

CNCC OFFICER REPORTS - OCTOBER 2024

CHAIR'S REPORT

(Andrew Hinde)

Stump Cross Show Cave

As a matter of transparency, I confirm that I have attended a site visit to the proposed new extension to Stump Cross show cave. This was related to my employment with Natural England. I attended with the SSSI site officer. We had a thorough examination of the proposed new route in the company of Tom Thomson (CPC). We agreed a work methodology that would protect the scientific features of interest within the cave during the construction phase.

Foxholes

I had a site visit with John Cordingley to Foxholes in Clapdale. A run-in of surface scree has blocked the access to the metal entrance gate. This cave has a significant archaeological interest. This is a project that can be picked up by the CNCC Conservation volunteers.

CNCC Photo exhibition

After a successful summer season at the Folly in Settle, the mounted photos are back in storage at my house. If you know of any public building in the Dales area that would like to host this exhibition, please let me know.

Hidden Earth at Llangollen

I enjoyed a weekend at the National Caving Conference last month. I spent a lot of time manning the CNCC stall in the exhibition hall where I met loads of old friends and chatted with passing delegates. Most people are interested in the bound copies of the cave topos and route descriptions. The display of resin bonded anchors are also a popular discussion point. It would be good to make more of this area of our work at the next Hidden Earth. This will hopefully be nearer the Dales. Thanks to Frank Pearson for delivering a great regional roundup of caving activity in the Dales. Finally, thanks to all who showed such concern when I had a "funny turn" after I was charged £6 for a pint in the Bridge Hotel!

TREASURER'S REPORT

(Pete Bann)

Please see separate document

SECRETARY'S REPORT

(Jill Bolton)

Online Consultations

Whilst I'm happy to set up online consultations for urgent matters, I'm aware that these can cause difficulties for certain clubs. It's fairly straightforward for small clubs to respond (or those which are effectively run by a single hard-working officer). But other clubs, quite reasonably, wish to discuss these matters at their committee meetings, which might not take place for several weeks. So, wherever possible, it's far preferable for items to go on the regular committee agenda.

As a recent example, there was a request for permission to install anchors in AKA Hole, urgent as the work was to be carried out imminently. Only ten out of fifteen committee members initially responded although that was sufficient to hit the 50% target.

Hidden Earth

The Hidden Earth conference was most interesting, particularly the Northern Round-up (Frank Pearson) and presentations on the Hydrology Database (Phil Murphy) and Cave Archaeology (Rick Peterson), all of which were very well-attended. I have suggested to Tony Brown that he might explore ways in which the CNCC could promote an interest in archaeology in the Dales (for example, running workshops or co-opting an "Archaeology Officer").

A highlight of the conference was Kai's amazing topo embroidery, which is now on display at Bernie's in Ingleton.

On arriving in the exhibition hall, I was rather startled to see the crowd of people at the CNCC stand . . . until I realised it was the queue to win free rope at the UK Caving stand next door!

Exploration Grant

Last week, I was pleased to receive an application for an Exploration Grant (only the second so far), but disappointed when it was quickly withdrawn as not matching the published criteria.

York University

You'll be pleased to hear that the SRT facility in the Sports Hall is now fully restored, thanks to a lot of hard work by Adrian Turner (and your CNCC officers, of course). As a result, the club is again thriving, and has already taken eleven freshers for a weekend at Bull Pot Farm.

BCA Agendas & Minutes

The new BCA Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann - a local Dales lad) is being very efficient in uploading paperwork to the BCA website. However, I receive these documents by email, so if anyone would like them forwarded directly, just let me know.

On a similar vein, I have a little "Observers" mailing group, to let individuals (rather than officers or clubs) know when CNCC agendas and minutes are available on the website. Again, let me know of anyone who would like to be added to this group.

CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT

(Kay Easton)

The main focus in recent months has been on the complete reconstruction of the entrance to Stream passage Pot, which has been reported fully on ukcaving.com and on the CNCC website. Stiles at Low Birkwith/Calf Holes have been inspected and repaired as necessary.

