

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 June 2016

Editorial

Welcome to the fourth in this series of newsletters, with news on conservation, bolting and access in our region. There has been an impressive amount of work put into some of the items reported here; the efforts of the IC anchor team to make our favourite caves more accessible and safe, our Access Officer and Representative to help further our relations with the major estates, and the conservation team, who have been very active off the back of the Heritage Lottery funded collaboration reported in January (including projects which are not reported here). As usual, we are always happy to hear your thoughts on what more we could be doing, so please feel free to get in touch. Finally, we are only a month away from Eurospeleo; the organisers have put in enormous effort to bring this together, and I for one can't wait!

Matt Ewles (Editor)

**Next AGM: 11th March 2017, 10am
Hellifield Village Institute, Hellifield.**

Your CNCC

www.cncc.org.uk

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Representative for non-club cavers wanted

Each year, the CNCC elects a Committee from our pool of full member clubs. This Committee meets at least three times a year to discuss topical matters relating to conservation, access, training or anchor installation, and instruct the Officers on any necessary actions to improve northern caving.

Last year there was discussion about the lack of interaction we have with individuals who choose to cave outside of a traditional club structure. At our AGM this year, members voted to accept constitutional amendments to create a position for an individual caver (IC) to serve as a Committee member. Their remit is to attend meetings and represent those who regularly cave outside of clubs, and raise any matters on their behalf.

The IC representative position will be available for the first time at the 2017 AGM, and is open to any BCA member caver. Interested individuals must make their intentions to stand known to the Secretary eight weeks before the AGM (i.e. by 14th January 2017) by sending an email ideally with a supporting statement which will be circulated.

The IC representative will be elected by a majority vote of all Direct Individual Members of the BCA present at the meeting (and not by a vote of the attending clubs). This mechanism of election may change in due course with changes to BCA terminology; however, the aim will always be to try to ensure (as best

as we possibly can) that non-club cavers are given the opportunity to elect their representative.

We do not have a mailing list of all BCA Direct Individual Members, however all the information you will need to know (including a list of the applicants) will be available on the CNCC website meetings page at least six weeks before the AGM.

We hope that this new position will be taken up by an individual who is passionate about northern caving, and keen to make a difference to help make the CNCC a more fully representative body.

Outcomes of Annual General Meeting 5th March 2016

This year was perhaps one of the most efficient AGMs ever. The CNCC Officers team remains unchanged as nobody new put themselves forward for any of the roles. The Committee has seen the departure of two very long serving northern clubs, but has been joined by the Northern Pennine Club. We also accepted two new full member clubs. All the other matters discussed are reported separately in this newsletter, including Birks Fell Cave and the changes to our constitution regarding individual cavers. Tim Allen delivered an update on the status of the BCA CRoW campaign, which the CNCC Committee voted in January to support. The draft minutes are now available on our website.

Changes to the Yorkshire Dales National Park



On the 1st August the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary extension comes into effect, increasing the size of the park by nearly a quarter. Although the name remains unchanged, the park boundaries now extend

through Lancashire and further into Cumbria than before. The increased National Park area was designated to cover further stunning landscapes and increased recreational opportunities and now includes the fabulous caves of Leck and Casterton Fells.

With this in mind Tim Allen, on behalf of CNCC, attended a meeting of the Yorkshire Dales NP Local Access Forum to give a short presentation. This included updating forum members on caving matters, raising awareness of access issues and offering assistance where it may be appropriate.

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The National Park Authorities are focused on the considerable task of taking over statutory requirements, however, caving is a key recreational activity in the park and it is essential to keep caving matters on the radar, and this was successful. One of the key statutory purposes of any National Park is to “*promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public*”. In this respect the Yorkshire Dales NP understand caving and are supportive of cavers, therefore the CNCC will continue to foster these good relationships.

Furthermore, Defra have recently published an ‘8-point plan action plan’ for the National Parks. Point 8 of this plan is to “*realise the immense potential for outdoor recreation in National Parks*” and caving is even specifically mentioned. In light of the ongoing BCA CRoW campaign this is an encouraging sign that Defra acknowledge the importance of caving in the National Parks. This plan is something to work on over the next five years to help ensure that our sport is promoted to the benefit of our clubs and institutions, alongside the improved conservation messages which the CNCC are helping to deliver.

