

CNCC OFFICER REPORTS – OCTOBER 2023

CHAIR'S REPORT (Andrew Hinde)

Yorkshire Dales National Park

I joined the YDNP Ranger Service for a day last month, to help celebrate the conclusion of the 3 Peaks footpath restoration project. I was able to chat to the Director of Park Services on our descent from Ingleborough, where we discussed Caving and CRoW, the value of caving to the local economy and the conservation volunteering cavers provide. It was “pushing at an open door” but, nonetheless, it was reassuring to see how well-respected caving is within the National Park.

I also had a debrief on the YDNP / High Birkwith negotiations. Basically, no change and none anticipated.

Hidden Earth

I attended Hidden Earth Conference at Portishead last month. It was really well attended with a strong contingent of Northern Cavers. The hours I spent on the CNCC stand were very interesting.

I learned about what engages cavers from across the country to come caving in the Dales and the services they really appreciate from the CNCC. The top two services were the resin bonded anchor scheme and the CNCC website (in particular the route descriptions and topos). We had 2 bound volumes on the table and everyone was asking where they could get a copy for their club hut or library. The point is that these are an active document “on line” with regular updates, rather than a definitive book. There is nothing to stop people downloading anything they need for personal use.

Most of the UK exploration successes covered in the lecture halls seemed to be in the CNCC region including Scotland. A proud moment for all the northern teams who came to support their presenters.

Photo Exhibition

The Dales Caving Photo Exhibition has completed its run at the Folly in Settle and has attracted a lot of critical acclaim. The next major exhibition will be the art gallery above the Old Sawmill Café in Clapham. This will begin in March 2024.

Fairy Holes Access

The CNCC licence agreement has eventually been signed by both parties for this year. There was a change of Land Agents mid-year which slowed the process.

BCA council rep

I have attended 3 council meetings this year and there is little to report. Many posts remain vacant.

I will hopefully conclude the proposal to raise the level of annual non-project spend to £3000 at the next meeting. It currently stands at £1500 (our current expenditure already exceeds this limit).

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Jill Bolton)

As expected, most of my work has been fairly routine, such as answering queries, proof-reading documents, helping people book on training workshops - and arranging this meeting.

CNCC officers recently received a rather odd email, addressing each of us by name, and purporting to come from our chairman. It was clearly a phishing scam, since this fake "Andrew" was proposing to buy us all a £100 gift voucher, as thanks for our hard work!

I'm now a signatory on the Barclays bank account, to help share the admin, particularly during holiday periods. Although this sounds a simple and straightforward process, it wasn't.

On the subject of money, I intend to claim the full amount of mileage (£60), whenever I make a "special journey" to attend these meetings. However, I also plan to make donations each year for caving-related "good causes".

At the June meeting, Tim Allen (TA) suggested installing an information board at Yordas Cave, similar to the one at Bull Pot Farm. Whilst the committee voted to approve this project, unfortunately the National Park no longer supports such boards.

There may possibly be other routes, such as through the Millennium Trust's "Lune Valley Project", but this might end up being hugely bureaucratic, for essentially a small sign. TA suggests "parking" the idea for the time being.

In August, I arranged approval for some urgent anchoring work at Cote Gill Pot in Littondale. Because this was dependent on good weather, it was necessary to email committee members, rather than wait for the October meeting. Eight out of thirteen clubs responded, all supporting the project, and it was nice to read the comments praising the work of our anchor team.

As usual, Matt continues to provide help and guidance, for which I am very grateful. The CNCC provides a model of excellent teamwork.

TREASURER'S REPORT (Pete Bann)

Financial Status as of 9 October 2023:	£
Business Community Account	934.67
Business Saver Account	12 247.10

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

	£
Trainers Costs	1 950.00
Training Venue Hire	1 217.00
Training Kit (Rope)	278.35
C&A mileage (Beck Head)	5.04
Buttertubs litter-pick mileage	109.80
Resin Purchase	143.93
Caving with Disabilities Weekend (Y&D)	100.00
Horner Photograph Collection Donation	500,00
Malham Lid Donation	500,00
Leaflets & Posters	289.60
Display Boards	341.40
Meeting Mileage claim	59.40
PayPal Credit from course bookings	3 610.49
Direct Credit	75.00
Admin	400.80

CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT (Kay Easton)

The entrance to Beck Head Stream Cave has been cleared by a small team led by John Gardner, and another small team led by Tony Brown removed a bag of dead lambs from Bull Pot (Kingsdale). Projects in the pipeline include Notts 2 (rubbish removal), Swan Dike (stock-proofing) and stile repair at Calf Holes.

