

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 14th October 2017 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

A lot of hard work has been undertaken by CNCC officers, club members and individuals in securing an improved and sustainable future for Northern Caving. Some of the work is in progressing difficult long term objectives such as cave access and anchor monitoring /replacement. Some are one off tasks completed by individuals who wish to "give something back to caving".

A fine example of this is the work undertaken by Ian Cross and his team who replaced all the broken tree stakes at the new plantation near Katnot Cave. This was a task that needed doing for a busy farmer who has been generous with access to caves on his land throughout Ribblesdale. Instead of complaining and passing on the problem to someone else – Ian made a few enquiries, sourced second hand materials and just got on with it, having got landowner permission.

It is not unusual for cavers to have an interest in, and care for, the unique environment of the Limestone Dales. If you want to tackle something that needs doing on behalf of Northern Caving, just give me a call and I can usually support you with transport, materials and advice.

I am also grateful to John Cordingley for dealing with an enquiry from a member of the public that I sent his way.

Last month I was able to arrange a visit to Fairy Holes Cave (Weardale) for the new owner of the quarry site. A trip to Vein Chamber is quite impressive for a first trip underground. The day was a great success. Mark was genuinely astonished at the scale of the underground landscape he was seeing for the first time. It is likely that further excursions for other members of the family will be requested in the future. Thanks to Graham Coates and Ray Duffy for providing essential back up and friendly advice along the way. I hope to write something in more detail for the newsletter.

I would also like to mention the amount of rotten scaffolding that has been removed from Dales caves in recent months.eg Pen y Ghent Pot. This was added to all the scrap collected through the UK Caving Conservation Rewards and weighed in at Morecambe Metals Ltd. A grand total of £129 was made at this recycling centre. With mixed metals currently making £165 per ton we need to do a few more vehicle recovery projects from caves while the price is right!

I would also like to commend Tim Allen on his success in getting caving to the top of the agenda in the YDNP Management Plan Consultation. We must keep up this momentum and make sure other institutions understand the true value of caving to the Dales economy and heritage.

Andrew Hinde – CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

In the month or so after the last meeting much of my attention was focussed on getting the August newsletter put together. This is the most well-packed newsletter yet and shows off better than ever the recent CNCC efforts in anchors, training, conservation and access. The newsletter also shows off the efforts of individuals and groups acting independently of the CNCC. To echo Andrew's Chairman report, working to encourage the efforts of enthusiastic individuals is crucial for us to continue to promote safe and sustainable caving across our region.

With the amount currently going on, I am expecting another newsletter around Christmas.

Other than that, I have been working with our webmaster on the development and testing of the online cave booking system, which Gary (in Tim's absence) will talk much more about. My technical ineptitude stands me in good position to provide design input into making the system user friendly, and also to test the system and make sure it really is fool-proof!

In August I emailed all full members to inform them of the CNCC's voting intention regarding the BCA referendum (i.e. to vote in favour of all proposals), and to ask for feedback or objections. None were received; and hence I delivered the CNCC vote accordingly. The BCA ballot and the agreement reached by the majority of voters is a real success story. I would like to congratulate Nick Williams who stepped in as the Acting Secretary for the BCA on the approach to this ballot, and Bob Mehew serving as Assistant Secretary. They managed to orchestrate a successful electronic ballot despite the BCA's 'challenging' IT infrastructure and the recent change in personnel.

As always, I'd like to appeal for anyone who has any articles for the newsletter, or items for future meeting agendas to send them though. It's also not too early to start thinking about whether you may be interested in a CNCC Officer or Committee role for next year. My records tell me that the Secretary has now been in post for too long and could benefit from replacement...

Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Financial Status as of 6th October 2017:

Business Current Account: £1,566.74

Business Saver Account: £14,500.69

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

£30.00 paid to the Hellifield Institute for the hire of the meeting hall.

Expenses payments of £70.22 to Gary Douthwaite, for newsletter production and postage (a further £55.65 is also due for payment).

Travel expense payments for Great Douk Dig Capping totalling £260.55 have been distributed.

£233.50 received from Natural England to be paid on to Bradford Potholing Club for travel expenses incurred during GG track repair work carried out in February 2017.

Anchor Replacement Scheme invoice to Lima Engineering (£3900.00) payed 3rd October 2017 (money transferred from the Business Savings Account on receipt of invoice).

Pete Bann – CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

A team of CNCC volunteers have placed a plastic tube to reinforce the entrance to the Great Douk dig in the bottom of the Great Douk pothole. This dig is on the route for the many novice cavers and naturalists who visit Great Douk cave. The two-day job was carried out with the aid of funding from the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (Stories in Stone).

