

NORTHERN CAVING

Newsletter of the Council for the Northern Caving Community



EDITORIAL

by Matt Ewles (Editor)

While the headliner of this newsletter, CaveMaps, is something we're really proud of, I'm keen to emphasise the other excellent work herein.

This has been a great year so far for conservation projects thanks to both Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust funding, and also the proactive efforts of some dedicated enthusiasts. We love organising conservation projects, but we also love supporting others to undertake them too.

Our anchor scheme has taken some big steps forwards and we are hoping to soon be able to bring new installers on board, perhaps later this year, to help us focus on replacing wobbly historic anchors.

The CNCC delivers for northern cavers thanks to our volunteers, some of whom have created their own role, which we greatly welcome. Next March however, we need new volunteers for two of our most critical roles, Chair and Secretary and we urgently need to hear from anyone who might be interested, with full support from the current team.

We hope you have an amazing summer of safe caving.

Cover photo: the CPC team repairing fencing at Yordas Pot (John Helm)

WELCOME TO CAVEMAPS.UK CNCC SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF CAVEMAPS

For nearly 20 years, CaveMaps has been the go-to website for online cave surveys across our region. This was the brainchild of Andy Powell, who built the original site and populated it with thousands of survey images and references.

In 2010, Andy won the Arthur Butcher Award to recognise the significance of this contribution to cave surveying. Andy later evolved to the site introduced novel ways of displaying surveys such as 'DeepZoom'.

However, as time progressed, keeping the site running got harder. Any web developer will tell you that keeping abreast of modern web design standards and online security requirements is a tough job.

In January, Andy approached CNCC to ask if we would be interested in adopting CaveMaps to ensure the site has a strong future. We were honoured to be asked and, after some initial very encouraging discussions, delighted to accept.

This is possible because our Web Administrator, Gary, is a professional web developer who works for CNCC on a voluntary basis. Since January, Gary has been building a new CaveMaps site from scratch, taking inspiration from the original site, including the colour theme, the cave categorisation by 'Northern Caves' areas, and other features.

As part of bringing CaveMaps into the CNCC, we wanted to tie the survey database to our existing cave database, to allow click-through from the CNCC website to surveys for that cave. This functionality is also now live; simply look up any cave on the CNCC website to see a link to any surveys.



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A huge part of the work involved transferring the data, assigning surveys to specific caves and entering information such as publisher, publication and year. We were able to use AI to extract this from the original database, and from text on the surveys themselves, but every single image needed to be checked and in many cases corrected.

Another important new functionality has been a user-friendly way for individuals to upload new surveys to the website, and the ability of moderators to easily manage the day-to-day running of the website and updating content via a user-friendly, non-techy admin area.

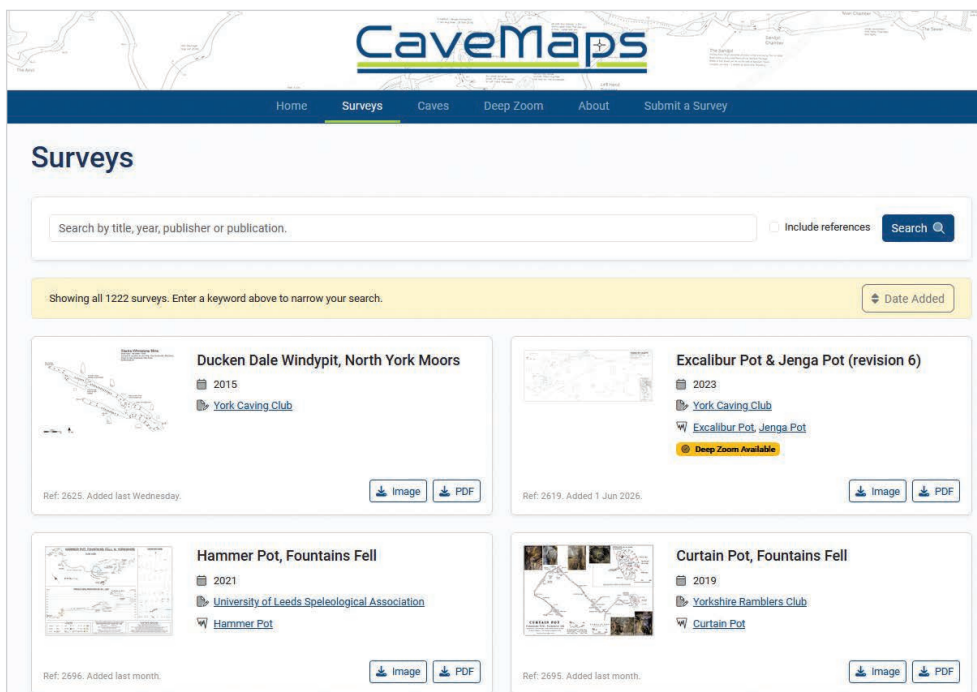
The way surveys are displayed, searched and downloaded has been improved. DeepZoom use has been extended to include the most detailed and highest resolution surveys. The new site is fully mobile-device compatible and should work on all modern browsers.

Previously there were a number of entries displayed only as low-resolution thumbnails. This is because permission to upload the full version has not been obtained. We have retained these on the new site, but referred to as 'references'. They are useful to help direct cavers to original sources e.g. via the British Caving Library. However, our feedback was that these were annoying for most users who simply wanted to see full online content, so they are now excluded from searches by default, but can be easily included by checking a box.

As part of the update, hundreds more surveys have been added, including the full Moldywarps Speleo Group catalogue, with thanks to MSG and Chris Curry, and most of the Ease Gill Caverns survey sheets courtesy of Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club.

The new site is now live: **cavemaps.uk**

The original site (cavemaps.org) directs to the new site but this domain will eventually be retired.



We'd like to thank Andy for his commitment to creating CaveMaps, and for supporting a handover to ensure continuity. It must be hard to let go, and we are honoured to be trusted with this.

We'd also like to thank the various contributors and admins (past, present and hopefully many more in the future) and Gary, who has spent well over 100 hours building the new site.

Which brings us onto our final very important point...

We'd love to expand the CaveMaps library. If you have published a survey that is not currently on CaveMaps and you would like to make it available, please use the new 'submit a survey' function, or if that proves problematic, email us (see below) to discuss. Original digital images, or good quality scans of paper surveys are required.

If you spot any issues or have any suggestions, please email cavemaps@cncc.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CAVES AND KARST

The BCA and BCRA are putting on a joint program of events to celebrate the first **International Day of Caves and Karst on 13th September**. The aim of this day is to raise global awareness, promote research, education and international cooperation in science, environmental protection, culture and sustainable tourism around caves and karst.

