

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 14th January 2021 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

Stories in Stone Project.

This project has now completed after 5 years of incredible effort by CNCC conservation volunteers.

One hundred and fourteen individual cavers took part in 28 different conservation projects around the Ingleborough Dales.

The Heritage Lottery Fund were very complimentary about the success of our project which exceeded expectations in nearly all areas.

The final claim from SIS has allowed us to purchase an 18V Makita sds+ drill and an 18V angle grinder (both with 2 batteries each). These have both been out on site at Knacker Trapper Hole where they proved very adequate for the task. They will be added to the CNCC equipment audit. These items will also be available to individuals and groups who have suitable training in their safe use.

Covid 19 Updates

I would like to thank our PR team for keeping the CNCC advice up to date and in line with Government statements over the last 10 months. It has been a complex issue which has aroused a few conflicts in an area which is personal and emotive. It has been a very difficult task which all the CNCC officers have contributed to positively. I feel that we struck the right balance of personal responsibility and community cohesion.

The future

Caving makes a significant contribution to the Dales economy. I hope that when the current restrictions are over we will see a resurgence in club and individual caving once again. I encourage everyone to make use of club huts when available and attend the club meets. Clubs have had a generous financial assistance during the lock down. We now need a boost in participation from club members and individual cavers when the time comes. Refresher SRT training courses will be available to anyone who needs one to give them the confidence to return to caving safely after a long lay off. Check the CNCC website for details.

Andrew Hinde - CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

The last few months have passed relatively quietly, and there is little to report.

After sending round an email regarding approval for a large purchase (see Treasurer's report) we realised that it would be worth contacting clubs to see if they had any CNCC-owned equipment that we had lost track of over the years. The only item mentioned was the conservation trailer kept at the BPC hut, which suggests record-keeping has been kept up-to-date over the years.

The AGM is coming up in March, but the deadline for those wishing to stand for positions is considerably sooner: Saturday 23rd January. All elected officers and clubs wishing to re-stand for their positions must tell me their intention to do so, along with any supporting statements you wish to supply. There is currently a vacancy for a committee club, and a vacancy for an individual caver representative. I recommend this is done as soon as possible.

While not an elected role, we are still lacking a BCA rep. Our co-opted officers are usually re-confirmed in the June meeting, but as there is currently no-one filling this role it is important to continue advertising it. If you know someone in your club who might be up to the task, then please let them know of this vacancy. Anyone wishing to find out more about the role can contact me at secretary@cncc.org.uk

Josh Young - CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

For obvious reasons, things have been reasonably quiet over the last couple of months, with only a few payments going out of the CNCC accounts. These have either been for conservation and access work at Alum Pot and Aygill, or for equipment for the CNCC which will be claimed back from Stories in Stone.

I've produced the 2020 accounts, which will be forwarded onto Ric and Pat Halliwell for checking. Hopefully this will be done in time to be included in the documentation for the AGM in March. I'm pleased to say that all of our expenditure from 2020 should be refundable by either the BCA or Stories in Stone.

Finally, a payment at the end of 2020 threw up a bit of an issue, as the expenditure was clearly a no-brainer as the money was being refunded by Stories in Stone, but as it was over the £500 limit we had to seek approval from the committee. This slowed down the process somewhat and seemed overly bureaucratic. I'd like to propose that as long as 4 out of the 6 elected officers agree to an expenditure and the other elected officers don't disagree, then I can authorise a payment of above £500. As long as this is agreed by the committee, this seems to be inline with the current CNCC constitution and it wouldn't need changing.

Ben Wright - CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

Before lockdown put paid to any Conservation projects, a group of volunteers over the course of three days stabilised the collapsed entrance to Knacker Trapper Pot, installing a plastic tube.

In October a small group repaired the wall around Yordas Cave and cleaned graffiti at the cave entrance.

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.

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

Very little has happened concerning access since our last meeting and I have been too busy to be proactive. I am keeping an eye on the Birkwith issue and will be writing to the NP in due course as we come out of the worst of the pandemic. I can update the meeting verbally and happy to discuss any issues brought up then.

I would like to formally offer thanks to Matt Ewles, our PR officer, for his diligent and prompt work in updating advice following the many government changes in their response to the pandemic. This was something I started doing last year when the pandemic began and am very pleased that Matt has taken it over as part of his role. He has consulted both with me on access and all the officer group before making public any advice. I have fully supported all the advice which has been put out by CNCC.