To date, 78 individual CNCC volunteers have now worked on 11 cave conservation projects over the last 18 months under the Stories in Stone project.

The entrance to Penyghent Pot has been stabilized, thanks to the generosity of Mike Cooper from royalties from his book *Not for the Faint Hearted*, and additional funding from the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (Stories in Stone).

There are various projects in the pipeline, more details when we are in a position to start work.

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. 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

Kay Easton – CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer

Firstly, sincere apologies for non-attendance but I was unable to schedule a long planned holiday for any other time.

Actions from last meeting:

I wrote to the QMC as agreed and I shall look to see if we can do more to assist cave training within future access arrangements. I am already asking landowner representatives to allow CNCC digression on this sort of issue.

I have the matter with the Langcliffe Estate in hand but have nothing to report to this meeting.

We do need to address the issue of caving and CRoW on our website. I will write a statement for review but wish to defer this to our next meeting when I will be able to answer questions. I have made enquiries with the Northern Caves team about determining which caves listed on our website are actually on CRoW Access Land. I understand this will be a quite simple exercise. I would like to say that in my experience the whole caving CRoW issue, promoted sensibly, has been one of the contributing factors that has persuaded landowners to accept the improved access we are hopefully soon to enjoy.

On-going projects:

The on-line cave booking project has progressed since the last meeting. Gary has continued to develop the system and I have presented a working model to Ingham & Yorke (who now represent both Ingleborough and Kay-Shuttleworth estates). The system has gone down very well thanks in the main to the professional nature of the development. It now looks highly likely that the system will be adopted across the two estates and probably Casterton will follow. The estate has given Gary the go ahead to complete the development then, subject to final approval, we intend to phase in the new system in parallel with the existing. Gary can update you more on detail.

Back in July I had a meeting with Mark Allum from the Yorkshire Dales NP. We discussed promoting caving, bats, NP media and the forthcoming Management Plan. Access features in some way in all these areas. Recently we received the results of the public consultation questionnaire. Cavers had responded very well and the results had caving right through them. So much so that in answer to the question 'what do you like most about the NP', 'caves' featured fifth in the list. Andrew should be able to brief you further if required and note that the results are publicly available.

Most recently the Management Plan has come up for discussion at the LAF and some proposals put forward for caving. The question is really what can the NP do for us? Whatever is agreed for the Management Plan it will be funded and effectively approves what the NP staff will be doing for the next five years. In line with modern times this has to be both achievable and measurable so if anyone has ideas please do get in touch. It is not likely that access can feature within this remit so my proposals so far have centred on; Interpretation boards and displays in NP centres and close to

cave systems, training NP staff to appreciate the value of caves, promote caves and caving in NP own media, investigate building and supporting caving 'hubs', supporting caving events.

The interpretation boards I have been working on for the Three Counties System have become bogged down in an impasse between the landowner and the NP. This centres on the landowner only wishing to give approval once he has seen the final product and the NP not wishing to go to the expense of producing the final product if they then have to change it. I have had a large correspondence on this of a very pedantic nature which is quite frustrating. I have further meetings booked in to look at a plan B.

Other news:

The results of the BCA ballot came out last week and showed a large majority in favour of all four proposals. The result was in line with CNCC mandate - thanks to everyone who voted. Not only does this remove the last barrier for the BCA to campaign for access it sends a strong message to those who have opposed it. More so, I think it indicates a desire to further modernise the BCA. We shall see.

In my absence from the meeting can I take this opportunity to tell you that I am now involved with organising the 'Underground Session' of the Kendal Mountain Festival. We are doubling the size of the venue and bringing the event more towards the centre of the festival. It will now be on the Friday night, 17th November. There is also the premiere of the Paul Diffley film, the Ario Dream, on at other times. Check the KMF web site for full details and please promote the event around your club media. This has got to be good for caving and attracting new people to our clubs and sport in general.

Also good for caving is the NewtoCaving website. Thanks to all who have posted a link. We have produced some A4 posters which people can pick up from Inglesport and place anywhere they think would be useful, sports halls, scout huts, community centres, camp sites, etc etc. Please also note that a copy-cat site, Start Caving, has sprung up after our launch. I expect many clubs will also have been contacted by the owners of that site. I need to make clear it is nothing to do with us and I would like to draw your attention to the warnings about the site given by Chris Howes in the latest Descent magazine.

I realise that a number of the items in my report stray from my remit as Access Officer. Let me know if you don't want to hear about the other stuff.