BCA are hoping to have events all over the country to support this day and are asking clubs and individuals if they would be willing to help host an event. This could include talks, displays in caving huts or local public venues, or try-caving sessions.

If you, or your club/group would be interested in running any kind of event to support this day, please get in touch with BCA's publications and information Officer, Zac Woodford (pandi@british-caving.org.uk).



TALK AT PRESTON-UNDER-SCAR

Last year, following CNCC's expression of concern about the reopening of Wensley Quarry, and likely to damage Keldheads Cave, we were contacted by Preston-under-Scar Women's group to ask if we could do a talk for their group. Our involvement in the objection process had piqued their interest into the local caves.

We immediately knew the man for the job and Chris Curry, of the Moldywarps Speleo Group kindly buckled to some gentle nagging.

Chris delivered a "thoroughly interesting and engaging evening" on 3rd March, with comments from many members about how much their eyes were opened to the underground world in the Wensleydale and Swaledale area. They were even inspired to learn more about underground watersheds in the area and the various becks!

Thank you to Chris for this excellent bit of community engagement on our behalf.

The CNCC is often asked to deliver talks for local groups, and we would very much like to be able to offer this, but sadly our existing volunteers are already stretched. If you would like us to keep your name on an informal 'list' of potential speakers, please do contact our PR/Comms Officer (pr@cncc.org.uk) with details about your subject and geographic area. Requests for talks usually include expenses being paid, and often a modest speaker fee.

DONATION FROM TARMAC

Following CNCC's voicing of concerns about damage to Keldheads Cave from the planned reopening of Wensley Quarry, our conservation team were able to bring in some experts to help provide more scientific input into the potential threat.

Professor John Gunn, a caver and karst expert, provided some geological advice and Si Cornhill and Di Arthurs resurveyed the cave. In return for Si and Di's efforts, Tarmac, via Halfren Water, have donated £1000 to CNCC; Thank you!

This won't pacify further objections if we feel future operations might damage the cave, but thanks to these efforts, we hope that a more informed decision can be reached about any impact and plans can be developed to avoid threats to the cave and hydrology.

Our Treasurer has advised that this money, rather than adding to our bank balance, can be spent to benefit northern caving.

ASH DIEBACK WARNING

We have heard of the very recent failure of a tree at Alum Pot often used for rigging of the North West route, and various dead ash trees now surrounding Bull Pot of the Witches which CNCC's volunteers are looking to address. The message is clear; closely inspect the health and integrity of any trees you might use as a belay.

You can find more information on this disease on the Woodland Trust website: [tinyurl.com/ash-dieback-info](https://www.woodlandtrust.co.uk/ash-dieback-info)

ALUM POT PARKING

We have received a polite request from the Outdoor Centre which is up the track on the right 60m along the green lane where cavers park for Alum Pot and surrounding caves. Cars parking opposite or adjacent to the turn along this track have been blocking vehicles with trailers from accessing the Outdoor Centre. We know this lane can get busy but do not obstruct this turning space.

CNCC AT HIDDEN EARTH 2026

CNCC will be at Hidden Earth this year in Llangollen, with a stall in the trade hall, and there are plans for this year to be even more engaging and interactive than ever before. If you see one of our team staffing the stall please do say hello, tell us what you think, or what else you would like us to do to support northern caving.



The CNCC stall at Hidden Earth 2025 (Gary Douthwaite)

CNCC'S USE OF 'X'

After a long AGM discussion, our members felt that continued use of 'X' as a social media platform was no longer in accordance with our values. We have deleted our account, but you can still follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky, Threads and Mastodon.



You can also follow our updates on the UK Caving forum. This is entirely run and managed by cavers (from our region too), not trillionaires committed to churning out rage bait.

The forum is at ukcaving.com

You can also sign up to our mailing list to receive roughly monthly updates (and get a heads-up on new training workshops). We won't spam you or pass on your email and you can unsubscribe any time.

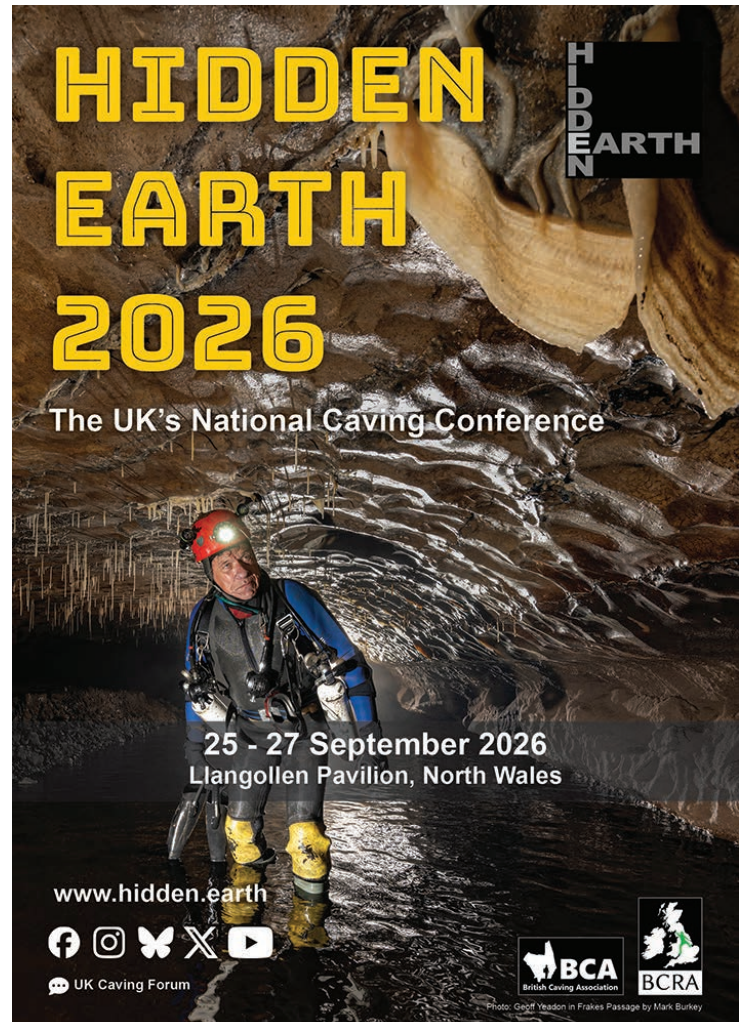
cncc.org.uk/mailling-list

AGM 2026 OUTCOMES

Our AGM on Saturday 21st March was a well attended meeting, including several new faces. We welcomed Combined Caving and Diving Club as a new CNCC member.

