

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 17th October 2020 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

I have little of consequence to report without stealing content from our hard working Officers reporting below. One thing I would like to double up on is the vote of thanks to Geoff for the fantastic service he has given to CNCC in the area of permits secretary and the online booking system.

The Fairy Holes Cave Agreement is in place for this year. Since lockdown was eased in July I contacted the landowner to suggest that permits could now be issued with a new maximum number of 6. I have had no response, but I suggest that we carry on issuing permits as normal in the meantime. As the new landowner "beds in" with the needs of cavers (for access to his site) I am bearing in mind when the appropriate moment might be to ask for a relaxation of restrictions on access. I would like to see a "Derbyshire Key" fitted on the entrance to avoid posting padlock keys around the country.

There are a few minor changes in landownership in the 3 Peaks area which will need negotiations over a couple of lesser known gems when the new owner/occupiers settle in.

I am pleased to hear of a few privateers who have been getting on with Cave Conservation projects in the Dales in recent months. Anyone who has an idea for a project is encouraged to talk to our Conservation Officer who can usually offer financial or logistical support.

Andrew Hinde - CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

I have continued to manage the various enquiries the CNCC receives regularly. I have had the pleasure of making these meetings as inclusive as possible given their online nature, making sure to invite all those who have an interest in the discussions which will be taking place. One example will be the presence of a representative for the Grassington Mines Appreciation Group, who have put many volunteer hours into getting around complicated permissions processes to plan a conservation project. I hope we will be able to do what we can to give them the support they need.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Geoff Whittaker for his years of service to the CNCC, helping to manage access for some of the best caving in the country. While it is a shame to see someone so dedicated and willing to give up their time for the sport step down from their role, it is a positive step towards the future for this access to now be just a few clicks away.

As one volunteer steps down, we have a new person stepping up. We are fortunate enough to have Mark Richards joining us at the meeting. Mark is interested in taking up the role of BCA Equipment and Techniques representative, and I'm looking forward to officially voting him in.

Josh Young - CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

I've finally got access to the CNCC bank account and I can now make payments. All paperwork should now come to myself rather than go to Pete. Both Pete and Matt are still signatories on the account (as is I think Andrew), so the next job is to add Josh and remove Pete and Matt. Are we okay with myself, Josh and Andrew as the only signatories, or should we add another?

I've submitted the 2019 accounts to the HMRC for corporation tax reasons - as we usually make a loss we obviously don't pay any tax. However as spending in 2020 has been reasonably low and the funding for the trailer, from The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, which was bought in 2019 will be included in the 2020 accounts, it is possible that this year we'll actually not be in deficit. This may cause issues with the tax return, but I'm sure there are ways around it. I'll look into it and sort it when the time comes.

I have also submitted our accounts to the BCA to claim back our 2019 spending - a total of £1153.49 which we've now received. As the rules have changed and now more things are claimable from the BCA next year we should get more.

Payments that have gone out of the CNCC account have been reasonably quiet since the last meeting, with payments to both Alan Speight and Gary Douthwaite for resin and drill bits and a small payment to Josh for the last Zoom meeting.

Ben Wright - CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

We have started to arrange socially distanced working parties. A group has repaired the wall around Alum Pot, and Andrew Hinde has repaired the stile at Long Churns. Other working parties are being arranged to mend the wall at Yordas and to replace the fencing around the top entrance.

New volunteers are always welcome, for weekend or weekday working parties. No specific skills are necessary, but if you have them, we will do our best to make use of them. On the job training is given as needed. Occasionally there may be the opportunity to attend a training course. If you'd like to be placed on the mailing list to be informed of future projects, please contact Kay Easton on conservation@cncc.org.uk, or use the link on the CNCC website.

Kay Easton - CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer's Report

Greetings to all at CNCC, northern cavers and beyond.

