

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6 Aug 2017

Editorial

It's probably fair to say that the last six months has seen several excellent initiatives that benefit northern caving. As well as having identified a way forward for anchor installation in our region, we have made progress towards a new system of cave access that we hope will modernise and simplify access to three of our major fells. Conservation projects have continued, not only through the CNCC and Stories in Stone scheme, but through independent groups organising their own projects, which is great to see. I'm sure you'll agree that these are all encouraging signs that the caving community in our region is thriving. You'll find all this news and more reported below; however, to keep completely up to date, please follow us on Facebook.

Matt Ewles (Editor)

Next AGM: 10th March 2018, 10am
Hellfield Village Institute, Hellfield.

Your CNCC

www.cncc.org.uk

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Changes to the CNCC team

At our AGM in March, we welcomed three new Officers to the CNCC team. Andrew Hinde has taken over from Roy Holmes as Chairman, Tim Allen has taken over from Johnny Latimer as Access Officer, and Marion (Maz) Holloway has become our new Training Officer. We have also welcomed three new clubs to the Committee.

We encourage all clubs who are regularly active in northern caving, to be a CNCC full member as this gives you a democratic vote at our General Meetings (typically one each year), and enables us to consult you by email on matters of relevance to northern caving. This is a simple way that your club can proactively support our work and contribute ideas to what we can be doing in the future. Information/FAQs, and a list of our existing full member clubs can be found on our website.

Non-club cavers are also strongly encouraged to get involved either by coming along to our meetings or getting in touch with the CNCC Officers to discuss your thoughts.



Andrew Hinde
Chairman

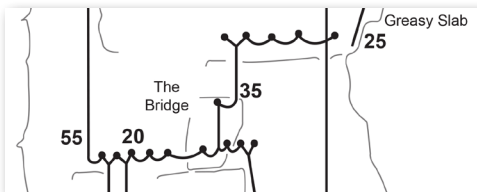


Maz Holloway
Training Officer



Tim Allen
Access Officer

Cave descriptions and topos



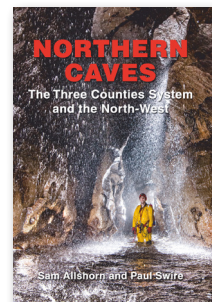
The addition last December of rigging topos and cave descriptions to the CNCC website has proved extremely popular. From early December 2016 to the end of June this year, rigging topos have been downloaded over 15000 times, and cave descriptions have been downloaded over 8000 times!

In the last few months, descriptions for Christmas Pot, Grange Rigg Pot, Washfold Pot, Hensler's Pot and Hagg Gill Pot have been added.

Have you spotted an error with a description or topo? Please tell us by using the reporting tool on the website or by emailing our Secretary. Perhaps your favourite cave doesn't yet have a CNCC route description and you'd like to write one? If so then please get in touch.

The updated and revised Northern Caves

The Three Counties System and the North-West (2017) has been sent to the printers. It's 472 pg full colour. It will be priced at around £30 excluding postage and packaging. Details of the launch and how to buy the book will soon be available on: www.northerncaves.co.uk



Penyghent Pot entrance restoration



Earlier this year, the 5m scaffolded entrance to Penyghent Pot was reported to be unstable. Initial pinning efforts helped stabilise things temporarily (using an ingenious method of weaving the blocks together with metal bars). However, after further monitoring of the situation, it became apparent in July that more substantial and urgent action was required. Work commenced in earnest.

The first job was to stabilise some very large loose blocks further down the shaft. This was done by installing concrete lintels for them to sit on, which involved considerable effort not only to get them up onto the fell, but to then lower them down the shaft and fix them in position. The following day, work began on removal of the old scaffolding from the upper 3m of the shaft. Much of it was in a bad state and had to be cut out with a grinder. Despite its age, this scaffolding was still weight-bearing and so removal required the installation of temporary braces to stop the shaft from collapsing. Installation of a new scaffold frame could then begin.

The scaffolding and surface landscaping was completed on 6th August, and a new mesh lid was fitted to make the cave entrance sheep-proof and safe. We expect that over the course of a few years the blockwork around the top of the shaft will grow over with moss and look more natural.

Continued inside...

...continued from front

Anyone visiting Penyghent Pot is strongly advised to pay particular attention and to check for loose rocks on the descent. Despite best efforts, there may still be some loose debris, or more rocks may become loose as the new structure beds itself in. You must make your own judgement as to whether it is safe and appropriate to descend.



Please report any observations to the CNCC and check for warnings of such observations on the Penyghent Pot webpage before any trips.

