

## REVIEWS

Judson, D. *et al.* 2003 *Underground Britain: Legal & Insurance Issues. British Cave Research Association Cave Studies Series. 12.* 40pp. Price £3.50 ISBN 0 900265 26 4.

This BCRA Cave Series work should find a variety of audiences. It ranges widely over legal issues relating to access; protection of nature and the environment; duties to third parties (in your care or otherwise, and especially children); as well as the legal aspects of helping nature out with a bit of “bang”, and other spelaeological engineering. It covers essentially the law of England and Wales, with some limited references to the position in Scotland. It seeks to put legislation in its historical and policy context, explaining why things are as they now are. Where changes are known or anticipated this is signalled in the text, an important feature, since out of date legal advice can be more hindrance than help.

Its predecessor volume, *Legal Aspects of Access Underground* (1989, National Caving Association) was much more limited in scope, as its title suggests. The range of statutes that can now impact on caving activity is surprising – you will now find both the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act featured, neither of which would spring to mind as of concern to cavers or those visiting mines. The sections dealing with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 are fairly complex in their treatment, but the authors have little choice since the changes it is effecting are both wide-ranging and complicated. As with any new legislation there is bound to be a bedding-in period (a lengthy one here with the phased implementation of parts of the Act). I suspect this area will be a strong candidate for prompting the “revised edition” in due course.

The second section covers the field of insurance (both personal and for third parties) for caving and related activities. It is able to do this with a larger British Isles and, by extension, worldwide remit (for policies taken out in the nations of the British Isles). It does so in a concise but sufficiently comprehensive depth for most readers. This section should prove a useful check-list on insurance issues for anyone planning a trip or expedition.

The booklet ends with a reference section, setting out all the relevant current acts and regulations; some select suggestions for further, more in-depth, reading; and contact addresses for the diverse range of organisations operating in the various fields discussed, with telephone numbers and, where appropriate, web addresses.

The issues covered in this work are of their very nature complex. Conveying them clearly to a non-expert audience, steering between oversimplification and excessive detail is not a gift given to all. I think the authors can claim to have avoided both extremes well, and delivered a booklet which gives practical and accurate advice in an accessible fashion. At £3.50 this is a painless way into these “boring but important” areas, which impact directly on everyone’s ability to visit and enjoy caves and mines, and do so in safety.

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