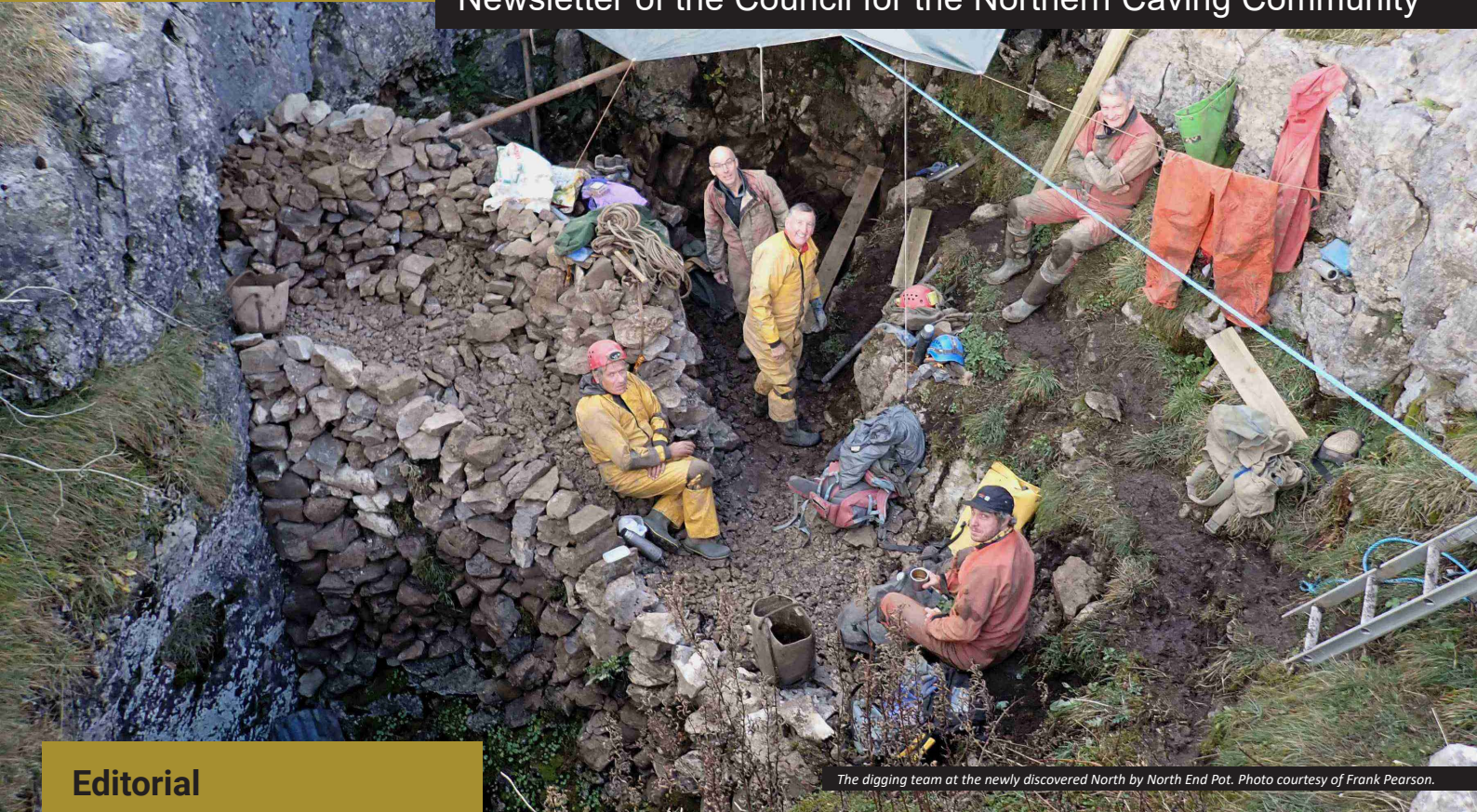


NORTHERN CAVING

Newsletter of the Council for the Northern Caving Community



The digging team at the newly discovered North by North End Pot. Photo courtesy of Frank Pearson.

Editorial

by Matt Ewles (Editor)

Welcome to the latest CNCC newsletter, and the first of many under our new name, Council for the Northern Caving Community. We're still CNCC, but the meaning behind the name is now different, emphasising our efforts to work for the benefit of all cavers.

We have a great selection of articles showing a compilation of the work we have undertaken or supported over the last six months. This includes a packed training calendar, new anchoring projects, access updates, and a selection of fine conservation efforts, all reported herein.

In addition to this we are pleased to include a report on the North by North End Pot breakthrough, and the first of a series of thought-provoking articles from our new Inclusivity Coordinator.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and contributors. If you would like to work with us or have any ideas, we would love to hear from you. Contact details for our team can be found on the back page.

After 61 years - CNCC chooses a new name

Since 1963, we have been the Council of Northern Caving Clubs, set up by several local clubs to provide a single voice to negotiate access across our region.

Our organisation has evolved enormously since then. The past ten years in particular have brought a revival of support including new volunteers, which has allowed major access improvements. We have rejuvenated our training and anchoring initiatives, while keeping momentum on one of our constant cornerstones, cave conservation.

We now work to promote caving as an enjoyable activity with benefits for health and the local economy, as well as building public awareness of what caving involves. This will help ensure our sport continues to attract new participants and is widely welcomed across our rural regions.

Ten years ago, the idea of changing our name to the Council of Northern Cavers (CNC) was raised, but the idea was parked while we dealt with other issues. Since then, we have sought to represent more cavers outside of clubs, ensuring they are included in all of our new access arrangements.

In just the last year we have focused even more on inclusivity, spurred on by volunteers coming forward for the roles

of Youth Development representative, and Inclusivity Coordinator. We have also received feedback that the 'Council of Northern Caving Clubs' name was giving the impression that we only care about those caving as part of a club. This was proving detrimental to our image with external bodies and access forums, where the prevailing attitude is that the countryside and outdoor pursuits should be for everybody.

Therefore, at our 2024 AGM our members voted in favour of changing our name, while retaining the well-known CNCC acronym.

The name '**Council for the Northern Caving Community**' was selected and accepted by a strong majority.