The coronavirus pandemic has dominated all our lives this year. Since our last meeting in June little has changed regarding access. There is plenty of caving going on amongst small groups of friends, diggers, divers etc. The hardest hit appears to be the instructed sector, normal club meets and club accommodation, with visitors from outside the area reporting it difficult to find places to stay. The channels for novices to enter our sport, especially university clubs, must be minimal this year and I aim to keep access widely open in order to make life as easy as possible for those who

can make it out caving. I was interested to note that government guidance on social distancing listed caving as an activity which could exceed the rule of six. For a government body to even list our activity is a step in the right direction and, I hesitate to suggest, a result of our high profile CRoW campaign!

The on-line system is still working well across all three estates with no issues to report. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff Whittaker for all his work behind the scenes administering the systems as they were introduced across the estates. He played an integral part administering and bedding in the systems which have been one of the great CNCC successes of recent years. It is worth mentioning that there are new agents representing the Ingleborough estate. I have introduced myself to them and offered to assist with any cave related issues that arise. I don't anticipate any changes to cave access.

The big access issue which has drawn my attention is the loss of access to the caves at High Birkwith. These are so important in the development of novice caving and highlight the real issues we face once land changes ownership. We had solved the parking problems but now wholesale access is at risk. Earlier in the year people calling at the farm during the February rescue had caused the landowner coronavirus concerns. More recently he has blamed the actions of cave rescue for his decision not to allow caving any more. I have liaised with CRO to find a solution to his concerns but I fear we may get no further whilst covid offers a convenient excuse. It appears generally accepted that the new owner is very anti-access to any activities on his land although not all the cave entrances are on his land and most are easily accessible from rights of way. The committee should discuss this problem but in the immediate term I suggest writing formally to the YDNPA to inform them of this loss of access to such important cave resources as I am sure there are wider issues at stake here.

The Judicial Review into the Welsh Government decision to remove caving from their access reform agenda is due for its preliminary hearing on 13th October. Should it go ahead (there is a Welsh lockdown in the court area) then I will be able to update the committee verbally at our meeting.

I have put forward a funding proposal for BCA C&A approval on the fencing of 14 Grassington Moor mine shafts. This follows the ongoing request for support from the Grassington Mines Appreciation Group.

I wonder if the committee should discuss the implications of the Dentdale issue with one of our major clubs – I'll leave that to the club and our chair to bring up.
That's all my access news for now.

Please note that I have resigned from the position of BCA representative and CNCC will need to find a replacement. Although the new executive members at BCA have made some positive progress to bring the organisation into the 21st century I have personally found them dishonest on some matters concerning the David Cooke complaint and my proposals put before the AGM. I therefore don't wish to get further involved but do wish the council well as there are many new members to take things forward.

Tim Allen - CNCC Access Officer

Training Officer's Report

Due to the current pandemic situation, no training workshops have yet been advertised. I am hoping we can start to roll out the workshops in the new year (obviously subject to current rules and regulations).

In the meantime, I am starting to populate the website with workshop details ready for roll out when suitable.

I "attended" a BCA training committee Zoom meeting on Monday 8th September, 11 people in attendance including Phil the new BCA chairman. The meeting was over two hours long and there was no falling out ! BCA training committee is looking to get agreement on terminology and SRT skills which will become "Agreed best practice". There was generally a positive response to the way CNCC are to provide caver training.

Ian Patrick - CNCC Training Officer

BCA Representative's Report - Andrew Hinde

- The meeting began with some words in appreciation of the late Mick Day. He was a very effective leader of several of the national caving bodies and an exemplar of leadership in turbulent times.
- A demonstration of the new BCA website was given showing the content and login pages for members.
- An update from Dave Rose on the Welsh Government judicial review regarding CRow and caving. This will go to an aural hearing before a judge in Cardiff.
- The Radon group are ready to publish their research (internally)
- QMC (qualifications) The Mines Inspectorate are now in charge of Health and Safety for recreational mine visits.
- C&A are going to have a meeting to approve regional projects above £750.
- The BCA modernising Working Group are still at the point of discussing terms of reference (3 years later)
- Age demographics of BCA will require a professional consultant working with the P&I Working Group.
- AGM will be a zoom meeting on 11th Oct. An attempt to have the 20 + proposals withdrawn by the proposers in favour of putting them before the Chairman's working Group will be attempted.