Discussions with Leck, Casterton and Ingleborough Estates



In May a meeting took place between the owners of Leck, Casterton and Ingleborough Estates, co-ordinated by Tim Allen acting on behalf of the CNCC. The action was fully supported by the CNCC Access Officer and Secretary. The meeting was the result of a lot of preliminary work and was the first time that these three major caving estates had been brought together in one place to discuss access. The advance application permit systems of these estates are the cause of some frustration amongst cavers and this was one of many points of discussion.

Other topics covered included cave geography and statistics, current permit arrangements, landowner indemnity insurance, current problems and possible improvements, changes in caver demographics, CRoW and other access arrangements in the Dales. The meeting had an honest dialog and lasted two and a half hours. Andrew Hinde also attended the meeting in his role as a Natural England Cave Conservation Advisor. Andrew informed the owners of the SSSI Cave Monitoring Project and the work of the conservation volunteers which impressed all around the table. This was an opening dialog and provides a starting point for further efforts to see if improvements to access can be made in these areas.

Birks Fell Cave: A forgotten gem in Wharfedale?

In the January 2016 newsletter we reported on an increased open season for Birks Fell Cave. More recently, at our AGM, Birks Fell once again came in for considerable discussion, mostly regarding the number of permit applications, which has decreased substantially since the early 1980s.

We thought it would be interesting to promote some statistics on this (see the chart below), particularly to emphasise that there are ample permits available throughout the

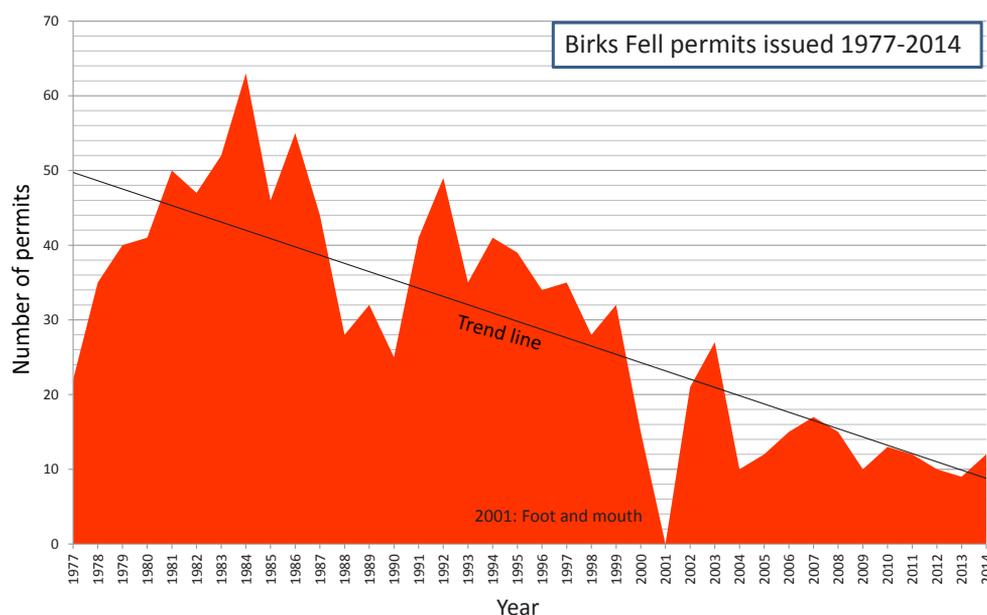
year except March and April due to lambing. These statistics also mirror similar trends for the Stump Cross Caverns area too. Permits can now be obtained by email and may be available at reasonably short notice, although advanced booking is always preferred. Please see the details on the CNCC website.

Birks Fell Cave is an excellent trip, but visits are often rained-off due to the flood-prone nature of the entrance crawls. However, do not let this put you off applying for permits for

your club, and hopefully the weather will be kind for one of them.