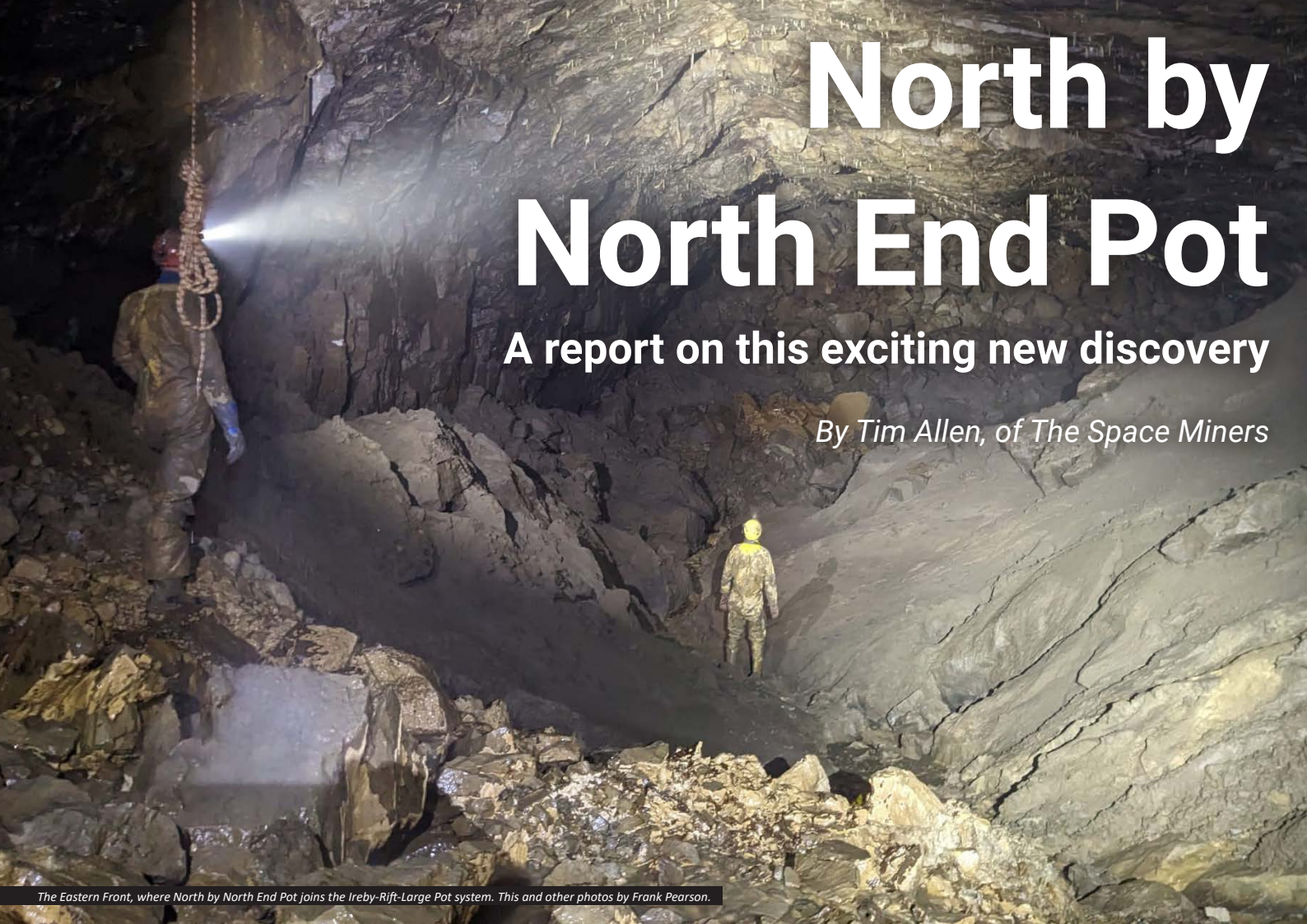
Of course, clubs remain the major building blocks of the CNCC and the new name does not detract from that. Instead, our name is now a statement that we are here to support and work on behalf of all cavers, which we believe has benefits for everyone.

The first phase of rebranding (social media, website header and of course, this newsletter) is complete, but the rebranding across all our website content and other published material will take longer.

North by North End Pot

A report on this exciting new discovery

By Tim Allen, of The Space Miners



The Eastern Front, where North by North End Pot joins the Ireby-Rift-Large Pot system. This and other photos by Frank Pearson.

North End Pot is a prominent feature on the edge of the Scars above Masongill. It has attracted interest from cavers over many decades, especially from the Earby Pothole Club in the 80s, and most recently from us, a digging group currently known as The Space Miners.

The Earby dig focused on a shaft in the south end of the shakehole (SD 683 765), which is now in danger of collapse, and entered the spectacular St Georges Hall. We chose the northern end of the shakehole with the hope of connecting to Llean Bean Aven in The Eastern Front of Large Pot.

After an enjoyable and social endeavour lasting just eight months we achieved the connection in March this year.

The North by North End Pot dig, as it became known, is an excavated shaft some 35m deep following a series of close packed vertical joints. Widening a side-rift at the bottom led to the final connection into a loose boulder passage at the top of the Llean Bean Aven. This was originally entered by climbing the aven a decade ago by The Eastern Front discovery team, quite a hardcore achievement!

Both caves are developed on these joints and herein lies the biggest problem. It is loose and dangerous to traverse, especially the upper part of Llean Bean and the pitch below.

Be warned though, this is no easy route into the joys of The Eastern Front. The cave descends 100m vertically with abundant quantities of loose rock which cannot be avoided or made safer. Then, once in The Eastern Front, a long crawl through The Pig Trough ensures a thorough coating of thick porridge-like mud.

For the few who will be tempted to enjoy this route, some of the conservation taping has been reinforced, especially around the base of the pitch and the passages leading to The Pig Trough. The CNCC provided the tape and stainless steel pins from their conservation supplies.

If these explorations weren't enough excitement, there was also an archaeological element to the dig when five sets of human remains were unearthed halfway down the shaft. These were not laid out in any formal sense but merely jumbled amongst the broken rock, and it was only the identification of five separate jaw bones which gave a tally. This was not unexpected at this site as the Earby dig also encountered bones, as did a third dig in the 90s between the two.

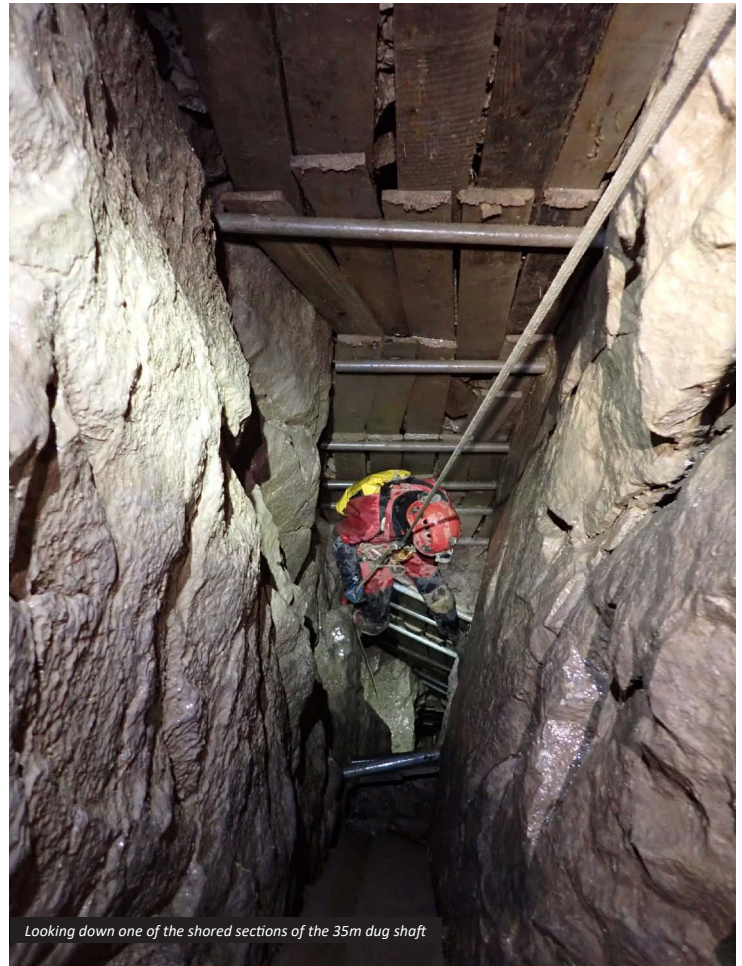


The North by North End dig.