A number of projects are in various stages of preparation, including removal of rubbish from Notts II, work on the shaft top at Aquamole, and stock proofing and attention to scaffolding at Swan Dike Pot.

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.

TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

(Ian Patrick)

We released our Autumn/Winter program a few weeks ago and most of the places were taken very quickly. We then released some extra dates and the majority of these places have also gone. We are now getting to a position where demand is outpacing supply.

Participants are from a variety of backgrounds, some are older cavers who are looking at refreshing their skills to get back underground, helping them achieve; this is hugely rewarding. Distances travelled by participants is also surprising, Kent and Cornwall are just a couple of the corners of the country some participants call home.

During September we ran a couple of successful "New to Caving Days". The timing was planned to capitalise on interest from the Craven Pothole Club Gaping Gill Winch meet where the CNCC posters and leaflets were in all the prime spots.

A great mix of people attended (16 in total) including some teenagers with their Dad and some young adults who came as a group who are members of a walking club from Manchester and also a young female nurse who wants to ultimately take up cave diving. Most of those attending have managed to sign up to SRT workshops and are really keen to start their caving "career".

The "New to Caving" days are currently facilitated by CNCC trainers. When fully attended (which they normally are) the income received provides a small surplus back to the CNCC, after trainer fee and kit hire.

However, we would much prefer these days to be run by local caving clubs; please get in touch if you can help. The days present a great opportunity to attract new members to your club and provide a really rewarding day.

The five SRT trainers are having a "Moderation Day" together (no trainer fee) in November, this is to chat and run through various aspects of the training we deliver. This will help ensure we are providing consistency in all our workshops, and generally look at any ways we can improve them.

Thanks as always to everyone involved for their help and support, it is very much appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any suggestions or ideas for any type of training.

ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT (Kai Trusson)

June 27: I set up an "official" UK Caving Forum account as "CNCC access officer" In order to ask how others access Kirk Gill cave as i received an email about it. This has now been sorted: the pub does not allow access via their car park, but a local farm does allow access via their land.

July 5: I chased up my email about Hudgill Burn but I've had no response.

July 26: I received an email about the location of the new entrance for Red Moss Pot and passed this on to Matt for updating on the website.

August 10: I attended the Craven PC Gaping Gill winch meet with Aila, where she showed me some routes including Stream Passage to Marilyn, and Flood Entrance (Wades to Original). Aila also showed me some additional access land I was unaware of, near Notts 2.

September 9: I finally heard back from the Langcliffe Estate. They are talking to their lawyers about an updated agreement. This will take time, probably beyond the next AGM.

September 25: I got contacted via Whatsapp about the mobile number for Smelt Mill on the website no longer existing. However they informed me the landline still works so I have passed this on to Matt for updating.

As I've already announced, I shall be standing down as access officer in March, in order to become more involved in Youth & Development. Nevertheless, I'm happy to support the person who takes over the role and to help in any way I can.

ANCHOR TEAM REPORT

(Matt Ewles, on behalf of Alan Speight)

Since the last Committee meeting the following anchor installation projects have been completed:

- Yockenthwaite Pot
- Cow Pot, Aardvark Country
- Cote Gill Pot

Ongoing projects:

Work in Simpson Pot (improvement of the anchors for better pull-through) is mostly completed. The topo has been updated for the upper half of the cave, but some further updates and installations may be needed considering recent discussions.

Anchors have been installed at the entrance of Marble Pot. However, this is an active digging project, and continuation of the anchoring will depend on the outcomes of the digging efforts, so no topo has been published yet.

Newly discovered AKA Hole was approved for anchoring by an email ballot of Committee. Thank you to Committee for accommodating such sudden and short notice requests. With new discoveries, there is often a desire to 'strike while the iron's hot' in getting these anchored, so your consideration of this by email was appreciated.