CNCC has continued to give support to individual groups carrying out conservation work, for example RRCPC at Wretched Rabbit. In order to be able to reclaim money spent from BCA, we need to seek approval before work begins. If you have a conservation project in mind and are seeking CNCC support, let us know in advance what materials you may need, and how many people will be involved, and we will seek approval on your behalf.

A list of equipment available for CNCC members to borrow for conservation projects is on the CNCC website: <https://cncc.org.uk/about/> (It's under the "about" heading rather than "conservation" because the list also includes publicity and anchor placement items.)

Those who are planning conservation works are reminded that Sam Allshorn has money donated by Mike Cooper from sales of "Not for the Faint Hearted" which is available for conservation work on caves featured in the book.

ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT (Adele Ward)

(Not yet available)

TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT (Ian Patrick)

Workshops

The Autumn/Winter programme of workshops is currently live on the website and uptake has been positive.

Assistant Training Officer role

I am pleased that the Committee agreed to co opt this role and relieved that Mark Richards accepted it !

New SRT trainer

Jo White has helped run a couple of SRT workshops and is happy to help run further workshops and will be a real asset to the current "Trainer Team".

First Aid workshop

Nicky Credland ran her first "First Aid for cavers" workshop. It was fully attended and positive feedback has been received.

"New to caving" events

These club led events have proved very popular. The YSS and RRCPC have both run really successful events. Thank you to both clubs. Please do consider if your club would be willing to run one of these.

Thanks to the PR/IT team we now have some leaflets and posters for promoting these events.

Anchor Installers Technical Forum

The CNCC are hosting a BCA regional anchor installers technical forum in October, we are looking forward to welcoming 5 attendees from Ireland as well as other regions to what will hopefully be a really valuable opportunity to share ideas and information.

Thanks as always to the "training team" and others who without, these workshops wouldn't happen.

WEB ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (Gary Douthwaite)

Please see separate document

PR & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT (Matt Ewles)

My work has continued as normal over the four months since the last meeting, including using social media, UKCaving and our own mailing list to keep followers/subscribers up to date on northern caving news. In general I try to alternate around all out core functions (conservation, access, descriptions, topos, anchors, training) to emphasise the broad reaching scope of the CNCC; so sometimes I will 'hold' stories for a few weeks.

Gary will report on our number of followers and page likes for Facebook, and I can confirm that at the time of writing, we stand at 608 mailing list subscribers, which includes 58 new subscribers since the last Committee meeting, roughly one person joining every two days.

I send a roughly monthly mini-newsletter to all mailing list subscribers, plus additional emails on more urgent safety or access issues or when new training workshop dates are announced (our mailing list always get one day advanced notice before I broadcast these more widely).

A more formal printed newsletter for October 2023 is currently in production and might just be available in time for the meeting, although that will be a tight deadline.

One of the most significant jobs over the last few months has been putting together a display and stall for Hidden Earth. This included the purchase of our own 8-panel free-standing Velcro display boards, which are a really useful asset which can also be borrowed by other clubs/individuals. With Gary's help, I put together a custom banner for the stall to showcase the work of CNCC since the last Hidden Earth in 2019, with a particular emphasis on how the scope of our work has broadened now that we are no longer facilitating many permits. This banner should be able to be used at other events over the coming year, and potentially at Hidden Earth next year too, and is also available to view on our publications page on the website. The stall also included copies of our last three newsletters, new-to-caving leaflets (see below), and printed versions of all our rigging topos and cave descriptions.

My thanks in particular to Andrew Hinde who put in a lot of hours manning the stall and engaging with people while I am sure he would rather have been attending the lectures. Overall, I sensed that the engagement was slightly muted compared to 2019, possibly due to the less busy trade hall than usual. However, it is worth noting that we were the only regional council with a formal presence; even our National Body was absent.

I have been working with Ian over the last three months to support the New-to-Caving events. This has included creation of a tri-fold A4 glossy promotional leaflet. We have 3000 of these leaflets (at no charge, due to issues with the printer). We are keen to distribute these as widely as possible, including cafes, pubs, bunk barns, any venues that will have them, and I am thankful to Ian who I believe has already started doing this. I will bring several boxes of them to the CNCC meeting and if you would like some, please take them to hand out however you see fit, including to

individuals who you meet who might be interested in getting involved in caving. The leaflets are also available to view digitally on our new-to-caving page of our website. We also have about 50 copies of a glossy A3 poster to promote these events, which are available to anyone who has a home for them.

