

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Officers and Meets Secretary Reports for 11th March 2017 Annual General Meeting

Chairman's Report

Nine years have passed since I reluctantly took on the task of Chairman of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs and many changes have occurred in this time. CNCC has dramatically changed from a virtually wholly permit issuing organisation to one of taking more care of and distributing information regarding our caves.

The issue of permits is still a vital part of our work but with the onset of CRoW, things gradually began to change leading to the current situation of free access to more caves than ever before. There is still a vast amount of negotiating and education (of cavers and potential cavers) to be done to preserve and care for our caves and I send my best wishes to everyone involved in CNCC.

My task as chairman has been made easy by the dedication and effort of all the other officers and council members and I thank them for that, I also convey my best wishes to the next Chairman.

All the best for the future, keep up the good work

Roy Holmes – CNCC Chairman (Retiring)

Secretary's Report

Last year saw our region play proud hosts to EuroSpeleo. I spent all week at the event, meeting cavers from all over the world, and experiencing some truly memorable and inspirational moments. The event was a total success. Despite >1000 delegates and >100 caving groups each day, there were no resulting conservation issues, no serious queues forming... and no rescues!

EuroSpeleo demonstrated that with careful planning and education, open access need not mean queues of cavers from Leck Fell all the way to Ingleton, nor should it have to present any additional conservation concerns. Regardless of how the BCA's CRoW campaign progresses, the CNCC has a responsibility to take a leading role in this planning and education. Our success in these matters requires us to constantly examine how we interact with the caving community.

Our new website (launched in December) forms an important part of this interaction, including a new conservation section (which has led to several new volunteers signing up to our mailing list), information on safety, warnings, plus descriptions and rigging topos for many of our well-visited caves. Communication has also been improved through greater use of Facebook as well as the regular newsletter (numbers 4+5 have been issued since the last AGM).

There have been a few key themes developing this year that have prompted the most discussions at our Committee meetings:

The first matter relates to liability and the duty of care that the CNCC has to those using our 'services'. These discussions were triggered by a debate at the July/October Committee meetings about whether the CNCC should support fixed aids (other than resin anchors, e.g. fixed ropes) in our region. The consensus of this was 'no' due to issues of safety, liability, and the high amount of work that would be required to pursue appropriate inspections of such fixed aids. These discussions then turned to resin anchors, which are also considered fixed aids, and which the CNCC has endorsed the use of for many years. It was found that more work to show 'due diligence' was needed if we are to continue to endorse and support resin anchor use and installation. This led to the implementation of clearer warnings and guidance on the CNCC website about use of resin anchors, a function to report loose anchors, and more recently an ongoing initiative to see all our resin anchors systematically inspected to help gather more data to understand future replacement schedules.

Our access agreements have also not escaped discussions regarding liability and due diligence. The BCA's new insurance broker has requested a greater duty of care from Access Controlling Bodies (i.e. the CNCC) towards cavers accessing caves via one of our access agreements. This looks likely to take the form of risk assessments. Some draft BCA guidance is currently being tested in our region (as a purely thought-based experiment) before being rolled out possibly later this year.

Furthermore, work by Tim Allen has made significant progress towards achieving a new access agreement which would cover Ingleborough, Leck and Casterton Fells. This would replace the old agreements that we currently have, would be compliant with BCA's recommendations about liability and due diligence for Access Controlling Bodies, and would (hopefully) see more access becoming available, and via an easier and almost instantaneous online system.

At the last AGM, we accepted the constitutional changes necessary to create the role of the Individual Caver (IC) Representative. This was in response to criticism that the CNCC was not being proactive enough about offering democratic representation to cavers who are predominantly active outside of a club structure. However, despite extensive promotion of this role, there has been no expression of interest whatsoever; but it will be advertised again for next year.

While the position of IC representative has attracted no interest, the Officer and Committee positions certainly have. Three new Officers are coming forward; Andrew as Chairman, Tim as Access Officer and Maz as Training Officer. Furthermore, three new clubs (Kendal CC, Rubber Duck CC and Grampian SG) are standing for the Committee (SUSS also stood for Committee but sadly did not get their application to me in time). It is encouraging that so many people wish to be involved.