Many thanks to those who have put in work (in some pretty rotten weather at times), including volunteers from ULSA, NPC, BPC and the CNCC. The project was performed as part of Stories in Stone, and was kindly funded by Mike Cooper from sales of 'Not for the Faint Hearted'.



Surveys on the CNCC website

In the last few months our webmaster has created the function to add cave surveys to the website.

Surveys will appear in the information page for each listed cave. At the moment, we have only a very limited selection available, as we are reliant on clubs/individuals giving us permission to use their surveys, but we hope to increase the numbers over coming months. An example of how surveys will appear on our website can currently be seen for Excalibur Pot in the North York Moors.

If you or your club would be happy to have any of your surveys of northern caves presented for all to enjoy on the CNCC website please get in touch with our webmaster (webmaster@cncc.org.uk). We can work with you to make these available, including providing advice on digitising paper surveys.

New awards for northern exploration

At the time of writing, the CNCC has been made aware of a new privately funded scheme called Northern England Caving Awards For Exploration (NECAFE), which is due to launch in September. We understand that the awards will be presented annually to any club, group of friends, or individual for original exploration in the CNCC region over the preceding three years. Although the awards will be judged on several factors, we are particularly pleased to see that one of the key judging decisions will be based on the efforts of the original explorers to ensure future conservation of their find. Watch out for more information in due course.

Access

Caving and the National Park

In March, the CNCC Access Officer, Tim Allen, attended a Cave and Crag Access Group meeting at the National Park offices in Grassington. This is a subgroup of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Access Forum, established as a requirement under the CRoW legislation. This is a good opportunity to network and to keep caving and cave access on the National Park agenda, particularly as they are beginning the process of writing a new Management Plan. Tim is involved in discussions on how we can see caves, caving and the CNCC more involved in this Management Plan, and what we might be able to offer. This is likely to involve promoting the benefits of caving to the National Parks.

New owners of Braida Garth

Following the sale of Braida Garth farm in Kingsdale, Tim visited the new tenants, Tom and Lucy, to explain the significance of the caves and access to them. They were extremely friendly and seemed happy to continue with current arrangements. If you are wishing to visit any of the East Kingsdale caves above Braida Garth Farm (including the King Pot and Vesper Pot vicinity), please make a courtesy call on-route to ask permission.

The BCA CRoW campaign

The CNCC has taken a supportive stance towards the BCA campaign to have caving recognised as a permissible activity on CRoW designated land. At the BCA AGM on 11th June, Tim delivered the CNCC vote of support to see barriers to the CRoW campaign removed from the BCA constitution. This motion was overwhelmingly passed, and these constitutional changes must now go to a ballot of all BCA members. Watch out for your ballot papers arriving by email or post. If accepted, this will conclude once and for all that the BCA has no constitutional impediment to campaigning for CRoW to apply for caving. Of course, this is only the beginning of what could be a long journey!

Moving towards an online booking system for cave access

During recent efforts to try to improve access, the landowners for Ingleborough, Leck Fell and Casterton Fell have requested the continuation of managed caver access to their land. For decades, the CNCC has acted as an intermediate between cavers and landowners to facilitate this managed access through the issuing of permits.

NewToCaving.com

This new website provides a wealth of inspirational material and information for anyone interested in trying caving for the first time in the UK, whether this be through a club, via instructed caving, or just as an enthusiastic bunch of individuals.

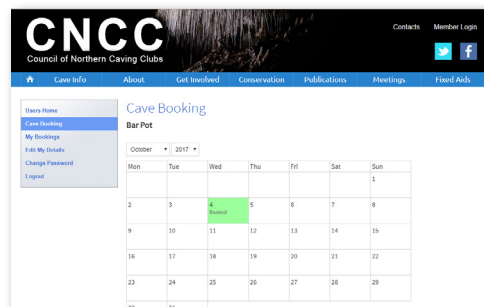


Clubs who are proactive about recruiting novices are encouraged to contact the website administrators to get yourself added as a contact. Alternatively, if you cannot accommodate novice cavers, then this website provides a great place that you can direct them towards to help them find all the information they need to get started.

The permit system has adapted over the years; our permit secretaries now administer these electronically, so gone are the days of sending letters with extensive advanced notice. The number of permits available has increased in most areas, and more recently we have included access for non-club individual cavers wherever new agreements have been negotiated. Furthermore, many caves such as those around Little Hull Pot, Fountains Fell and Washfold Pot have been brought out of permit-based access agreements in favour of a simple courtesy call or completely open access.