There is an agenda item to approve anchoring of High Hull Pot following a request from a visiting caver. This caver kindly offered to do the work themselves, but asked if CNCC would prefer to take the lead. There seems to be nothing controversial in this request and this will hopefully become a more popular sporting trip for those also visiting nearby Hull and Hunt Pot.

Future projects on the radar

At the end of September, we received a report that the spit hangers in Brunel Rift of Illusion Pot are very worn. A volunteer has offered to replace the hangers, but asked whether Illusion Pot could justify CNCC anchors? This is a late addition to the agenda, requested by two of our anchor installers.

We have recently received a request to anchor Lungs Pitch in Mayday Hole, to create a second route for this popular new pothole. After consultation with the original explorers, we believe there are no concerns with this becoming an anchored route and it has been described as an enjoyable pitch. This has no urgency and was too late for this meeting agenda so is another one to 'park' until January.

Other anchor matters we have been made aware of

We have received reports that some new spanner-tightened anchors have appeared in Meregill recently, on a route closer to the water (a similar situation to the ones that appeared in Bull Pot about a year ago). We would encourage all cavers considering anchoring new routes in established pots to engage with us first so we can see if there is a more conservation-friendly or long-term solution.

Other information

All the caves which have been approved for installation of anchors are now listed on our website (AKA hole has not yet been added because it isn't on our database yet): <https://cncc.org.uk/equipment/anchor-locations/>

On request of one of our installers, some projects are not publicly listed but are recorded in the back-end administration system along with Committee approval dates.

If you are interested in joining the CNCC anchor team:
<https://cncc.org.uk/equipment/installers/>

Finally, my thanks to the entire anchor team for their efforts. The amount of work that goes into anchoring caves is immense, not to mention all the work to research the projects, identify issues, research solutions etc. In particular, the anchor team are now working together in a much more coordinated way than ever before (again, a lot to ask for an entirely voluntary role).

TRAINING & EQUIPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Mark Richards)

Nothing to report, as the Training & Equipment Working Group has not held a meeting since the last CNCC meeting in June.

YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Aila Taylor)

I assisted with the CNCC stall at Hidden Earth, and spoke to a lot of young people who visited the stall about my involvement with CNCC and about the different training opportunities CNCC offers.

I was supposed to speak about the importance of regional councils being involved with Youth & Development as part of Jono Lester's Y&D talk at Hidden Earth. However this was cancelled because Jono did not turn up.

I am providing additional support to CHECC amidst alterations in the BCA committee and the stepping down of the CHECC training officer. To help reduce the burden on the CHECC committee at the moment, I have also taken on the responsibility of providing visiting student clubs with access to the CHECC SRT kits stored at the BPC. In addition, I am going up to the hut mid-week to move the kits back into storage once they have tried.

I have visited various student clubs on their freshers' trips to build connections with the new committees and help persuade their freshers that caving is the best hobby in the world.

BCA COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

(Andrew Hinde)

At the meeting on 10 September, a proposal that the BCA Conservation & Access Working Group should be the budget holder for all the Regional Caving Council's C&A spending and approve their budget forecasts was passed. Claims will be made directly by the RCC as usual.

A housekeeping proposal to change the BCA banking mandate was approved.

The voting record of each voting member of BCA Council will now be recorded in the minutes. This was approved years ago but is now going to be implemented by the BCA secretary.

ACCESS CO-ORDINATORS' REPORTS

Bowland

(Tony Brown/AB)

As discussed at the June meeting, AB has approached the Duchy of Lancaster Estate, with a view to updating the access agreements. At the moment, access is restricted to BCA member clubs.

Excalibur

(Matt Ewles)

No permit requests have been made for Excalibur Pot this year and there are no access issues to report. Permits are usually available at short notice if anyone fancies visiting, and I am always happy to help you organise a full weekend in the North York Moors, including to advise on good camping and some excellent local walks for the day you are not caving. Why not put a date in your 2025 meets list?