Overall, this been a great year; new people, new initiatives, new projects and a new website. Hopefully the coming year will bring yet more improvements for northern caving.

Finally, I would like to thank Roy and Johnny, who are standing down this year.

Roy has been an outstanding Chairman, who has confidently and professionally presided over meetings for nine years. He has kept our meetings focussed and on-topic, ensured fairness and impartiality, while also allowing flexibility and sustaining good humour, even during some quite heated discussions. Undoubtedly, he can take a lot of credit for the amount that has been achieved in the fleeting few hours we spend in Hellifield every three months.

Johnny threw his name into the hat for the position of Access Officer just under three years ago, before it was even an elected position. The CNCC at the time needed new people to come forward. Johnny led by example in doing so, and has steered the CNCC in the direction of modernisation and a positive attitude towards the benefits more open access can bring. He has contributed substantially to the improved access we now enjoy on Ingleborough Estate and elsewhere. While I know that family and work commitments have tempered how much he has been able to do personally in the last several months, he has offset this by requesting Tim's involvement in a more official capacity, which of course has led to Tim now standing to take the Access Officer role in full.

Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Financial Status as of 16th February 2017:

Business Current Account: £2423.60
Business Saver Account: £18400.69

Since the January meeting, the following payments/receipts made:

- £30.00 paid to the Hellifield Institute for the hire of the meeting hall.
- £122.31 paid to Sam Allshorn for the purchase of resin for anchor bolts.
- £500 grant paid to Swaledale MRT to support the purchase of underground communication equipment.
- £519.30 received from Natural England to cover the Gauber Pot mileage expenses.
- The £145.80 volunteer mileage expenses for Blood Cave completes the agreed CNCC contribution (for 2016) to access IDLP funding through NE.
- Travel expenses for Blood Cave and Gauber Pot volunteers are now being distributed.

AGM 11th March 2017 Report:

Following the agreement by the CNCC committee that the accounts should be verified by a volunteer CNCC member club, rather than pay the increasingly expensive costs of an accountant, Craven PC have once again volunteered to verify the 2016 accounts for the 2017 AGM. The attached letter from Pat and Ric Halliwell verifies this report as accurate. The process is a little different from that of an auditors report, in that it verifies, by inspection of bank statements, invoices, receipts and working spreadsheet that this report for the 2016 financial year is correct.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME

Balance c/f from 2015	£2760.07
Cave Surveys	£75.00
2015 BCA Annual Funding Grant	£973.12*
Transfer from Savings Account	£500.00
A&C Mileage Expenses from Natural England	£840.15 **
TOTAL INCOME	£2388.27

EXPENSES

Meetings (Room Hire)	£120.00
Secretarial, postage & 'phone calls	£59.13
A&C	£131.80
A&C Katnot Cave	£340.39
A&C Skirwith/Slab	£840.15 **
Training (First Aid Course)	£500.00
Comms Eqpt Grant UWFRA	£500.00
Eurospeleo (competition prizes)	£100.26
TOTAL EXPENSES	£2591.73

*Payment by BCA of full amount claimed for 2015.

**Amount received from Natural England regarding Skirwith/Slab Caves travel claims.

Balance c/f to 2017 **£2,556.61**

CNCC BUSINESS CURRENT (COMMUNITY) ACCOUNT:

Balance 1st January 2016 **£2760.07**

Interest received: £0

Balance 30th December 2016 **£2556.61**

CNCC BUSINESS SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Balance 31st December 2015 **£18, 891.43**

Interest received: £9.26

Transfer to Community Account £500.00

Balance 30th December 2016 **£18,400.69**

ASSETS: Makita DPC6430 12" cutter, value new (2013) £576.00

I am prepared to stand as Treasurer for the next 12 months.