Despite the recent improvements, the current permit system on the three key estates has many flaws and is becoming inappropriate for modern caving practices and expectations. The system fails a large number of responsible cavers who are not in clubs, or who are not BCA members. The result of this is a missed opportunity to engage with these cavers, and barriers to participation in our sport, which is not the message we want to give.

The need for a permit secretary means that last minute bookings, for example, due to a weather related change of plan, or simply a spontaneous decision to go caving, may not be possible. It must be said that many of our permit secretaries do deal with very last-minute permit requests; but this should never be relied upon; permit secretaries have lives outside of issuing permits!



Furthermore, there is an increasing expectation for the CNCC to show due-diligence in alerting cavers to any known 'non-standard' dangers associated to the caves for which it helps administer access (e.g. recent rockfalls), and ensuring cavers are reminded of safety messages regarding the use of anchors and other fixed aids. The current system fails to properly tie together the issuing of access with alerting cavers to this critical information.

With these matters in mind, the CNCC is pursuing a dramatic change to the way access is administered. The new system that we are developing is an online calendar based booking system. This will be open to all cavers, with much greater flexibility and ease of use, and will satisfy the requirements of the land-

owners for managed access. Furthermore, it will be a more modern system that will allow access to be booked automatically (and from your smartphone immediately before your trip), and will allow you to see which potholes/caves are currently 'free' that day, helping to spread caver traffic (with conservation and safety benefits). The system will also interface directly with any warnings or important information on the CNCC website that we, or the landowner believes visiting groups for that cave should be aware of during their trip.

Currently, Ingham and Yorke who manage Ingleborough Estate have had extremely positive discussions with our Access Officer, Tim, and have agreed to review such a system. We hope that if Ingleborough Estate support this, so too will the owners of Leck and Casterton Fells.

The system is currently being developed by our webmaster, Gary Douthwaite. This is a major programming undertaking, involving writing bespoke systems (rather than off-the-shelf software) to cope with multiple users and a live booking diary which

interfaces directly with the CNCC website. Thankfully, Gary is a professional web designer (he works for the CNCC for free). Tim is currently testing the first draft of the system and once this is finished we hope to be able to demonstrate the final draft to Ingham and Yorke this Autumn.

The idea of electronically managed cave access was originally raised in our first newsletter (December 2014). Nearly three years on, we are almost there! Follow the CNCC on Facebook or keep an eye on our website homepage newsfeed for more updates.

Conservation

Great Douk Cave

The 3rd of July saw a group of volunteers, organised by the CNCC Conservation Officer, turn up to install a tube into the dig at the bottom of the Great Douk entrance shakehole. Having commenced in 1969, the Great Douk dig is one of the oldest digs in the Dales, but was becoming unstable, and presented a hazard to visitors to the cave.



The team consisted of Fred Rattray, Dave Allenach, Andy Farrow, Edward Easton and Rowan Worsman. Andrew Hinde and Ged Benn had been to Colt Park to load up the vans with all the equipment required, and this was ferried down to the site.

There was white and brown water issuing from Skirwith Cave and the other springs from the fell. Obviously there had been a great downpour, which made it especially challenging to get the vans to the site. There was also a substantial amount of water coming out of Great Douk, some of which was going down the dig, so the team were kept busy building dams to divert the water away.

The shaft was accessed by two fixed ladders which were later removed. Dave, who was involved in the original dig in 1969, had quite a few stories to tell! The job entailed fixing scaffolding poles in the shaft to enable a platform to be made which would house the tube, and fixing this in place with cement. Once this was done, the cement needed to set, so everyone headed back to Colt Park, unloaded the vans and enjoyed a well-deserved brew.



Work continued on the 6th of July, with Rowan, Ged, Fred and Dave being joined by Terry Devaney and Tim Sullivan. The new entrance pipe was carried into the shakehole where the cement and scaffold shaft was ready for it. The pipe was then inserted into the shaft and it took a little bit of persuasion to allow it to sit right. Then concrete had to be mixed and put round the pipe to hold it in place. The protruding scaffolding poles were then cut flush with the ground. A lid was made and placed over before stones were piled on top to hide the entrance. The high standard of the work should not only preserve the dig, but make it safe for the many visitors that Great Douk receives each year.

This is an abbreviated version of a more detailed report by Rowan Worsman, which can be found on the CNCC website conservation section.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Stories in Stone

This project is part of Stories in Stone, a scheme of conservation and community projects concentrated on the Ingleborough area. The scheme was developed by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership, led by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. To date, 78 individual CNCC volunteers have worked on 11 conservation projects over 18 months under the Stories in Stone project – a fantastic effort!

