

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 5th October 2019 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

Stories in Stone Project

The Stories in Stone cave conservation Project has been extended in duration and funding for another 12 months until Dec 2020. This is a recognition of the fantastic work done by CNCC conservation volunteers and the value for lottery players' money that they provide.

Future projects will include some major stal cleaning in the Caves of GG area and some more shake-hole clearing on the Ingleborough Estate. A few old dig sites remain to be capped too.

CNCC Secretary

I am sure that everyone in Northern Caving and beyond will join me in thanking Matt Ewles for his enormous positive contribution to CNCC over the last 6 years. Matt took over as CNCC Secretary at a very turbulent time in its history and made an immediate impact with his honest brokering and negotiating skills. He managed to develop an ethos of open and transparent communication and near faultless administration which is a fantastic legacy for us. His infectious enthusiasm was, and remains, a huge asset to CNCC. We now have an Assistant Secretary (Josh) under Matt's tutelage and I am confident that Matt's legacy is in safe hands. However, we all have a responsibility to protect and carry forward this hard won legacy that Matt has worked tirelessly to develop over so many years. At the heart of Matt's success within CNCC is his boundless enthusiasm for caving and the special environment in which it takes place. I hope that he can bring similar rewards to the BCA membership in his future role as BCA Secretary.

New Online Booking System for Leck Fell

This will be covered elsewhere in the reports but I want to record my personal thanks to Tim Allen and acknowledge the gratitude due from all cavers who will benefit from this really significant and incredibly hard won new development in access for Dales Cavers to some of the finest caves in the UK.

Andrew Hinde - CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

I hope you have all had a good summer and made the most of some of the fine and warm weather we've had.

Since the last Committee meeting, much of my work (and Gary's) has been focussed on getting the material ready for a Hidden Earth stall, which by the time you read this should have happened and been successful. This has involved compiling a CNCC 'timeline' banner and of course the main poster display. I hope this has gone some way to show how valuable CNCC is as an organisation for northern cavers. I don't plan for this stall to be an annual feature but I believe it should aim to make an appearance every 2-3 years, with the content being kept up to date (the costs are negligible).

I met with the organisers of Cavefest and offered some advice for a northern event, and said that we'd be happy to use our contacts to help them appeal for cave riggers for the event (with volunteers to contact Cavefest directly); but I made no commitment for CNCC to take any specifically active role. It was clear that the event format that has been so successful down south for the last three years will need some considerable rethinking if it is to work up north, not least because our caves are very SRT-orientated where people will be less inclined to lead people without knowledge of their SRT capabilities, but also because northern cavers are tougher nuts to crack in terms of getting them to come along to such events (as we found at EuroSpeleo 2016). Maybe my advice will have helped. I wish them every success in making this a great event and I will certainly come along and test the quality of their bar assuming they manage to bring a northern event to fruition.

Anchors have seen some movement (not literally, thankfully) over the past few months. I'm extremely grateful to Alan Speight for stepping in as our anchor coordinator, and I hope to work with him over coming months to see the anchor scheme get back on track. I have redrafted the anchor policy to reflect the fact that it can no longer be the 'one man band' it was with Simon, and to put the decision of where anchors get placed in the hands of the CNCC Committee rather than just one person. Personally, I believe we need to ask the BCA E&T to approve a few more trainers for our region, and we need to get a few training courses organised to increase our 'pool' of volunteer installers; I know a few people in my own club alone who would like to do this, and have been contacted by a few others over recent months. I am very keen that anchor installation in our region does not move towards appearing as a 'closed shop' and that we appear welcoming for those genuinely enthusiastic about getting involved.

Significant credit should go to Tim for his excellent work with Leck Fell. The decisions made at the last Committee meetings were clearly the right ones, as they have led directly to us now having a solution that pleases cavers and Leck Estate alike; great work and excellent judgement. The number of new registrations for the online booking system after the news release was rather surprising. I suggest we all get firmly behind Tim as he continues his work to see the system pitched to Whelprigg Estate (Casterton Fell).