Anchor Coordinator's Report - Alan Speight

When I took over from Simon thinking all the anchors delivered to me were all stamped and marked up and ready to hand over it came as rather a shock to find that most of the anchors had no identity marks and some anchors had the same code number - this has now been sorted by Sam Allshorn and Johnny Lattimer and every anchor in stock has its own individual mark.

Also Simon did not want to sell or hand over the loose anchor puller that he had made so two new anchor pullers have been made for the CNCC (and we are awaiting the invoice for these).

Since lockdown ended a number of caves have been anchored and once the topos have been completed they will be put on the CNCC website.

So in a nutshell all is going well. I hold a stock of resin for fixing the anchors along with a batch of spare 12mm drill bits. There have been two reports of loose anchors that have yet to be sorted.

PR and Communications Officer's Report - Matt Ewles

I have got off to a bit of a slow start in this new role, as it's taken a little while to work up enthusiasm to take up another caving role after a rocky start to the year. Plus there isn't an awful lot of news, even less of it which is good news. Nonetheless things are looking much more encouraging ahead.

Since the last Committee meeting I have kept the CNCC's news feed as active as possible, with a few stories about CNCC's online statistics, the potential criminalisation of trespass and What Three Words implementation into the CNCC website, as well as a few notes about description updates (I have significantly overhauled the Ease Gill Caverns description), the completion of the Valley Entrance anchor work, and a few safety warnings. These have been circulated by all usual media.

I have updated the CNCC's Covid-19 guidance statement following launch of the 'Rule of Six'. I'll continue to monitor the applicability of this statement as the rules and regulations change.

Gary has completed and publicised the CNCC's mailing list for individual cavers to sign up to, and will soon have completed the email system we will use to communicate with them. It might make sense for only elected Officers to be able to send emails, but I can help compile content. This mailing list provides us with the opportunity to communicate direct with hundreds of cavers in a much more personal way than some other common forms of social media.

After a conversation with Jon Beavan, chair of the Local Access Forum, I have been planning an article on the work that was done last year to restore Crackpot Cave. This ticks a lot of boxes in terms of showcasing caving, and cavers proactively conserving the National Park. I'd like to try to get a significant piece into the National Park magazine (who I have contacted to put the idea forward) and failing that local press or other local media (suggestions welcome). On 26th September, myself and our Webmaster went to Crackpot Cave to take some top-notch photos of the splendid passages to support such an article. Hopefully this will provide a nice bit of PR to see us through these quieter times while fewer new conservation projects are happening.

I have been working with Mark Burkey, who as well as being a top cave photographer, also has access to a printer that can print quality photos at A3 or even A2 size. Furthermore he has given CNCC access to his photo gallery in Flickr. From this, and from other photographers, I have selected ten five shots which I feel will work best for general promotion of caving to a non-caving audience. Mark has kindly agreed to print these (I have suggested a few copies of each), and I plan to get them framed for distribution to venues across our region where they can be displayed to showcase caving. The cost of this should hopefully be fairly modest (does the CNCC Committee want to set a maximum budget?) and should be reclaimable from BCA under Publications and Information.

Additionally, I am currently drafting a 'media info' section for the website, which will include lots of FAQs, useful links, and a gallery of free-to-use photos for media use in promoting caving. Once again, I am thankful to Mark Burkey and Gary Douthwaite who have made their excellent photos at our disposal for this. I will pick a selection of suitable photos and get these online.

Josh is compiling the text for the next newsletter and Gary and I are happy to format this/lay it out in the usual way over the coming months. It would be great to get this out before Christmas.

I'm open to ideas for what more could be done to promote caving and better engage with cavers across our region.