Pete Bann – CNCC Treasurer

Craven Pothole Club

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Email: R.A.Halliwell@hull.ac.uk

26 January 2017

CNCC Accounts 2016-17

Dear Pete

We have checked the bank statements, claims and receipts, summaries of cheques issued and payments received and after raising a small number of minor queries, which you have resolved entirely to our satisfaction, we are happy to state that all monies expended have been accurately accounted for. Similarly all income has been correctly recorded and the bank statements are in full agreement with the records of all transaction.

With all best wishes



Dr RA Halliwell, Vice-President Craven Pothole Club
Mrs PC Halliwell, Hon Librarian Craven Pothole Club

BCA Grant to Regional Councils: CNCC Claim 2016

The CNCC Treasurer will be submitting a claim to BCA for a total of **£310.93** comprised of the following budget heads:

Sub Budget Head - **Meetings** (Covers - photocopy, postage, room hire, stationary, phone bills, travel expenses of officers to meetings. Does not cover - travel expenses of members)

Meetings: £179.13: comprising:

Room Hire: £120.00

Photocopying, Postage and 'phone calls: £59.13

CNCC officers do not claim mileage.

Sub Budget Head - **Conservation & Access** (Covers - Negotiating access to caves and mines, gating of entrances, stabilising (and opening up of alternative safer) of entrances, working with landowner to maintain access, payment of "peppercorn" rents for access, other liaison and public relations work related to maintaining access and promoting conservation, travel expenses for meetings, photocopy, postage, stationary, phone bills. Does not cover - digging as part of new exploration)

Conservation & Access: £131.80: comprising:

£131.80: Annual access agreement for Fairy Holes/Mongo Gill

Sub Budget Head - **Insurance** (Covers - Provision of Public Liability cover for all persons (including officers, members, volunteers and land owners & their employees) involved in activities on behalf of the RCC activities, public liability cover for land owner access agreements. Does not cover - insurance for clubs or individuals not undertaking authorised work on behalf of the RCC)

No expenditure in 2016 under this budget head

Sub Budget Head - **Provision of Information** (Covers - Production of "Regional" Circulars (regular or spasmodic) on access, Production of "Regional" Access Handbook (regular or spasmodic. **Does not cover** - Production of a "Regional" newsletter (regular or spasmodic), Production of Handbook (regular or spasmodic), Production or sponsoring of "Regional" (Area) Guide Book, Topo sheet, Bolting Guide etc, Participation in events to promote caving)

No expenditure in 2016 under this budget head

Pete Bann, CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

Teams of CNCC Volunteers have been active during the year, with support from Natural England and from the Lottery Heritage-funded Stories in Stone project.

Slab Cave, a short stream cave on the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve had a ramshackle cover of slate boskins balanced on tree roots and sky hooks, a hazard to livestock and visitors including the many scientists and researchers working in the surrounding meadows. CNCC volunteers worked over a 3-day period in May to put a new stock proof cover over the open rift entrance. The new cover will survive 500kg cattle/cavers standing on it and the replacement slabs will soon develop a covering of moss.

Also on the NNR, volunteers replaced the broken slabs covering Blood Cave and the nearby rift to secure against stock.

More than 3 tons of assorted rubbish were removed from Gauber Pot on Park Fell, thus re-establishing after many years of closure access to the fine flowstone decorated pitch. A second pot nearby was also cleared. A temporary stock fence was erected round the open pot, and a further two days' work saw the pot securely lidded.

CNCC volunteers also supported Bradford Pothole Club in their "reducing the caver's footprint" initiative, planting 250 trees around Wilson's Cave.

Refresher training on the use of abrasive wheels was provided.

During Eurospeleo 2016, the Conservation Officer gave a short presentation to European cavers as part of the Field Trip to Scoska Cave on the flora of the cave threshold, showing the links between the physical conditions in the cave entrance and the physiological needs of the plants. She gave a similar presentation during a summer school for ecology undergraduates and a visit by non-caver NE specialists.