Have a good meeting.

Tim Allen– CNCC Access Officer

Training Officer

Data from the survey conducted over the summer has been collated into a separate report, available for anyone who wants to read it (***Secretary note; this excellent report has been included overleaf***).

The survey received 90 responses in total. I intend to adapt the form into a suggestions/ volunteer form for people who have specific requests and/ or would like to put themselves forward to offer training.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, no fixed plans for events have been made. However, I have been working on things behind the scenes and there are several plans in the pipeline.

I have been trying to contact Firebird to arrange First Aid training with no success. It looks like there has been a change in management and emails are getting lost. I have given up on getting a response from them and have got in touch with another instructor that ULSA used earlier in the year.

Damian Weare of the YSS is looking into holding regular drop-in SRT sessions at their training facility we are considering ways of integrating this with CNCC SRT training. My initial thoughts are that every month or two, we could use this slot to offer more formal training sessions, perhaps with a particular focus.

I am also in discussions about paperless surveying training (this was popular on the survey). The aim would be to have a taster session for interested cavers and then a series of training sessions which would be able to go into the techniques, technology and software in more depth.

Maz Holloway – CNCC Training Officer

CNCC Training Survey 2017

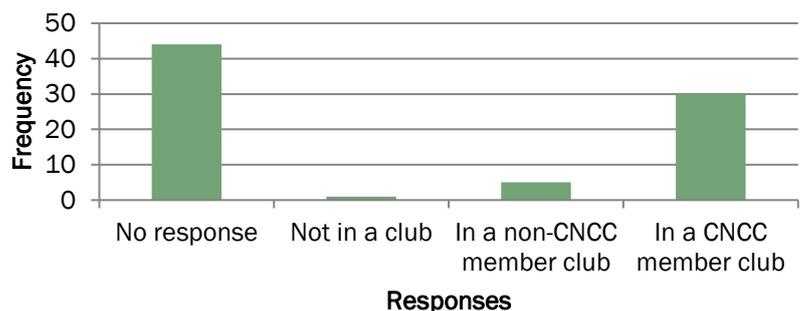
The CNCC training survey was opened for responses on 31st July 2017. The aim was to provide an opportunity for cavers and caving clubs in the north of England to have a say in how the CNCC training provision should be developed.

Demographics of Responses

The survey received ninety responses, the majority of which were submitted before the middle of August. Of these responses, five were on behalf of clubs, whilst the rest were by individuals.

Most people did not list any club memberships. Of those who did, the majority listed at last one CNCC member club.

Membership demographics



Findings

Individual responses

The survey questions were designed to understand whether people had been involved in CNCC training events previously, what kinds of training provision they would like to see offered by the CNCC and when these sessions should be run.

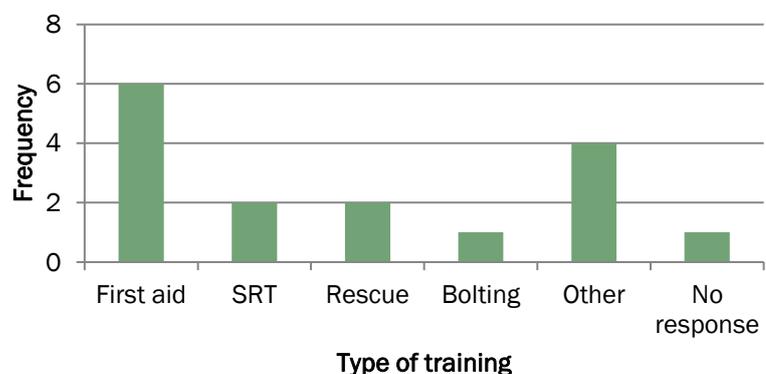
These points will be covered briefly in turn. Please note that most questions allowed for multiple responses.

“Have you taken part in any previous CNCC training events? If so, please provide details.”

Of the 85 individuals who responded to the survey, 15 had previously been involved in training events organised by the CNCC. The survey allowed a free text response to describe the kinds of training people had attended. These responses were categorised and grouped.