Robinsons & Fairy Holes

(Dinny Davies)

The access agreement was revised in June, and now allows visits by individual BCA members, as well as by clubs. Up to eight permits a year may be issued, although only two or three have been requested this year. All are reminded to get in touch, should they wish to visit next year (May to September).

INDIVIDUAL CAVER REPRESENTATIVE

(Tim Allen)

I have given some thought to the role of IC rep and wanted to be sure I am correct in my assumption of best guidance to follow in order to satisfy the role as intended.

The constitution is clear that I should represent those who cave outside the club structure. I understand that can include club members caving outside of the club but more generally is intended to include those who do not belong to a club.

The CNCC mission statement gives guidance on how CNCC operates and, I have assumed, is helpful in guiding the IC rep:

- Work to achieve the best possible access to caves.
- Establish beneficial relations with landowners and kindred organisations.
- Promote safe and responsible caving in parallel with cave and countryside conservation.
- Provide services and information to improve the accessibility of caving.

If the rest of the committee feel this is an accurate reflection of the role perhaps it can be incorporated in a future version of the Manual of Operations.

Perhaps in line with bullet point two of the mission statement I contacted the BCA exec recently. I copied in the CNCC secretary to all correspondence for the record. I wanted to explore what synergy there might be between my role within CNCC, and [any] role at BCA, for example the Individual Member reps. I was also curious as to who the BCA represent, an issue I had brought up before during my time as a BCA officer without receiving clarification. Do the BCA represent only the paid members or the wider caving population as well?

The BCA secretary replied to my enquiries promptly and with careful thought which was reassuring. The conclusions I came to from his replies is that the BCA represents its paid up members and there is no specific role on its council who would represent those caving outside of the membership. The secretary suggested that non BCA members are not stakeholders in the organisation, but I argued that they were, of course, stakeholders in caving.

The secretary also suggested that by working on behalf of the BCA membership they were by default working for the interests of all cavers. In some parts this is true, such as the CRow campaign, but clearly in terms of supporting restrictive access arrangements only for the membership this is conflicted. There will be other conflicts too.

The secretary was able to clarify that the Individual Members reps were on council to represent DIMs and CIMs. They had no terms of reference or any guidance on the role, but the title was clear.

There also seems to be some confusion as to what BCA actually is. The secretary described the organisation as the governing body for our sport (except in Wales), however the constitution describes BCA as a National Federation and I know others describe it as the representative body [for British caving].

However, a quick scan of the BCA constitution would suggest that there are a number of constitutional statements which are indeed aimed at all cavers, presumably including those who caved outside of the organisation. These include but are not limited to:

- to disseminate relevant information to cavers nationally
- to encourage responsible participation in caving
- to challenge and eliminate barriers to participation in caving

The BCA clearly has some conflicts between its unincorporated structure and its ability to serve the interests of all cavers. This is a wider point the CNCC BCA rep may wish to take up.

PR & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT

(Matt Ewles)

The summer months are always a quieter time for CNCC, but despite this, we have had some great articles:

- Stream Passage Pot entrance repairs
- Robinson's Pot improved access agreement
- New training workshops (two separate batches)
- North by North End Pot description
- Yockenthwaite Pot new anchors
- Calf Holes stile repairs

Therefore, we have covered all CNCC's core facets including access, conservation, training, anchoring and cave descriptions.

We also had a lovely short article from a team of mine explorers who CNCC (thanks to Andrew) had assisted with a pipe to stabilise their current project at Furness Iron Mine. I was pleased to be able to publicise this, as it is not often that we are able to show our support for our mine exploration community. This had considerable engagement on social media.

Much of mine and Gary's effort has been the Hidden Earth stall, which included producing a new poster (with some updates since the 2023 poster), tablecloth and pull-up banners with our new name. The stall was a much bigger success this year, with numerous people calling past, and we benefitted also from being next to UKCaving, who had a substantial queue at one point past our stall.