New volunteers are always welcome, for weekend or weekday working parties. No specific skills are necessary, but if you have them, we will do our best to make use of them. On the job training is given as needed. Occasionally there may be the opportunity to attend a training course. Tools will be provided, but you are responsible for providing your own protective clothing - stout footwear, preferably with steel toe caps, stout gloves, weatherproof clothing, helmet. You will also need to provide your own packed lunch and hot drinks.

A new link has been provided on the CNCC website to make it easier to register to be involved in future projects. If you'd like to be placed on the mailing list to be informed of future projects, please contact Kay Easton on conservation@cncc.org.uk, or use the link on the CNCC website.

Kay Easton – CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer's Report

In the few years I've been involved with the CNCC I feel there have been really positive improvements. It certainly isn't down to me but I hope that in some way I've assisted in making the CNCC more open, approachable and keener to act in the interest of cavers whilst maintaining good relationships with land owners and their agents.

It's been unfortunate that in the last six months I've not been able to give the role the time which it requires due to my work and family commitments.

I'm thankful to Tim Allen for putting himself forwards for the role and I believe he'll be an excellent addition to the CNCC team. He has a wide knowledge regarding cave access and is already involved with CNCC as he's assisted me in the last year.

Johnny Latimer – CNCC Access Officer

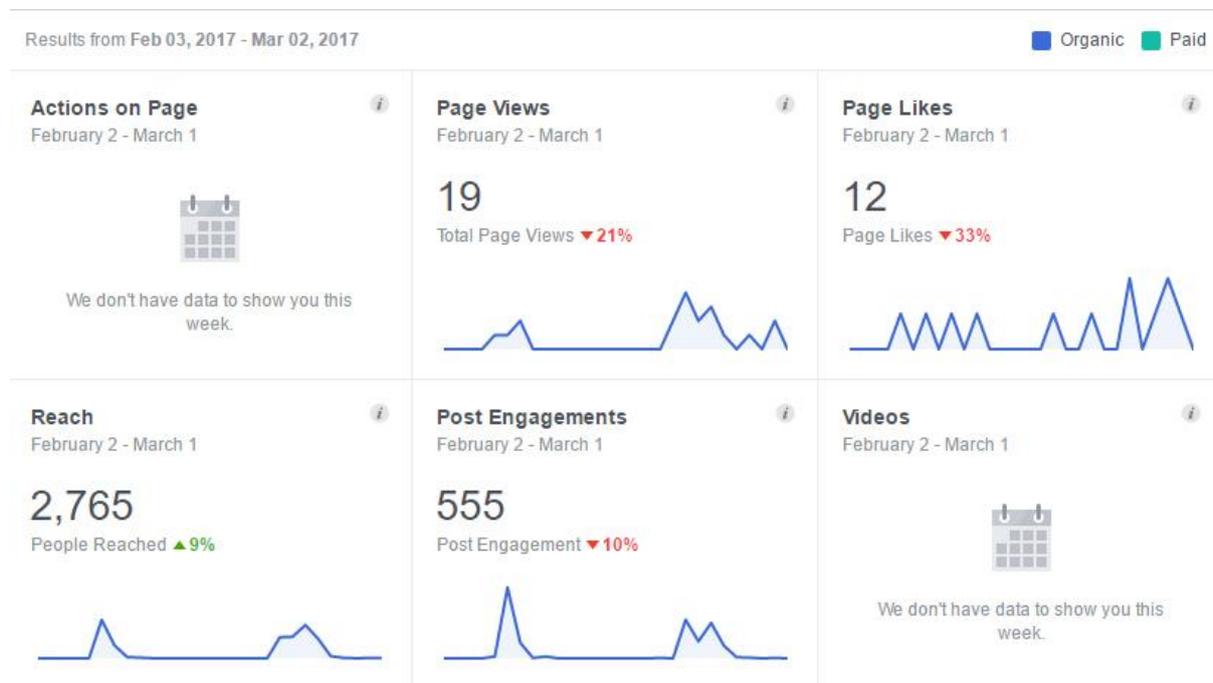
Webmaster's Report

The new CNCC website was launched on the 11th December and has received a very positive response from cavers on Facebook, UK Caving and in person. The site has been totally re-built from the ground up to incorporate changes in web technology as well as how the CNCC stores and shares its digital resources.

