

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5 Feb 2017

Editorial

Welcome to the fifth in this series of newsletters, with news on cave conservation, access and anchor installation in our region. We've had a little more of a gap since our last issue than usual, but that's more due to how busy we've been, rather than us not having enough to report. With so many new people and clubs standing for positions at our upcoming AGM, and the current work to improve access and the anchor scheme in our region (two particularly topical matters) the CNCC remains well positioned for 2017 to support northern caving more than ever before. If you don't already follow us on social media, please consider doing so; details below. This is the best way that we can keep you up to date on all news for our region, and there's always something of interest to most cavers.

Matt Ewles (Editor)

**Next AGM: 11th March 2017, 10am
Hellifield Village Institute, Hellifield.**

Your CNCC

www.cncc.org.uk

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It seems like ages ago now, but August last year saw our region play host to the 5th European Speleological Congress (EuroSpeleo), an enormous festival of caving, hosting over a thousand cavers from dozens of countries around the world. Despite the wet weather at the start and end of the week, in between we were treated to five dry days, four of them gloriously hot and sunny! Many great trips were enjoyed as well as an ample amount of cool beers afterwards.

Over 100 caving groups graced our cave systems every day, and despite this we've heard no conservation issues. Serious queues at potholes did not materialise; the worst seemed to be a few delays ascending Alum/Diccan and Lost John's, but nothing too serious. This was all thanks to the advanced planning of the organisers, several of who were regular CNCC contributors, and a simple system for booking timeslots for arrival at cave entrances to stagger the traffic.

This event was everything it should have been; and showed off everything that is great about the Yorkshire Dales caving region. EuroSpeleo 2016 will no doubt be talked about for decades. Another fine legacy of the event is that the cave descriptions written bespoke for the event are now updated and available on the new CNCC website (see below).

Updates to CNCC website

After several months of development, the new CNCC website was launched in December.

The general appearance has been modernised and freshened up. The website is fully smartphone/tablet compatible and has been better interfaced with Facebook.

Cave descriptions: The cave descriptions that were written specifically for EuroSpeleo have been modified and made available on the website cave info pages to download. There is a reporting tool for any inaccuracies that you identify and a function to submit descriptions for caves not covered; please contact the Secretary to discuss before starting work.

Rigging topos: The rigging topos featured in the former CNCC rigging guides (courtesy of the CNCC Technical Group) and also the IC anchor rigging topos are available to download as a PDF and print. There is a tool to report any errors that you come across.

Cave information pages: To find information about any cave, just search for it by name. The layout of each cave information page has been redesigned, partly to emphasise any warnings cavers should be aware of, which will now appear in a red box at the top of the page.

Caves area map: The new map function will help you to search for caves by area; just click on any of the cave pegs to take you to information about that cave.

Fixed aids section: The website now has a dedicated fixed aids section, which includes lots of information on anchors, including history, types and locations, as well as safety requirements. There is a function to report any defective anchors which we would encourage you to use.



Digging in Wharfedale?

The National Trust Upper Wharfedale Ranger, Peter Katic, has expressed a few concerns about unauthorised digs within the Wharfedale/Langstrothdale areas. It is not clear at the moment if these are active or historic digs. However, we would like to take the opportunity to remind all cavers that if you have a project you wish to pursue on National Trust property (which includes much of the land in upper Wharfedale/Langstrothdale and Darnbrook/Malham), to please get in touch with Peter to discuss (peter.katic@nationaltrust.org.uk). This is in addition to discussing with the tenant farmer and any other necessary bodies (e.g. Natural England). Peter has indicated that permission for responsible projects has a good chance of being granted, but that there may be location specific considerations that the National Trust would like to make diggers aware of. These areas offer excellent prospects for substantial discoveries, so a little time taken for advanced discussions can help sustain future explorations for everyone.