Some of the respondents were unsure as to whether the training was provided, organised or merely funded by the CNCC because they

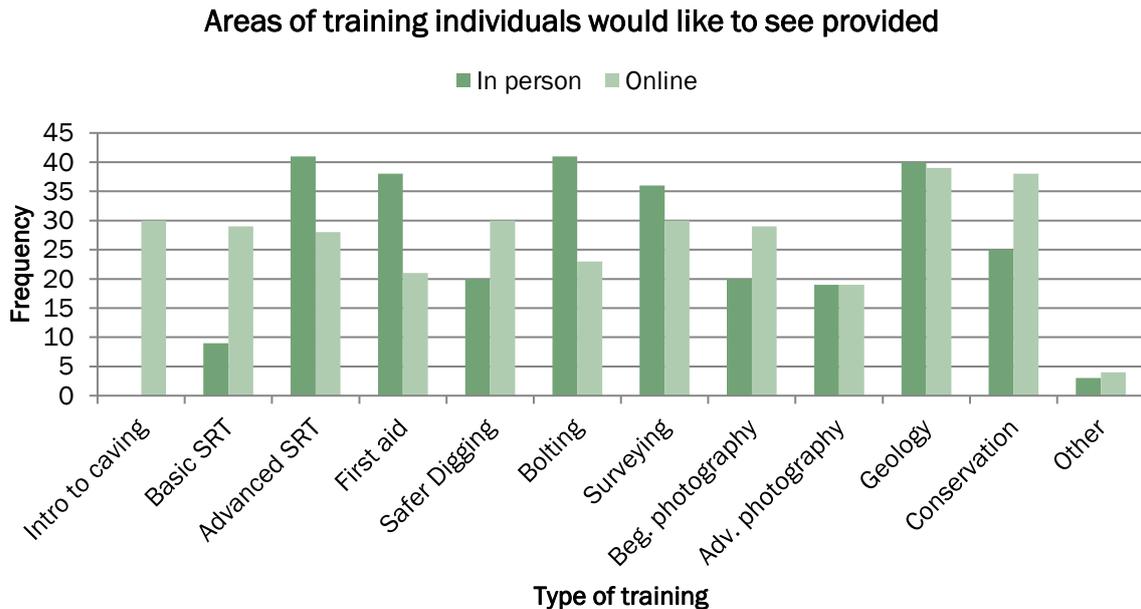
Attendance at previous events



attended several years ago. These responses have still been included as they are indicative of the types of training people have attended in the past.

“Which of the following areas for training would you like to see training provided for: Intro to caving; Basic SRT; Advanced SRT; First aid; Safer Digging; Bolting; Surveying; Beginners photography; Advanced photography; Geology; Conservation; Other[Text box provided].”

Respondents were permitted to select as many of the options as they wished. Each Type of training was subdivided into ‘in-person’ training and ‘online’ training.



In terms of in-person training, the five most popular topics were: Advanced SRT; Bolting; Geology; First aid and Surveying.

Online training, despite not being offered before, was a relatively popular idea. The two most popular topics were Geology and Conservation.

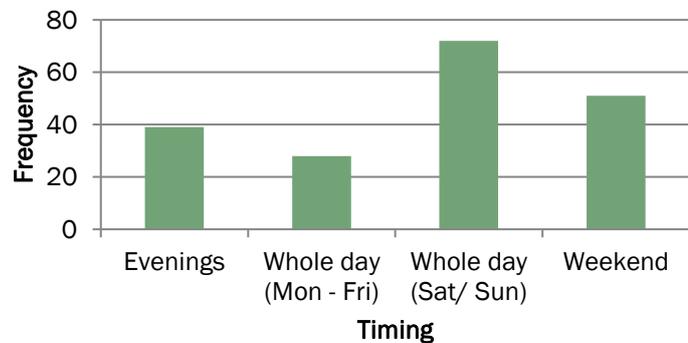
In the free text box (under “other”) several themes emerged. Three people requested rescue training of various sorts (self rescue, peer rescue, training on call out procedures in different areas, emergency techniques for clubs). One person requested training in advanced surveying techniques (e.g. Therion). Another requested training on taking groups or individuals on cave experience trips.

Three people made requests regarding online resources and books. One suggested basic online guides with more in-depth guidebooks available for purchase. One requested a PDF version of the new Northern Caving guide for those who have purchased a hard copy. The third requested more guides and surveys online.

“Would you consider attending training events which were: For a few hours in the evening; A whole day event (Mon-Fri); A whole day event (Sat/ Sun); A weekend event?”

Respondents were again able to select multiple options. There was a clear preference for day-long events over the weekend, although almost a third of respondents said they would consider attending a weekday event.

Individuals' preferences for timings of training sessions



In addition to the above questions, there was also space to offer training to others and leave contact details. Eleven people offered to provide training (thank you!), although three of these people did not provide contact details. Some of the offers align well with the preferences expressed by survey respondents and I will be getting in touch with these people in due course.

