

THE COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

The Annual General Meeting of the Council will be held at the Ingleboro' Hotel, Ingleton at 3.00 pm on Saturday 19th May. 1973

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the 1972 AGM
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairmans Statement
4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Officers and Committee
7. Area Reports and Access Agreements
8. Visiting Clubs from other Regions
9. Quarrying in the Dales
10. Any Other Business

Members are reminded that Officers and Committee are to be elected by this meeting. Nominations for these positions may be sent to the Secretary.

J. Rasdell
Hon. Secretary.

THE COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on Saturday 19th May 1973 at the
Ingleboro' Hotel, Ingleton.

The following clubs were represented:

Bolton Speleo Club, Bradford Pothole Club, Craven Pothole Club,
Earby Pothole Club, Gritstone Club, Kendal Caving Club, Lancaster
University Speleological Society, Northern Pennine Club, North
Manchester Caving Club, Northern Scout Caving Group, Preston
Caving Club, Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club, Rolls Royce Speleo-
logical Group, Sunderland Caving Club, Yorkshire Subterranean
Society. Nelson Speleological Society attended as observers.

Item 1 Apologies for absence

Received from Moldywarps Speleological Group and Northern Cavern
and Mines Research Society.

Item 2 Minutes

The minutes of the 1972 Annual General Meeting were read and
accepted as a true record.

It was not considered necessary to read the Minutes of the Special
General Meeting of 2nd December 1972 when the revised Constitution
was agreed.

Item 3 Chairman's Statement

The Chairman drew attention to the role of the National Caving
Association in providing a channel of communication, and forum
of discussion, between its constituent organisations when the
policies of one effect the interests of others, either directly
or indirectly. Although N.C.A. itself is constitutionally
prevented from interfering with the affairs of its members, it
is right and proper that there should be consultation and co-
operation to avoid any misunderstanding or clash of interest.

The other three Regional Councils regard as an unfair and
retrograde step, the CNCC decision, embodied in the new
constitution, to restrict the issue of permits to Member Clubs
for access to Council controlled areas such as Leck and Casterton
fells. The matter had been placed on the Agenda for further
discussion because some of the possible implications might so far
have been overlooked.

The British Association of Caving Instructors was another NCA
constituent currently coming under attack from certain quarters.
The field of caving activity be school parties and outdoor
pursuits centres is here to stay, whether we like it or not and
clubs should be relieved that BACI has taken it upon itself to
improve standards of leadership and exercise a certain amount of
control - a task which clubs have turned their back on. It would
appear that most of the criticism is based on distorted ideas
about what policies BACI is adopted and there is a need for more
communication and interchange of ideas between that body and the
caving clubs at both national and regional level. It is never-
theless a healthy sign that clubs are beginning to discuss and
express their views about training and the ways in which people
are introduced to caving.

Item 4 Secretary's Report

A fairly progressive year can be reported since the last AGM. Four Committee meetings have been held and a Sub-committee was set up to make recommendations on the Constitution and to prepare a draft for consideration by the Council. The wording of the Constitution agreed at the Special General Meeting should give the Council and its committee much clearer guidelines for carrying out its work in future. An important new clause means that the Council should have regard for long-term considerations of cave conservation in the region as well as working for improved access.

Council delegates attended the NCA AGM in November and notice was given of the probable need for changes in the CNCC permit system for areas subject to Access Agreement. It was stated that the rapid growth in demand from clubs based in other regions was causing considerable embarrassment. Although the new rule is now in force, and an increasing number of clubs are enquiring about CNCC membership, the possibility of improved access facilities on Leck Fell is still being followed up with the landowners.

A provision agreement has now been negotiated for access to Washfold Pot after several years in which permission has rarely been granted by the owner. Plans are also going ahead to extend the weekend weather forecast service to the Wharfedale area where the major cave systems are particularly liable to flooding.

The Secretary expressed his thanks to the Meets Secretaries coping with an increasingly time-consuming job, to the Chairman for his help and guidance, and to The Sports Council clerical staff for services rendered.

Item 5 Treasurer's Report

The Council's funds now look much healthier following an influx of overdue subscriptions. A grant had also been received from the National Caving Association. The accounts (attached) show a slight increase in typing and duplicating costs but more work had been done than in previous years.