Both the YSS and RRCPC have recently held new-to-caving events and currently there is one more event in the calendar hosted by the YSS on the weekend of 4-5th November which is nearly fully subscribed, but I believe Ian is hoping to add more so that there is never a point where no events are listed. To do this we REALLY need northern cavers and clubs to come forward to help run them, get in touch with Ian (training@cncc.org.uk) if you can help.

We anticipate that the twice-yearly winch meets will be a very good use of these posters and leaflets, plus the three main show caves in our region (volunteers to deliver them would be appreciated), tourist information centers, caving huts and bunk barns. I will need your help to get these distributed please!

In July, I put together a short article in the Craven Herald on the excellent work of the CPC to clear up Buttertubs Pots. This was well received by the editors and I will try to make use of this opportunity more in future when any caving stories crop up that might spark some interest from a wider non-caving audience. The Buttertubs, being a well-known beauty spot, and the quality of the photographs, made this a perfect article for a local newspaper.

I am also in dialogue with the National Park's Digital Communications Officer (who manages their website and social media) regarding possible opportunities to promote caving in future publications including The Visitor magazine, and possibly other avenues that can be mutually beneficial for both organisations.

I am not directly submitting material to Descent, but I have spoken with Frank Pearson, their new northern correspondent, and welcomed him to 'lift' material from our mailshots or website, which I believe he is doing. It is on my list to put together some more bespoke articles for Descent over the coming year.

The caving photos, originally displayed at the National Park Offices in Bainbridge, have been on display for the last few months at The Folly in Settle. I believe Andrew has collected these now (thank you), and we are searching for new opportunities to display them. We have an offer to display these at The Old Sawmill Café in Clapham from March next year, but if anyone is able to display these anywhere ahead of that time, please let me know.

I have continued to maintain and update our cave descriptions and topos, although I do have quite a backlog of reports to deal with over the coming months.

Finally I would like to thank our elected Officers, Andrew, Jill, Pete, Kay, Ian and Adele for actually making my job possible (they do all the actual work), as well as our extended co-opted Officers group. The CNCC has a very strong team at the moment, and this is clearly reflected in the amount of work getting done.

TRAINING & EQUIPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Mark Richards)

The BCA "Training & Equipment Working Group" is making progress to become fully functioning, and they are still defining the terms of reference for the group.

The last minutes on the BCA website are from the "Equipment & Techniques Committee" in 2018, before the Working Group was formed. This is part of the group's action plan to address.

YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Aila Taylor)

I was asked by Josh White (ex BCA Y&D) to find a place to store some BCA-funded SRT kits for CHECC, which I have done. The BPC have said they will store them in their new garage - this still needs to be approved at their next committee meeting but I'm fairly confident that it will be.

Achieved lots of 'networking' at Hidden Earth (amongst other activities!) and participated in the Youth & Development talk/meeting. Also ate quite a few chocolates from the CNCC stand.

Have been supporting York Uni with getting BCA funding for their training facility and liaising with Jono Lester about this (BCA Y&D). An update about this cannot be given in advance as it is a quickly changing situation, but I can provide an update at the meeting.

Supporting CHECC explore options for potential emergency funding. They have so far decided not to pursue these options, but there is a high chance that they will in the near future (again, a quickly changing situation, that I can't really comment on in advance).

Attended an 'Accessibility for cavers' workshop run by Bendrigg, kindly funded by CNCC. The other attendees seemed very pleased that there was a CNCC presence there. The skills gained from this workshop will hopefully make caving in the Dales more accessible. Hopefully they can also be utilised to support university clubs, who often feel quite nervous about managing any disabilities in caving due to university club leaders being so new to the sport (and leading) themselves.

ANCHOR TEAM REPORT (Alan Speight)

Cote Gill, Littondale

We received a request from a reliable source to install some approved anchors in Cote Gill Pot. The existing anchors were in a poor state, and potentially several decades old. The Anchor Team wished to carry out the work promptly (in good weather), so we asked for the committee to approve the project by email, which the secretary arranged.

Ground anchors

At the June committee meeting, concern was raised about the use of steel ground anchors, which may slowly corrode and eventually fail. We hope to discuss this issue at the BCA Regional Anchor Installers Technical Forum, on October 14 & 15. Following the forum, we intend to draw up a suitable Management Plan for committee approval.