Dating of human remains found in the 80-90s identified them as Neolithic and some 5000 years old. Needless to say, all remains are in the care of the archaeologists.

On a final note, it would be a shame to lose the Earby dig and the spectacular St Georges Hall beyond. The 15m of original shoring is rotten with some sections having already failed. It is a high risk trip to get to the bottom and not recommended. It is hoped that CNCC will support a future request to finance the materials needed to save this side of North End Pot.

See page 9 for a report on the anchoring of this new find.



Meet our new

INCLUSIVITY COORDINATOR

Josh White



At our committee meeting in October 2023, we discussed ways the CNCC could support and promote greater inclusivity, both within our organisation, and northern caving. This was prompted by feedback that some of the information on our website was hard to interpret by those who are newer to caving, and particularly those who are neurodivergent or have a learning disability.

A few months prior to this, we sponsored our new Youth Development representative, Aila, to attend an inclusivity workshop run by the Bendrigg Trust, to gain knowledge in how she could support inclusivity for youth caving.

We also acknowledged at our October meeting the lack of diversity within the room, trending towards middle-age (an arguably generous statement), male and white, an imbalance that has been a challenge to address in many organisations and sports, not just caving.

We're delighted to welcome all volunteers, but the risk of having a less diverse team is a lack of awareness of the challenges that a more diverse population might experience.

We agreed that it would be beneficial to bring someone on board with experience in this area, to help us to understand what more we could be doing to make our resources more accessible to all, and to support greater inclusivity in caving. This could be through more careful choice of language, clearer information, specific services or simply a dedicated point of contact.

At our January meeting, we welcomed Josh White to the newly created role of Inclusivity Coordinator. Josh is well positioned to take on this role (despite, in his own words, being a white, middle-class, cis, non-disabled male). You can read more in his thought-provoking, and occasionally tongue-in-cheek article below.

This comes at a time when CNCC is active on social media, has over 700 subscribers to our mailing list, and our web resources such as cave descriptions, new to caving and training information, are accessed by thousands of people each month. Anything we can do to make that content more accessible, or to encourage someone into caving who otherwise may have felt excluded, can only be a good thing, and all feedback is welcome.

How I'm going to make every cave wheelchair accessible

By Josh White, Inclusivity Coordinator

When I was approached as someone who might consider a new CNCC role specialising in inclusivity, it felt a little weird as a white, middle class, cis, non-disabled male.

However, I have a professional background as an outdoor instructor working with people with disabilities plus a track record of championing inclusivity issues on BCA Council and coordinating a team of volunteers in my Youth & Development BCA role.

The overwhelming majority supported this new role (and my co-opting into it). However, this came crashing down to earth upon being announced across CNCC's various online platforms. I've never seen the word 'woke' used so frequently by people unable to define what they mean by it, often tying themselves in knots.

That forum thread highlighted a need to raise awareness about what inclusivity means, and how I intend to undertake my role.

Inclusivity (Oxford English Dictionary):

"The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or intellectual disabilities or belonging to other minority groups."

One of the main pushbacks used in the 'anti-woke' stance is that caves by their nature aren't accessible for all and it's outrageous to suggest that the demographics of caving should reflect national demographics. It is worth nothing however that the above definition is very carefully worded to say "equal access to opportunities".

Through various projects, I hope to promote access opportunities to groups who may not otherwise have them. If individuals within those groups decide, for whatever reason, caving is not for them, that is okay. However, that doesn't negate the (in my opinion) moral obligation upon all of us to help those with fewer opportunities through no fault of their own.

When discussing accessibility, many people will jump straight to the idea of wheelchairs and walking sticks, but this is just a small portion of what accessibility covers. I hope in this article to open some eyes to how broad reaching the topic actually is. The Equality Act 2010 feels a reasonable, if a little boring, place to start with this. The gist of this legislation was to set out what personal characteristics can't be discriminated against and to protect them.

The protected characteristics are age, gender reassignment (which I will refer to as gender affirmation after consulting with members of this community), marital status, pregnancy or maternity leave, disability, race, religion or belief system, sex, sexual orientation.

Clearly this covers more than just wheelchair users, and hopefully as readers you will start to think about things that may not be ideal for cavers (or prospective cavers) with these characteristics. Often, we forget that caving isn't just about the underground activities. Caving is also about facilities at a hut, the culture within club huts or other buildings, or even how we get to a club hut.

For each newsletter I hope to provide snippets of advice based upon real life issues that have passed through this group.

Equality statements

I was recently contacted by a club looking to update the equality and diversity policy wording on their membership forms.

The BCA recently updated its own equality and diversity policy to clarify the standards it sets for itself and its members, and I would encourage clubs to lean heavily on this document (which is available on the BCA website), and consider something like the following:

We <insert club name> are committed to being a welcoming club to all, and as such work in line with the BCA's equality and diversity policy. As an extension to this, we expect all members to behave in an equally welcoming manner. If as a member you feel you have witnessed or been subject to any behaviour that contradicts the above policy, please contact <insert relevant member> at <insert relevant email> where it will be dealt with using the utmost discretion.

Gender affirmation in huts

In the last two months I've been contacted by two clubs regarding 'issues' around gender affirmation. One enquiry related to bedrooms and one was about bathrooms. I will try to provide advice around both of these in one article, so buckle up.

This is obviously a hugely personal issue of which I don't have any lived experience, and I wouldn't want to even pretend to know how someone who has gone through this experience feels.

Likewise, I am not a legal expert, so if you have any concerns on this subject that require legal input, I suggest you seek this from someone who has the appropriate experience.

Historically many huts have gendered bedrooms and bathrooms. Some huts have moved away from this, and some have not. I am not going to say in this article whether I believe either of these are right or wrong (if that saves you some reading). What is important is that anyone entering or staying at a club hut has a right to feel safe, and this is particularly relevant to safe spaces to change.

Both issues that have been raised with me are from club members who are concerned about other members who have undergone gender affirmation being in certain gendered spaces.

If a person expresses that they feel unsafe in a club hut because of another person(s), it is important to discuss this with them and take it seriously. You need to investigate the reason this person feels unsafe. Is it a particular behaviour of the other person?

Of course, threatening behaviour is unacceptable irrespective of gender, sex, age (or any characteristic). If, however, the behaviour is something that can't be narrowed down to anything specific, or perception of the behaviour is subjective depending on the physiology (or any protected characteristic) of the affected individual, then it's equally important to call this out as it could represent an unawareness from the individual that their behaviour is affecting others, or worse, this could represent thinly veiled transphobia. Whatever the explanation, this should be dealt with head-on and not ignored.

Education is so important, and it's the responsibility of all of us to look out for each other.

In my ideal world, clubs would have non-gendered bedrooms and bathrooms, and private spaces to change for those who value this. The membership should be welcoming to all, and willing to look out for each other and keep each other safe, immediately raising any safety issues with the relevant club officials.

Website updates

We're aware that there are elements of the CNCC website which are not as accessible for people as they could be, whether that be the wording or the ease of navigation or use. Our webmaster has added a reporting form to our website where inclusivity issues can be reported (anonymously if you wish). This can be found on our 'resources' page under the subheading 'inclusivity'.