We've had a few changes to our Officer team, with our former Assistant Access Officer, Mike Appleton, taking on the full Access Officer role, and our Secretary, Jill Bolton, moving to Treasurer. We welcomed Matt Ewles back as Secretary for one year only.

We had a great discussion on ways CNCC can represent an even wider caver demographic. We hope to present some constitutional changes to the 2027 AGM to achieve this and ensure that groups other than clubs can become democratically involved.



EASE GILL OPEN HOUSE 2026



Over the last year we have reported on the Ease Gill Open House, a caving festival hosted by Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club (RRCPC) centred on Bull Pot Farm and Ease Gill Caverns. This year promised to build on 2025's inaugural event, and it sounds like a great success.

We're delighted to have received the following report by Rachel Turnbull (ULSA, RRCPC).

Following the emerging success of last year, Alice Shackley of RRCPC picked up her clipboard and set about organising the second event. The premise was simple - to rig a number of popular entrances to the Ease Gill system and provide food, beer and accommodation for summertime festivities.

Meeting new people, having new experiences and coming together as a community was to be the vibe of 2026's Ease Gill Open House.

"The whole thing was brilliant, the caves were fantastic, everyone was so nice and the food was amazing!"

— Anonymous feedback

Running from 5-14 June, 127 people attended from 40 clubs spanning the length and breadth of Britain; from University of Leeds Speleological Association to Heighington Shaft Inspectors, Combined Services Caving Association and Shepton Mallet Caving Club.

It was wonderful to see so many northern neighbours show up and get involved, with support from Kendal Caving Club, Bradford Pothole Club, Craven Pothole Club, Yorkshire Subterranean Society and Swaledale Outdoor Club.

We were blessed with mostly settled weather, and even two thunderous days mid-week failed to dampen the enthusiasm of cavers who set out to Pippikin Pot and County Pot. Popular trips included Wilf Taylor's (8 trips), Easter Grotto (5), Cape Kennedy (4) and Spiral Staircase (4), but of course, Lancaster Hole proved to yet again be the most popular entrance with 41 trips either entering or exiting here out of a total 117 (35%).

"Really well organised, I had a great time and a lot of beer" — Phil Underwood



There were lots of new faces this year, and we were so pleased to host members of the Highton Shaft Inspectors for the full ten days. RRCPC member, Becka Lawson, ran a survey workshop midweek for them and other attendees made the most of the hut's SRT wall for some training before taking their new skills underground in Bull Pot of the Witches.

With a variety of attendees, RRCPC members took the opportunity to lead trips into lesser known parts of the system, but handy laminated survey packs and CNCC's route descriptions were also used to aid navigation. Many people commented on what a great chance this was to learn routes like the upper traverse or Manchester Bypass (useful in flood conditions) but with so much on offer there were seasoned cavers alongside groups of newbies all using this opportunity to experience new parts of the system.

Not all achievements happened underground, with conservation efforts around Cow Pot and in Peterson's Pot, plus diving and digging projects throughout the week. Let us not forget the CDG diver who attempted a trip down The Mistral to Pooh's Revenge, searching for a sound connection to a digging project on Leck Fell.

"Very sociable atmosphere, easy to mix with new folk"
— Anonymous feedback

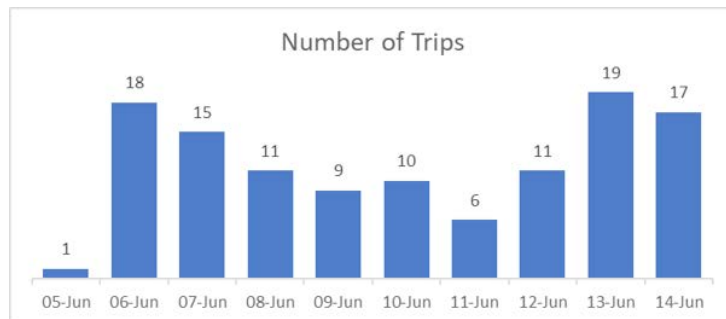
It was great to see so many clubs, plus representation from Speleosisters+, an inclusive collective of women and gender diverse cavers, particularly as the club celebrated Pride month.

The hut and bar provided a great space to meet new people and form new connections. By the end of the week the RRCPC had even gained 7 new members! It was also RRCPC's 80th birthday this year so on the last day of the event an outing to Stop Pot was made, bringing together more than 30 cavers to recreate a photo taken in the same spot 40 years prior.

Après-cave drinks were enjoyed to the tune of 7 barrels, and Lynda and Stuart Johnson were the stars of every evening, cooking gorgeous meals (gaining an average rating of 4.94/5) and, much to my delight, dessert! The final Saturday saw the annual RRCPC family BBQ which catered for everyone in attendance, big and small, with almost too much food to handle.

Thank you to Rachel, Alice and all the volunteers from RRCPC, Lynda, Stuart, Becka, Phil, Kristian, Lucy, Dinny, Leann, Liz, Rachels, Emma, Sams, Ray, Piper, Tam, Toby, and Gwen. You all put on a wonderful event.

CNCC note: We will share future dates as soon as they are listed. Thank you to everyone who attended to help this event become a cornerstone of the UK's caving calendar. Photos courtesy of Philip Withnall, Rachael Pajak, Carlos Tapia, Sam Davis and the organisers.



IREBY FELL FOOTPATH REPAIR



The footpath from Masongill Lane to Ireby Fell was paved with stone flags and timber bridges by CNCC volunteers back in 2009. Prior to this, the site was a quagmire, which the landowner was keen to rectify. In recent years those flags have slumped down-slope and the timber bridges rotted to the point where an alternative 'desire line' route was forming parallel with the slippery flags.

On 24th February, following an appeal to our regular volunteers and via UKCaving, a team was assembled comprising Alan Wylie, John Gardner, Simon Johnson, Richard Bendell, Pete Bann, Andy Richardson, Tam Rennie, Leann Rennie and Andrew Hinde.

They levelled and reset the heavy stone flags, restored the drainage channels and installed three wooden sleeper bridges across the boggiest sections. The soft rush was cut back from the path edges to slow down the disruptive influence of the root system.

The group divided themselves into teams and worked virtually without supervision to produce an excellent result. This kind of project brings out all the skills, determination and teamwork that cavers seem to have in abundance.

The whole job was done in one day with all materials delivered to site during the previous week thanks to Pete Bann.

This project was supported by community grant funding from Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.



Photos courtesy of Andrew Hinde.