I have managed to renegotiate the access agreement for Excalibur Pot. In doing so I have managed to remove the restriction that meant access was only available to only BCA member clubs; now anyone can obtain a permit here, by email, often at very short notice. There are still some restrictions (one permit per week and Sundays only during shooting) due to the private and commercial nature of the land, but these restrictions are extremely unlikely to be problematic given the very limited number of visitors the cave receives (3-4 each year).

At the time of writing this I have just finished work on the 10th CNCC newsletter (in fact the hard-copies have just arrived). We are back to four pages but still great quality content. The conservation initiatives over the past several months have been great! I rely on your proactivity to send me newsletter items, reports, photos etc as and when they come up; it makes writing the newsletter so much easier just to open a folder and see a load of emails I have dropped in there over the last six months with various items of content. Thank you to all the proactive contributors that made writing this newsletter a breeze. In particular, thanks to Rowan Worsman, who saw a conservation project that needed doing at Crackpot Cave, and just got on and made it happen.

I have written a cave description for Birks Fell Cave in Wharfedale following a magnificent and inspiring trip in August. This is now available to download from our website along with the relatively new topo from Sam Allshorn.

I would like to draw everyone's attention to a notification on the BCA website homepage (www.british-caving.org.uk) regarding the upcoming member ballot about some changes to the BCA constitution that I proposed at the June AGM. In a nutshell, this ballot will be happening in mid to late October, for one month approximately, during which time all clubs and individuals will be sent a voting form (either by email or post). I have no intention to abuse my position to try to persuade you to vote one way or another or to try to skew your judgement on the matter. I do suggest however that you all have a look at the notification, familiarise yourself with the issue at hand, communicate it to your members, and participate in the ballot (and encourage your members to participate too). I would like to ensure the northern voice (whatever it may be saying) is heard.

Finally, a big thanks to Josh, who has taken the lead in the organisation of this meeting as our new Assistant Secretary. As you will probably know/suspect, I am hoping that this year is my last year as CNCC Secretary. I will have served in the role for six very enjoyable years and you are probably fed up of me and my unnecessarily long reports. I am of course hoping that Josh will want to take the job come March; assuming we haven't scared him off by then. To ensure this doesn't happen I would like to urge all our Committee and Officers to please do everything possible to make his job as easy as possible; be proactive in providing reports and applications for 2020 Committee positions when asked later this year, and of course by making him feel extremely welcome/not letting him leave.

Matt Ewles - CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Financial Status as of 22nd September 2019

Business Community Account: £726.61
Business Saver Account: £16559.24

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

£507.14 Received from BCA re-claim for 2018.
£30.00 to Hellifield Institute for Meeting Room hire (BCA).
£400.00 paid to PR Beresford for removal of scrap from P5 Shakehole (SIS).
£35.00 for the post box sited at Low Birkwith Farm to collect the agreed parking fees.
£301.59 for components for 'Conservation Water Pump and Stal Cleaner' (SIS).
£324.00 to Marsden AES Ltd for GG Access Track Repair Work (SIS).

Also £500 transferred Across from the Premium Account.

Pete Bann - CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

The group has received support in recent years from the Lottery funded Stories in Stone Project, which has paid for materials for cave conservation and a mileage allowance for volunteers. This support has now been extended for a further year.

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, or use the link on the CNCC website.

Kay Easton - CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer's Report

Greetings to all at CNCC, northern cavers and beyond, I hope to see you at our meeting. A significant moment for northern access to report this month with a new arrangement for Leck Fell and the removal of restrictions.

Leck Fell

At our last meeting the committee voted to withdraw support for the out of date access agreement on Leck Fell. I informed the estate and received a response quite quickly which led to a number of meetings and follow ups directly with the landowner. These meetings were conducted in a friendly and positive manner and the estate were apologetic that they hadn't attended to our correspondence in a timelier manner. The outcome was to introduce the on-line system to Leck Fell, with no closed season or restrictions. This has been well reported through the caving media and is already up and running. Full details appear on our web site.