Tim Allen - CNCC Access Officer

Training Officer's Report

Happy New Year to all.

Return to SRT workshops.

Two 1 day workshops have initially been planned for 13 & 14 February. One workshop sold out within a day of launch, the other currently has only 3 spaces. This take up has only come from the initial launch. Some extra advertising nearer the time will quickly fill these spaces.

Huge thanks to Gary for developing the IT side. This part will be really important to the future success of the workshops. We have had some initial problems with the PayPal side of things but these are slowly getting sorted. Thanks also to Matt for some help with the wording etc. The workshops can only run if Settle moves back to Tier 2. I will monitor the situation and keep the participants informed.

BCA Training Committee

I have attended a couple of TC meetings. These have been dominated by a BCA proposal document to substantially restructure the Training Committee. It appears that the document has been put together without meaningful input from TC and by authors generally unknown. We were informed at the last TC meeting that this document had been put to council and parts of it voted on. Apparently not all parts were voted on as council struggled to deal with such a large complex document.

The latest TC meeting suffered from getting over heated and entrenched in various view points. A really long meeting with no real outcomes !

The point I was disappointed in was that council had voted (a small minority and a lot of abstentions) to only pay trainers delivering BCA training "reasonable travel expenses". My view is this will stop the BCA developing a solid and consistent training programme.

I emailed my concerns to the training officer and training committee. Copy below.

Copy of email sent to Training Officer and committee

As CNCC training officer below are some of my thoughts on the consultation document.

During the recent training committee meeting it came to light that the BCA have already voted on some parts of it. This response deals what I believe to be a fundamental flaw in what the recent council meeting have voted for.

It was reported that BCA council have voted in favour to ONLY pay "reasonable travel expenses" for anyone delivering caver training on behalf of the BCA.

I assume that the BCA would want recreational caver training to be of the highest standard, provided by experienced and qualified (where required) trainers, whose qualifications are up to date, including CPD and first aid.

As an example, for a "technical workshop", the BCA would require:

A suitably (up to date) qualified trainer with :

A current first aid certificate

Professional indemnity insurance

A Willingness to prepare content, syllabus and resources for the workshop.

Willing to commit to a date in possibly 4-8-12 weeks time.

Be prepared to honour this date even with other offers of paid work.

Prepare, set up, run and clear away a professional level training workshop.

Use their personal kit as required adding to "wear and tear".

Carry out all admin work as required.

For all the above, the BCA are now offering to pay "reasonable travel expenses" ONLY.

I think that this model will struggle to develop a consistent, varied and professional level of recreational caver training that the BCA should be providing.

I presume that the BCA would (should) charge participants to attend training workshops. I assume that this "profit" would go to subsidise other expenses that the BCA see more fitting than to pay professional trainers ?

Note 1.

The BCA currently underwrite / subsidise the QMC as required. This includes DIRECTLY paying (£150 - £200 a day ??) trainers to run “up date workshops” solely to allow people to keep their professional qualifications up to date so generally they can keep charging customers for their service.

Note 2.

The BCA recently paid £5600.00 to a private company to provide a (non specified) number of educational/ training sessions and trips to people aged 12 - 21 who live in a commutable distance of the Ingleborough area.

Example of costings:

A “Technical” workshop for 6 people at £20.00 per person.

Negotiate a favourable rate (reduced) from a suitable trainer of £145.00

This leaves a “subsidy” of £25.00 from the BCA.

(£5600.00 would pay for 224 days of training for 6 people. I.E 1344 of “people training days”) this equates to EVERY weekend for 4 YEARS of quality training.

Obviously venue costs, unfilled places etc would effect the overall picture BUT this model would provide a sustainable and realistic solution to recreational caver training by the BCA. “Reasonable travel expenses” does not.

Summary

To completely exclude the recreational caver training provision from anything other than “reasonable travel expenses” seems somewhat unfair and detrimental to what should be a core provision of the BCA.

Ian Patrick - CNCC Training Officer

BCA E&T Representative’s Report - Mark Richards**IC Resin Anchors**

At the CNCC meeting held on 17/10/2020

Point 6 of the minutes discussed the following :

JY obtained quotes for the production of more IC anchors: 650 for £5.60 each, or 1300 for £5.50 each (excluding VAT). BW said that this would be a large proportion of our funds, but perhaps we should suggest the BCA buys a batch so that the anchors can be used throughout the country. ME agreed, we have 447 unused anchors and are running out of caves that need them.