TURBARY, KAIL AND LITTLE POT FENCING

Fencing of various caves around the Turbary Pot area was originally undertaken by CNCC volunteers in 2010, and by Steve Round and fellow cavers in the 1990s, to ensure these pots remained safe for grazing animals and to sustain good relations in an area where cavers have enjoyed unrestricted access for many years.

In the years since, the fence posts and strainers have rotted and many have snapped, leaving the pots exposed.

On 22nd and 28th April, CNCC volunteers Pete Bann and Andrew Hinde, replaced the rotten posts and strainers around Turbary Pot, Kail Pot and Little Pot. Existing stock netting was able to be reused through application of some novel 'off label' techniques.

We always think of the benefits of fencing as being preventing animals falling down the holes, ensuring their safety, and avoiding the cave becoming blocked by something nasty.

However, a secondary benefit has emerged over the years. The exclusion of grazing animals from the area immediately around these infrequently visited pots has allowed natural regeneration of flowering plants, Juniper and dwarf shrub species, forming a haven for insects and birds.

This project was supported by community grant funding from Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.



Photo (showing Andrew Hinde at Kail Pot) courtesy of Pete Bann.

SWEETWATER HOLE FENCING

Sweetwater Hole is found at the western end of Souther scales pavement near Meregill, Ingleborough.

Prior to our work, the fencing around the open entrance shaft was in a bad state. The grazing regime here has changed in the last few years from sheep to Belted Galloway Cattle to enhance the floral diversity of the nearby limestone pavement. Cattle require a much stronger fence to prevent them falling down the open shaft.

The repair was requested by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) who own the Nature Reserve, and who now own the land around Dow Cave (Wharfedale), where a further partnership is planned to cap open mine and cave shafts.

On 20th December our Projects Coordinator, Andrew Hinde, and conservation volunteer Pete Bann, undertook the work in glorious winter conditions. The job was made significantly easier by having the materials delivered to site with a quad bike and trailer, with thanks to Natural England staff.

We're pleased to partner with YWT on this work, and to support their efforts to improve floral diversity on our limestone pavements. We are also very thankful to Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust for providing funding for this work. This project really was a multi-organisational collaboration that we can be proud of!



Photos courtesy of Andrew Hinde.

STARTING HANDLE HOLE



Left: Taken from CNCC Newsletter 11 showing the 2021 cleanup works to show the proximity to the road.

Right: Restoring the entrance framework and ensuring a better fitting stable lid (courtesy of Dave Gledhill).

This unusually located cave, just metres from Leck Fell road, was first dug in the 1970s and then again in the 80s and 90s to try to find a way into Notts II prior to the current Iron Kiln/Committee Pot entrance. It has four pitches and a depth of 65m so is a modest and short trip.

The entrance was recently brought to the attention of Jon Beavan by Mr Coates, the tenant farmer, who was unhappy about what he felt was a very unsafe entrance that dropped straight onto a 9m pitch. He felt there was a major liability issue, especially given the proximity to the public highway.

Furthermore, we had heard that sheep have been known to become trapped whilst sheltering in the entrance depression due to gaps in the lid surroundings.

On inspection, the lid was found to be unstable with no secure framework and also too small for the hole. Jon and a small team from the Leck Fell Chums spent some time sorting this out, building a new frame around the entrance to stabilise and ensure a good fitting lid.

Nice work by the team, and a great effort to sustain good caver-landowner relations.

HISTORIC DIGS ON LECK AND CASTERTON FELL – YOUR HELP NEEDED

In addition to Starting Handle Hole, CNCC have been directed by landowners towards a number of historic abandoned digs on Leck and Casterton Fells. Many of these may have once been covered, but some are not, or the coverings have rotten. They are causing a little friction with landowner and farmer relations, and we'd like to try to address that.

Over the coming months we are looking to try to identify as many of these as possible so that we can plan for the necessary work. If you, or your group/club have any abandoned digs on Leck or Casterton Fells which you feel might need some remediation, or if you spot any while out on the fells, we would like to know about them (please email conservation@cncc.org.uk).

You are not going to be dragged over hot coals for your historic dig. We are not the digging police, and we definitely don't want to be! We just want to try to identify as many sites as possible so our team can scope these out and plan the necessary resources.

This work is particularly important to sustain good relations with the landowners of both fells. In particular, landowner permission is always needed for digging, so good relations are important to avoid compromising permission for future projects.



YORDAS POT FENCING AND WALL REPAIRS

A report by John Helm, CNCC Conservation Volunteer and Craven Pothole Club Conservation Officer.

It was noted last autumn that the fence around Yordas Pot top entrance and the wall around the tree plantation were in a bad state. We approached the farmer at Braida Garth, and he was receptive to the proposed work of repairing the fence and walls.

The CNCC funded the materials, and it was decided to perform the work in spring when the weather improved. As Conservation Officer of the Craven Pothole Club I put a scheduled conservation meet on March 21st and a possible extra day. Sadly this later meant that it would clash with the CNCC AGM.

Prior to the day of the meet, two trips to Settle Coal meant the materials were onsite and, with the assistance of the farmer, were moved up the hillside to the top of the enclosure. This highlighted that a Scots Pine tree had recently fallen right over the entrance.

Fortunately on the day of the meet the weather was bright and fine so a 'crew' of 15 folk (all from the CPC) met at the top of Kingsdale.

Prior to the meet, the tools required for the work had been sourced from various folk attending.

There were four teams, three working on repairing the drystone walls, including cutting and removing fallen branches, with one

team cutting up the tree and de-obstructing the entrance. Once the pothole had been cleared and the old and damaged fence removed, holes were dug for the corner posts to allow us to set these in Post Crete prior to finishing the work for the day.

On the second day of the weekend five folk met to finish the work. The stock fence and the remaining posts were installed then a slip proof step completed. The entire work had taken 120 man hours.

The farmer was very happy to have the enclosure wall repaired and the pothole fenced off.

People involved: John Helm, Jacqui Cowling, Helen Grey, Meg Stark, Dave King, Rowan Worsman, John Webb, Robert Scott, Ben Davies, Sarah Clayton, Robin Stone, Paul Carrier, Jay and Ted Hartford, Serhan Kirlarizic, and Sarah Mackin.

All photos courtesy of John Helm.



YDMT FUNDING 2026-2027

As you will see from these articles, we are very grateful to the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust for funding to support our work over the last year.

We are therefore thrilled to announce that CNCC has now secured a YDMT match-funding grant of another £2000 to support conservation work for the coming year too, which will allow us to continue our work.