Tree planting at Wilson's Cave

Volunteers from the Bradford and Craven Pothole Clubs and Natural England, assisted by funding from the Stories in Stone scheme, have planted over 250 trees and shrubs around the Wilson's Cave area, including native British species, such as hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn and buckthorn. This is part of a wider initiative to restore areas of the National Park to conditions pre-dating the influence of deforestation and sheep/cattle grazing, to help preserve native species of plants and wildlife.

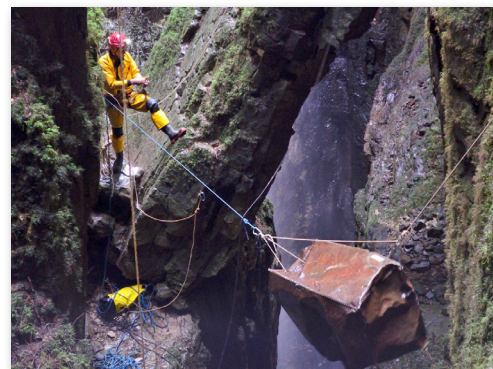
Alum Pot metal tank removed

At the start of March, a post on UKCaving by Mark Sims asked about the origin and history of the large metal tub, probably an old water tank, next to the Alum/Diccan Pot sump. It became clear that this has been there since at least the 1970s, although quite how it came to be down there was unknown.

Research and consultation with Natural England by Mark concluded that the tank was rubbish, so over the Easter weekend, Mark, along with members of the Buttered Badgers, Tim and Jane Allen, and other volunteers visited Alum pot to try to remove it. The weight of the tank had been estimated to be around

150kg (once it was emptied of cobbles and sand), so this was going to be a serious project!

With the hefty weight in mind, a 12" petrol Stihl saw was taken underground to cut the tank into pieces. However, once at the bottom, on reflection, the team decided it would be much more fun, and potentially safer, to take the tank out intact instead. Several punctured holes provided a belay for wire strops, which allowed the tank to be dragged most of the way to daylight, but putting up quite a fight! Friday's work concluded with the tank sat at the top of the short pitch at the bottom of Alum Pot. All that was left for Saturday was to haul it the 80m to the surface.



On the Saturday, numerous sporting cavers were making their way into the cave by every conceivable entrance. Great care was required to keep the hauling operation and the sports trips separate but everyone was extremely patient. The bottom section was a straight haul up to the underside of the bridge using a tag line at the bottom to keep it clear of the wall. The tank was then transferred onto a cross haul from an anchor slightly higher up and from one of the traverse anchors in the washed-out bedding. A few further manoeuvres and it was sat on top of The Bridge. From here it was a big pull up to the surface using a 5:1 advantage hauling system.

A more thorough write-up (from which this abbreviated article is adapted) with some excellent photos can be found on UK Caving Forum (Dales section, started 18th April 2017). This was not a CNCC project, but instead an excellent example of local cavers showing the initiative to integrate cave conservation into their annual events, and having a great time doing it. The CNCC are very grateful to all involved, including CAN Geotechnical for the loan of lots of the equipment.

Want to get involved?

Have you seen a cave, or cave entrance in need of conservation works? Or perhaps you are interested in signing up to our mailing list of conservation volunteers? Either way, all the information you need plus online submission and signup forms can be found in the conservation pages of the CNCC website. Alternatively, contact our Conservation Officer (conservation@cncc.org.uk) for details.

Anchors

The future for northern cave anchor installation



Spanning three decades, the CNCC Technical Group were endorsed to install stainless steel resin bonded anchors in northern caves. They oversaw installations in many of the most popular potholes, replacing older spits which were starting to become unserviceable. Their work was published in the CNCC Rigging Guides and their extremely familiar and popular rigging topos are now available on our website and as a compilation in the recent book 'Northern Caving' (Les Sykes, 2015).

The CNCC Technical Group have always been independent from the CNCC (despite their name). In 2014, their work slowed down partly due to some issues with a recent batch of anchors (which were supplied in the wrong grade of stainless steel) and issues sourcing other satisfactory anchors.

At about this time, Simon Wilson was working on developing the IC anchor, an alternative laser-cut stainless steel anchor with practical and conservation benefits over the traditional P-type resin anchors based on the need for a smaller hole to be drilled. In 2015, the IC anchor was designated as the CNCC's preferred anchor owing partly to the conservation benefits.