How to get involved

I don't claim to be an expert, and so I'm putting together a team of people with lived experiences who I can co-ordinate responses from. If you would like to be part of this team, to help us make the caving world a more welcoming place to those it wouldn't immediately be, or if you have any other questions, please get in touch:

inclusivity@cncc.org.uk

Outcomes of our 2024 AGM

Our AGM on 16th March at Clapham Village Hall was attended by a total of 42 people, with 19 clubs represented including 18 of our full members. This is a healthy turnout by caving meeting standards and an encouraging sign of enthusiasm to work with CNCC for the benefit of northern caving.

We were pleased to welcome two new clubs to our membership (Birmingham Student Caving Club and Ulster Speleological Society and Caving Club), plus Kai Trusson as our new Access Officer. Their enthusiasm to support CNCC is encouraging.

We then voted to amend our constitution to relax criteria on who could take on our role of Individual Caver representative. Tim Allen was then elected to take the role for the coming year.

Many of you will remember the outstanding work Tim did as our Access Officer, achieving open access without compromising landowner relations across most of our major fells. Furthermore you have probably seen the work he and Jane Allen have done to promote caving across our region and nationally, including running UKCaving. Therefore, to have Tim back on-board in an official role is a win for CNCC and we look forward to working with him as he provides a voice for those who caved outside of clubs.

You can email Tim via the new address **icrep@cncc.org.uk** if you have any points to raise.

Second was a proposal to change our name, which is reported on the front page of this newsletter.

It was such a positive, productive, and well-supported AGM, and we come away with a full Officer and Committee team, a new name and two new member clubs. We welcome anyone to attend any of our meetings, just contact our Secretary for more information.



Our first exploration grant

Our exploration grant scheme was launched in our previous newsletter, and six months on we are pleased to announce our first award. This goes to Ray Duffy, from RRCPC, and is a contribution to costs for their ongoing project to connect Rollerball (Kirtle Pot) to the Pre-cambrian Series in Aygill Caverns. The aim is to enable a more accessible route into this part of Aygill to enable further digging efforts at this extremity of the Three Counties System. The total value of this grant was £155.81, and we hope to provide you with an update on their work over the coming year. Good luck to the team.

We welcome further applications. You can find more information and an application form on the resources page of our website.

Cave archaeology exhibition

The Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes is hosting an exhibition, running through summer, to celebrate the cave archaeology of the Ingleborough area. This is part of the 'Our Common Cause' project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project officer contacted our Chairperson, Andrew Hinde, to ask if they could borrow the Mesolithic bone assemblage that local cave explorers have recovered from dig sites in recent years.

This is work by leading experts in the field, who are also local cavers. John Thorpe and Tom Lord are working with local authorities and universities to ensure that the value of caves is understood and that cave explorers are a vital part of the conservation of this material.

Separately, last year, the Our Common Cause initiative commissioned the University of Central Lancashire to undertake a review of all existing archaeological material from Ingleborough and design a method for centralising documents and finds. The project lead, Rick Peterson, is keen to work alongside northern cavers who have a particular interest in cave archaeology. If this is something you would like to be involved with, we can put you in touch (chair@cncc.org.uk).

Remember, CNCC is the first port of call for anyone who discovers archaeological artefacts or bones in caves, and we would like to remind you of our digging guidelines document (available on our website publications page) which remain extremely relevant.



SAFETY

Rockfalls at Alum Pot

In early May there was a small rockfall from just above the traverse path that leads from the Greasy Slab to The Bridge in Alum Pot. This has compromised the solidity of the path along the edge of the shaft, leaving it crumbled in parts.

Users of the traverse path need to be extremely cautious to avoid further rockfall and knocking stones down the pot onto the route below. Keeping away from the edge, on the inside of the traverse line, whilst a bit more inconvenient, would reduce the risks.

Separately, we received word in April of a similar type of collapse in the entrance gully to Marble Steps, and on the boulder bridge above the entrance to Upper Long Churn, with some hanging rocks still posing a concern at both sites, demanding extra care.

This is a timely opportunity to remind you of the importance of keeping well away from the bottom of pitches while your companions are manoeuvring above. If necessary, avoid any rope-free calls to someone waiting to ascend or descend behind you until you have moved away from the danger area. This is particularly important for surface-exposed shafts and rockfaces where freeze-thaw weathering over winter may have loosened the surface.



Battle of Britain Chamber, County Pot

In February we issued a warning about some rock movement in Battle of Britain Chamber in County Pot, on the route leading up to Splash Chamber.

We received a further warning at the end of April about more loose rocks above the crawl to Showerbath Passage.

Overall, it seems this chamber (which is the point that the Upper Trident and Manchester Bypass routes to Stop Pot diverge) has undergone some movement over winter, and cavers are urged to be extra cautious when passing through this area.

Reporting issues to CNCC

Spotted something wrong? On our website homepage you will see the 'report a problem' section where you will find separate reporting forms for:

- Underground hazards
- Defective anchors
- Topo or description errors
- Cave information errors
- Conservation issues

Please use these forms to tell us about any issues you encounter to help get the information to the right people who can action these. We aim to reply to all issues that are submitted, so if you get no reply within a couple of weeks, or for any other issues or enquiries, please email our Secretary directly (secretary@cncc.org.uk).

ACCESS

High Birkwith area

We would like to remind all cavers that access to several caves around High Birkwith (Birkwith Cave, Old Ing, Browgill, Dismal Hill) continues to be refused by the landowner. Unfortunately, we have exhausted all immediate routes to a resolution but we continue to seek new opportunities wherever possible.

Access to Calf Holes is unaffected by this and remains absolutely fine. In fact, we encourage you to keep visiting this excellent pothole to ensure cavers remain a recognised presence in the area.

Park at the very friendly Low Birkwith Farm (£5 for cars, paid in cash in an envelope labelled with your registration number, via the honesty box on the rear wall of the barn). If you do exit at Browgill Cave, we suggest returning to the public footpath at the bridge, only a few hundred metres away along the river, quickly and discretely.

Check our website for the most up-to-date details.

Foxholes collapse



Lower Foxholes, blocked by a collapse, photo by John Cordingley.

We received notification in March that Lower Foxholes (near to Ingleborough Cave) is currently blocked following collapse of the slope above the entrance. This has prohibited access to the gate just inside the entrance, which was installed around 30 years ago. We are in discussion about remedial action, however due to SSSI implications and permissions, this may take a little time.

East Kingsdale and Braida Garth



For any cavers visiting East Kingsdale pots via Braida Garth Farm (typically Vesper, Growling, Spectacle, King, Broken Finger), please remember to make a courtesy call at the farm. The owners are very caver-friendly but prefer to know if people will be coming through the farm later in the day, particular after-dark.

In March 2024, cavers returning through the farm at night, who had not been able to speak with the owners earlier, were mistaken for intruders, following a recent increase in farmyard thefts.