Feedback from the YDMT after reviewing our application was that our work scored highly and meets their people and landscape aims. Thank you to YDMT for supporting us once again.

We could not have won this grant without the efforts of our conservation volunteers and officers who have made our projects happen.



THE EVOLUTION OF CNCC'S ANCHOR SCHEME



Our Anchor Coordinator and installers examining techniques (All photos by Matt Ewles)

Over 30 years ago, CNCC launched our anchor scheme to install stainless steel resin bonded anchors in many of the most popular potholes of our region.

This scheme aimed to replace spit anchors which were starting to degrade or even fail, and to provide an anchor that cavers could be confident in using to reduce the proliferation of individual bolts appearing at pitch heads.

The amount of work that went on through the 1990s and 2000s by Les Sykes, Glenn Jones and others was phenomenal. This era saw thousands of anchors installed across the most popular sporting SRT routes in our region, plus a huge amount of research and development into safety, equipment and techniques which underpins work even today.

The anchor scheme hit some challenges in the early 2010s due to a lack of a reliable supply, but the introduction of the IC anchor, designed and manufactured by Simon Wilson, provided the perfect timely solution. The CNCC adopted this anchor and soon commissioned a production batch of 650 of them to ensure our anchoring efforts could continue.

Projects included many of the 'Black Book' caves made popular by Mike Cooper's 'Not For The Faint Hearted'. These caves were previously off-the-radar of many cavers but were now seeing a resurgence of interest. Some excellent new discoveries also put demands on our diminishing pool of anchor installers.

The IC anchor was a game-changer, requiring a smaller hole to be drilled (12mm instead of the 18mm hole required for previous Bolt Products and DMM P-type anchors). This made installation quicker, requiring far fewer batteries, less resin, and causing less damage to the cave.

Importantly, the IC anchor could be extracted (by a special tool made for the purpose) and the hole re-used should any anchors need replacing in the future.

The IC anchor has now been adopted by BCA and is also in use in Wales and Mendip.

Today, the installer's workload is supplemented by reports we receive of sporadic early generation anchors (typically 1990s) showing slight movement caused by a 'resin shrinkage' effect. When these anchors are reported to us they are triaged, and we do the best we can to perform remedial action.

Cavers are reminded of the need to perform a pre-use inspection of anchors, to ensure multiple belays so you are never reliant on just one anchor, and to report unsatisfactory anchors.

Replacing anchors first requires extracting them. This is not trivial and even if the anchor shows movement, they can often still demand significant force. The hole, usually 18mm, can be re-used if the rock integrity allows, and thanks to Simon's work we have identified a resin which is rated for such large diameter holes, which should not show the shrinkage issues.

Research, development and testing remains an ongoing process, to identify new products and techniques.





The BCA has undergone quite a few changes in recent years, including to its anchor policy. This policy recommends Regional Councils such as CNCC approve installers and assessors.

In the last year we have been joined by Ian Walker as our Anchor Coordinator, who has been working to align our anchor scheme more with BCA's policy. Many improvements have already been made, and our installers are in regular communication, more aligned on practices, and even sharing practices nationally.

However, we want to take this one step further by introducing annual meetings to re-validate existing installers, discuss new ideas and provide structured opportunities for anyone new wishing to join the installers team to do so.

The first such event took place on 2nd May at the Yorkshire Dales Guides barn, attended by our Anchor Coordinator Ian Walker, and installers Ian Patrick, Toby Buxton and Gary Douthwaite, with CNCC Secretary Matt Ewles observing.

This was a very productive meeting. We agreed on the structuring of future events and a training pathway for new installers, and took the chance to demonstrate techniques, compare tips and tricks, and identify areas for improvement.



Topics included the choice of resin (Fis V and Fis EM Plus, with Fis V having now been dropped from our scheme), anchor pulling (using the CNCC's puller), spit removal techniques, hole re-use, and whether holes not being re-used should be filled and 'camouflaged' for aesthetics or left open.

We hope that these events will become annual, with another later in the year to re-validate our other installers and provide a chance for some new people to receive training. We have already heard from a few experienced cavers who may be keen to join the team, which is great news!

It is important to remind cavers that our installers do this for fun. They don't get paid (other than consumables and travel expense... many not even claiming the latter and damaging their own kit in the process). Underground days can be long and hard, carrying huge amounts of kit and often getting cold and wet due to the limited movement not being enough to keep warm. We welcome feedback but we also urge some understanding next time you are at a pitch-head cursing the installer because you wish the anchor was a few centimetres lower or higher. Factors play into anchor location which you may not have considered, including rock quality, protection from elevated water levels, or simply the feasibility of drilling a site.

NEW ANCHORS AND TOPOS

Since the last newsletter we are pleased to have published the following new topos or major updates:

Newly anchored caves:

WIZARD'S CHASM

An excellent off-piste adventure.

NORTH END POT

Added to the North by North End Pot topo.

MARBLE CAKE HOLE

Added to the Marble Steps topo.

EXCALIBUR POT

Entrance pitches and climb to streamway.

PAY SANK

To replace failing spits throughout.

EASE GILL CAVERNS

Sylvester Pot, including the Mancunian Way pitches and Ease Gill Aven.

JEAN POT

To replace failing spits throughout.

Topo updates for already-anchored caves:

ALUM/DICCAN POT

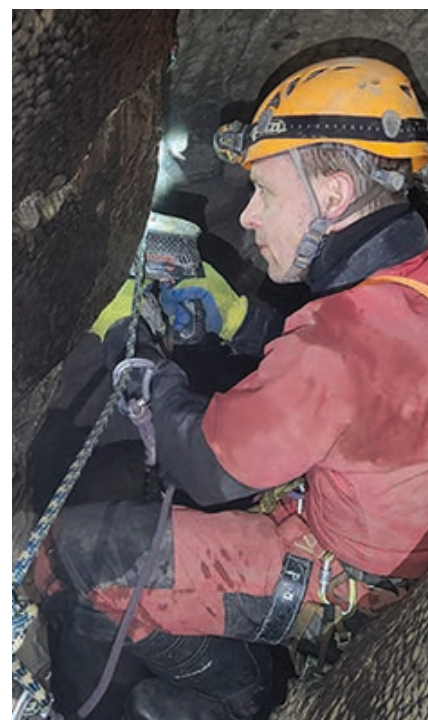
Extensively redrawn to improve accuracy.

DALE HEAD POT

Anchored in 2011 but no topo ever published at the time.

LOST JOHNS' CAVE

Extensively updated to include Dome Alternative route and following a thorough audit of the system.



