesday 18th February 2015

The meeting opened at 19.32
Present:- David Jean, Alasdair Neill, Marina Dewins, Dave Warne, Rupert Goddard, Bernard Page, Richard Vooght, Alex Heath, Keith Coventry, Wayne Pearson, Tara Beacroft, Alex Noot, Dan Snaith, Dan Church, Jonathan Howe, Laura Milroy

Apologies:- There were no apologies.

Minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2014 had previously been circulated electronically.

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

2014 Officer's Reports

Chairman (Dave Warne):-
Once again we have had another good year; Tuesday evening trips have been going well, with large numbers turning out. This has led to multiple trips being organised and large numbers on some trips.

This has been largely down to the influx of new members that have joined throughout the year. There has been a steady stream of enquiries generated from the redesigned website, with the membership up in the fifties at the end of the year.

We still need to look for new venues within our normal area, as we are still revisiting the same old places. We are, however, still enjoying good relations with some of the Cornish groups that provide a variety of trips down in the west.

We have still managed to have a few away trips throughout the year, with the North Wales trip proving to be very popular. We have also had trips to Mendip and South Wales, as well as some social events held at the Pengelly Centre.

On the access front, there has been a small group venturing into some of the mines in Cornwall with total disregard for safety and the environment. These individuals have littered the mines with empty beer cans and discarded packaging. This has got back to some of the land / mineral owners and has consequently led to the sealing of some of the mines. I must add that these are not PCG members.

Membership fees for the year have remained unchanged again, with annual subscription of £9, and BCA insurance a further £17 making a total of £26 per individual.

There have been concerns regarding conduct and competency on club trips and the use of social media. One trip was abandoned due to insufficient equipment, and graffiti left on another trip. The committee will be looking into a Code of Conduct, and minimum competency for certain trips. We will also be looking into a policy on the posting of articles on social media. This includes the posting of sensitive information and the tagging of people without prior permissions.

Recently we have managed to get two bumper editions of the journal out, these are currently on the website for download. This didn't get emailed out due to size of files.

Once again the club cannot function without a healthy functioning committee, many of whom have been in place for many years, and undertake more than

one function. It would be nice to see some of the ordinary members especially the younger ones taking on an active role on within the committee.

Secretary (Laura Milroy):-
I don't have much to report. There has been very little correspondence during the year. I have only had a few emails, some of which were 'spam'. I have written a letter, regarding consent for access, to the land owner of Tor Wood Mine (Newton Ferrers Estate, Cornwall) but I am yet to hear anything back. I will let the Committee know if I hear anything back.

I am happy to continue in the role if nobody else would like the opportunity.

Treasurer (Rupert Goddard):-
Rupert Goddard presented his report.

PCG accounts for the period January 1 2014 to December 31st 2014

Membership for current year, paid in last financial year		307	
Bank interest on Deposit account	0.37	0.86	
Tackle Fees	40.00	73.00	4
Donations	351.00	6.89	
TOTAL			
	£1,754.87	**£1,014.10**	
Expenditure	**2013**	**2014**	
Printing and postage	0.00	7.89	
Insurance	715.50	706.00	
Subscriptions	20.00	20	
Web hosting	30.00	36	
Equipment	0.00	0	
Key Hire	40.00	40	
Books	20.00	0	
50th anniversary celebration costs	462.31	0	
Refund of subs over payment (Manley)	0.00	0	

Accrued Income (Subscriptions received for next yr before yr end)	307	0	3
TOTAL	**£1,594.81**	**£809.89**	
BALANCE AT YR END	**£160.06**	**£204.21**	

Notes

1. Subscriptions refer to amounts received for relevant membership subscription year

2.,3. Membership incomes received in different years has not been accrued / deferred as in previous years, but manually included in the current year (2014).

PCG accounts for the period January 1 2014 to December 31st 2014

Bank Accounts	Balance at Start	Balance at End
Community Account	1881.94	2216.29
Interest Savings Account	1856.10	1857.28

Transfers	**2013**	**2014**
None	0	0.00

Income	**2013**	**2014**	
Membership subscriptions	£1,056.50	626.35	1
Membership for next yr	307.00		2

4. Tackle fees for 2014 includes £5 temp membership fees.

Prepared by Rupert Goddard
Treasurer
Plymouth Caving Group
18 February 2015.