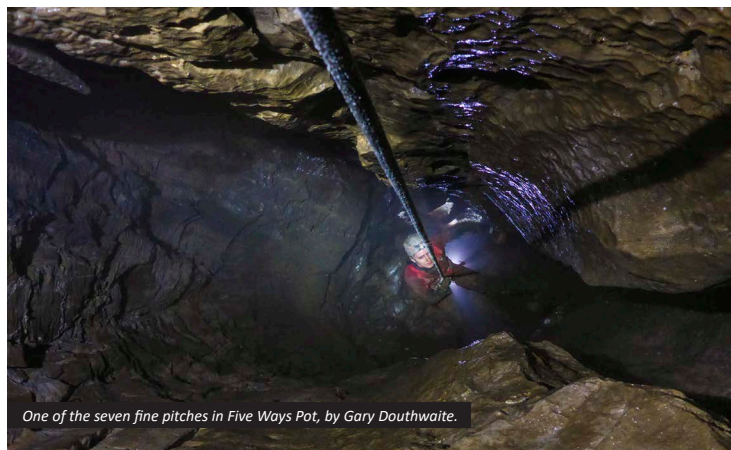
There is usually somebody at the house or in the nearby buildings, but if nobody can be found to speak to in-person before your trip, please be prepared to make alternative arrangements.

For trips where you know you will be approaching or returning at antisocial hours, or where you are unable to speak to the owners in-person, we recommend approaching from the parking near Yordas Cave, towards Heron Pot and Brown Hill. Details of this route have been added to our webpage for each of the relevant caves on East Kingsdale. This route only adds 800m (10-15 min) to the journey, is entirely on access land and avoids the farm so is less likely to trigger the dogs barking and so will avoid disturbance.

Gatekirk Cave

We understand that access to Gatekirk Cave is currently being refused by the landowner. He was extremely polite to some recent visiting cavers, but for various reasons was not comfortable with granting access. This is something we plan to investigate in due course, however, there are some sensitivities to consider. Currently we advise that permission, if requested, is likely to be declined.

Five Ways Pot



One of the seven fine pitches in Five Ways Pot, by Gary Douthwaite.

Our installers have completed work to install CNCC resin bonded anchors in Five Ways Pot, a 2022 discovery on Dowlass Moss.

Work started in November and was completed on 30th December after being rained off on multiple occasions. All exploration ropes and hangers have been removed and we have published the topo and a route description on our website.

This is a splendid seven-pitch pothole, nothing too difficult and with plenty of variety and interest.

Furthermore, Five Ways Pot is explorable in moderately wet weather, although in extremely wet conditions one of the scaffolded climbs and the second pitch (Blade Runner) become splashy and under exceptional circumstances could become hazardous.

This has already become an extremely popular trip, with reports of groups visiting most weekends.

To complement this, we have added a route description for neighbouring Mayday Hole to our website. This is another popular wet-weather compatible trip on Dowlass Moss, discovered by the same team only a year before Five Ways Pot. The topo for Mayday Hole has been online for some time, but a route description was never written (although the navigation is very straightforward).

Fossil Pot

Fossil Pot near Grassington is not a well-known cave but is an excellent and quirky day out. The cave features an assortment of short esoteric squeezes (typically suited for slim or average sized cavers) and short climbs/pitches, with a splendid but all-too-brief section of main streamway at the bottom as a reward.

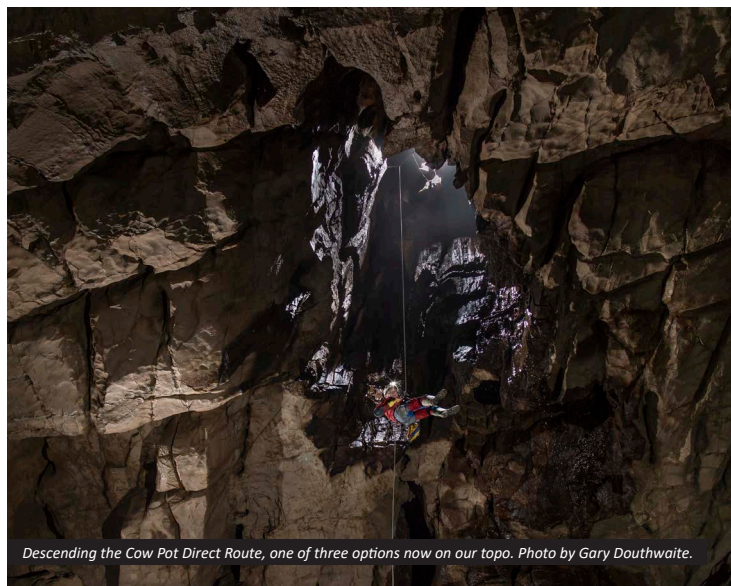
We have hosted a route description for nearly four years, however, work to install CNCC anchors has just been completed and we have added a rigging topo to our website. The tackle requirements of this trip are minimal so cavers can expect a fairly short but very satisfying adventure, exiting with time for tea and cake (or a pint) in one of the many fine Grassington establishments afterwards.

Anyone visiting will no doubt be left pondering what other wonders are yet to be discovered underneath this high-potential and seldom visited area of Grassington Moor.



Fossil Pot, by Gary Douthwaite.

Cow Pot new routes



Descending the Cow Pot Direct Route, one of three options now on our topo. Photo by Gary Douthwaite.

For decades, our rigging topo for Cow Pot, Easegill, has omitted two routes, which were fitted with CNCC anchors decades ago in parallel with the usual Direct Route.

We don't know why these were omitted from the topo at the time, but it seems a shame not to publicise them. Thanks to some great work by one of our volunteers, we have been able to update our rigging topo to include these two new routes, listed in Northern Caves as Sneaky Route and Devious Route.

Sneaky Route drops into Fall Pot via a parallel shaft, accessed beyond the usual Direct Route pitch, with a slightly narrow/awkward takeoff. Devious Route however follows the descending stream gully as you arrive at the start of the traverse, achieving a more staggered descent which is closer to the waterfall.

Our topo and route descriptions have been updated to include these.

The Direct Route arguably remains the most spectacular pitch. However, regular visitors to Cow Pot can now add a little variety. Be aware that Devious Route will need even drier conditions than Direct Route, and Sneaky Route includes a narrow squeeze to get on/off the main hang, which, to avoid any drama, should be considered by any larger cavers on an exchange trip that is exiting this way.

Topo for County Pot

By popular demand, less than a month before this newsletter, we have published a rigging topo for County Pot.

Until recently, the rope requirements were covered in our route description as they are fairly minimal and some are optional. However, three separate requests for a dedicated topo were made, and we listened. The topo shows the pitches which are fitted with CNCC anchors (first pitch, Upper Trident and down from Poetic Justice) with optional ropes listed for non-anchored climbs including into Broadway and the chimney climb up to Poetic Justice.

North by North End Pot

This new discovery (see pages 2-3) has been anchored, with work complete and the topo uploaded to our website just in time for this newsletter. However, we would like to raise a few notes from our anchor installer for anyone considering a trip.

Locating adequate quality rock for anchors was challenging in several places. In the entrance shaft this was almost impossible and so the tops of upright scaffold bars must be used. Avoid using horizontal bars as they are only held in by wall-pins in some places. As with all such non-standard belays, it is totally incumbent on each caver to evaluate these scaffold bars for suitability.

The top of Llean Bean Aven has many loose rocks. Although it may be tempting to kick them down as part of typical 'gardening' procedures, we advise that this is only likely to make the situation worse. The walls and floor here, and on the subsequent pitch, are very loose, and extreme care is required when someone is beneath as they will be in the firing line of any dislodged rocks.