Anchoring of the major Scanty Lardos extensions, reported in Descent 310, is underway, and we believe that OBJ Hole (Gaping Gill) has also been completed, with topos in due course.

Photo: Gary Douthwaite installing an anchor on Monastery Pitch, Lost Johns' Cave (by Matt Ewles).

CNCC TRAINERS MODERATION DAY

We are now partnered with five instructors to allow us to deliver our program of training workshops.

These workshops are subsidised by BCA, and by the trainers themselves who support CNCC at a discounted rate. This means we can offer affordable and accessible workshops in our region for cavers to improve their skills. These are now attended by cavers from all across the UK who travel specifically to our region.

This is particularly useful for cavers who do not have access to training facilities directly or through their clubs.

To ensure consistent delivery of our workshops, and to remain up to date with developments in SRT techniques, equipment and caving, our trainers give up a day of their time each year to attend a moderation event. This provides an opportunity for discussion, sharing of experience, and the practical review of key skills.

This 2026 event was hosted by the Craven Pothole Club, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

TRAINERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ian Patrick, Mark Richards, Jo White, Helen Hooper, Sam Litten

TOPICS DISCUSSED AND PRACTICAL SKILLS PRACTISED

- Development of new workshop content
- Review and rationalisation of existing workshops
- Carabiner selection for cowstails
- Risk assessments and consent documentation
- Venues used for training workshops
- PPE inspection and kit checking procedures
- Identification of new equipment requirements
- Lessons learned from hauling systems used during rescue workshops



- Techniques for breaking into a tensioned line to perform rescues, including new ideas and strategies
- Locking off Petzl Simple descenders
- Strategies for lifting cavers off their jammers during rescues, particularly for lighter rescuers
- Tips and techniques for ascending and descending on Petzl Caving Line 7mm rope
- Pull-through techniques
- Introducing Pantins to novice cavers

Thank you to our entire training team for their efforts.

All workshops are listed on our website, and our summer program is also shown on the back page of this newsletter, with a few spaces being available at the time of publishing.

Our workshops often sell out within days of being advertised. To hear about new workshops at least one day before they are advertised anywhere else, sign up to our mailing list:

cncc.org.uk/mailling-list

CERTIFIED FIRST AID COURSE

In February we organised a certified first aid course through REC, a commercial training supplier.

This two day practical course taught the skills for managing casualties in outdoor and underground environments and met the requirements of many National Governing Body awards and provided a three-year first aid certificate. This was aimed at recreational cavers, and also instructors. Our February event was the first such certified course we have organised and was fully subscribed within days of being advertised.

We received such good feedback that we are now running another identical event on 7-8th November this year.

This two day course at Fraser Hall, Cowan Bridge, includes a mixture of indoor and outdoor learning (no caving). Those who complete the full course will receive a three year first aid certificate.

As this course is certified and sits outside of our usual recreational workshop program, this event is not subsidised, but we believe you will agree that £95 for two full days of professional training with certification is extremely good value.

At the time of writing this newsletter, spaces are still available and can be booked on our website training page.



First aid practice at our February course (by Mark Richards).

INCLUSIVITY

Josh White, CNCC Inclusivity Coordinator

For any questions or more information: inclusivity@cncc.org.uk



For this issue, and following on from Pride month 2026, we have a guest contributor to our inclusivity series. Matt Ewles offers thoughts about LGBTQ+ inclusivity in caving and how simple actions and awareness can support this.

In recent years, June has been globally accepted as Pride month, a chance to celebrate all forms of diversity, specifically across sexuality and gender identity.

For the last few years, you may have noticed many organisations, including CNCC, showing their support for pride through simple changes such as their social media profile or perhaps through more direct initiatives.

I have been caving for 22 years, starting with York University Cave and Pothole Club in 2004. Then, in 2009 I was part of a group who founded York Caving Club, and in 2014 I became CNCC Secretary for the first time. I am also a gay man, and

I am often asked by those outside of the LGBTQ+ community why we still need Pride? Some have a perception that there is no longer any discrimination on the grounds of sexuality. Happily, there is some truth to this from the majority of UK citizens. However, I still fear walking down busy streets, or even busy countryside areas, holding hands with my husband, because there are still a very small number of people who take issue with that. Even if that is only 1% of the population, in a busy location with hundreds of people, you have a high chance of meeting one of those few who could really ruin your day with an abusive comment.

Society is not necessarily on a one-way road towards a more inclusive world. We have seen LGBTQ+ attitudes and rights going backwards in some counties, including Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Hungary, Italy and even the US. This usually happens as far-right populist governments comes to power. For example, in 2024 Bulgaria introduced legislation similar to the 'Section 28' of UK law (which was repealed here in 2003) which prohibits schools from even discussing 'non-traditional sexual orientation or gender identities'.

I have heard many people say "why do you need to mention your sexuality anyway?"

After all, going caving is nothing to do with sexuality or gender identity, right?

Perhaps a blunter way to paraphrase this is "don't mention it and you won't get any problems".

throughout all of this time as a caver I have never hidden my sexuality or shied away from referring to my partner Gary, who is also a caver (and CNCC's web administrator) as my boyfriend, and since 2018, my husband.

I am proud that the caving community throughout my 22 years of involvement has treated my sexuality as a non-issue to participating in caving. I am lucky, having come into caving in a more enlightened millennium where homophobia is seen by most people as totally unacceptable.

Over those 22 years I have made some observations; some humorous, and others being a little more serious, to identify how simple actions and understanding from within the caving community can make a big difference and help ensure other LGBTQ+ individuals feel as welcome as I have.

The end outcome of such censorship legislation will, over time, be an increasingly unaccepting society.

In the UK we have the threat of such political parties riding high in our opinion polls, with opinions of great concern to many LGBTQ+ people. A degradation in LGBTQ+ rights and a move towards a more homophobic, transphobic society, could be only one election away from our own doorstep.

For these reasons, Pride remains essential to showcase the joy inclusivity and diversity brings and to maintain a united platform to protest against inequality and prejudice.

While acceptance of diversity in sexual orientation is (currently) quite advanced in UK, understanding and rights of gender diversity are decades behind. I can't talk about this with any experience (and I'd welcome an article for a future

newsletter from anyone who can) but clearly the need for Pride, and a united community, remains strong. It makes me proud when my own caving community can be a shining light for this, especially through direct positive actions.

I have heard many people say *“why do you need to mention your sexuality anyway?”* After all, going caving is nothing to do with sexuality or gender identity, right? Perhaps a blunter way to paraphrase this is *“don’t mention it and you won’t get any problems”*... or *“don’t ask, don’t tell”* as the US military policy dictated even until as recently as 2011!

