



## **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS (Updated Oct 2025)**

### **History**

The Society in its present form was constituted in October 1959 from two groups: one was a former society of the same name founded in October 1956 whose founder members had caved as part of the 1st Chelsea Boy Scouts and the other was the London Spelæological Group which was formed in 1938. In 1964 CSS acquired a cottage called Whitewalls above Llangattock in South Wales from which it bases activities in that area. The cottage has 16 bunk beds, gas central heating, cooking and washing facilities, as well as a garden for camping. An extension to the cottage added an upstairs library room, two showers, new toilets and a cave rescue store room. Just below Whitewalls is the Old Daren Sunday School which CSS acquired in 2017. It has been renovated to provide additional accommodation for up to 8 people and serve more generally as a multifunctional space.

### **Membership**

The Society currently has over 100 members, encompassing a wide range of abilities from complete novice upwards. Our members are nowadays distributed across many parts of the UK, and a few who now live abroad also continue their membership. Only a handful of members are now based in London and the South East of England.

To become a member of CSS you must be at least 18 years of age. You join initially on a provisional basis for six months after which you would normally be accepted by the committee for full membership. Joint membership is available for two full members living at the same address receiving one copy of club publications. There is no 'joint-provisional' category of membership. All members must also subscribe to the BCA public liability insurance scheme.

### **Indoor Meetings**

The Annual General Meeting is held at a venue near Whitewalls, usually on the last Sunday each January, and there is an annual club dinner in a local hotel the evening before the AGM. The AGM elects a new committee (often the same people continue) to run the club for the coming year. The club no longer holds any meetings in London as very few members are now based there.

### **Weekend Caving Trips**

The Society runs regular underground trips, using club equipment, to caving areas around Britain. In addition, foreign caving expeditions are occasionally organised by members. Events are advertised on the club website, in the journal, and via an email mailing list.

One weekend of each month is a "club weekend" at Whitewalls or elsewhere. As well as caving trips there are other above-ground activities and entertainments like a summer barbecue, kayaking, mountain biking or walking trips, a bonfire party and a curry night. The club has leaders, keys and permits for local caves such as Agen Allwedd, OFD, Dan-yr-Ogof, Ogof Draenen, Craig a Ffynnon and Ogof Capel.

Use of Whitewalls currently costs £5 per night to provisional and full members. Non-CSS guests pay £8. Many full members hold a cottage key on a semi-permanent basis while provisional members may temporarily borrow a front door key from the Cottage Warden or Secretary.

### **Publications**

The Society produces a quarterly journal that is posted free to all members. This is a high quality glossy magazine with photographs and articles written mainly by members. Other publications, such as Records and cave surveys, are printed from time to time and are sold to members at reduced rates. The journal can also be received by email and back issues are available on the website. A membership list is produced once a year, issued to all members usually with the first journal in the year.

### **Library**

The club owns an extensive library of caving publications which may be borrowed by full members. The library room at Whitewalls is accessible to all full members.

### **Website / Forum**

The Society has a web site [www.chelseaspelaeo.org](http://www.chelseaspelaeo.org) which contains up-to-date information about the club and its activities, and lists external bookings for the cottage. The website also links to a members' forum which is often used to arrange mid-week trips and to circulate late breaking information. The forum can be found at: <https://cssmembers.proboards.com> Please join it using your real name as it is a private members-only forum.

### **How to become a member**

New members wishing to join should send a completed membership application form (below) to the Secretary, either enclosing a cheque payable to *Chelsea Spelæological Society*, or making payment by online bank transfer. Details of the club's bank account can be found on the membership form. Although the club's membership year runs from October to September you may join as a provisional member on any date.

Membership is normally provisional for the first 6 months during which you should attend caving meets with the club, and at the end of which the committee will consider you for full membership. This will take place at the meeting closest to the end of this 6-month membership period. You do not need to find a proposer and seconder, but by this time it is expected you will be known to members of the committee who can recommend that you are accepted as a full member. It helps us if the people you have been caving with can make supportive comments informally to committee members. If you are not yet sufficiently well-known to club members, the committee may postpone a decision and offer a further 6-month period of provisional membership.

The treasurer will then contact you to confirm the pro-rata fee payable to cover full membership for the period until the next 30th September to align you with the CSS membership year. You will already have paid BCA insurance up to the end of the current calendar year, so it depends what date you joined whether another BCA payment is due at this time.

**Example 1:** You join as a provisional member in November and become a full member in May. You have already paid BCA insurance up to the end of the year, so you will just need to pay full membership subs from May to September.

**Example 2:** You join as a provisional member in June and become a full member in December. In this case, your BCA insurance is about to expire, so you will need to pay BCA insurance for the following year along with your full membership subs for the period December to September.

### Joint Membership

If you live at the same postal address as another full member, you can choose to convert the two full memberships into one joint membership where only one set of publications is posted out. You can also convert a joint membership back into two separate full memberships, as you wish. The treasurer will work out what rebate or charge applies in these circumstances: the treasurer's calculation is final.

### Associate Membership

This is intended for former members of the society who are no longer active cavers but wish to continue to receive publications. Associate members staying at Whitewalls pay guest rates. The associate membership fee includes non-active caver BCA insurance (£10).