To make matters even better, as reported elsewhere in this newsletter, IC anchors have now been installed, making the previously very difficult to rig Shale Pitch much safer.

Mike Cooper’s book ‘Not for the Faint Hearted’ has an excellent description of Birks Fell, which contains the proclamation that “*cavers who get bored in Birks Fell Cave should begin the search for a different leisure interest*”. Although subjective, this seems an understandable statement given the variety, adventure and real sense of journey Birks Fell Cave has on offer.



Fairy Holes

At the time of writing, permits for Fairy Holes in Weardale for August to December 2016 are still available (first Saturday of each month). This is unusual for what is usually a very popular trip. If your club is interested in taking one of these permits, email Ric Halliwell as per details on CNCC website. The CNCC will continue to work to sustain caver access for 2017 and beyond, but the situation here is regularly changing and is requiring considerable efforts. We are sure that after a trip to Fairy Holes, you will agree these efforts are altogether worthwhile.

Slab Cave Recovering

Colt Park, Ingleborough



This short stream cave on the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve had a ramshackle cover of slate boskins balanced on tree roots and sky hooks (see picture above). A health and safety audit on the Reserve (by Kay and Edward Easton) identified this as a hazard to livestock and visitors.

Funding from the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (Stories in Stone) and expert labour from CNCC volunteers have



worked over a three day period in May to put a new stock proof cover over the open rift entrance.

The new cover will survive 500kg cattle/cavers standing on it (hopefully). It looks a bit brutalist at present (see picture below), but it will soon develop a thick covering of moss. It has been suggested that it be renamed Patio Cave or Septic Tank Cave! Some further landscaping will ease it into the background.

Many thanks to the volunteers;

Pete Monk, Tony Bog Brown, Andy Farrow, Tim Sullivan, Ged Benn, Pete Bann



Access to the cave remains a climb down at the south end of the Bunker.

Cleaning up of abandoned digs

As part of our on-going conservation efforts, the CNCC is planning to get more involved in the clean-up of abandoned surface digs across our region over coming years as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership project with Heritage Lottery funding.

We would very much like to hear about any abandoned surface digs or untidy cave entrances where work to restore the surface to a tidy state may be required. In particular, we are keen to hear about any such sites on Ingleborough (all areas/fells), as this will be the first area of attention. However, we would welcome details of any sites across our region that might benefit from attention.

Perhaps you have been out walking and spotted a messy abandoned dig with old buckets, scaffolding or rotten boarding? Or maybe you stumbled upon one while looking for a different cave? Maybe you know of some shakeholes full of rubbish? Alternatively, does your club have some old abandoned digs that you never quite got round to tidying up properly and which you feel the CNCC could provide you with some support to tidy up?

If you have any information please get in touch with our Conservation Officer.

conservation@cncc.org.uk

First aid training

On 31st March the CNCC conservation volunteers, along with several other cavers taking advantage of available spaces, enjoyed a day of First Aid at Work training, with an emphasis on working around a cave environment. This brings the volunteers training up to date, ahead of what is sure to be a very productive few years following the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership Heritage Lottery fund award (see January 2016 newsletter).

Bolting News

Ohce Pot – An alternative to Echo Aven to reach The Wormway in Ease Gill Caverns

We have been contacted by Ray Duffy and Sam Lieberman who, on 13th December 2015 finished installation of IC anchors to allow a new route to bypass Echo Aven in Ease Gill Caverns, for cavers doing a through-trip from the Stake Pot to Link/Pippikin/Mistral side of the system.