CRoW and the BCA Constitution

You will remember back to the BCA poll in 2014 regarding the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CRoW). The results of the poll were a majority in favour of the BCA campaigning for caving to be recognised under CRoW. This could have a significant impact in our region where many of our caves (Leck and Casterton Fells and much of Ingleborough included) are on CRoW designated land. The CNCC has taken a generally supportive stance on the campaign to date, however some have argued that the campaign is in breach of a clause in the BCA's constitution:



“That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access.

To address this, a debate was held at the last BCA AGM to consider amending this section of the constitution to:

“That any rights held by the owners or tenants of property or mineral rights, to grant or withhold access, be respected.

At our AGM on 11th March, the CNCC will discuss whether we should use our vote to support or reject the progression of this constitutional change to a national poll. Part of the reason this requires such careful consideration is that the amended wording may still be cited as a barrier to the CRoW campaign depending on your interpretation. This is certain to be a lively discussion!

Access

Collapses in Shuttleworth Pot and Christmas Pot



In January 2016 we reported on a collapse of the Divers Pitch in Shuttleworth Pot. Since then a team comprising John Gardner and others have reported further on the situation. The steep boulder slope down towards the river (at the bottom of the main pitch) has slumped and the original anchors are too high. The slope is collapsing backwards, and the rope from the main pitch now lands on an unstable slope. The situation is dynamic, and we advise all cavers visiting Shuttleworth Pot to take extreme care at the bottom of the main pitch where the slope is unstable, and to avoid descending the Divers Pitch until movement has settled.

Elsewhere, we received a report in November 2016 of a collapse just above the second pitch of Christmas Pot (Ingleborough). A later inspection found that the collapse was at the 2nd re-belay of the first pitch, where two large boulders are now balanced above the 3rd re-belay. Getting to the 3rd re-belay is now awkward as the rope tugs on one of the boulders. These boulders should be treated with extreme caution and all visiting cavers should make a very close inspection before descending the affected area.

Robinson's Pot

We have been reminded by Ric Halliwell that permits are still easily available for Robinson's Pot for this year. Robinson's Pot has unusual access issues, as the entrance is directly underneath Darnbrook Farm. From 2016 onwards,



the number of permits available for this cave increased to eight per year (the first Saturday of May to September, and the third Saturday of May, July and September). These permits are not all being taken, which is a shame, as it's a splendid cave. After the initial passages, the stream is met and a crawl leads into the dramatic and enormous MacColl's Rift. A few hundred metres further is the splendid and well decorated main stream passage. Issuing of permits, and any questions about availability can be done electronically, just email Ric using the address on the CNCC website.

Access initiatives

CNCC Access Representative, Tim Allen, reports on several ongoing initiatives in our region.

'Jewel of the National Park':

A request was received to give a talk to a combined meeting of the Yorkshire Dales, South Cumbria and Lancashire Local Access Forums. Interest centred on caves such as Three Counties system which are within the National Park extension. Tim, supported by Frank Pearson, delivered a well-received talk on the grandeur and importance of the great system and a closer look at some of the conservation and access issues surrounding it.

Frank gave some fascinating facts about the 18th century cave explorers of the area which included the famous poet William Wordsworth. The response was very positive with one councillor describing the Three Counties system as a 'Jewel of the National Park'. Quite right!

Interpretation boards:

Recent closer engagement with the National Park by Tim has seen another positive outcome. Support has been secured for two interpretation boards on the Three Counties cave system, similar to that for the Alum Pot system. This is great news as the number of these boards is strictly limited across the National Park.

In addition to general information on the caves for cavers and other visitors alike there will be a prominent conservation message. Suitable text and images have been supplied to the National Parks specialist for final styling and we hope to see the boards in place soon.

The CNCC has offered to make a partner donation towards the costs of the boards.

Work towards more modern and flexible access:

Some of our most popular caves are on access land whose owners prefer a managed access system for cavers.

Even after careful consideration of insurance, conservation and competence matters it is an ongoing challenge to get to the bottom of what the real concerns are. In addition, the jury is still out on whether the CRoW Act applies to caving. There are accepted views on both sides of the argument, as the Act may, or may not, apply. Until such time as this is settled somewhere in court this must be taken into account when considering caving on access land.