### CSS subscription rates

|             |            |              |                          |
|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Associate:  | £28 (Year) | Full:        | £30 (Year)               |
| Joint Full: | £40 (Year) | Provisional: | £10 (any 6-month period) |

### BCA Insurance

Members must also pay the appropriate rate for BCA membership, generally called BCA insurance because it includes active-caver public liability insurance. The British Caving Association (BCA) provide their insurance scheme to cavers through their clubs and to others by direct purchase. If you already have BCA insurance via another BCA caving club, or as a direct member, you will not need to pay it again through CSS, so please indicate this by completing the relevant details on the membership application form. All club members need to subscribe to the BCA insurance scheme one way or another: it ensures that British caving runs smoothly, and allows many cave access agreements to remain in place that depend on the cave visitors having insurance. We collect BCA insurance for the following calendar year along with membership subs payable from 1<sup>st</sup> October.

### BCA "active caver" insurance rates

|           |                                                                                        |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 year    | £32 (if joining between 1 <sup>st</sup> October and 31 <sup>st</sup> March)            |
| 9 months  | £24 (if joining between 1 <sup>st</sup> April and 30 <sup>th</sup> June)               |
| 6 months  | £16 (if joining between 1 <sup>st</sup> July and 30 <sup>th</sup> September)           |
| 15 months | £32 (if joining after 1st October but this includes all of the following year as well) |

### Club database

The club holds membership information and contact details on a computer database to facilitate administration. We never share information about our members, whether stored in the database or any other form of media, with any third parties except with BCA, for insurance purposes. The database is stored on a secure web server to which only key officers of the club have access. A copy of our privacy policy is available on request.

From time to time you may be sent a copy of the database page with the details we keep about you. Please tell the secretary if anything is incorrect as it is important we keep this information accurate and up-to-date. The club officers who use the database are currently the secretary, treasurer, and the Journal Editor.

You can choose how much contact information to disclose in the annual members handbook, for instance whether to include your email address or mobile telephone number. But these details might be useful to the committee for club administration purposes, so we encourage you to include them in the handbook. We keep a recent paper list of members' next of kin in the library room at Whitewalls for the unlikely event of handling a serious incident, and this information is also in the club database but, again, you can choose not to give details of next of kin.



## **APPLICATION FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP**

*Please send this form to the club secretary: Adrian Fawcett, 5 Ambryn Road, New Inn, Pontypool, NP4 0NJ. You may either enclose a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to "CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY" or you can make an online bank transfer, details below. Please call Adrian on 07973 815050 if you have any questions.*

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone numbers: (home):\_\_\_\_\_ (work):\_\_\_\_\_  
(mobile):\_\_\_\_\_

Email : \_\_\_\_\_

Write "HIDE" against any contact details that you do not want to be shown in the **members handbook**, which is circulated to all club members each year and to other new members when they join the club.

Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ N.B. You must be 18 years of age or older to join CSS

Membership of any other caving clubs:\_\_\_\_\_

Caving experience:\_\_\_\_\_

Any special caving interests:\_\_\_\_\_

Person to be contacted in an emergency (optional):\_\_\_\_\_

Their address and telephone number(s):\_\_\_\_\_

By default, you will receive a printed copy of each society journal. Otherwise you can tick the box below:

☐ I would prefer to receive an electronic version of each journal instead of a printed one.

Data protection legislation requires us to obtain positive consent from all members for their personal details to be held on a computer database and used by the club for administrative purposes. The only other organisation with which we share this information is the BCA. See the "Club Database" section of the General Information section. You have the right to ask for your details to be removed from the database at any time.

☐ I give my consent for the details I have supplied on this application form (and as subsequently updated) to be used by the Society as described above.

BCA Insurance: Please tick one box below, as appropriate:

☐ I do not require BCA insurance through Chelsea SS because I already have this insurance via \_\_\_\_\_ (club) BCA membership number \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I need to purchase BCA insurance through CSS as shown below

Joining between these dates:

1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March  
(insurance runs to end of December this year)

1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June  
(insurance runs to end of December this year)

1<sup>st</sup> July and 30<sup>th</sup> September  
(insurance runs to end of December this year)

1<sup>st</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> December  
(insurance runs to end of following December)

BCA "Active caver" insurance rates:

☐ £32.00

☐ £24.00

☐ £16.00

☐ £32.00

Total payable now: 6 months club subscription £10.00 + £ \_\_\_\_\_ insurance = £ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I enclose a cheque payable to Chelsea Spelaeological Society

☐ I have paid online into the Chelsea Spelaeological Society bank account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-90-02, account 00591115, using "CSS PROV SUBS" as the payment reference.

Constitution Rule 9 of the 2009 CSS Constitution states:

*Every person whether a member or not, making use of the services of a guide or guides or taking part in any activity or expedition organised by the Society or in which any member of the Society shall take part, shall do so at his or her own risk, and he/she or his/her legal representatives or assigns or dependants shall have no claim or right of action against the Society or any member thereof in respect any damage, loss or injury sustained, including death, notwithstanding any negligence of the guide or any members of the body of members of the Society.*

I have read the Society's Constitution and made special note of Rule 9, shown above, and agree to abide by its terms, and any amendments which may be passed at a General Meeting of the Society. I also agree to my contact details being stored in the CSS database which will be used solely for the purposes of administering the club and producing the members handbook circulated annually to club members.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_