I wish you all a happy and safe return to caving (law permitting) over Autumn and Winter.

Webmaster's Report - Gary Douthwaite

Since the last report in June, in addition to general website housekeeping, I have been working with Matt in his new position to keep publicity flowing on the website and on Social media as well as keeping the Covid-19 information as up to date as the situation changes.

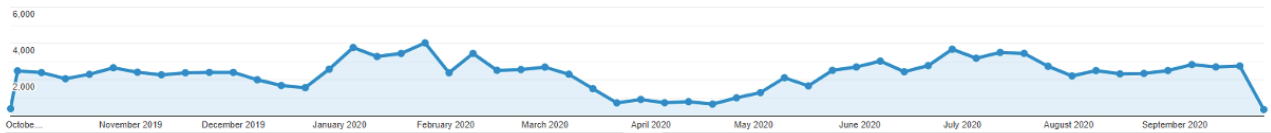
The new mailing list signup opened recently and received a great deal of interest quite quickly. To date around 150 people have signed up. I am working on construction of the back end to actually send out email to the list which should be ready in the next month or so. The idea is that those signed up will receive important updates and news as well as a monthly 'digest' of updates to access, descriptions, topos etc. Once some tests have been carried out with the those currently signed up it will be further advertised with an aim of having another avenue of communication with cavers. GDPR has been duly considered but as signup is totally voluntary as well as having an 'unsubscribe' option on every email this should not be a problem.

What 3 Words has now been added to almost every cave on the website as an additional form of reference. This has generally been supported by the rescue organisations.

Google Analytics (27 Sep 2019 to 27 Sep 2020)

Traffic to the website has increased following the lockdown and is receiving a steady amount of traffic. I have included the past 12 months page views (rather than the usual 4 months) as this allows a better comparison. I have also included some interesting demographic stats.

Pageviews



Gender: 68% male, 32% female

Age:

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
11.54%	25.87%	17.36%	18.54%	14.5%	12.2%

Facebook

As of 15 June 2020 we have 1127 page likes (+31 since last report on 15 June 2020) and 1219 followers (+41 since last report).

Page likes in the last 12 months.

Performance of recent Facebook posts (original content only, not shared posts, some omitted)...

Published	Subject	Reach (people)	Clicks	Reactions & Comments
28/09/2020	Take care if visiting Lancaster Hole	392	24	39
20/09/2020	Covid-19 update	450	123	21
14/09/2020	Extra care if visiting Boxhead Pot	393	100	10
03/09/2020	Newsletter signup	366	32	12
10/08/2020	What 3 Words	407	48	11
06/08/2020	Craven "Gaping-Gill-without-a-winch"	4500	484	300
30/07/2020	Video: repair of path on Ingleborough	901	95	32
21/07/2020	Rules on trespass	492	93	132
13/07/2020	New anchors and description for Toyland	1700	247	69

Twitter

As at 29 Sep 2020 we have 446 followers (+14 since last report on 15 Jun 2020).

