

# CNCC OFFICER REPORTS – JANUARY 2024

## **CHAIR'S REPORT** (Andrew Hinde)

### **CNCC Photo Exhibition**

I have been approached by the Curator of the Folly Museum in Settle for a return of the CNCC Caving Photo Collection for display in the summer of 2024. This will be part of a History of Geology Exhibition which will examine how work at Victoria Cave and other local sites informed the development of Geological and Karst Geomorphological Theory. It is hoped that the centrepiece will be an original copy of Smith's Geological Map of Great Britain.

### **New to Caving Initiatives**

I would like to thank the CNCC Member Clubs who have taken on the responsibility of leading events to introduce newcomers who want to try caving. The project is gathering momentum after the inaugural event with Craven Pothole Club. Hopefully those who find this a rewarding experience will go on to join clubs and engage in further training with the Instructed Caving Sector and CNCC courses.

### **Cave Archaeology Exhibition**

The Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes will be having an exhibition in summer 2024 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 (previously known as HLF). The project officer contacted me 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. The CNCC is the "go to" first port of call for anyone who discovers archaeological artefacts or bones in caves.

See the CNCC "Digging Guidelines" leaflet on the website:

<https://cncc.org.uk/conservation/digging-guidelines/CNCC-Digging-Guidlines.pdf>

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT** (Jill Bolton)

It's been rather a busy few weeks, dealing with routine enquiries, and organising both this committee meeting and also my first AGM. Preparing the October minutes myself reminded me exactly how much I appreciate having a Minute Secretary.

Assisting YUCPC with their unsuccessful BCA grant application was also very time-consuming, and emphasised the need for good communication.

On a more positive note, I managed to identify an excellent candidate for the new role of Inclusivity Co-ordinator, and I hope this meeting will co-opt and welcome him. I have also recruited a few volunteers to join an informal working group, to improve everyone's interaction with the CNCC (and with caving in general). No doubt there's room for anyone else who would like to contribute to this work.

Whilst preparing for the AGM, I noticed that only BCA Direct Members (red cards) are eligible to vote for the Independent Caver Rep. I'll be pleased to hear from any DIMs planning to attend the AGM, as a candidate will need at least three votes to be elected.

The committee might wish to consider a constitutional amendment to this process, especially as the BCA will eventually scrap all plastic cards. It will become increasingly difficult to identify DIMs in the future.

Clapham Village Hall now have an online calendar, which shows when the room is available. I've booked March 16 for the AGM, and (provisionally) June 22 and October 26 for the remaining 2024 meetings.

Finally, I must apologise for the number of emails which I've sent out recently. It's tricky to get the balance right, between being "open and transparent" yet not bombarding you all with messages. I'm very conscious that the "power" lies with the CNCC committee, and your officers are merely "civil servants".

## **TREASURER'S REPORT** (Pete Bann)

Financial Status as of 4 January 2024:	£
Business Community Account	1 568.10
Business Saver Account	8 686.48

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

	£
Course Trainer Fees	2 810.00
Course Venue Hire	360.00
Admin	164.72
Try Caving Weekend support	438.58
Payment to CNCC (overpaid refund)	60.00
PayPal Credit from course bookings	1 386.73

## **CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT** (Kay Easton)

CNCC has continued to give support to individual groups carrying out conservation work. In order to be able to reclaim money spent from BCA, we generally 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.

As an example, see the email in Any Other Business from the "Angels of the North", who have been asked to carry out some work at Stump Cross.

A list of equipment available for CNCC members to borrow for conservation projects is on the CNCC website.

<https://cncc.org.uk/resources/assets/>

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)

No report

## **TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT** (Ian Patrick)

### **Workshops**

The remaining Autumn/Winter programme of workshops on the website are now all practically full. I will be looking to get the "Spring / summer" programme sorted in the new year. Please do let me know if there is anything specific you would like putting on.

### **Digital cave surveying for Dummies**

We have had a very generous offer by 3 cavers to run a workshop on the "dark art" of digital cave surveying. This workshop is aimed at complete novices. There is obviously a demand for this kind of workshop as it "sold out" very quickly. I will hopefully be able to organise another one for next year.

### **Anchor installers technical Forum**

The CNCC hosted a BCA regional anchor installers technical forum in October, this was well attended and proved a very informative and enjoyable event.

(See separate report for more details)

### **CNCC SRT trainers "moderation"**

I am hoping to organise a day for the SRT trainers in the new year to get together and catch up with each other to share experiences and ideas to help "moderate" our workshop delivery.