For all the pitches, it is recommended for anyone above a descending or ascending caver to remain totally still until the vulnerable caver is safe from any dislodged rocks.

We emphasise these warning in the strongest terms. This is not a cave for large or inexperienced groups, and it is not an easy route (or a clean one) into The Eastern Front of Large/Rift Pot.

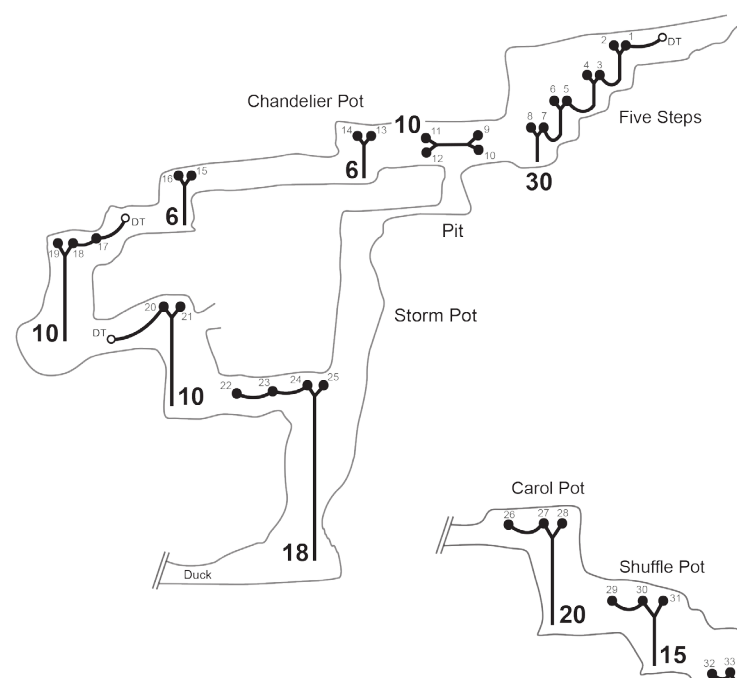
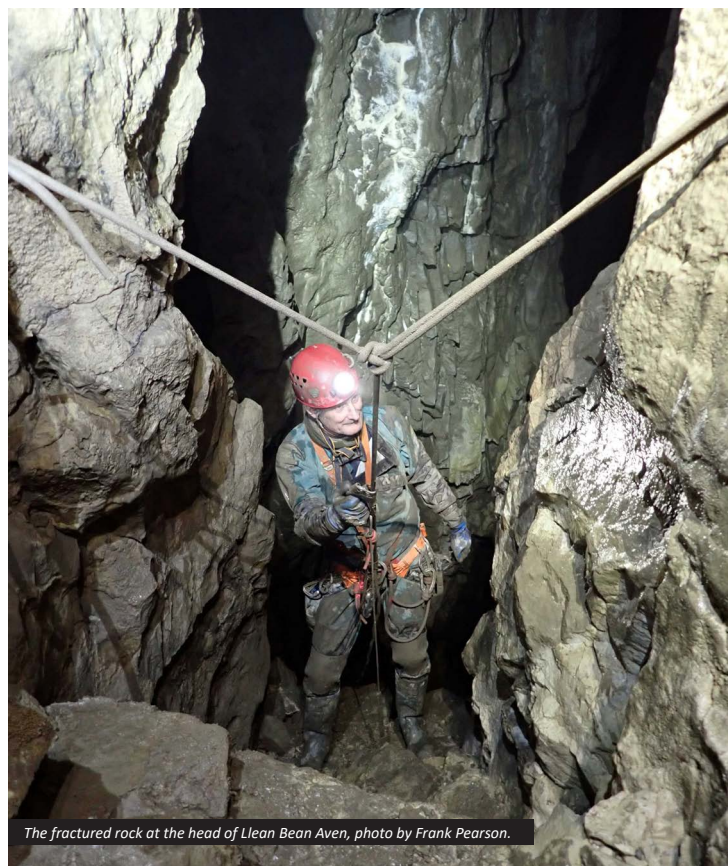
North by North End Pot must be treated very seriously and with great care due to the loose nature of the entire route.

Marilyn and Disappointment Pot

For years we have been receiving reports of poor anchor locations at Marilyn and the subsequent pitches of Disappointment Pot near Gaping Gill. In particular, for Niagara Pitch in Marilyn this may be due to some movement of this notoriously loose pitch since the original anchors were fitted.

This has now been rectified, with extensive re-anchoring of Niagara Pitch, and the 4th and 5th pitches of Disappointment Pot, including installing new anchors, removing old ones and new drilled threads.

An updated topo has now been published on our website.



Simpson's Pot new anchors

In our last newsletter we told you about efforts to improve the anchoring in Swinsto Hole, which is now complete.

The aim of this work was to improve the anchor positioning and safety particularly for those undertaking a pull-through trip. In doing this, we hope to avoid incidents of stuck ropes and a proliferation of 'tat'. We also replaced any anchors that were showing movement.

Similar work in Simpson's Pot commenced this year and has been completed as far as the duck below Storm Pot. The topo has been republished to reflect quite a few changes in this area.

As with all CNCC topos and route descriptions, we strongly encourage cavers to download the most recent version, rather than relying on older printouts or books which may be out of date. On average about 20% of our descriptions and topos are updated each year, so older printouts have a high chance of being incorrect.

Work in Simpson's Pot is now on hold for the summer holidays but will continue with the pitches below the duck later in the year. Thank you to our installers who give up their time to keep our anchors safe and to ensure rigging can be done to modern standards.



Stump Cross remediation

by Tom Thompson, Stump Cross Exploration Team

In early winter 2023 our group received notice that the landowner on our site, Stump Cross Caverns, had plans to start children's activities in the field, north across the road from their business centre and cafe.

This field is the site of several of our ongoing digs with high future potential of extending the Stump Cross system in a downstream direction.

Over the last few years, their main venture in the field, beneath which lies the majority of the show cave, had been the 3d filming of *The Keep*, beyond Grenade Shaft. Our team assisted the film crew and removed mud from the base of the shaft so that the filming would not lead to this spreading to formations in the cave beyond.

Since becoming the proprietors of Stump Cross, the owners have concentrated on a new approach to children's educational experience within the visitor centre. Their latest initiative of educational fossil and geology related visits in the field we have been working in is a natural progression for them.

The field was not used for stock rearing and so was not stock proof, but nevertheless we have always kept our digs covered to prevent stray livestock falling into our former and current sites.

Now however, it became imperative for us to create more robust and permanent lockable caps and covers on our sites for the safety of the children, and to remove all redundant materials in order to conserve the sites in as much of a nature-compatible condition as possible.

As we are committed to digging only where permissions exist, exploration activities had been suspended when permission expired. We had decided that if any of our sites were to be revived in the future, we would apply for renewed permission, such that there will be only one current dig at any given time.

All exploration was suspended during December so the team could focus on completing the preparatory groundworks to ready the sites for secure enclosure and natural conservation.

The next move was to generate a plan of action compatible with conservation, future access and the cave owner's ambitions for educational activities.