Casterton Fell

I had some correspondence with the Whelprigg Estate earlier in the year and followed up with details of how the on-line system operates. Since then I decided to concentrate on Leck as it seemed more productive to deal with one estate at a time. My next task will be to try to persuade the estate to place all the caves of Casterton Fell onto the on-line system as well.

Weathercote Cave

I visited the new owners of Weathercote cave and presented him with a Caves & Karst book. He is much more open to cavers visiting the cave than the previous owners. However, as the entrance is very close to the house he would prefer visitors made arrangements in advance. Details have been supplied and publicised.

Joint Hole

The Joint Hole field has been sold and I have liaised with the CDG over the best approach to make to the new owners. Ongoing.

Barbondale

A further round of publicity through the caving media was instigated to alert cavers to the potential problems of conflict with the shooting syndicate which operate in September and October. Disturbing the birds just before or on the day of the shoot (Thursdays) is the heart of the problem here. Offering some simple advice on access routes should keep cavers away from any further problems.

Birkwith area

Parking has now been arranged at Low Birkwith Farm thanks to our Andrew. Details have been publicised.

Ireby

I have responded to enquires as to whether Ireby Fell Cavern should have a formal access agreement. I offered advice on liability issues and recommended that access should stay as it is. This has been accepted.

Caves and Karst books

We have now given out 5 more books from the further batch of 20 copies to local landowners (25 in all now given away). If anyone has the right landowner contacts and wishes to present a book to them please get in touch.

National Park

I attended a Cave and Crag Access Group meeting in July. Ric, Pat and Andrew also attended in their various capacities. I took the opportunity to update the meeting on recent access issues. From our perspective all appears quiet on the National Park front. One aspect of interest came from the new Access and Engagement Officer who, unlike her predecessor, is much more focused on engagement than access.

BCA C&A Meeting

This was an on-line meeting with the regional reps and some representatives of constituent bodies present. It was the first under the new C&A convenor, Louise Badderley, to be held. I briefed the meeting on our region and put forward the deferred proposal on taking control of the C&A budget from the finance committee. This received broad support from those present with only the CSCC arguing against. However, in the end CSCC abstained. The proposal passed reads as, "That regional C&A funding for projects above the £750 limit should be placed before the C&A committee and not the Finance committee for scrutiny and approval." This opens up potential changes to the rules from C&A to allow funding for tools, equipment, maintenance, training, PPE, consumables, volunteer travel, etc. Again there is broad support for this. This should mitigate the concerns some of our committee held over future funding of C&A work in our own region. BCA has already stated that no reasonable request for funding will be turned down. It is most unfortunate that Louise has announced that she is standing down at the October meeting as she was very keen on driving this forward. It leaves C&A without a convener – anyone?

Good caving

Tim Allen - CNCC Access Officer

Webmaster's Report - Gary Douthwaite

Ongoing housekeeping on the main website with some changes at the back-end to accommodate changes to the online booking system. As announced recently, Leck Fell has been added to online booking and a login created for the land owner to view the statistics. All the relevant caves have now been added and the system continues to work well with no reported issues. Lot of new sign-ups as expected.

Site and social media statistics to date are as follows.

Google Analytics

Page views for (per week) from 1 Sep 2018 to 31 Aug 2019.



Total page views in the last 12 months: 118,012. Previous 12 months: 83,778 (41% increase).

Sep 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18	Jan 18	Feb 18	Mar 18	Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19
6650	8856	13082	12516	9605	9838	11966	9211	7827	10150	8059	10052
+66%	+33%	+72%	+140%	+31%	+25%	+90%	+12%	+47%	+22%	-10%	+31%

% is increase on same period in the previous year.

Facebook

As at 9 Sep 2019 we have 963 page likes (+23 since last report on 6 Jun 2019) and 1046 followers (+27 since last report).