Following some discussion with key caving estates in the Dales last year a proposal was put forward to move to an on-line calendar based booking system as a suitable compromise, and an outline proposal has been accepted in principal.

Responses to follow-up discussions on the details of this proposal have been frustratingly slow, but efforts are continuing. It seems apparent that matters related to caving are a very low priority for most landowners; this may be seen as both a good and a bad thing. Work continues.

New conservation website

At the end of 2016 we launched the new conservation section on the CNCC website. Here you will find a wealth of information, including the BCA's Minimal Impact Caving Code and digging guidelines for SSSIs. There is also information on how to get involved in CNCC-organised cave conservation initiatives (including lots of FAQs), and a function to report conservation projects that you feel we should be considering. Remember, we rely on all cavers to help us identify worthwhile conservation projects and we welcome any suggestions for our future initiatives.

Restoration of Gauber Pot



It was only in the 1970s that asbestos cement roofing panels were finally banned. There are still plenty of barns in the Yorkshire Dales clad with this potentially harmful material. Back in the days when people were less aware of the issues some of this material found its way into the shakeholes and cave entrances of the Dales.

On the 8th August 2016, a team of 11 CNCC/ Natural England volunteers were drafted in to help restore the entrance to Gauber Pot situated on Park Fell (SD 766786). Although it only has a depth of 15 metres it might have some potential. The only trouble is the entrance has been inaccessible for decades, blocked by a huge amount of asbestos roofing dumped in less



enlightened times. The first job was to remove the asbestos and then make an assessment of how best to make the entrance cattle proof. The team assembled on the 8th August and several members kitted up in protective gear provided by Andrew Hinde, Cave Conservation Officer for Natural England.

Safety was paramount and everybody working near the covered entrance was secured by a safety rope. A long day's work saw most of the asbestos double bagged and taken down to Colt Park for safe removal. All that remained was to get the team back to cover the entrance and make it stock proof. This was carried out on the 1st September. A total of 24 man days was put into the project. Another great example of CNCC actively engaged in conservation.

The project was funded in part from CNCC and the Stories in Stone project. This scheme has been developed by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership and is supported through



the Heritage Lottery Fund. Stories in Stone will run from January 2016 to the end of 2019. Maybe you have other projects that could be put forward for funding?

More photos at:

cncc.org.uk/news/the-restoration-of-gauber-pot

Locating Blood Cave

During further walks in the area on Park Fell Pasture to identify cave entrances which may pose a hazard to walkers, we tried to locate Blood Cave (SD 775771) which according to Northern Caves "...lies under slab on hikers track and must be replaced with care...". A hole, which turned out not to be the entrance to Blood Cave, was found in approximately the right place but not on the track. In December 2016, a small team of CNCC volunteers including some of the original explorers returned and removed the slabs from this hole and found a short section of cave going in both directions but too tight to continue.



We also found the original Blood Cave entrance close by, directly under the track, covered by slabs and turf. The slabs and turf were replaced, and the other hole was made stock and tractor proof with concrete beams and covered with turf. This work was carried out with the support of Natural England and Stories in Stone.

Reports and photos: Pete Monk, Andy Hall, Kay Easton and other CNCC conservation volunteers

Anchors

Anchor discussion for AGM

The future of anchor installation in our region has been a hot topic lately, both at CNCC Committee meetings and on the UK Caving forum. Excellent efforts have been made by the IC anchor team over recent years to install resin anchors where previously they were absent, and to replace a number of older anchors. However, future efforts are hampered partly by funding (the team has been mostly self-funded so far) and the availability of the IC anchors, which have been deemed preferable to the current Bolt Product anchors on conservation grounds (small hole, easier to remove if required, and the hole can be re-used). A suggestion put forward for discussion at our AGM in March aims to move matters forward, and could see funding secured for anchor production and the CNCC taking a more involved role in the anchor installation program.