This is a perspective from some outside of the LGBTQ+ community who have never needed to pre-think whether to mention their partner in casual conversation. Who you are attracted to, who you love, and who you identify as feature heavily in our self-confidence, our identity, and our entire lives, and underpins much of our social interaction.

Several decades ago, Philip Judson set up the Gay Outdoor Club’s caving group, at a time when being gay in mainstream clubs was not very widely accepted. They proudly booked accommodation for events under their club’s full name, often getting rejections, excuses, blatant homophobia, comical misunderstandings from owners who thought that ‘gay’ just meant they were very happy, but they also got occasional inspiring rays of light of acceptance.

In recent years, other clubs welcoming the LGBTQ+ community (e.g. Out on Rock) have started, showing the desire from some individuals for a safe environment or to be around others with shared experiences.

My husband and I have taken on various club and CNCC roles. When I was first elected to be CNCC Secretary in 2014, with a statement mentioning the gender of my partner, I have it on good authority that there was some ‘gossip’ about what a gay man would do in a Regional Council. I don’t think any of this was ill-intentioned or bad-natured, but perhaps more a sense of bemusement. Were we all going to have to wear pink feather boas to future meetings? Could a gay man really have the skills to take a leading role in a Regional Council, especially as the CNCC was quite turbulent then.

I hope that our involvement in these roles has shown that being gay has no bearing on your ability to be part of the caving community, and I’d encourage other members of the LGBTQ+ community to step up and show this too.

I recall being at the NPC hut, Greenclose, when a group of visiting cavers were sat around the table flicking through a copy of Descent, and they noticed an advert for the Gay Outdoor Club. What followed was the usual array of puns around ‘potholing’ and a clear assumption that gay people must primarily be looking for sex, and couldn’t possibly be interested in actually properly going caving.

I don’t think this wasn’t meant to be offensive - I could see it as nothing more than careless banter - and I sat and listened for a minute before chirping up from the corner of the room to introduce myself as a Gay Outdoor Club member. The

colour drained from their faces as they realised their faux pas, but after setting a few things straight (no pun intended) we drank beer and chatted for hours, where I surprised them with my knowledge of northern caves.

Some LGBTQ+ cavers in that situation would have perceived a toxic environment and felt very unwelcome or unsafe. Don’t get me wrong, many LGBTQ+ people are happy with friendly banter related to sexuality – some even instigate it – but the lesson here is simple; be totally sure everyone around you will be comfortable if banter strays into these territories.

So, coming back to the purpose of this article, what can you and your club do to help promote LGBTQ+ inclusivity?

Firstly, remember that just because Pride might not seem necessary to you, it still carries a powerful meaning for many. Even simple measures such as a social media post from your club, a logo change to celebrate Pride month next year, or a supportive comment on social media about the inclusive actions of others can send a clear message.

Importantly, you do not have to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community to support Pride. Valuing and celebrating diversity should be for everyone. I was inspired attending York Pride at the end of May to see so many diverse families celebrating along the parade route, and attending the festival.

Proactively share and celebrate stories that showcase diversity within your group. Check if your club constitution calls out homophobic and transphobic behaviour as being unacceptable. Avoid banter straying into territory that could make others around you feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Remember that anyone around you could be struggling to understand or accept their own sexuality or gender identity. Careless banter, no matter how harmlessly intended, could leave them questioning whether your group, and the caving community, is a place where they can truly be welcome.

Finally, I encourage openly LGBTQ+ people to take on visible roles within your groups, if you feel able to do so. This visual representation, as Josh has touched on in one of his previous articles, albeit in a different context, helps to normalise the diverse involvement which makes caving so amazing.



A display of support at Bull Pot Farm during the Ease Gill Open House.

FARTHEST NORTH:

HUMAN REMAINS FROM HEANING WOOD BONE CAVE, CUMBRIA, UK AND THEIR EUROPEAN CONTEXT

This report on the findings from Heaning Wood Bone Cave covers the finding of the oldest human remains in the North of England. Amateur archaeologist Martin Stables, managed to get the 11,000 year old little girl named as Ossick Lass. There is only one other individual of the Mesolithic Period that has also been named, that being Cheddar Man.

ABSTRACT:

The results of research on the human remains and artefacts recently discovered at Heaning Wood Bone Cave, Cumbria, UK are reported. Radiocarbon dating has established that the human remains include the earliest discovered so far in northern Britain, the 'Ossick Lass', which date between 9290 and 8925 cal BC.

The cave was used for burial during three phases in prehistory, with one individual remains dating to the Early Mesolithic, four to the Early Neolithic and two to the Early Bronze Age and is thus an important addition to our developing knowledge about the deposition of human remains in caves in north-west Europe at these dates.

Genomic analysis has established that all but one of the sampled individuals were biologically female.

Osteological and taphonomic analysis shows that, in each phase, the burial practice seems to have been successive inhumation of the recently deceased body into the vertical entrance of the cave. Artefacts associated with the burials include perforated periwinkle shell beads radiocarbon dated to the Early Mesolithic, a small assemblage of worked stone, including diagnostically Early Neolithic pieces, and shards of Early Bronze Age Collared Urn pottery.

YORKSHIRE DALES UPDATE FROM RICK PETERSON (UNIVERSITY OF LANCASHIRE):

The 1980's Earby Pothole Club dig of North End Pot yielded a wealth of archaeology. New dates from these finds show a wider date range than previously demonstrated. Both human remains and aurochs and cattle were being deposited in the Late Neolithic, around 2800 cal BC but there are also cattle and deer from the Early and Middle Bronze Age. The perforated antler mace discovered in the Earby dig is now

Wolverine bone at Stump Cross, photographed on the day it was found (courtesy of Tom Thompson)



dated to the Early Bronze Age. Later activity still is evidenced by the human crania already dated to the Middle Iron Age.

We also have Early Neolithic dates for human burial from the following caves: Gaping Gill main shaft, Feizor Nick Cave and Greater Kelco Cave. Dates for faunal remains from Y-Pot come from a middle Iron Age dog and a range of dates on deer, cattle and sheep/goat ranging from the 11th to the 16th centuries AD. There are other human remains from Y-Pot which will be dated next year.

All this and more is covered in Prehistoric Yorkshire, Volume 63, 2026 available from The Yorkshire Archaeological & Historical Society (www.yas.org.uk).

WOLVERINE JAW BONE UNEARTHED IN STUMP CROSS CAVERNS FEBRUARY 2026

Wolverine bones have previously been found in Stump Cross as far back as 1922 and on a number of occasions since. A recent find in February 2026 was exciting because Stump Cross is the main site for Wolverine in the UK and the new lower jaw bone is an excellent example with some teeth.