Action: JY/MR to put forward a proposal to the BCA E&T committee that the BCA purchase a batch of IC anchors to allow them to be installed throughout the UK.

Below is a proposal to BCA Council from the E&T committee:

The E&T committee propose that BCA make a purchase of one batch of 650 IC anchors for use by all regional councils.

At the BCA council meeting

The BCA Treasurer HJJ commented that the cost of the proposal had been built into his budget, which had just been approved by Council.

The Chair PJR opened discussion and Mark Sims (E and T Convener) pointed out difficulties in supply when asked about timescales, which AH (CNCC) gave a generous offer to solve this problem, where stock held by CNCC, could be given to other regional councils in the short term with the CNCC stock replenished when these new anchors were manufactured. This offer was subject to the agreement of the other CNCC officers. The Chair thanked AH for this, and said it was fantastic to see cooperation happening between the Regional Councils. That's how the BCA can work helping each other and thanks for that.

Summary - The BCA committee were in favour of a proposal that the BCA purchase a batch of IC anchors for use by all regions and Lima Engineering were asked to manufacture the batch. The CNCC have said they will distribute IC anchors in numbered batches of 25 to any RCC that requested them, with the proviso that they will be replaced when the new manufactured batch are available.

Note the BCA committee were in favour of adopting Fischer FIS EM Plus 390 S resin under the scheme based on test results and on data provided by Fischer, due to favourable strength and shrinkage properties. Stopping the use of Fischer FIS V 360 S was not considered necessary, particularly in the absence of tests of the EM Plus in rock types other than limestone.

SRT Competency in view of Anchor Installers across the regions

The E and T committee received contact off one regional club suggesting that SRT competency was not required in their area in order to be an approved anchor installer.

Current guidance states

"Regional Councils shall take responsibility for the training of persons who will be authorised to place designated anchors on their behalf. The delivery of training and assessment will be undertaken by individuals authorised by the appropriate Regional Council, who are already authorised to place anchors under the scheme. The Regional Council will pay particular attention to the ability of the proposed trainer to not only instruct candidates to install anchors but also to assess the candidates' competence for judging the location of new anchors **and their SRT ability to** safely install anchors on location.

The E and T are suggesting the following paragraph change to the guidance and this will go the BCA council at their next meeting.

"Regional Councils shall take responsibility for the training of persons who will be authorised to place designated anchors on their behalf. The delivery of training and assessment will be undertaken by individuals authorised by the appropriate Regional Council, who are already authorised to place anchors under the scheme. The Regional Council will pay particular attention to the ability of the proposed trainer to not only instruct candidates to install anchors but also to assess the candidate's competence for judging the location of new anchors and **their ability to safely install anchors on location.**"

Anchor Coordinator's Report - Alan Speight

Over the last few months Sam Allshorn has completed a good number of anchor installations & Graham Coates and Kieran Hodgson have concentrated on checking and resolving the many defective anchor reports (see Graham's report below) - A new batch of resin has been purchased so equipment wise we are well prepared to continue with the work once the latest lockdown has ended.

Supplementary information from Graham Coates:

26/11/20 Churns

The bolt on the Hand basin climb was extracted, The bolt came out without damaging the substrate but required a lot of effort despite visible radial movement.

Two IC anchors then placed in a pull through configuration, at the top of the climb.

11/12/20 Simpson Pot (Storm Pot)

Primary DMM Eco anchor on Storm Pot removed and replaced with IC bolt.

17/12/20 Bar Pot (South East Aven)

Petzl Collinox bolt completely missing from Y hang at the end of the traverse. IC anchor placed

Note: Although all the other anchors feel sound, I think they need further investigation as they have been in for many years and well used, but sudden failure of the y hand anchor is alarming.

Yordas 18/12/20 Chapter house traverse DMM eco removed and IC placed.

Yordas 03/01/21 Middle Entrance 2nd Pitch

DMM eco with very slight movement left in place but IC anchor placed alongside to back up and form Y hang.

Next projects planned are to investigate Spout pitch in Swinsto and Deviation bolt Shadow route Ireby.

PR and Communications Officer's Report - Matt Ewles

Happy new year to everyone!