R. Coe (CPC) asked how many Southern-based clubs were currently paid-up members of CNCC. The Treasurer replied that there were only four at present, but the Secretary added that enquiries had been received from quite a number of others.

The Chairman suggested that the Council might like to consider transferring a portion of its funds to a Building Society deposit account where it could earn a bit of interest and be held in reserve in case of unforeseen expenses, such as legal costs. On a proposal by CPC, seconded NPC, it was unanimously resolved that the sum of £100 be deposited with a Building Society forthwith.

I. Jopson (RRCPC) asked whether the Council would receive a similar grant from NCA this year. The Chairman stated that although some grant was probable, the amount was uncertain at this stage. A claim had been submitted but the extent to which this was deemed to be valid might well be effected by the decision to insist on CNCC membership for access to controlled areas.

Item 6 Election of Officers and Committee

The Council's Officers were all re-elected, unopposed.

Chairman:	J. R. Sutcliffe	(prop. KCC; sec. CPC)
Secretary:	J. Rasdell	(prop. BPC; sec. NPC)
Treasurer:	J. M. Clarke	(prop. CPC; sec. RRCPC)

The following Full Member Clubs were elected to serve on the Committee. There were no other seconded nominations.

Craven Pothole Club	(prop. KCC; sec. NPC)
Kendal Caving Club	(prop. CPC; sec. NPC)
Northern Pennine Club	(prop. CPC; sec. KCC)
Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club	(prop. CPC; sec. KCC)
Bolton Speleo Club	(prop. BPC; sec. YSS)
Earby Pothole Club	(prop. NPC; sec. CPC)
Yorkshire Subterranean Society	(prop. CPC; sec. NPC)
Burnley Caving Club	(prop. KCC; sec. CPC)

In response to an enquiry, the Treasurer reported that there were currently 26 Full Member Clubs out of a total membership of 73. S. Kirkbride (PCC) suggested that clubs should be notified when they are eligible for Full Membership. The Chairman replied that the onus was on clubs to make application in accordance with the Constitution and if they were sufficiently interested they would do so.

Item 7 Area Reports and Access Agreements

a) Leck and Casterton Fells

The Meets Secretary, I. Jopson reported that during 1972 he dealt with 462 bookings of which 118 were from clubs outside the Northern Region. He had no means of knowing whether these clubs were members of other Regional Councils or not. The permit system was generally working well but he was very worried that continued "pirating" might seriously jeopardise the Agreement with the landowner. The destination board provided by the Red Rose CPC at Bullpot Farm was being used and it was hoped that visiting groups would continue to use it in their own interest.

It was stated that the area of High Leck Fell, which includes Pippikin Pot was not part of Lord Shuttleworth's estate but the landowner had asked that these potholes be included in the agreement when it was first negotiated. The area is considered important from the grouse-rearing point of view and so the 'close season' was enforced. Lord Shuttleworth has now responded favourably to a request from the Council that permits for Pippikin Pot could be issued in addition to the two clubs allowed on the remainder of the Fell on one day. It will be necessary to obtain the sanction of the owner concerned and the Committee is pursuing the matter.

b) Penyghent

D. Barker (Meets Sec.) opened by offering his apologies to member clubs for delays in answering correspondence, but gave

an assurance of better service in future. He had received no complaints from the landowners, but asked clubs to ensure that permit slips are placed in Mr Perfect's letter-box at Brackenbottom. 70 permits had been issued during the past year and 30% of these were from southern clubs.

c) Fountains Fell

D. Barker reported that there were no access difficulties at present for Magnetometer Pot. Mr Coates, the landowner for Gingleing Hole, is allowing only 12 meets per year and the 1973 allocation is fully booked. Clubs should therefore apply 12 months in advance for this pothole. Anyone wishing to visit Hammer Pot would have to see Mr Coates for permission. There appeared to be little chance of improved access.

d) Mongo Gill Hole and Birks Fell Cave

D. Mellor (Meets Sec.) reported that there were no problems at present with the agreements covering these two caves. Permission for caves and pots in Langstrothdale should be obtained from the tenant farmers. Digging permission was difficult to obtain in that area.

e) Washfold Pot

The Chairman reported that the owner, Mr Morphet, had agreed to a permit system being operated for a trial period, following several years in which cavers had rarely been granted permission. The farmers had requested assistance with two jobs before the permit system starts - covering a subsidiary shaft which is a hazard to stock, and modifying a gate on the access path. The Committee thought it would be advantageous if the permits could be dealt with by one of the established Meets Secretaries. D. Barker confirmed that he could do this and that his club (NPC) would deal with the work required by Mr Morphet.