Page likes in the last 12 months.

Twitter

As at 9 Sep 2019 we have 392 followers (+35 since last report on 6 Jun 2019).

Online Booking System

To date, there are 354 registered users (+65 since last report) and 545 individual bookings have been made. This number includes 461 approved bookings and 84 cancelled bookings.

41 new users have registered since 22 August when the Leck Fell addition was announced.

Of the users who specified gender there are 52 female and 243 male.

293 users have given their birth year. The average age is 43.5 with the youngest 17 and oldest 78.

Below: approved bookings since the system started in Feb 2018.

	By booked date	By booking made date
Feb 2018	26	78
Mar 2018	24	15
Apr 2018	21	7
May 2018	7	3
Jun 2018	6	5
Jul 2018	15	8
Aug 2018	5	5
Sep 2018	14	19
Oct 2018	18	23
Nov 2018	22	24
Dec 2018	30	27
Jan 2019	20	22
Feb 2019	11	13
Mar 2019	35	33
Apr 2019	22	21
May 2019	11	18
Jun 2019	31	29
Jul 2019	7	13
Aug 2019	2	86
Sep 2019	2	14 (to 9 th Sep)
Oct 2019	5	-
Nov 2019	0	-
Dec 2019	9	-
Jan 2020	5	-
Feb 2020	4	-

Download Statistics (to 16 Jun 2019)

Publications (since 16/09/2018) 3,355 (2,304 unique)

Topos (since 20/11/2018) **23,463** (15,935 unique)

Cave descriptions (since 20/11/2018) **16,690** (11,703 unique)

Meets Secretary's Reports - Geoff Whittaker (Aygill, Ingleborough, Leck, Casterton)

Aygill Caverns

Aygill Cavern permit requests have remained similar to the previous years – see table below for a monthly breakdown.

Casterton Fell

Permit requests for Casterton Fell on a monthly basis are pretty constant - see table below for a monthly breakdown.

Leck Fell

I've included March and July as original digital permits issued, and from August there has been a rapid increase because Leck went online booking. However, I can't record how many people/ clubs went caving during July when no permits were required, before the online booking system was approved by the Landowner.

I did get several emails from individuals complaining that they now had to register and book online when previously they were told no permits were required.

There have been no issues raised from the Estate as far as I'm aware.

Ingleborough Estate/Allotment and Newby Moss

The online system continues to operate smoothly and remains constant.

There have been no issues raised from the Ingleborough Estate/Ingham and Yorke as far as I'm aware.

Table showing permits issued for Aygill Caverns and Casterton Fell March to September 2019. Table also shows number of online booking trips for Leck Fell and Ingleborough March to September 2019

2019	Aygill Caverns	Casterton Fell	Leck Fell	Ingleborough	Registrations
March	0	30	32 (permits)	35	26
April	0	28	0	22	14
May	2	21	0	9	5
June	1	21	0	34	10
July	1	13	3 (permits)	19	10
August	0	27	21	9	45
September	0	14	17	19	7
Totals	4	154	73	147	117

Meets Secretary's Reports - Tony Brown (Bowland)

No permits given out during the period but UCLAN Archaeological Department, who liaise separately with the land agent via the farmer, returned to Bowland this summer and focused on Dinkling Green Mine Cave. The original entrances were quarried away by the early 1800s and most of what exists now would have originally been beyond daylight. UCLAN thought that artefacts could lie in front of the site, in spoil removed during mining. Excavation revealed prehistoric worked chert. It is as yet undated but a lithics specialist will assess. The cave should now be considered a site of archaeological interest.

Meets Secretary's Reports - Matt Ewles (Excalibur)

Six permits issued for 2019 so far (although unclear how many actually used). This is in-keeping with the average visitor rate of one group every couple of months. The new access agreement (see Secretary report) makes access open to all now, and of course, permits can be issued by email and often at short notice. Good caver-landowner relations are being maintained by the local diggers.