Thanks as always to the "training team" and others without whom these workshops would not happen.

## **TRAINING & EQUIPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT** (Mark Richards)

There have been no T & E Working Group meetings, since the last CNCC meeting. However, the group has agreed its Terms of Reference, and has an up-to date list of members.

Furthermore, the group has produced, published and advertised a document on suspension trauma:

<https://british-caving.org.uk/suspension-trauma>

## **BCA RESIN ANCHOR INSTALLER'S TECHNICAL FORUM** (Ian Patrick)

In October 2023, the CNCC hosted a technical forum for BCA regional anchor installers and other interested people.

An incredible amount of hard work by numerous people over the years has been put into the BCA anchor scheme. We truly stand on the shoulders of giants and are indebted to their efforts.

To help continue this exceptional work the aim of this forum was to:

- Share knowledge and experience
- Network and foster relationships with fellow installers
- Swap tips and tricks for installing anchors
- Discuss various aspects of anchor installation and the surrounding “frameworks”
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between regional installers

There was a good turnout of fifteen cavers with “Representation” from CNCC, DCA, CCC, North Wales, Cornwall and a strong contingent of six cavers from Northern Ireland.

The day involved discussions on a wide variety of topics such as:

- Route to becoming an anchor installer
- Record keeping. Reporting loose anchors
- Re-using holes
- New placements “permission” requirements
- Drawing Topos
- Extracting anchors and patching holes
- Rigging “standards”
- Testing of anchors
- BCA “Anchor coordinator” Role
- E&T committee now part of T&E working group (Relevance?)
- Drilled threads
- Chain linking anchors
- Pull through rings/ anchors
- Temporary anchor options
- Fixed aids / hand-line
- Ground stakes
- Insurance BCA

We kept the sitting down discussions to a minimum and focused on practical activity which also allowed people to have more specific informal chats which proved valuable.

Johnny Latimer, who manufactures the IC anchor and assisted in its original development kindly attended and gave a very informative chat about this unique anchor.

We had anchor installation demonstrations of the systems used by the CNCC and also the different system used by both the DCA and CCC.

We looked at testing anchors and the equipment used.

For the rare occasions we need to remove an anchor we had a look at and practiced the options for this.

Later in the day, a frenzied session of “experimental learning” took place With people trying out all sorts of different variations, some of them rather “unconventional”. This session provided a great deal of entertainment but with some interesting learning.

The forum was a great success with excellent feedback and a genuine desire to have more of these events in future, 2-3 years been the consensus.

There were some really positive action points that came out of the day and these will all be actioned in due course.

Thanks to all attendees for making this informative, engaging and enjoyable.

### **ANCHOR TEAM REPORT** (Alan Speight)

All reported anchor defects have now been dealt with, or are being attended to.

Graham Coates has now started to remove the bent over defective anchors from Rowten Pot.

For the record, Sam Allshorn has pointed out that the ongoing projects in Strangle Pot & Strans Gill commenced prior to the current approval system.

### **WEB ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT** (Gary Douthwaite)

Please see separate document

## **YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Aila Taylor)**

Youth & Development has progressed well, the scene was dominated by Northern CHECC in late November. I helped to organise trainings for Northern student clubs and am working closely with CHECC and Jono to create a better system of communication between us all, in addition to some materials clarifying 'who to go to for help about what' so the many roles are less confusing for students.

In response to my Descent article on menstruation and caving I've been asked to write up some of the info, aimed at student clubs and freshers, on the CHECC website - many student clubs have said it would be a handy resource for them to use especially in freshers season.

Have spent time with Birmingham when they visited the Dales, getting to know them and helping with a problem with their SU that Jono, Mealy (CHECC training officer) and I have been working on. Several clubs are also in need of new kit so I'm hoping to explore the possibility of a BCA student club 'kit fund' type thing, but my ability to push this is limited as it is really Jono's realm. The problem with Birmingham SU is ongoing and likely to be ongoing for some time.

## **ACCESS CO-ORDINATORS' REPORTS**

### **Bowland** (Tony Brown)

One permit in the period. Nothing else to report.

### **Excalibur** (Matt Ewles)

Excalibur Pot and Jenga Pot continue to receive no visitors. It seems some of the recent videos we have posted of work beyond the Jenga Sumps has been poor PR for the system!

Everyone is reminded that the classic Excalibur Pot trip is a fine day out and perfectly combined with a day of walking to make the ideal speleo-weekend in the North York Moors. Good inspiration for any meets secretary planning summer events . . . ?