Other Committee reports

A number of other committee members took advantage of making brief reports

Conservation Officer (Rupert Goddard):-

Over the last 12 months, I have continued to act as point of contact for conservation matters. Due to family commitments, I have been unable to cave or be involved in any practical conservation issues, accept matters brought to my attention during committee meetings e.g. CROW Act and its impact on

cavers / mine explorers. Some members have continued to notify me of bat sightings and it would be good if trip organisers can continue to notify the conservation officer of any bat sightings, numbers, species and sight. The aim is that these details will be passed onto the relevant county biological records centre.

Membership Secretary (Rupert Goddard):-
The role of the membership secretary involves collating new members' address and next of kin details, submitting their details to the BCA for insurance and notifying the treasurer of payments to be made.

In 2014 the PCG had a membership of 51, compared to 52 in 2013. However, 2014 saw the membership being far more active, resulting in large attendance at Tuesday night trips and more away trips than we have had of recent years.

Librarian (Ali Neill):-
The library has remained, during the past year, partly held at our old tackle store and partly with me. The former is now accessible through Dave Warne. It has been suggested there might be a future home in Buckfastleigh, which hopefully will make it more accessible.

The current library list on the website is very out of date. This, in part, is because the updated version was lost due to a computer glitch. In general, anyone willing to take on this task will find it as fascinating as when I first took on the task of cataloguing our collection.

Following the spirit of exchange of information within the caving world, the PCG has exchanged publications with other caving groups both in the UK and abroad. We continue to receive publications from other groups, but we have utterly failed to fulfil our part of the bargain for some years now by reciprocating. I have repeatedly brought this up at committee meetings, but really feel like I have been banging my head against a brick wall trying to get this resolved. Most of these groups provide printed copies and wish the same in return.

It also appears committee has failed in its responsibility to provide printed copies of the Newsletter to members where requested, as is required under the constitution, and as I understand, some members requested.

Tackle Warden (Richard Vooght):-
There has been slight difficulty in getting tackle down to Plymouth from Buckfastleigh since the tackle has been re-homed in the Pengelly Centre. It might be that committee consider finding somewhere small where some tackle reserves can be kept to ease this difficulty.

I am aware that I need to play a more active role in enforcing the payment of tackle fees and ensuring that the Treasurer knows what monies relate to what tackle fees.

There is also outstanding gear still to be purchased after our tackle audit.

Meet Secretary (Bernard Page):-
Tuesday evening trips have been held throughout 2014, with more than one trip on several Tuesday evenings. There have been large numbers turnout for most trips which is great, but has sometimes caused a slight issue with smaller venues.

Finding volunteers to co-ordinate trips has on occasions been difficult, especially for some of the more challenging venues and because we are running more than one trip on most Tuesdays.

It is important that members let the trip leader know, in advance, if they are attending a trip, especially with such large numbers showing up for trips.

I am happy to continue as meet secretary next year unless there are any members who would like to give it a shot.

Editor (David Jean):-
We only managed to get one Newsletter out last year, but that was due largely to my personal medical circumstances, but I hope to get more out this year. People have been giving me write-ups and photographs for the Newsletters and I hope to compile an Easter Newsletter. Please pass any write-ups, photographs or information to me by mid March.

Webmaster (Keith Coventry):-
In 2014 we redesigned the website and utilised search optimisation. We have seen 1609 unique visitors to the site and many returning visitors. The website is currently up-to-date and we now have a 'closed'/private Facebook group. We have discussed and put in place lots of new ideas in relation to the website this year, and there are still plenty more being discussed going forward. I think that the success of the new website is reflected by the increase in new members and new enquires.

The 2014 Committee then stood down and David Jean took the chair.

Election of Officers
Chairman Dave Warne nominated by Keith Coventry seconded by Marina Dewins appointed nem com

Dave Warne then resumed as chair.

Secretary Laura Milroy nominated by Rupert Goddard seconded by Wayne Pearson appointed nem com

Treasurer Rupert Goddard nominated by David Jean seconded by Bernard Page appointed nem com

It was agreed that David Jean should continue as President. This was proposed by Dave Warne, seconded by Laura Milroy and agreed nem com.

Other Committee Posts
It was proposed that:-
Alex Heath be responsible for the Library.
Richard Vooght be responsible Tackle.
Keith Coventry be responsible for the Website.
Tara Beacroft be responsible for Membership.
Wayne Pearson be responsible for Conservation.
Bernard Page be responsible for Meets.
David Jean be responsible for the Editor role.