Since the last meeting I have continued to maintain the Covid-19 guidance on the CNCC's website in line with the November lockdown, subsequent return to Tier II for the majority of the northern caving regions, the later raising of the tiers, and now the new January lockdown. At this rate we will need a full time Officer to keep on top of the ever-changing regulations! I am thankful to all CNCC Officers who have provided such quick input into the content of these to ensure what we publish is timely, well considered and peer reviewed.

The CNCC's mailing list which was opened to signup around the time of the last meeting, now has 161 subscribers. Since its launch I have sent three emails to all subscribers, two general news updates, one specifically regarding our lockdown advice and, at the time of writing, I am planning a further one about the AGM and to publicise the new media gallery and the latest lockdown advice. Hence, typically one email per month which is what I expected. So far I have received no feedback (usually a good thing), and nobody has unsubscribed, which is perhaps the key test. I will continue to push this mailing list. While the reach of this is much lower than the likes of Facebook or UKCaving, I suspect it may attract people who do not use social media so widely or regularly, so could be a different audience. I would appreciate clubs alerting their members to this.

Signup here: <https://cncc.org.uk/mailing-list/index.php>

At the last meeting I was tasked with putting out a polite reminder about parking on Leck Fell, which has been done by mailing list and social media. The message has been to encourage use of the online booking system for social distancing and to car-share up onto the fell where individuals are comfortable doing so, and to park tightly once up on the fell to help share the available space.

I have made no progress on my planned article on Crackpot Cave; but I will pursue this again in due course.

The plan to print multiple northern caving photos for framing and distribution around the area is progressing. This is now with Mark Burkey who has volunteered to print these. Mark is getting to work on the printing through January/February this year, and he has even kindly agreed to mount them for us too, ready for framing. I trust there are no objections to reimbursing Mark any costs associated to this, and that I can be given a reasonable budget for framing (it would be nice to get reasonable quality frames rather than flimsy plastic ones which will fall apart in six months)? Once venues reopen I will be looking for locally resident volunteers to distribute these to visitor centres, outdoor shops/venues etc.

I have been working with Gary to compile a new media section for the CNCC website:

www.cncc.org.uk/about/media

This contains lots of FAQs about caving, a list of useful links, and a media gallery currently of 12 excellent photos which we have permission to make available, royalty-free, to anyone for downloading for the purposes of promoting caving, subject to appropriate crediting. These photos have been chosen by me as some of the best in terms of showing off northern caving, being bright, colourful, interesting and eye-catching.

This section should be useful for anyone putting together any kind of media to promote caving (e.g. articles, news stories, club posters/leaflets/websites etc). I would like to thank the photographers who have allowed their images to be used; Mark Burkey, Clive Westlake and Gary Douthwaite. I am amenable to adding more in due course if other photographers come forward to contribute. Obviously, the images need to show off northern caving in an inspiring and positive light (i.e. no miserable looking cavers in sludgy crawls... that side of caving is best discovered first-hand I think).

I have kept our newsfeed up to date, both on our website and on social media, with information covering the outcomes of the October Committee meeting, Growling Hole anchoring, warnings about issues at Aygill Caverns and Knacker Trapper Hole (and subsequent remedial work) and Thistle Cave. More recently, we have advertised the CNCC's new training signup system and the two SRT refresher courses planned for February.

I am working to compile and publicise a live inventory of CNCC-owned equipment which is available for northern cavers to use for conservation/anchoring projects.

Since the last meeting, new descriptions have been published for Growling Hole (to complement the new topo) and Fossil Pot, and the Marble Steps, Ireby Fell and Cupcake description has been greatly improved. A number of topos have been amended based on feedback we have received about rope lengths. I know that a few of our anchor installers have been dealing with loose anchors reported at Yordas and Long Churn, and that is a good PR story in the making; I think it is important to demonstrate that we have listened to these reports and acting on them.

After the last meeting, I worked with Rob Watson on the CHECC Northern Caving Guide. He had done a splendid job with this. I was able to help improve this and make it more 'CNCC' by inclusion of some conservation notices, harmonisation with key CNCC messages and cave descriptions, and input on the choice of caves. This is a splendid resource, and Rob has made an excellent job at formatting this on the CHECC website:

<https://checc.org/student-caving-trip-options-in-the-yorkshire-dales/>

Fingers crossed for an altogether more positive year ahead.

Happy caving
Matt

Webmaster's Report - Gary Douthwaite

I have been working with Matt and others to keep the website and social media up to date with Covid information. We've also tried to keep the positive news flowing where possible.