Engagement with younger cavers also seemed very positive. At one point there were three cavers under 30 years old sat behind the CNCC stall with our Access Officer, Kai. The fact that younger cavers are unashamed to sit behind the stall of a regional caving council is heartening. I suddenly felt very old! I'd like to thank all the volunteers who staffed the stall throughout the conference, including Andrew, Jill and Chris, Kai, Aila (and sorry to anyone I have missed), plus Tim and Jane from UKCaving for keeping an eye on things from the UKCaving stall next door.

You can see our Hidden Earth poster on the website publications page:

<https://cncc.org.uk/publications/>

The poster itself is available for any other purposes (along with the display boards).

Monthly mailshots have gone out to our mailing list, which continues to grow by roughly one additional subscriber every two or three days and now stands at 747 subscribers (up 45 since my last Committee meeting report). If you subscribe, do check your junk/spam mail periodically and add us to your safe senders list so that future emails do not go to junk.

I still have ample copies of our New-to-Caving leaflets and posters, and our current newsletter which I will bring to the meeting. Please take any that you can distribute. On kind invite from Kristian Brook, I will be passing copies over to the newly re-opened Bernies to display, which will be a great venue for our materials.

I will be aiming to get our next newsletter out before Christmas, and I'd welcome contributions. It was great to have a few bespoke articles in the last issue (including from Josh and Tim), and I would welcome more such contributions, rather than just re-hashing existing news stories.

Separate from my PR & Communications role, I also was able to finalise the new agreement with the National Trust for Robinsons' Pot, which basically continues the status quo, except that it now allows individual BCA members as well as clubs to obtain permits, for the first time ever, and some of the outdated wording has been modernised.

I continue to work with Jill to respond to reports of website errors, safety warnings, description and topo errors etc. More people than ever are remembering CNCC as the first port-of-call for such things and they always receive a reply, usually within a few days, and follow-up on the actions we have taken to address their report.

Finally, I would like to thank Ian Patrick for his recent 'outreach' efforts regarding the Simpson Pot 'chains' for pull-throughs. This was very much a PR exercise that could have fallen under my remit, so I'm thankful to Ian for taking a direct lead and saving me from my arch-nemesis . . . anchor discussions!

Happy caving!

WEB ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

(Gary Douthwaite)

Please see separate document for full report with analytics

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

6.0 ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEM

Comments from Tim Allen (former CNCC Access Officer, Current IC Rep)

As the officer who negotiated the removal of the paper permit system and replaced it with the on-line booking system these are my thoughts (in case I do not make the meeting).

It is a very useful exercise to periodically review our position on the value of this system. It does seem to work well and appears to be popular with the majority of users. It satisfies the requirement the three major landowners had for a managed access system, yet it is open to all and helps avoid cave congestion. It does, however, require volunteer time investment in maintaining IT systems that function smoothly.