ACCESS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORTS

Robinsons & Fairy Holes (Dinny Davies)

Thanks to Andrew Hinde and to Adele Ward for getting the existing access arrangement for Fairy Holes re-signed. There was only one permit each issued/requested for Fairy and for Robinson's this year. I'd just like to remind everyone to consider both caves, when planning their trips for next year."

Excalibur (Matt Ewles)

Excalibur is receiving its first, and only, visitor of the year (CPC) the day after our meeting, so interest has very much waned. That's not too surprising given its location so far from the Yorkshire Dales.

A trip to the Main Streamway is excellent, and for connoisseurs, a trip to the Main Streamway from the Jenga Pot entrance is 'memorable'.

The landowners remain happy and interested in proceedings, and no issues to report currently. A permit is very quick and easy to get by email usually with just a day or two notice, or even by just a Whatsapp message (my number being available on the Excalibur Pot page of the CNCC website).

Bowland Co-ordinator (Tony Brown)

Bowland Caves - nothing specific to report

Hearing Wood Bone Cave

The bones of a two and a half year old child, unearthed at Hearing Wood Bone Cave, have been dated to 9,200 BC, making them the oldest human bones so far found in the North of England.

Martin Stables, neither archaeologist nor caver, excavated the site for six years from July 2016, discovering human remains, along with flints, Langdale stone flakes, stone tools, pottery and a huge number of animal bones. Single-handedly, he shifted many tons of boulders, stones and earth, meticulously sifting the deposits before everything went to UCLAN for cataloguing and research.

By the time Martin had reached a point below which further finds were likely, he had revealed a tight fissure down which he allowed himself to be lowered via an electric winch. However he soon reached a point beyond which assistance could be provided from above and sought assistance from cavers via Northern Boggarts.

Richard Mercer of Kendal Caving Club and Alan Speight of the Yorkshire Subterranean Society responded to the call and Richard descended the crevice using a single rope and traversing out to where the crevice widened a little.

On return, Richard reported that at the bottom of the initial descent the passage turned right and right again, quite steep over a lip to an almost vertical drop to a sizable chamber, twelve to fifteen feet wide by about ten, height perhaps twelve. A sloping floor led to a small hole, which must take the water. On the way down, he saw a fissure worth looking at. At the top of the slope a good-sized aven went a long way up, the top out of sight.

The new cave needs surveying to complete the work and check out the aven's position relative to the surface. Apart from that, there are undiscovered records of two excavations in 1974, one by FUG and one by Pete Redshaw, who owned the land on which the cave lies. If anyone can help, please be in touch with Martin Stables at martinstablesabc@gmail.com.

Please note that permission to enter the cave is no longer given.

I have submitted a fuller article to Descent and understand that UCLAN will publish in Caves and Karst Science.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

YORK UNIVERSITY CPC - SRT TRAINING FACILITY

Please see separate document (already circulated)

ROLE OF CNCC EQUIPMENT REP (Mark Richards)

Mark Richards, the current CNCC Equipment Rep on the BCA "Training & Equipment Working Group", wishes to ask the committee for clarification of the role. He feels this clarification would also be useful in the future to anyone else wishing to take on the role.

In addition to this, there is currently no mention of the role on the CNCC website, so this clarification, followed up by a written statement of the role, would enable the website to be up-to date.

An alternative is to decide if this role is still required and of use.

SCANTY LARDOS POT ANCHORS (Mark Richards)

Mark Richards (CNCC Equipment Rep and Assistant Training Officer) would like to seek the committee's view on removing the original anchors in Scanty Lardos Pot, now that CNCC have re-bolted it with IC anchors.

Mark would consult with the committee and the regional anchor team, to see if any of the initial anchors are considered to still be key anchors.

DISAPPOINTMENT POT ANCHORS (Gordon Coldwell)

Gordon Coldwell was involved with the discovery of Marilyn at Gaping Gill. Marilyn drops into Disappointment Pot beyond the nasty duck, and therefore has created a way into Henslers Master Cave (and beyond), which is more weatherproof than could previously be accessed.

When Disappointment Pot was bolted (pitches 3, 4 & 5), it was done with a view that to get there, water levels would have to be low. This is no longer the case, when accessed via Marilyn. Pitch 5 is particularly bad when wet, but could be greatly improved with an amendment to the rigging/bolting of the existing route.

Gordon requests that CNCC look to amend the rigging in the lower reaches of Disappointment Pot, with a view to it being more weatherproof. He would happily be involved in this dialogue, and help carry out any work.