Ali Neill, Marina Dewin, Alex Noot and Dan Snaith were all elected as committee members without portfolio.

They were all elected without opposition.

Any Other Business
It has been agreed that the PCG Constitution needs to be looked at and updated. It has also been discussed about a Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy for the club.

A date was set for an EGM to discuss a Code of Conduct, a Social Media Policy and the proposed rewording in Section 9 (Membership and Subscriptions) of the PCG Constitution. The proposed new wording is:

"All club members join as a provisional member for a period of 6 months. The purpose of this to assess your attitude and suitability for caving with Plymouth Caving Group. The committee reserves the right to refuse membership to any individuals, without giving reason, who they feel do not have due regard to safety and The Caving Code."

The EGM will be held after the committee meeting on Wednesday 20th May 2015. The club will be formally notified of the EGM.

Wayne presented a short and thoroughly enjoyable film to reflect PCG's caving and mining activities in 2014.

The meeting closed at 20.35.

The next Committee Meeting will be at Moorcroft on 18th March at 19.30.



New to Caving and Plymouth Caving Group
Craig Holdstock

About October 2014 I had been looking around for something else to do and I stumbled across caving. Looking on the internet I found, much to my surprise, that there were a number of caves all very local to





me and although I had not thought about it before of course there where lots of mines. As I was looking around I found the Plymouth Caving Group website and thought that I would give it a go.

I made contact using the club website and my email was swiftly replied by Bernard and Dave who let me know of the next suitable trip and what to expect. So one dark evening I drove to just outside of Buckfastleigh to find a number of people in strange gear standing around a small road. I managed to find Bernard who let me have a helmet for my first trip into Pridhamsleigh.

Fortunately for me as I had some rather cobbled together clothing the trip turned out to be less muddy and damp than usual. I found everyone very welcoming to a newbie and I followed along. We spent 2 hours in the cave with me wondering how enough we would finally get out as I felt completely lost. I was muddy and wet, albeit not as much as normal for Prid, but I had had a thoroughly enjoyable time.



My second trip was also Pridhamsleigh and another muddy and damp trip ensued. I thought I had better get some slightly better

attire, so I decided to make the plunge and invest in some wellies. I also did not have a boiler suit and





looking on a well known website I found a second hand caving suit at a good price that did not have much use.



Since then I have gone on to a number of trips to get away on a Tuesday evening whenever possible. Trips have included Virtuous Lady Mine, Kerswell Cave, Old Gunnislake, Wheal Benny, and Clifford's Cave. Where I have, each and every time, been made to feel welcome.

More recently I went on the Wheal Russell which was great fun, although I did end up with what looked like a very bad Essex tan all over my bottom half, I think it took nearly two weeks to completely fade! Also I have had a couple of really enjoyable trips into Bakers Pit which is an excellent cave with so much to see and do.

My last trip so far was to Afton Rift which was the most physically challenging trip so far. It was a really good trip but was pretty tight in places and involved lots of climbing and traversing along a rift, not surprising considering the name! Everyone on the trip was fantastic and supported each other ensuring a safe trip.

So about 6 months into my time with Plymouth Caving Group I have met up with a a really great group of people whilst exploring some awesome underground places. So thank you to everyone in Plymouth Caving Group. I am really looking forward to the next 6 months and continuing to explore more places underground.



Dates for your Diary

Saturday 16th May
An event will be held at Chudleigh Rocks which will include plenty of opportunity for SRT practice as well as a competition between Bernard and Alex. A barbecue is also planned to make this the complete fun day out.



Bat Creature From Van Meter, Iowa

Van Meter is a small town, very small town, in Dallas County, Iowa. Even today its population is merely 1073 but just over 100 years ago, at the time of this story, it was just over 350. Van Meter nestles in the valley of the Raccoon River and just outside the town are a number of coal mines.

Residents his for three nights after a giant bat-like creature emerged from an abandoned mine to create havoc. Flying at speed or perched on top of buildings with a bright light shining from its horned head, the spectral figure created panic in the town.

Even eminent members of the community such as the mayor, doctor and school teacher claimed to have witnessed the half-human, half-animal flying around and are even said to have made a cast of its three clawed feet.

Eventually need overcame fear and the townsfolk armed themselves with all manner of weapons to hunt the visitor down. But it was last seen flying back into the mine amid blood curdling shrieks and cries.

It was never seen again.