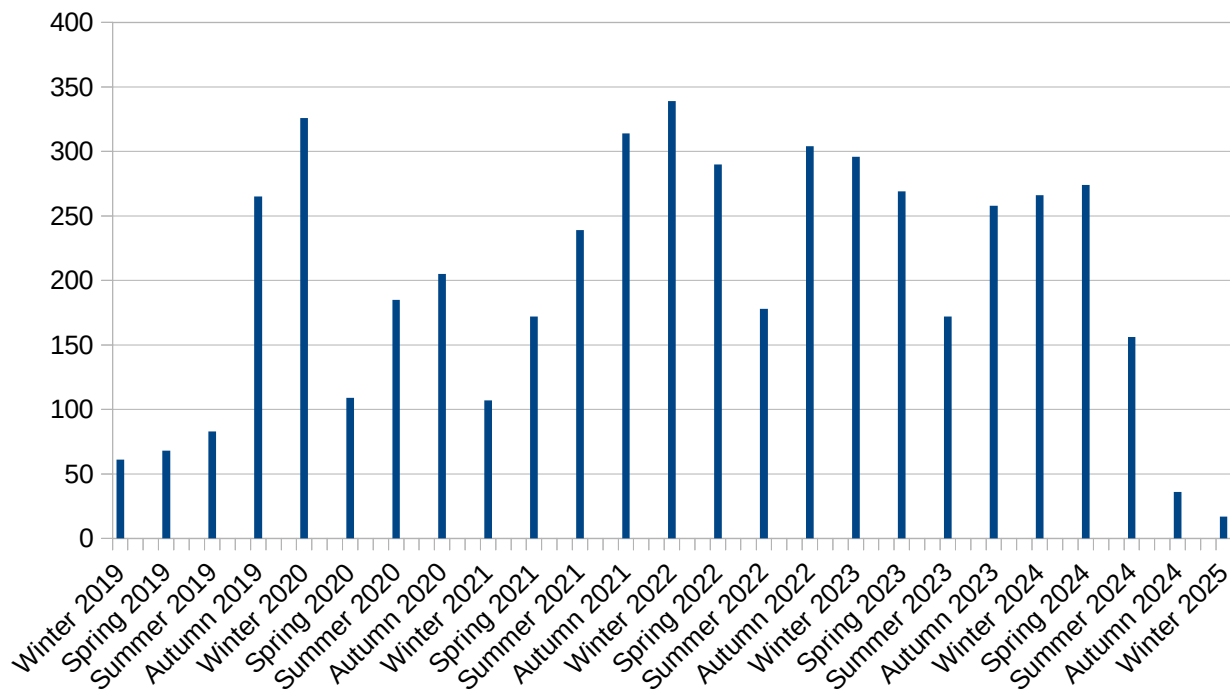
In my opinion I doubt the landowners will have changed their desire for some form of managed access system. Even though they'll take no notice of the booking system day to day, they will see it as operating in their interests and with their agreement.

A consensual withdrawal would not be impossible but would take some considerable persuasion in my view. A new access officer would need to spend time setting up personal relationships with the stakeholders and put a strong argument forward. This would take time. Without further changes in countryside access legislation or clarification on caving under CroW, I can't think of what argument the landowners would accept for consensual withdrawal. Is it necessary or worth the resource effort pursuing this at the moment?

It would also be possible for CNCC to unilaterally withdraw support for the system. The landowners would not like it but they would be unlikely to be able to do much about it. They are powerless to prevent cavers crossing access land and do not have resources to take steps to prevent cavers from descending caves. However, it is a risk to sour relations with possible unforeseen consequences on other arrangements or caves on other land designations.

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ANALYSIS OF CAVE BOOKINGS BY QUARTER



NOTES

Winter 2019: System being implemented
Spring 2019 - Summer 2021: Covid19
Autumn 2024 & Winter 2025: Bookings still being made

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

8.0 ANCHORING PROJECTS

The committee is invited to approve the following projects:

- High Hull Pot, Pen y Ghent
- AKA Hole, Leck Fell
- Illusion Pot, East Kingsdale
- Simpson Pot, West Kingsdale

HIGH HULL POT

On main agenda

AKA HOLE

Four pitches and a traverse in AKA itself, plus the Escalator Rift pitches with an assortment of different anchors

<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?threads/aka-hole-new-entrance-to-ireby-2.32335/>

Prompt online approval from ten committee members, in order that the work could be carried out immediately. Two others responded after a reminder, (NPC, RRCPC and USSCC have not yet replied).

ILUSION POT

Last month we also received this report via the "Report a Problem" page:

Cave: *Illusion Pot, East Kingsdale*

Anchor Site: *Traverse spits and hangers and rope reported as being very worn on Brunel rift in illusion. Could that traverse be added to the list of places worth installing half a dozen hangers? The "falling off" penalty is fairly high.*

Ian has requested committee approval to carry out this work, which is in the rift down to the original entrance from Dale Barn.

SIMPSON POT

Please see separate document "Simpson Pot Chains"

Also UK Caving threads for lots of photos:

<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?threads/simpson-chains.32303/>

<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?threads/simpson's-pot-anchors-rope-wear.32393/>