

Mendip Caving Group - Constitution and Rules

Part One: Administration

1. NAME. The full name of the Group is the MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

2. OBJECT. The object of the Group is, for the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the exploration, scientific study and conservation of caves and related features.

3. MEMBERSHIP. Membership shall be open to anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group. There are four classes of membership as follows:

(a) FULL MEMBERS, i.e. people who have been probationary members for at least six months, who have completed a training trip (as defined by the Committee) and who have been approved for full membership by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

(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.

(c) ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, i.e. either:

(i) former full members who are unable to play a full part in Group activities, but who wish to continue their association with the Group. Their change of membership requires the approval of a majority vote at a Committee meeting. Or:

(ii) persons who wish to become members of the Group, but who are unable to take part in the regular caving activities and who have been approved by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

(d) HONORARY MEMBERS, i.e. people who have given exceptional service to the Group. Election to this class of membership requires a unanimous vote of the Committee.

Note: Persons aged under 16 years may be sponsored by a member and attend meetings as their guests.

4. 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. Honorary members may have the same privileges as full members. 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.

5. EXPULSION FROM MEMBERSHIP. Membership may be terminated by the decision of two - thirds of the Committee (all being present). The member shall be notified of the intention of expulsion, and shall be given reasonable opportunity of attending the meeting and presenting a case. A full or associate member may appeal against the Committee's decision to a general meeting called for this purpose by the Secretary.

6. SUBSCRIPTIONS are payable on January 1st each

year. Members failing to pay by January 31st may have their membership terminated. Members joining after June 30th in any year shall pay reduced subscriptions at pro-rata rates. The amount of subscription for all classes of membership shall be determined at a General Meeting and notified to members in time to take effect from the next due date of subscription. Members may apply annually to the Committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription in two circumstances:

- (i) Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year,
- (ii) Members experiencing financial hardship.

7. COMMITTEE. The Group's business shall be regulated by a Committee of eight members. They will normally be elected at the annual general meeting to serve for a period of twelve months. If a post falls vacant during the year, a substitute officer may be co-opted for the remaining period. The honorary officers shall be: Secretary, Treasurer, Caving Secretary, Cottage Warden, Tackle master, Editor, Recorder/ Librarian, and Social Secretary.

8. COMMITTEE MEETINGS. Any officer may call a Committee meeting. The quorum for the Committee shall be more than half the number of posts filled. The decision of the Committee shall be binding on all members unless varied by a majority vote at a General Meeting.

9. GENERAL MEETINGS.

(a) The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the spring of each year to:

- (i) receive the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting,
- (ii) receive the officers' reports and examined accounts,
- (iii) elect officers for the following year term,
- (iv) appoint honorary examiners for the following year / term,
- (v) discuss formal motions and any other business.

(b) An Extraordinary General Meeting may be requested by a majority of the Committee or by five Full Members.

(c) Notice of any General Meeting, together with the agenda, shall be given by the Secretary to members at least 14 days before the date of that meeting.

(d) The chairman of each meeting will be appointed by the Committee.

(e) Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with the signatures of Full Members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting. A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee.

(f) Votes at General Meetings shall be counted by two tellers appointed at the meeting. The election of officers shall be by secret ballot.

(g) The Committee may grant a postal vote to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

10. FINANCE

(a) The Group's funds shall be placed in such account, or accounts, with banks or be otherwise invested as the Committee shall direct.

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10. FINANCE (cont)

(b) The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts and receipts of all transactions.

(c) The signatures of two members, as nominated by the Committee, shall be required on all cheques and notices of withdrawal. Any signatory not already being a member of the Committee shall by virtue of being a signatory also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

(d) Two independent examiners shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting to serve for a period of one year. They shall examine the books up to the end of each financial year, and may conduct examinations at such times as they may deem necessary and report them to the Committee.

(e) The signatories may require the authority of the Committee before signing cheques etc. for sums in excess of £200.

(f) A member may not hold more than £150 of Group funds in the form of cash for more than 28 days.