The Chairman asked clubs to remember that the Council had only even negotiated access agreements for caves which had been closed and that there was no desire to tighten access arrangements unnecessarily.

f) Cherry Tree Hole and Darnbrook Pot

The Chairman reported that no progress had been made towards re-opening these caves. The farmers had said that their action in blocking the entrances had been precipitated by the rescue operation last summer which had allegedly caused them considerable inconvenience.

It was resolved (prop. CPC; sec. KCC) that a letter be written to the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association, requesting their assistance in negotiations.

g) Fairy Hole, Weardale

The Committee has asked Graham Stevens (Moldywarps SG) to investigate the situation at the quarry which has destroyed the downstream end of this cave, with a view to regaining access.

Item 8 Visiting Clubs from other Regions

The Chairman opened the discussion by saying that letters had been sent to the other Regional Councils, explaining carefully the reasons behind the Council's decision to insist that all clubs requiring permits for CNCC controlled potholes should become Member. Apart from pressures caused by the increasing demand from southern clubs, the main drawbacks with the previous system were:

- a) Meets Secretaries had no means of checking the credentials of non-member clubs
- b) Such clubs were not on our mailing list when important access information had to be circulated
- c) The number of applications from non-members was now such that the Council could no longer risk bending the rules laid down in most of the Agreements
- d) The system was biased against Northern clubs who were all expected to subscribe £2 per year to the Council before gaining access.

Replies had been received from the Secretaries of Derbyshire Caving Association, Council of Southern Caving Clubs and Cambrian Caving Council objecting to the decision. The main complaints voiced by all of them were:

- a) the rule is very unfair on those clubs which are only able to make one or two trips to the North each year. Most of the holes they want to visit are in controlled areas and £2 per year is considered a lot to pay for the privilege.
- b) the restriction is contrary to the development of closer co-operation between Regional Councils through the National Caving Association and upsets NCAs case for obtaining grants for access expenses which are administered in the Regions.

The Chairman asked the meeting to consider whether some alternative scheme might be worked out which was less drastic. A suggestion was made that a booking fee could be charge to non-member clubs but it was argued that this would not solve the problems. A proposal from R. Cox (BPC), that a reduced subscription for Associate Membership should be levied for clubs which are already members of another Regional Council, was withdrawn after further discussion. Most speakers felt that the subscription should be the same for all classes of membership and that £2 was not excessive. Various other points were raised on the possible implications in other caving areas if the restriction was continued.

D. Mellor (CPC) then proposed that the rules on Access Procedure agreed to at the Special General Meeting in December 1972 should remain unchanged. This motion was carried by 7 votes to 3.

A proposal from I. Jopson (RRCPC) that the Annual Subscription be reduced to £1 was withdrawn after the Treasurer had given his view that the reduced income would not allow the Council to build up a reserve fund.

Item 9 Quarrying in the Dales

The Chairman stated that the Council should define its attitude towards quarrying in fairly general terms, in order to guide policy when development proposals come to the attention of the Committee. Should CNCC join the ranks of the conservationists and amenity bodies which oppose all quarry development in the National Park on principle or should we try to gain the confidence of the quarry owners by keeping quiet except when actual speleological sites are threatened? Earlier in the year the Council was given the opportunity to comment on the County Planning Authority's consultative document on 'Hard Rock Resources in the Yorkshire Dales' which assessed the present and future requirements of the industry, the environmental effects of specific sites and proposed a planning strategy. No known caves appeared to be threatened by any of the short-term development envisaged. We therefore supported the conclusion that development should be concentrated on the established sites but called for less wastage of the 'chemical-grade' limestone. Attention was drawn to the serious implications which would be felt if any encroachment of the Ingleton 'granite' quarry onto the Ingleborough side of the present road was permitted in the long term. The main criticism of the report was its failure to recognise the recreational value of caves.

The general feeling of the meeting was that the quarries are as much an established part of the Dales scene as are the farms. They provide employment for the local community with whom cavers wish to maintain good relations and it would be against the interest of clubs to condemn all quarry development. It was agreed however, that the Council should strongly oppose any proposal to quarry where a known or suspected cave system would be effected.