Club responses

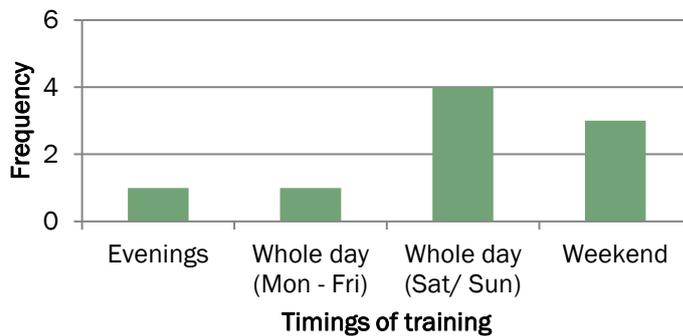
Areas of training clubs would like to see provided



Five clubs responded to the survey. Of these, two had been involved in previous CNCC training events.

The clubs showed a stronger preference for online resources over in person training. Surveying and basic SRT skills were the most popular topics. None of the clubs made suggestions for other types of training or any other requests.

Club preferences for timing of training sessions



In terms of timings of events, clubs responses were similar to individual responses: day long events on a Saturday or Sunday were most popular.

One of the clubs offered to help with providing SRT training facilities and potentially producing SRT training videos or other resources.

Action Plan

The findings from the survey show that northern cavers are keen to see more training events being provided by the CNCC. In addition, online resources were also popular and as such, it is important to consider how both of these might be implemented.

In person events

SRT training and First aid courses continue to be popular topics for training. My hope is to organise at least one of each by the end of 2017. I am trying to get in touch with various first aid providers (including people who left their details on the survey).

Surveying also proved popular. One respondent offered to provide training in paperless surveying and I am in the process of trying to arrange a session on this.

Whilst geology was a popular topic, I currently have no contacts who might be able to provide some sessions. However, I am going to send out some scoping emails to local university departments and see if we could arrange something along these lines.

Online training

There seems to be a good amount of interest in providing online training and resources, particularly in the areas of geology, surveying and introductory SRT. As a starting point, I'd like to curate a list of external resources which could be put up on the CNCC website. This could then progressively evolve into some information sheets (pdfs) available for download and potentially videos (although that would be a much larger project).

Conclusion

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. I plan to modify the survey to be an ongoing suggestions box, so if people have ideas for training or want to provide sessions for others, there will be space on the CNCC website to do so.

Marion Holloway
CNCC Training Officer

Webmaster

There have been no significant changes to the public site since the last meeting but the website continues to perform well in statistics as does the Facebook page.

Working with Tim Allen, considerable behind-the-scenes work has been done on a beta version of the new online cave booking system. The concept has been demonstrated by Tim to Patrick Holmes of Ingham and Yorke and was met with initial positivity.

I plan to further refine a few details on the system before putting it to test with a handful of volunteer clubs alongside the current system over the coming months. I'm happy to answer any questions during the next meeting and I will try to arrange a short demonstration at this meeting.

Gary Douthwaite – CNCC Webmaster

Anchor Coordinator

During 2017 defective anchor reports have been made for the following caves: Tatham Wife Hole, Rowten Pot, Lost Johns Cave, Notts Pot, Sell Gill Hole, Lower Long Churn, Upper Long Churn, Alum Pot, Pool Sink, Simpson Pot, Juniper Gulf, Jingling Pot, County Pot.

Six anchors have been removed and five installed in Tatham Wife Hole. Thanks to Mark Sims and Toby Buxton for assisting with Tatham Wife. One anchor has been removed and replaced in Upper Long Churn. One loose anchor has been removed from Lower Long Churn. Three anchors have been removed and two installed in Sell Gill. In all these cases the reporters have been informed and thanked.

Simon Wilson – CNCC Anchor Coordinator

Meet's Secretary Reports

Ric Halliwell (covering Fairy Holes, Birks Fell, Stump Cross area and Robinson's Pot):

All the permits for Fairy Holes have been issued for this year. The Robinson's Pot permit season has also finished with all permits being used. However I have only issued 10 permits (7 Clubs) for Birks Fell for the whole year and all permits are available for the rest of this year. It is a magnificent Cave and it is very sad that it receives so few visits at present. The National Trust do still insist that I inform them and the tenant farmer before the start of each month about the permits which have been issued for the following month. Mongo Gill is also an interesting through trip but no permits have been requested at all in the current year.

All other areas (Ingleborough, Leck, Casterton, Excalibur, Aygill, Whitewell, Penyghent etc):

Nothing further to report since the July meeting.