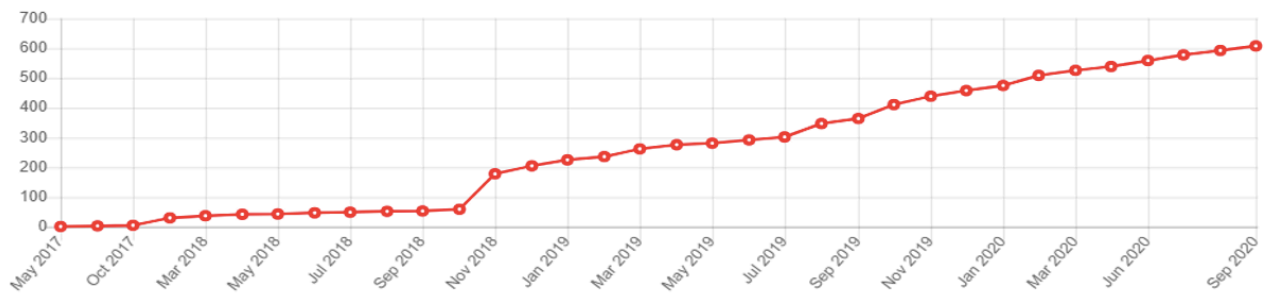
Online Booking System

- To date, there are **605 registered users** (+55 since last report) and **1625 individual bookings** have been made. This number includes 1355 approved bookings and 270 cancelled bookings.
- Of the users who specified gender there are **91 female** and **433 male**.
- The average age is **46.2** with the **youngest 17** and **oldest 79**.

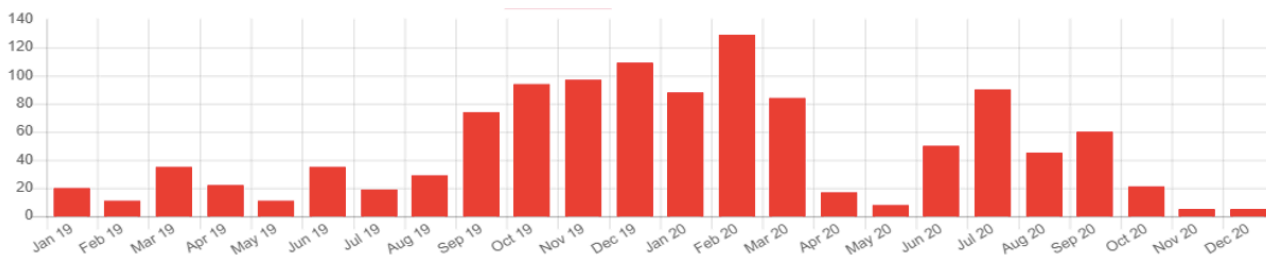
New registrations:



Total bookings:



Bookings count by month:



Media Download Statistics (to 28 Sep 2020)

	Total	Average / month	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20
Publications	6391	256	274	239	236
Topos	51970	2260	2597	2109	1981
Cave descriptions	41014	1783	2426	1741	1787

Top 5 media downloads (6 months to 28 Sep 2020)

Topos	Descriptions
Boggarts Roaring Holes (4.2%)	Alum Pot and Long Churn Caves (5.0%)
Valley Entrance – Toyland (4.2%)	Ease Gill Cavern (4.8%)
Lost Johns' Cave (3.5%)	Caves of Scotland (4.7%)
Notts Pot (3.0%)	Valley Entrance (4.7%)
Alum Pot (2.8%)	The Leck Fell Master Cave System (4.7%)

Addendum: Report from Grampian Speleological Group - Alan Jeffries

At the start of the outbreak of Covid all activity closed down. By June, individuals were conducting modest visits to caves in the Lothians, Perthshire and Argyll and by the summer small parties (four or less) were sporadically active. Our hut was closed until relaxed rules from the Scottish Executive allowed us to re-assess. It is currently only available to members, and even then under strict guidance rules (ie only one 'household' in residence at one time; we informed the local residents of this arrangement to maintain good public relations - it was well received).

As things stand now, we have several 'bubbles' of two, or at the most three, members who have good knowledge of isolation and social distancing of each other, who are active on a fairly regular basis, while solo outings continue throughout Scotland. No plans to open up our hut in Assynt any further for the foreseeable. As with others, the GSG accepted the £10,000 payment which will offset loss of hut revenue pro tem. Fortunately our current main thrust of exploration, in Applecross, is so remote that two local members are able to 'drive' work ahead with little hindrance.

At this time we have no information on the status of GUPA (Glasgow University Caving Club), but suspect it is dormant, with students either not attending Glasgow in person or being advised to isolate if they are. It is possible the GSG may provide nurturing skills in the future event of that club re-activating after the 'All clear'.

As to what happens in 2021: that is our 60th Jubilee, and plans for celebration are rather up in the air right now. Contact is maintained through regular Zoom meetings and internal email systems.