This resulted in a budgeted plan and financial assistance was sought. The CNCC were the most prominent contributors, followed by members of our team, and then a substantial contribution came from the Barry Andrew Estate. Our team members contributed tools, plant and equipment, with a former Stump Cross cave owner providing quad-bike and trailer transport to move the materials to site using suitable tyres to avoid any damage to the grass.

All materials were sourced from the most local suppliers we could find, to avoid excess carbon emissions and to contribute to the local economy, including concrete materials coming from a Nidderdale supplier and the steel from Airedale.

During January 2024 the work continued with the Craven Pothole Club cottage warden approving use of some surplus timber materials for the formwork required to concrete two of the sites, where a substantial cap was needed to hold a secure lid. Successive work meets resulted in the sites being covered and rendered lockable.

During the project all redundant materials were removed from site and responsibly disposed of or redeployed at our current dig site. We had some very challenging weather during the project, including snow, high winds and heavy rainfall to deal with.

Our current dig, **West Sink**, had been opened by pursuing a new entrance, Red Kite Rift, which turned out to have been entered in the 20th Century, and then either filled in or covered by landslip. A substantial scaffold frame has been installed here holding a large Durbar steel plate door which will be made lockable.

The spoil heaps at each of our sites have been landscaped to create flowing-to-flat areas conducive for plants to re-colonise.

Our other project, **Pond Sink** has two entrances, the Tower Entrance having been constructed from concrete blocks during previous decades, both being secured as part of this project.



Sludge Pit Rift at North Pot was fitted with an access tube and all spoil from the site has been in-filled around the outside of the tube and a securable lid fitted.

High Street Hole, via a scaffolded shaft, entered a series of phreatic chambers that had been filled with boulder clay. This shaft also required a concrete cap.

Additionally, in January, group members assisted the cave management by demonstrating a workable solution to a persistent low level flooding problem in a sector of the show cave, by utilising our own pumping equipment and by recommending suitable electrical and drainage solutions. The site of the flooding had previously received attention from some members of our team who had contributed by building a steel bridge and a drainage sump. The cave management have indicated that they now intend to fit a pump and proceed with the suggested solution.

Photo selection courtesy of D Headley, C Bone, E Whittaker, A Weight and R Worsman.

CNCC would like to thank Tom for this report, and the team for their efforts to ensure this important site is safe for the future, but still accessible for exploration.

Leck Fell

On 28th March, our Treasurer, Pete Bann, visited Leck Fell to repair the stile leading into/out of the Lost Johns' Cave enclosure. This is crossed by cavers wishing to visit Boxhead Pot and It's a Cracker, and it has been in a dangerous state for a little while.

Separately, the F'ing Hopeless Pot team have been back at work installing a new cover to ensure the excavated entrance is safe and stock-proof. The small team used the well-established farmer's quad-bike track as a minimal-impact route of approach (as the construct needed to be dragged most of the way). The finished entrance is beautifully engineered.

Leck Fell was reported to have been teeming with birdlife over this spring, which is a great sign. Cavers visiting during spring months (February to May) are reminded to be diligent when crossing to reach your cave to minimise disturbance to ground nesting birds. This includes paying attention to where you step and taking note of any birds that appear agitated by your presence, suggesting a nearby nest; if this happens you should move away quickly and quietly. Follow existing tracks where possible to avoid longer grass or heather that restrict your view of the ground. Minimise your footprint by area and time as much as possible.



New gate at Bull Pot Farm

The CNCC has funded a new gate on the path leading towards Bull Pot of the Witches, alongside Bull Pot Farm. The old one must have seen decades of cavers heading off on their adventures but had reached the end of its life. Thanks to Ray Duffy for coordinating this and keeping us informed.



TRAINING

Digital cave surveying workshop

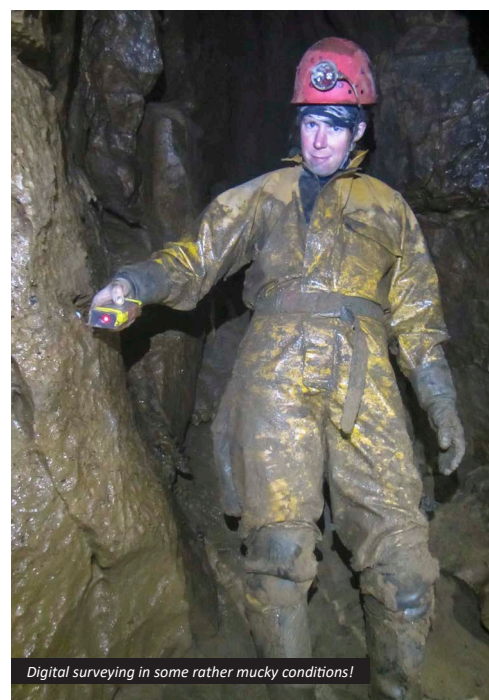
On the weekend of 24-25th February, CNCC organised a digital cave surveying workshop at the YSS Old Schoolhouse hut at Helwith Bridge. This was aimed at those with no cave survey experience (but an understanding of the principles) or those with survey experience using 'traditional' techniques including sighting instruments or pencil/paper data recording.

The workshop aimed to introduce attendees to digital cave surveying using DistoX, real-time data capture and recording (e.g. SexyTopo), Therion for drawing surveys and displaying data using tools such as Google Earth equivalents. This was certainly a steep learning curve but an invaluable opportunity to develop 21st century survey techniques.

All eight spaces were taken, five by people who had specifically requested this workshop, but the remaining three spaces were snapped up within days of advertising (sadly three dropped out on the weekend, but we gained one last minute). Thanks are due to lenders of the DistoX equipment, Alastair Gott, Adele Ward (North York Moors Caving Club), Mike Bottomley (Ario Caves Project) and a Craven Pothole Club team.

The feedback from participants was excellent, particularly regarding the expertise of tutors Alan Weight, Alastair Gott and Tom Thompson, and the hospitality of the YSS hosts. Thank you to all attendees for making this an excellent and worthwhile session.

If you would be interested in attending a future session, please email training@cncc.org.uk to register your interest, as these are typically run on a by-demand basis rather than as part of our routine training offerings.



York's new training facility

CNCC



York University Cave and Pothole Club (YUCPC) was founded in 1981 and have since grown into a prolific student club often introducing more than 50 people to caving each year. They have been particularly active in making new discoveries in the Picos (Spain) and Durmitor (Montenegro) areas and have been a CNCC member club for decades. Two CNCC Secretaries from the last 10 years and our webmaster were brought into caving through YUCPC. Furthermore, at least three non-student northern clubs are well-populated with former (and current) YUCPC cavers who have continued their student pastime into a lifelong passion.

Part of the reason for their success is that the club has always benefitted from an excellent facility in the University Sports Centre, allowing dozens of people each week to be trained in all aspects of SRT. However, following recent health and safety audits, access to these facilities was completely withdrawn.

For nearly two years now, the club has been doing their best using trees and the YSS facility for training, however, the loss of their own facility has limited what they can achieve and resulted in fewer students sticking with the club beyond their first term.

Such stories have become all too commonplace for many student clubs, but this situation was different, in that a lifeline was available. The university would allow continuation of the facility if £2235 could be raised for the girder clamps needed to meet the health and safety requirements for the free-hanging ropes, with all future maintenance costs being met by the University as part of their annual budget.