Description:

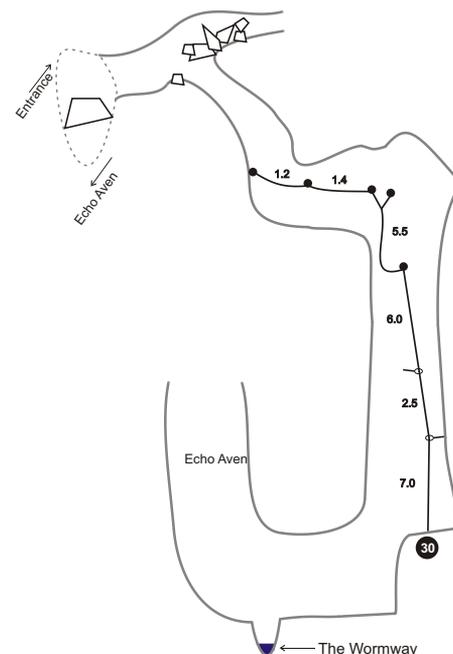
Following the normal route to Echo Aven in Link Pot, the crawl from Hylton Hall joins Echo Crawl at a T-junction. From this junction, the normal route heads downstream and a climb over large boulders in the streamway is made. At this point a small passage on the left leads to two smaller passages on the right. The furthest passage loops back to the Echo Aven passage but the first one climbs down a dry stone walled entrance and then a small vadose stream passage for a few metres to Ohce Pot.

Gearing up can be easily done at the dry stone walling and although the pitch is a little tight at the top it soon opens up to a fine hang. The passage takes a small stream, which in very wet conditions hits a small ledge a few metres below the Y-hang. If this is spraying water everywhere then be assured that you don't want to be in The Wormway (we have been there during recent floods and although it's usually only a trickle, it can get unpleasant).

The pitch lands on a fine ledge from where a short free climb down huge boulders can be made to the foot of Echo Aven and on to The Wormway. The route is shorter, faster and much easier than Echo Aven, with much better communication and better places to hide from the draught and spray than Echo Aven itself. It has a rope in situ and may become the normal route in due time for the reasons above.

Ray Duffy

Tackle: 30m rope (in situ)



A busy year for the IC anchor team

Those of you who read Descent magazine will see in the recent issue (250: June/July 2016) the excellent ongoing work of the IC anchor team. The following is a summary of work undertaken by the team (Simon Wilson, Sam Allshorn and several others) over the last year. Reference, where specified, should be made to Descent for full information, and the IC anchor website (www.resinanchor.co.uk) where many of the rigging topos are available to download.

Fountains Fell: Gingling Hole and FOUL Pot

The team has completed anchor installations in Gingling Hole, including both Big Pitch and Big Rift routes, making this splendid Fountains Fell classic safer and more accessible. The rigging topo is on the IC anchor website. Work to install anchors is complete in FOUL Pot too. This is an outstanding but not well known deep pothole, 116m down the dry valley from Echo Pot (but nowhere near as difficult), with some fine pitches and engaging situations. The completed topo will be published shortly.

Birks Fell Cave

Anchors have been installed on Cascade and Shale Pitches in Birks Fell Cave. For more details, see Descent, but in summary 15m rope for first pitch, 17m for Cascade and 35m for Shale. Note that this is an increase on the lengths specified in the book 'Not for the Faint Hearted'. These installations are particularly welcomed by this newsletter editor who has been as far as Shale Pitch on two occasions, only to have to turn around due to rusted spits, unsafe naturals, and a respect for gravity.

Ingleborough: Rift Pot and Stream Passage Pot

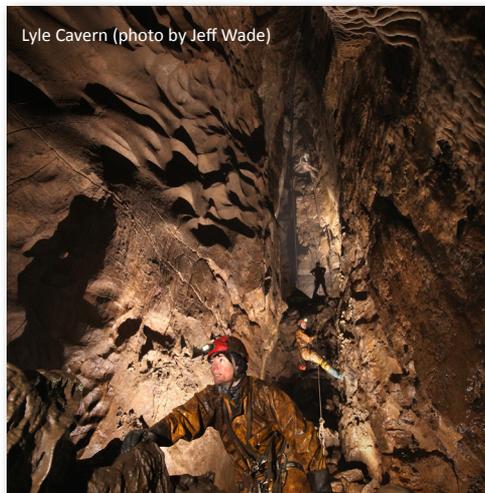
Since the major work to fully IC anchor Rift Pot on the Ingleborough Allotment over a year ago, a few more anchors have been installed here. Previously in wet conditions many cavers would descend the (much looser) Yorkshire Ramblers route to allow a drier descent, due to lots of spray from the Long Kin East water on the main shaft pitch. The additional anchors allow a hang further out on the main shaft, away from the water, and require only a few extra metres of rope. The rigging guide on the IC anchor website has been updated. This is an excellent choice of trip for wet weather conditions.