(g) Any member of the Group not already being a member of the Committee, who is appointed by the Committee to be a manager of the Group's shop, shall by virtue of that appointment also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

11. THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES of the Group may be changed only if approved by at least four-fifths of the members voting at a General Meeting. No amendment may be made which will cause the Group to cease to be a charity at law.

12. NEITHER the Mendip Caving Group, nor the Committee of the Group, nor any member, can accept responsibility for any loss, injury or death arising from a Group activity, howsoever caused. In particular, members and guests stay at the cottage and camp and cave with the Group entirely at their own risk. Nor is responsibility accepted for the loss, or any damage to personal property. Members of the Group and guests are deemed to know of, and accept without qualification, this rule.

13. THE COMMITTEE shall have full powers to deal with any matter that might arise that is not otherwise provided for in the Constitution and Rules.

14. CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES. There shall be four custodian trustees of the Group. The first custodian trustees shall be appointed by the Committee, and the Group's real property (land and buildings) shares, unit trusts and such bank accounts and other investments as the Committee shall decide shall be vested in the custodian trustees to be dealt with as the Committee shall direct by resolution (of which an entry in the Minutes Book shall be conclusive evidence). The custodian trustees shall be indemnified against risk and expense out of the Group property. The custodian trustees shall hold office until death or resignation or until removed from office by a resolution of a four-fifths majority of members present and voting at an Annual General Meeting. Where necessary the Committee shall by a resolution of a quorum of the Committee present and voting at any meeting, nominate the person or persons to be appointed the new custodian trustees and, for effecting such nominations, the Secretary is hereby nominated as the person to appoint the new or additional custodian trustees of the Group within the meaning of Section 36 of the Trustee Act 1925. He shall, by deed, duly appoint the person or persons so nominated by the Committee as the new or additional custodian trustee or custodian trustees of the Group.

The provisions of the Trustee Act 1925 shall apply to any such appointment. Any statement of fact in any such deed of appointment shall, in favour of person dealing bona fide and for value with the Group or the Committee, be conclusive evidence of the facts so stated.

15. DISSOLUTION OF THE GROUP. In the event of the dissolution of the Group, and after satisfaction of all due debts and liabilities, and remaining assets may not be distributed amongst the members but will pass to a body with similar objects established for exclusively charitable purposes or to some other charitable body.

Part Two: Caving. THE GROUP recommends that all members read and act in accordance with the National Caving Code as published by the National Caving Association, enclosed with this Constitution and Rules.

NATIONAL CAVING ASSOCIATION - The National Caving Code

Always include experienced cavers in the party.

Pick a cave or pothole within everyone's capabilities.

Leave a note of your trip and latest time of return with a responsible person and report to them on your return.

Ask for, and act on, local advice.

No less than four in the party and keep together.

Take notice of the local weather forecast.

One reliable cap-lamp for each person: without light, you're lost.

Boots, helmet and warm clothing are essential.

Emergency lights, food and first aid kit should always be taken.

See that ladders, belays and ropes are inspected and rigged properly before hanging your life on them.

Accident underground is always easy: rescue is sometimes difficult, sometimes impossible.

Falls, loose boulders, rising water and exposure cause most accidents.

Exit takes more effort than entry. Plan with the return in mind.

Clumsiness can wreck cave formations.

Observe marked routes - they are there to safeguard the cave.

Never leave litter or spent carbide in a cave - pollution kills cave life.

Set others a good example when caving - persuade them to follow it.

Enlist the help of the Regional Caving Council in passing on scientific information to be recorded nationally.

Responsible leaders will avoid taking novices where they may accidentally cause damage.

Vandalism means damage to stals, mud floors, rimstone pools, etc - help prevent it.

Alert your Regional Caving Council to any developments which may possibly damage caves.

Take care not to disturb cave fauna or remains which may be of archaeological interest.

Invite help in taping off formations to keep caves in their undamaged state for the generations to follow us.

Organise a trip to clear up litter now and again.

Nature needs YOUR help to safeguard her interests NOW!