### **Robinsons & Fairy Holes** (Dinny Davies)

Thanks to the YSS who have already booked permits for Fairy Holes and Robinson's Pot. All others are reminded of their availability.

## **PR & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT** (Matt Ewles)

Happy new year to everyone.

Since the last meeting, most of my CNCC efforts have been putting together the rather belated December newsletter, which was published before Christmas and posted to all the usual places. As always, many thanks to Andrew Hinde and Tim & Jane Allen who help us as local enthusiasts to see this distributed to various venues to which it is not usually posted.

The exploration grants have been added to the website along with (based on some feedback thanks to Aila) a nice simple form to use to apply for one. This has been publicised via all usual channels.

I have been working with Gary to revamp the layout of a few sections of the website, including the 'About' section which is now called 'Resources' and an imminent revamp of the Fixed Aids section following some discussions with our Training Officer.

The Anchor Installers Forum and First Aid training workshop in October have enabled me to keep CNCC Training as a high-performer in our PR/Comms output, along with the recently advertised New-to-Caving event by the CPC in March, to ensure that our New to Caving page is never devoid of an upcoming novice event. I know Ian has lots more planned for this, and I am always happy to help continue to promote his efforts.

I'd like to remind everyone that I have a large stock of leaflets and posters to promote these initiatives, and will bring these to most meetings. Please take some off my hands, if you have any outlet to distribute these either at your own events or any local venues (bunkhouses, pubs, tourist information, etc).

The Beck Head Stream Cave and Bull Pot sheep removal story have kept CNCC's conservation involvement equally high on our PR/Comms radar. Thank you to all involved.

I have an upcoming story about the completion of anchoring at Fives Ways Pot on Dowlass Moss; Our first new topo and cave description for a while. That should be out by the time of the meeting.

With relation to some of the agenda items for this meeting; I would urge Committee to come to this meeting open minded and forward looking. It could be easy to dismiss a few of the items such as the appointment of an Inclusivity Co-ordinator, or a change of CNCC name, as being 'unnecessary' or just 'tinkering around the edges'.

However, I believe that these are important matters. The CNCC is doing really well, and we are in a privileged position to be supporting northern caving and respected by many northern cavers in doing so. Having someone who is keen to work with us to ensure our output and services are more accessible to more people (in ways I, and many others, might not perceive) will be a great boost.

Secondly, the change of name would represent the end of a 60-year era, but I really feel we need to listen to the advice we are getting from some very well-informed and reliable sources, and focus on the future, and not dwell on the past. Moreover, regardless of whether a name change is 'necessary', I feel the message given in dismissing this opportunity in the light of such advice could be very detrimental to our image as a modern, progressive and forward looking organisation. I am looking forward to the discussion.

With respect to the action item to review our website content for clarity, this is on hold pending guidance from our new Inclusivity Co-ordinator.

Our mailing list has around 650 subscribers. The power of this was demonstrated when I sent an email out about three spaces remaining on a Digital Survey workshop in February, which resulted in those spaces being snapped up within 24 hours, leaving me no need to publicise this more widely.

I have an open dialogue with the YDNP Digital Communications Officer with several avenues to get caving more into their media. This is an 'open goal' at the moment, as they are really keen to work with us, but I am really struggling for time to get on with this one. I am therefore currently looking for an assistant to help share some PR/Comms duties moving forward.

## **BCA COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT** (Andrew Hinde)

12 out of 40 members of BCA Council attended the on-line meeting on December 12, with 3 observers present. No reports were submitted prior to the meeting from Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Book-keeper, Insurance manager or any Working Group Convenors except QMC.

A written report from the employed Membership Administrator was available with the Agenda. BCA membership has increased to around 7000 total. Council agreed to a proposal to switch to a commercial membership contractor called "Just Go" ( already used by QMC ).

Council agreed to switch to providing all CIM members with an e-membership card (pdf) instead of plastic.

A proposal from BCA Conservation and Access Working Group to increase "non project" annual spending limit to £3000 for Regional Councils was accepted unanimously.

The CNCC rep proposed a grant of £1835 be paid to York University CPC to assist in the supply and fit of beam clamps for their SRT training facility. The CNCC had already confirmed they would support this with a £400 grant from its reserves, if supported by BCA. After discussion, where the BCA Youth and Development Officer explained that such a grant would be unhelpful to his work and negotiations with other Universities, the proposal failed to get a seconder. The proposal failed.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6.0**

### **CLUB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS**

*For discussion*

We have received applications to join CNCC from two clubs, to be considered at the AGM in March.