During the recent BPC winchmeet, Simon Wilson and Bob Riley undertook replacement of the prototype PECO anchors in Stream Passage Pot which were due for decommissioning. A total

of eight anchors have been removed using the anchor removal tool. They have been replaced (using the same hole to help with conservation) with IC anchors.

Leck Fell/Masongill: Boxhead Pot, Cupcake and Lost Johns' Cave

The team has completed supplementary installations at Boxhead Pot main pitch. These new anchors provide a slightly alternative route to that of the existing resin anchors, with additional deviations at the top, meaning the rope can be kept further from the water in wet conditions. The rigging topo, as well as the topo for Long Drop Cave and It's a Cracker (both of which are earlier Leck Fell locations to benefit from IC anchors) can be found on the IC anchor website. Cavers are advised to take care on the boulder slope above the Boxhead Pot main pitch, which is currently being monitored. One of the original DMM anchors is now out of reach due to movement here, and more anchors will be installed at a later date when it becomes clearer where they are needed.



Lyle Cavern (photo by Jeff Wade)

Work is also ongoing in Lost Johns' Cave, with new anchors installed on Lyle Cavern Pitch and the calcite climb below. New stainless steel maillions will be placed at the top of Lyle Cavern soon, and possibly a new fixed rope in due course.

Sam Allshorn has placed IC anchors to allow an excellent alternative to Dome Pitch. A full rigging topo for Lost Johns' is currently in production and should be available soon on the IC anchor website.

Finally, the Cupcake on Leck Fell has recently been fully fitted with anchors and a complete rigging topo and description can be found in Descent.

Rift Pot (Masongill)

A number of anchors have now been installed in Rift Pot (near Marble Steps) on Route 66, allowing a more pleasant dry hang to Coates Cavern. Ropes required: 20m (first pitch), 20+45m (Route 66 to Coates Cavern). See Descent for more details.

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to Sam Allshorn and Simon Wilson for providing this information. They have passed on personal thanks to the many people who have helped with these projects, carrying the bolting gear, measuring ropes, and often getting very cold while the anchors are installed, so that the wider caving community can enjoy safe resin anchors for years to come.

Want to get involved?

Being involved in the CNCC can take many forms.

Full membership:

Full member clubs of the CNCC can vote at our AGM, and receive email notifications of any matters that the CNCC becomes aware of that may affect northern caving (and log into the CNCC website). If your club is not already a full member (you can find a list on our website), you can contact our Secretary for information on how to apply.

Officer:

Our officers work hard to perform the day to day functions of the CNCC, advise, and carry out the wishes of the Committee. This is a real chance to make a big difference to northern caving, and anyone interested should contact our Secretary for more information.

Committee:

Each year up to fourteen of our full member clubs are elected to the Committee, who then meet at least three times a year to work in the best interests of our member clubs and northern cavers. If your club is already a full member and you are interested in standing for the Committee, please contact our Secretary for more information.

You can get lots more information on the CNCC website as well as signing up online to become a member club:

www.cncc.org.uk/getinvolved

Contact: secretary@cncc.org.uk

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www.eurospeleo.org



Unless you have been underground 24/7 for the last several months, you will be aware that in August (13-20th) the Yorkshire Dales is hosting Eurospeleo 2016. This international festival of caving now has nearly 1000 delegates signed up and promises to be a week to remember. The website now has bespoke

descriptions for all the caves that will be rigged for the week, as well as a list of all the events that have been submitted so far. We already have a long list of science, technology and exploration talks, guided walks and field trips, workshops and more. If you haven't already got your ticket now really is the time to get one. You may have missed the initial discounts, but a reduced rate compared to the on-the-door price is still available and camping prices have remained at only £10 for the entire week, so it is still a very cheap summer holiday!