More resin anchor installations

In the June 2016 newsletter, we reported on the completion of the work of the IC anchor team to install new resin anchors at Gingling Hole, New Rift Pot and Birks Fell Cave, adding to their already impressive catalogue of caves fitted with this relatively new resin anchor.

Sam Allshorn has reported the removal of rubbish from, and completion of anchor installation in FOUL Pot, a splendid less well known pothole near to Echo Pot on Fountains Fell (SD 850701). FOUL Pot is a hard day out, but nowhere near as fearsome as some of its near neighbours, meaning it is a likely destination for many cavers. A description and rigging topo are reported in Descent 253 (Dec 2016).

More recently Sam has completed work on a new rigging topo for Penyghent Pot, shown overleaf.

Cavers are reminded that the entrance of Penyghent Pot should be carefully inspected before descent and treated cautiously owing to the age of the scaffolding. Work is being considered to improve this.

Penyghent Pot is hazardous in flood, and is quite a physical undertaking. However, with the right team in the right weather, it is one of the most splendid underground adventures in Yorkshire.

Finally, work is now complete to install IC anchors in the Red Herring Series of Large Pot (including the Flake Aven route). For cavers not daunted by the awkward second pitch, this trip is sure to please, especially now that it benefits from resin anchors. More details including rigging information will no doubt be published in due course.

More anchor news overleaf...

Resin anchor inspections

The CNCC is working to establish a strategy to systematically inspect all approved resin anchors across our region. The aim is to identify which ones may require replacement in the future. This work may require volunteers from the wider caving community and further details about how you may be able to help will follow in due course. In the meantime, cavers are reminded of the need to always perform pre-use inspection of all anchors; details on how to do this and what to watch out for can be found in the new fixed aid section of our website. Anyone who identify an anchor which they deem defective, should report this to the CNCC as soon as possible. There is a function to do this quickly and simply on our fixed aid page of the website.

Penyghent Pot rigging details

The following text is intended to accompany the rigging only and is not a thorough cave description. Cavers are recommended to source the description on the CNCC website and from the book 'Not for the Faint Hearted' (Mike Cooper) to supplement their research for this trip.

Below the entrance climb is a brief crawl to a further 2.5m climb down. The following long and wet crawl leads to the 1st pitch, rigged from two anchors and a bar over the pitch head to give a hang between the waterfalls.

Below is Easy Passage, a stooping passage to the second pitch with a few sections of crawling and a climb. The 2nd pitch is rigged from two or three anchors on the right. An easy climb down leads to start of the 3rd pitch under the left wall. If water is flowing down this pitch, it's worth rear-ranging cobbles at the start of the bedding so the pitch is dry. A series of anchors lead out along the rift until a descent is made at the far end. The 4th pitch follows immediately. There is an anchor in the left wall to protect the approach to the pitch head which is a small ledge that provides stance for anchors in opposite walls for a large Y hang.

Below the 4th pitch is a series of rift pitches largely rigged from natural belays. A traverse into the rift leads out onto blocks at head of the 5th pitch where rope can be anchored to jammed blocks. A longer section of passage leads to several ways on a climb up and down being easier avoiding longer sections of low wet bedding. Coffin Pitch is indicated by steep water chute. At the start of the water chute is an easy crawl to the left behind a large block, providing an easier take off than the traverse above the water chute. The rigging starts with a natural belay low on the right then there is a rebelay around large wedged block (presumably the block that named the pitch).

Below Coffin Pitch is a short section of rift to Flake Pitch; the large flake provides the only belay for an awkward take off. It is possible to use another large flake further back up the passage-way but this requires twice as much rope.