Several sections of text have been re-written to make them clearer and to add some updates including the 'about', 'get involved' and 'conservation' pages. A new section – 'fixed aids' – has been added which clearly sets out our current policy on fixed aids as well as incorporating the current and historic bolting techniques. Photos highlighting the two different approved anchor types have been included to make it clear to cavers not yet familiar with the differences.

The cave detail pages have been re-designed to make them clearer and to incorporate rigging topos and route descriptions. Separate pages showing all topos and descriptions have also been added. The list of caves is now no longer divided into the three sections as dictated by Northern Caves, as this was thought to now be out-dated and a single list would be easier to use.

A great deal of work has been done to allow the site to seamlessly adapt to mobile devices as statistics show that around 50% of people visiting the site do so from smart phones or tablets. The site is now also fully social media ready allowing pages to easily be shared.



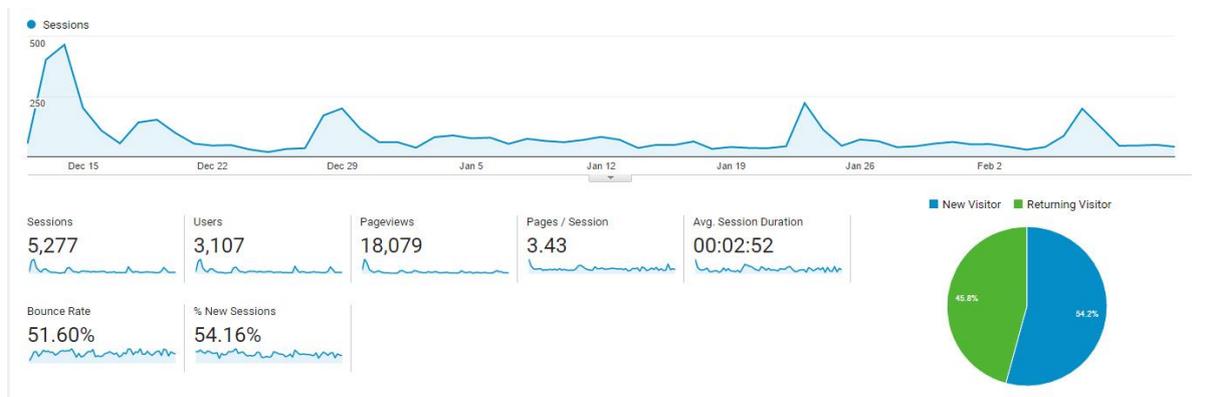
Above: Facebook Insights data showing people using CNCC Facebook page over one month period from 2nd February to 1st March 2017.

Facebook

In the one month after the new website was launched, posts on the CNCC Facebook page reached >16000 people with 1700 people engaging in those posts in some way (clicking, liking, commenting etc). Since then, the CNCC Facebook page has been used to share all news, and circulate relevant information. Interest has naturally settled to more typical levels (following the initial post-launch spike). Over the month prior to this AGM (2nd February-1st March), our posts have reached 2765 people, with 555 of them engaging with that post in some way.

Google Analytics (website use)

Between 12th December 2016 and 12th February 2017 (two months), Google Analytics reports over 5200 sessions for 3107 unique users. Current hit rate is also seeing 54% new users during this period. The peaks in use correspond with articles posted on Facebook. Google search terms commonly include cave names where the cave details page comes up ranked at number one.



Above: Google Analytics data showing people using CNCC website 12th December 2016 to 12th February 2017.

Gary Douthwaite – CNCC Webmaster

Meets Secretary's Report – Casterton Fell

There are no issues to report.

Between March 2016 and February 2017 (inclusive), 239 permits were issued to 53 clubs.

Table 1. Number of Casterton Fell permits issued to clubs between March 2016 and February 2017.