The application from Ulster Speleological Society and Caving Club is included in the agenda.

An extract from Birmingham Students Caving Club's application is shown below.

#### **Birmingham Student Caving Club**

<https://birminghamstudentc.wixsite.com/birmingham-students>

We travel up and down the country introducing students to caving. We aim to develop their caving skills: this ranges from SRT to surveying skills. Some of the club members grew up caving in Yorkshire and have a great passion for northern caving.

As the club grows we hope to be able to help with all aspects of caving including conservation.

We believe it will be beneficial for a new club to be involved with the wider caving community. This is to help grow the club, and to retain members once they leave university.

**Proposer:** ULSA

**Seconder:** NPC

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### STUMP CROSS

*(Action: Does the committee wish to propose a vote to fund this project?)*

In December, the CNCC received the following email from the “Angels of the North”:

*I'm Tom Thompson of Craven Pothole Club, and I'm writing on behalf of our explorers group known collectively as Angels of the North, (our WhatsApp handle), we have members who are in many northern clubs though the core is CPC.*

*Our main effort has been to attempt to extend Stump Cross/Mongo Gill in a downstream direction towards Wharfedale. Our primary focus has been in the field immediately north of the show cave, across the Pateley- Grassington road, under which the majority of the downstream part of the cave lies.*

*We recently received notice from the owner, Lisa Bowerman, that she intends to utilise the field for unspecified activities. Lisa has been very active in creating activities for young children at the Show Cave, both recreational and educational, many of which are informative on caves and caving, history, geology and with hands on handling of palaeontology specimens. We applaud this.*

*In order for Stump Cross to utilise the field for similar activities it would be necessary to make a wide range of underground access points safe. Many of these points are historic, perhaps from mining activities but some from caver activity in the early to mid-late 20thC. Some of the latter were securely capped and equipped with lockable entrances by our group and their CPC predecessors. Notably, many entrances on both sides of the road were consolidated and secured with skilled assistance by Terry Shipley, a treasured member of our group who recently passed away suddenly.*

*Our specific responsibility in the field amounts to five sites which we keep covered, but with respect to the plans, potentially for children's activity, now need to be more robustly secured. As the owner is not primarily concerned with the underground access to these sites being maintained, but with them being securely closed in respect of her future plans, we find ourselves under an expectation to comply.*

*I have been co-ordinating the response and have secured the following:*

- 1. Full commitment from the group to provide labour to secure entrances at the five sites.*
- 2. A pledge of approximately £450 from the group members to foot the bill for the groundworks materials, delivered to site, (2 tonnes ballast and 300kg cement, 22 sq M reinforcement mesh.)*

3. A pledge from the former owner of the cave, a group member, to supply loan of Quad and Traylor with balloon tyres to transport materials to the sites in the field.
4. Use of members tools and equipment Inc concrete mixer, compacter, cutting equipment, generator, welder etc to complete the works.

*What we are short of is the materials to create the secure lidded access to the sites, i.e. hardware. We therefore wondered if CNCC would consider awarding a grant to cover this (if you will excuse the pun).*

*I have a quote of £266 from Tomrods Steel in Thirsk, to deliver a sheet of 2.5 x 1.2 sq m Durbar Steel Footplate to site. This can be cut to form the 5 lids. The remainder of the hardware, gate-hinge-pins, U Bolts, Rawlplug eye-bolts, cutting discs etc we estimate will bring this to approx £400 in total.*

*We therefore would like to request a grant of £400 from CNCC, to maintain access to:*

- *Pond Sink 2,*
- *Pond Sink 1 (limited hardware only)*
- *Sludge Pit (at North Pot)*
- *North Pot (Northern Caves 1)*
- *High Street Hole*
- *West Sink (Northern Caves 1, now extended and surveyed to over 71 m L and 15 m depth.*

*I attach survey information for West Sink, for your interest and information) I have constructed a detailed work plan and the preliminary groundworks will be completed in four work-party efforts by the end of this week. Concrete to be laid next month. We would anticipate completion by February 2024, weather permitting.*

*I hope that CNCC will be able to support this initiative. We would be very pleased to supply a report and photographs, following completion. Thank you for your attention to this.*

*Kind regards  
Tom Thompson and the Angels of the North.*

**NOTE**

Surveys not included in committee reports.  
Please email secretary if you would like copies.