The IC anchor group has operated independently from (but endorsed by) the CNCC since 2015 up to the present day. They have installed anchors in a number of potholes across our region including (Old) Rift Pot, It's a Cracker, Long Drop, Large Pot Red Herring Series, Birks Fell Cave, Car Pot, FOUL Pot, Ginging Hole and several others. Much of this work has been personally funded by the IC anchor team, but now that the scheme is becoming more active, and the demands for anchor installation are increasing, this is no longer sustainable.

Over the last year the CNCC has discussed on a few occasions bringing anchor installation within the Council, rather than endorsing an independent group. It was clear that many cavers already (mistakenly) believed this to be the case. In fact, it is a recommendation of the BCA Equipment and Techniques anchor policy that Regional Councils do take an involvement in anchor placement.

Ahead of our 2017 AGM, a suggestion was put forward by Simon Wilson to make this happen. This includes the expenditure of up to £3900 to purchase approximately 650 commercially produced, CNCC-owned IC stainless steel resin anchors for use in our region. We voted unanimously in favour of accepting this suggestion. The BCA Equipment and Techniques group have agreed to assist funding up to approximately half the total cost, the remainder being from CNCC funds. We also appointed Simon to coordinate the anchor scheme in our region.

Work is now ongoing to bring this to fruition and more news will follow. These are the first steps in

revitalising CNCC-sponsored anchor installation in our region, and will go on to include appointment of at least one additional installation trainer, and additional anchor installers as required.

These exciting changes will help support anchor installation in our region for the immediate future.

Remember though that the anchor scheme is not always about installing new anchors. Much of it is about keeping track of existing anchors. Cavers are strongly encouraged to report any anchors that they deem defective through the CNCC website so that information about unsatisfactory anchors can be collected to help us plan for longer term initiatives. Remember that it is a requirement that all users of resin anchors inspect every anchor before use and make your own informed decision as to whether they are satisfactory for use. Lots of information on how to inspect anchors and report unsatisfactory ones can be found on our website: www.cncc.org.uk/fixed-aids

Resin anchors for Large Pot, Red Herring Series

The Red Herring Series of Large Pot is often overlooked in favour of the more popular P-anchored route departing the stream and descending via Colossus towards the Rift Pot connection. This may be set to change. Not only is the Red Herring Series featured in Mike Cooper's excellent book 'Not for the Faint Hearted', but Sam Allshorn reports that the route is now (as of March 2017) equipped with IC resin anchors. A rigging guide/topo can be found in Descent 255 (p12) and will hopefully also soon appear on the CNCC website. Visitors beware; an extremely restricted pitch-head a short distance below the entrance makes Large Pot extremely demanding. The lower sections of the Red Herring route become hazardous or impassable in wet conditions.

Resin anchors for Car Pot

Car Pot near Gaping Gill was listed by Des Marshall and Donald Rust in 'Selected Caves'. More recently, it also appeared in 'Not for the Faint Hearted'. It certainly seems to be one of the more well-known of the classic tight Yorkshire potholes. Thanks to further efforts by Sam Allshorn and a team of (presumably quite thin) assistants, Car Pot now also benefits from IC resin anchors. A rigging guide/topo can be found in Descent 256 (p8) and will hopefully also soon appear on the CNCC website. Prospective visitors should ensure they research the physical demands of this trip, and be aware that dry and settled weather is needed due to potential flooding in Baptistry Crawl and the lower pitches.

Anchors replaced in Bull Pot

Following reports of several loose anchors in Bull Pot, an inspection was performed early this year and 13 of the original P-type anchors were found to be unsatisfactory. In March, these were removed and 10 new IC resin anchors were installed to replace them. A new rigging topo (covering the very slightly amended anchor placements) has been published on our website, which replaces the original 'CNCC Rigging Guide' topo. Rope lengths from the original topo are still suitable for the new anchors.

Training

Training survey

Our new Training Officer, Maz Holloway has created a survey to gather your thoughts on what training opportunities the CNCC should be offering.



This should only take a few minutes to complete and we would be very grateful if as many northern cavers as possible could participate. The survey principally captures information such as what kind of training events you, or your club might be interested in, to help us build a general picture of the training needs and wishes of northern cavers.

If you feel that you are able offer training for the CNCC (spanning a wide variety of areas, from SRT skills, rigging, surveying, photography, cave science, first aid, amongst others), please tell us.

You can find the survey at: www.cncc.org.uk/training-survey

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 and a representative for non-club cavers 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 you are interested in standing for the Committee, please contact our Secretary for more information.

Find more information at:

www.cncc.org.uk/getinvolved

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