The likelihood is that more bones will emerge as the CPC assist the cave management in creating a new show cave route removing years of backfill to give unhampered access to the bone layer.

The bones found previously in Stump Cross come from the Clastic Horizon which is extensive and includes wolf, fox, reindeer and bison bone as well as wolverine but this is the first find since 2011. Recent dating indicates an age of up to 90,000 years for bones in that horizon.

Anything found will eventually end up on display in the Stump Cross show cave centre.

In the context of this work, Stump Cross Caverns are trialling a new activity called "The Ice Age Dig" which will comprise two parts.

There is a community palaeontology/archaeology project, inspected and approved by the University of Lancashire where the important sediments recovered from the new show cave route will be sieved and washed by children and families as part of an engagement initiative.

Later, students from any relevant science will be invited to be involved in academic research on the large amount of broken speleothem recovered and curated. These deposits reach back over 100,000 years during which extraordinary changes to the flora, fauna and the physical landscape of the north of England were wrought by the power of ice and its aftermath. The Ice Age Dig welcomes academic research of these incredible resources of speleothem and sediments.

This project is conducted by the Angels of the North Cave Diggers, with support by Black Sheep Diggers, CPC, CNCC, and the staff and managers at Stump Cross Caverns.



*Human rib found near Gaping Gill
(Keziah Warburton)*

CNCC'S ONLINE RESOURCES

Our website is well known for providing comprehensive information about cave access, anchors, training, conservation, route descriptions and rigging topos. But did you know we also offer a variety of other useful online resources...

ASSETS LIST:

Conservation, anchoring and SRT training equipment, available to support northern cavers.

PRESS AND MEDIA:

A dedicated page with FAQs about caving, useful links, and a free-to-use media gallery.

EXPLORATION GRANTS:

Apply online for funding to support digging projects in our area.

NEW TO CAVING:

Lots of information for potential newbies including regular CNCC 'try caving' events.

REPORTING TOOLS:

Report website, topo or description errors, conservation issues, hazards, or defective anchors.

CAVING SAFETY:

Cave-specific warnings, general advice on underground safety, anchor use, rope care and cave rescue.

ACCOMMODATION:

A list of all caving club accommodation in our region.

The Cavers' Forum - bringing the caving community together online.

ukcaving.com

By Cavers, for Cavers -
sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions since 2003.

Proudly supporting CNCC

CNCC'S SUMMER 2026 TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Our spring/summer workshop program is shown below, mostly now as a retrospective to demonstrate the kinds of workshops we run, although at the time of writing there are vacancies on a few events. As well as our popular new-to-SRT workshops, we've had rescue and pull through covered. There have been opportunities for those already familiar with basic SRT to improve skills and practice under supervision to build confidence or restore some rusty knowledge. A few of these sessions were our 2:1 intensive format (two trainees, one trainer), and we have had our popular geology tour with The Rock Doctor (John Helm) and a new workshop format looking at problem solving.

To be the first to hear when we launch our winter program, sign up to our mailing list: cncc.org.uk/mailling-list

28-29 MAR

New to SRT (two days)

28 MAR

SRT rigging underground: 2:1 intensive

3 APR

SRT underground refresher

4 APR

Pull through techniques (Swinsto Hole)

18 APR

Geology tour with The Rock Doctor

18-19 APR

SRT refresher and improver (two days)

25 APR

SRT rigging underground: 2:1 intensive

26 APR

SRT rescue underground 2:1 intensive

9 MAY

SRT underground refresher

9-10 MAY

New to SRT (two days)

10 MAY

SRT rescue foundations

17 MAY

SRT underground refresher

23 MAY

Pull through techniques (Simpson Pot)

30 MAY

Venture Underground – New to caving

6-7 JUN

New to SRT (two days)

20 JUN

Problem solving and assisting cavers

4-5 JUL

SRT refresher and improver (two days)

18 JUL

SRT underground refresher

1-2 AUG

New to SRT (two days)

29 AUG

SRT rescue foundations

29 AUG

SRT rigging underground: 2:1 intensive

30 AUG

SRT rescue underground 2:1 intensive

5-6 SEP

New to SRT (two days)

12-13 SEP

New to SRT (two days)

10 OCT

SRT rescue foundations

11 OCT

New to SRT (one day)

7-8 NOV

Certified first aid

YOUR CNCC

Chair: Todd Rye - chair@cncc.org.uk

Secretary: Matt Ewles - secretary@cncc.org.uk

Treasurer: Jill Bolton - treasurer@cncc.org.uk

Conservation: Kay Easton - conservation@cncc.org.uk

Access: Mike Appleton - access@cncc.org.uk

Training: Ian Patrick - training@cncc.org.uk

Equipment Rep: Mark Richards - equipment@cncc.org.uk

Individual Caver Rep: Tim Allen - icrep@cncc.org.uk

PR and Communications: Matt Ewles - pr@cncc.org.uk

Youth Development Rep: Chris Holt - ydrop@cncc.org.uk

Web Administrator: Gary Douthwaite - web@cncc.org.uk

Anchor Coordinator: Ian Walker - anchors@cncc.org.uk

Inclusivity Coordinator: Josh White - inclusivity@cncc.org.uk

Archaeology Coordinator: Tony Brown - archaeology@cncc.org.uk

Cave info, rigging topos, descriptions & more at : cncc.org.uk

Find CNCC on social media...



Facebook



Instagram



Bluesky



Threads



Mastodon



YouTube



Follow the CNCC on UK Caving forum : cncc.org.uk/ukcaving

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Being involved in the CNCC can take many forms:

MEMBERSHIP

Our members can vote at our AGM and will be called upon for input on any serious matters that arise through the year. If your club is not already a full member (you can find a list on our website), why not consider joining?

OFFICERS AND CO-OPTED VOLUNTEERS

Our officers and volunteers work hard to perform the day to day functions of the CNCC. They advise, make recommendations, and carry out the wishes of the Committee. This is a real chance to make a big difference to northern caving.

COMMITTEE

Each year up to fourteen of our members and a representative for individual cavers can be elected to the CNCC committee, who then meet at least three times a year to work in the best interests of our member clubs and northern cavers.

INDIVIDUALS

We welcome any enthusiastic individuals or groups to come along to our meetings and participate, or just to see what goes on. The more formal matter of voting is limited to our committee and members, but input from all participants is embraced.

For more information on getting involved, contact our Secretary or visit: cncc.org.uk/getinvolved