Month	Number of CNCC Permits	Number of Clubs
March 2016	32	16
April	27	12
May	18	10
June	7	5
July	12	7
August	9	6
September	22	9
October	30	14
November	23	10
December	24	13
January 2017	11	7
February	24	15

Table 2. Number of permits issued for entrances on Casterton Fell between March 2016 and February 2017. A single permit can be issued for multiple entrances, so the total number of entrances exceeds the total number of permits.

	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	Subtotal
Lancaster Hole	13	17	7	4	5	6	15	18	13	11	6	11	126
County Pot	14	6	10	3	6	2	12	8	6	13	7	6	93
Wretched Rabbit	4	11	1	1	1	0	1	6	5	7	2	11	50
Cow Pot	2	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	5	3	1	6	24
Top Sink	8	9	5	0	0	3	6	1	5	3	1	3	44
Pool Sink	6	4	3	1	0	0	5	4	6	1	0	1	31
Sylvester Pot	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	4
Subtotal	47	50	28	9	13	12	40	39	40	39	17	38	Total 372

Hannah Walker

casterton.permits@cncc.org.uk

02/03/2017

Meets Secretary's Report - Birks Fell, Robinsons Pot, Ludwell Fairy Holes and Mongo Gill

General

This is my 28th year as access controller and there have been no changes this year regarding access to Birks Fell, Robinsons Pot, Ludwell Fairy Holes and Mongo Gill after the major changes of last year.

Birks Fell

I have received only 6 requests for permits for 2017 and that is from only 3 clubs, a marginal increase on the same time last year but still half the number of permits requested at this time in 2015. In the whole of 2016 I only received 13 requests for permits, that is a third of the number 20 years ago. This is a real shame as this is a great trip.

Robinson's Pot

The new access agreement which commenced in 2015 allows 8 permits per year on fixed dates (see CNCC website for details). At the time of writing this report I have so far issued only 6 of the available 8 permits. I urge clubs to apply for the two remaining permits which I negotiated on the basis that there was a large demand.

Ludwell Fairy Holes

This is the fourth year of access to this cave. I issued a total of 6 out of the available 12 permits last year taken up by just three clubs. I have received 3 requests for the available 2017 permits. Although I notify the gamekeeper each month that a permit has been issued I am afraid that he doesn't always open the bottom gate on the track so it is sometimes a longer than usual walk in. Thanks to Andrew Hinde for all his efforts in negotiating this agreement.

Mongo Gill

When the access agreement was up for renewal I asked the owner if he would permit me to issue permits to DIMs. He said he was not prepared to do that at the moment but would renew the agreement for just two years rather than the usual five in order to review the situation at a sooner time than would otherwise have been the case. I received only 1 request for a permit in 2016 (compared with 26 twenty years ago) and have so far received none for 2017. No permits have been requested for Great Expectations, nor were any issued last year. The connection with Stump Cross streamway remains well and truly blocked by a major collapse.

Stump Cross

There is no agreement regarding access to Stump Cross Caverns because the entrance to the cave is within the showcave/café building. I have however negotiated access for two groups in the last year and hope that eventually we will be able to gain access on a regular basis. However I envisage this being a long term process which could easily be derailed if there are any problems with any of the groups who are allowed access.

Ric Halliwell
26 January 2017

Other Areas

Bowland (Tony Brown):

During the year, I have given out two permits, one for Whitewell Pot and Whitewell Cave and one for Whitewell Pot, Whitewell Cave and Hell Hole. For 2016 we never got the insurance certificate required by the Land Agent which he raised with us at the beginning of the year and which we need if we are to have credible discussions about digging and diving.

Excalibur Pot (Matt Ewles):

Excalibur Pot in the North York Moors continues to attract a small amount of attention, typically 2-3 permits issued each year, an (unsurprising) decrease from the 5-6 per year during the first few years in which we had an access agreement. This year is the 10-year anniversary of the discovery. Doesn't time fly? Anyone interested in a permit, please get in touch (details on CNCC website).

No reports for Ingleborough, Leck, Aygill or Penyghent. No issues reported in these areas.