Immediately below Flake Pitch is the 8th pitch belayed to a large blade of rock on the left. If the

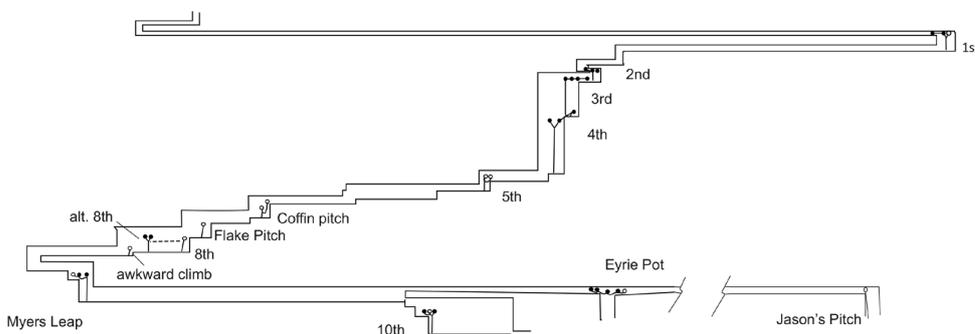
8th pitch is too wet an exposed step over the pitch leads to a traverse over jammed blocks to a pair of anchors that provide a dry alternative.

Below the 8th pitch more rift leads to an awkward climb down. A drilled flake low on the right provides a useful belay for a handline or sling. Ahead is a short drop into Pool Chamber. Easy going and scramble over blocks leads back to streamway. Further easy going leads to short drop before Myers Leap. There is a drilled thread on the left and two anchors out on the right to rig the pitch. Below Myers Leap easier passage eventually leads to 10th pitch which is preceded by a wet 3m climb down. The 10th pitch is anchored on the left and there is a natural belay to form a less than ideal but useable hang. Nigeria pitch follows but is bypassed on the left. After Nigeria the streamway continues to final sump.

Above the 3m climb down to the 10th pitch, an exposed traverse leads to the Penyghent Extensions. A crawl leads to Eyrie Pot where anchors on the right and one mid way protect the traverse, then a final anchor on the right and thread beyond (in the floor) provide the last two anchors. Beyond here, much crawling eventually leads to Jason's Pitch with a single massive natural belay.

Rope lengths and anchor summary:

Pitch	Rope	Notes
1st	12m	2 resin bonded anchors
2nd	12m	3 resin bonded anchors
3rd & 4th	55m	7 resin bonded anchors
5th	15m	2 naturals
Coffin	17m	2 naturals
Flake	10m	1 natural
8th or alt	15m	1 natural or 2 resin bonded anchors
Myers Leap	17m	1 natural and 2 resin bonded anchors
10th	12m	1 natural and 2 resin bonded anchors
Eyrie Pot	17m	4 resin bonded anchors and 1 natural
Jason's Pitch	15m	1 natural



Annual General Meeting

The CNCC AGM will be held on 11th March 2017 at Hellfield Village Institute starting at 10am.

The agenda and some supporting documents are on our website meetings page to download. As with all CNCC meetings, this is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Full member clubs are reminded that their representative must bring (or provide in advance) a letter from a club official to identify the representative as authorised to deliver a vote on behalf of their club.

As well as a few of the specific agenda items (discussed elsewhere in this newsletter), there will be elections to the Committee and Officers team, for each of which we have three new applicants putting themselves forward.

Want to get involved?

Being involved in the CNCC can take many forms.

Full membership:

Full member clubs of the CNCC can vote at our AGM, and receive email notifications of any matters that the CNCC becomes aware of that may affect northern caving (and log into the CNCC website). If your club is not already a full member (you can find a list on our website), you can contact our Secretary for information on how to apply.

Officer:

Our officers work hard to perform the day to day functions of the CNCC, advise, and carry out the wishes of the Committee. This is a real chance to make a big difference to northern caving, and anyone interested should contact our Secretary for more information.

Committee:

Each year up to fourteen of our full member clubs and a representative for non-club cavers are elected to the Committee, who then meet at least three times a year to work in the best interests of our member clubs and northern cavers. If you are interested in standing for the Committee, please contact our Secretary for more information.

You can get lots more information on the CNCC website as well as signing up online to become a member club:

www.cncc.org.uk/getinvolved

Contact: secretary@cncc.org.uk

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