A new media section has been added to the websites (cncc.org.uk/about/media) to provide resources for newspapers/magazines and other publications. It contains general information on caving as well as some useful links and a photo gallery of images that can be published (copyright remains with the photographer). These images have been kindly doated for use by Mark Burkey, Clive Westlake as well as myself.

Working with Ian Patrick the new training section is now active on the website complete with online payments via PayPal (thanks to Ben for help with that). There were a few teething troubles with payments, but it all seems to be ok now. Further refinements will be made as things progress and we can hopefully add more courses later in the year.

We now have a CNCC Instagram (@cncc_uk) account which will be updated along with other social media.

There are plans to upgrade the website to meet current standards and work is already underway on the booking system. This will be moved to its own website with a more streamlined look.

Google Analytics (1 Jan 2020 to 31 Dec 2020)

An interesting view of 2020 as far as the website activity goes. During the first lockdown web traffic dipped considerably as you might expect. However it has remained pretty steady throughout the rest of the year.

Pageviews



Gender: 68% male, 32% female

Age:

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
11.63% ↑	25.60% ↓	17.23% ↓	18.32% ↓	14.79% ↑	12.43% ↑

Facebook

As of 6 January 2021 we have 1157 page likes (+30 since last report) and 1260 followers (+41 since last report).

Performance of recent Facebook posts (original content only, not shared posts, some omitted)...

Published	Subject	Reach (people)	Clicks	Reactions & Comments
02/01/2021	Covid updates	809	258	94
23/12/2020	Merry Christmas	334	2	22
21/12/2020	Training courses now on offer	377	47	15
21/12/2020	Rigging topo reminder about updates	408	30	21
20/12/2020	Knacker Trapper Pot conservation	509	54	29
13/12/2020	Knacker Trapper warning	548	172	22
28/11/2020	Covid updates	893	122	42
20/11/2020	Aygill Caverns info	1000	242	83
19/11/2020	CHECC Northern Caving Guide	709	47	29

Top 5 media downloads (six months to 31 December 2020)

Topos	Descriptions
Valley Entrance - Toyland (4.2%)	Alum Pot and Long Churn Caves (5.3%)
Lost Johns' Cave (4.2%)	Ease Gill Caverns (4.3%)
Alum Pot (3.4%)	The Leck Fell Master Cave System (4.9%)
Bull Pot (2.5%)	Valley Entrance (4.4%)
Yordas Pot & Cave (2.5%)	Caves of Scotland (4.0%)

Twitter

As at 6 January 2021 we have 457 followers (+11 since last report). 250 tweets have been made by CNCC.

Instagram

As at 6 January 2021 we have 255 followers. Pretty good considering the account has only been used for a short time.

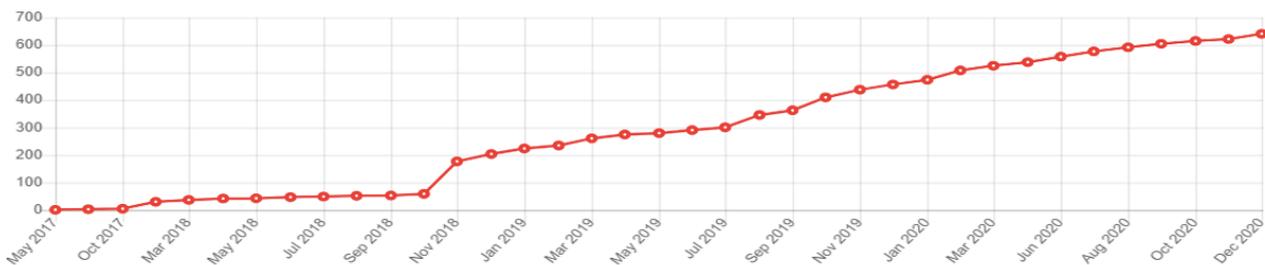
Online Booking System

- To date, there are **641 registered users** (+36 since last report) and **1625 individual bookings** have been made.
- Of the users who specified gender there are **96 female** and **462 male**.
- The average age is **47.6** with the **youngest 18** and **oldest 80**.

New registrations:



Total bookings:



Bookings count by month:



Media Download Statistics (to 31 December 2020)

	Total	Average / month	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20
Publications	7806	260	206	166	156
Topos	60036	2224	2413	2046	2236
Cave descriptions	48692	1803	2492	1717	1396