To raise the money, CNCC agreed a donation of £400 from our own funds, and we decided to petition the BCA to support the remainder, following their recent precedent of supporting youth caving via several other grants. Unfortunately however, on this occasion our funding proposal failed to achieve any support on BCA Council so did not progress.

After word of these issues got out, some extremely generous donors (who prefer to remain anonymous) from the Northern Pennine Club came forward to contribute £700 to the costs. Then, in January, CNCC voted again to increase our level of support from £400 to £1000 on the caveat that YUCPC would fundraise the remainder. This brought the pledged money to £1700 of the £2235 required. With further work, members of YUCPC were able to persuade the University to cover the difference, allowing the work to finally go ahead.

The work went ahead very quickly, and on 4th June, our Secretary, PR Officer and Webmaster attended the opening of the new facility, including 12 ropes hanging from a girder via the new clamps to allow supervised practice of all aspects of SRT.

The facility is still not quite what it used to be, as several anchors against the walls, which once allowed the rigging of more cave-like scenarios for rebelay and deviations, are still decommissioned, but there are encouraging noises from the university that they will fund the work to re-instate those in future years.

Since the funds were raised, and the university have demonstrated more commitment to the facility, BCA have retrospectively agreed to cover CNCC's contribution.

One point to note is that YUCPC welcomes non-members to come along to their weekly training sessions. The university are supportive of this, as it was an agreed condition of the caving community raising the funds. If you would like to take advantage of this, we recommend contacting YUCPC directly to confirm dates and times for their sessions. The club is also able to take on a small number of non-student members too, which may be particularly appealing to any people in the York area who wish to join a student caving club but are not themselves involved with the University.

We hope that this will mark a turning point for YUCPC in 2024 and that their reduced activity of the last few years will be very quickly reversed when the new freshers start in October.

We would like to acknowledge and commend the proactivity of YUCPC through the last two years. Despite loss of a facility that had been a cornerstone of the club for decades, they have kept the club going as well as possible and managed to retain enough experience to keep trips running. We know many student clubs are in a similar situation and we admire their tenacity and passion to keep the clubs as active as possible.

Furthermore, the professionalism of YUCPC in seeking out a solution with the university and then presenting such well-costed and researched proposals for funding, has been exemplary.

We would like to thank everyone involved, including CNCC Committee, BCA, and the generous NPC individual donors. Thanks to this support, the YUCPC facility should be available to introduce hundreds more young people to caving over the coming years and hopefully decades.



YUCPC cavers presenting CNCC Secretary Jill Bolton (left) with a 'thank you' card.



CNCC training at the Yorkshire Dales Guides barn, photo by Ian Patrick.

Spring/summer 2024 workshops

Our program of workshops for spring and summer were announced in February and have already proved a great success. The focus has been mostly SRT-orientated as we saw takeup on our photography, first aid and geology workshops starting to drop last year as these had reached the majority of interested cavers.

Our workshops continue to be subsidised by CNCC via the BCA, and through a discounted rate from our professional trainers. We hope you will find they represent excellent value for money.

Sessions so far this year have been held at the YSS hut at Helwith Bridge, at the Yorkshire Dales Guides barn near Stainforth (pictured above), or underground (typically Long Churn or Sell Gill).

At the time of writing this newsletter, we've just had our June two day new-to-SRT event. The first day was indoors and the second day took the participants down Alum Pot where they were treated to a bright sunny day illuminating the shaft (see photo below left).

At the time of writing this newsletter all spaces on upcoming sessions through June to August are fully booked, but more dates for autumn/winter will be announced in the coming months.



Popular workshops can sell out in days. To hear about newly advertised dates before everyone else, and to receive regular updates on northern caving, please sign-up to our mailing list. You can find a link to do this on the homepage of our website or just scan the QR code here.



Enjoying the views on our 1st June new-to-SRT workshop, photo by Ian Patrick.

Our spring/summer workshops:

- 24th February: Digital cave surveying
- 16th March: SRT rigging beginners
- 17th March: SRT rescue beginners
- 13th April: SRT underground beginners
- 20th April: New to SRT (two days)
- 27th April: Skills for horizontal cave leaders
- 28th April: SRT rescue advanced (2:1 intensive)
- 4th May: SRT intermediate
- 11th May: SRT underground refresher
- 12th May: Pull-through caving skills
- 1st June: New to SRT (two days)
- 8th June: SRT rigging refresher
- 9th June: SRT rescue advanced (2:1 intensive)
- 22nd June: SRT underground refresher
- 23rd June: Pull-through caving skills
- 13th July: SRT intermediate (two days)
- 20th July: SRT rescue beginners
- 21st July: SRT rigging beginners
- 10th August: SRT underground refresher at Gaping Gill (1 day underground)

New to caving workshops

On 2nd March, the Craven Pothole Club, supported by CNCC, ran the first new-to-caving workshop of the year. This was well attended with eight enthusiastic participants looked after by six members of the CPC. The weather was certainly on the chilly side with a dusting of snow on the ground. They had a good explore around Long Churn Cave before climbing out of Dr Bannister's Hand Basin. A short walk over the limestone paving brought the team to Wilson's Cave where the majority of people braved near freezing water to 'enjoy' an invigorating aquatic through trip. The team were then warmed at CPC Headquarters with tea and homemade cake.

Around the time of writing this newsletter, we are hosting our second new-to-caving event of the year, and a further session is now scheduled for 8th September. If you or anyone you meet would like to try caving, this is the perfect opportunity.

We had a shortage of clubs offering to run these events, so we are enlisting commercial trainers to ensure at least one event is always in the diary. If you, your group, or your club would be willing to partner with us to run a new-to-caving workshop, please contact training@cncc.org.uk to discuss.

Our website training page now has a dedicated new-to-caving area where you can direct anyone wanting to try caving as a new hobby. There, you will find many useful resources and the opportunity to sign up to a future introductory session.



Enthusiastic new cavers on the March CPC/CNCC new to caving workshop, courtesy of Ian Patrick.



HIDDEN EARTH 2024

The UK's National Caving Conference

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Llangollen, North Wales



www.hidden.earth



Northern Caving gets everywhere



These newsletters are posted to the UK's caving huts, as well as to several other venues and anywhere that requests one.

However, we were surprised at the end of January to see one copy having made it as far as Mulu! None other than Leck Fell Chum and Space Miner, Frank Pearson, with the Benarat cliffs in the background.

It appears that Frank may be fed up of the sunshine and enormous caves Mulu has to offer, and is longing for a nice, wet Yorkshire pothole. We can't blame him for that one bit!

Thanks to Tim Allen for the photo... and no, this isn't photoshopped!

Your CNCC

Chair: Andrew Hinde - chair@cncc.org.uk

Secretary: Jill Bolton - secretary@cncc.org.uk

Treasurer: Pete Bann - treasurer@cncc.org.uk

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

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

BCA Youth and Dev. Rep: Aila Taylor - ydrep@cncc.org.uk

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

Anchor Coordinator: Alan Speight - anchors@cncc.org.uk

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

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

Find CNCC on social media...



Facebook



X



Instagram



Threads



YouTube



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

Want to get involved?

Being involved in the CNCC can take many forms:

Full membership:

Our full member clubs 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 full member clubs and a representative for non-club 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 matters of voting are 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