

NEWSLETTER

Issue 7 February 2018

Editorial

The end of 2017 saw an outwardly quiet period for the CNCC, which did not portray the amount of work going on behind the scenes. Perhaps one of the largest ongoing initiatives is the online booking system. Getting landowners on board, and developing the IT infrastructure are not simple tasks, but we report here some very encouraging progress. In parallel, the move towards a more progressive attitude to access has become a central focus over the past six months and is demonstrated by the news here about Penyghent and Dale Head. The new anchor scheme is also gaining momentum and evolving. Things are changing rapidly, and for the better, and this is thanks to hard work of various contributors as well as the productive collaboration the CNCC has created.

Matt Ewles (Editor)

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

Your CNCC

www.cncc.org.uk

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More cave descriptions and rigging topos

Based on download statistics, the availability of rigging topos and cave descriptions on the CNCC website remains extremely popular.

Several new topos have been added to the website over recent months, including:

- The Cupcake
- Car Pot
- FOUL Pot
- Pippikin Pot
- Magnetometer Pot
- Large Pot (Red Herring Series)
- Birks Fell Cave

The topo for New Rift Pot (Marble Steps area) has also been updated to reflect several new anchors installed here.

Many thanks to Sam Allshorn for supplying these topos.

Furthermore, to accompany the FOUL Pot topo, a route description has also been posted. This excellent pothole provides a challenging (but not too brutal) varied adventure on Fountains Fell, with some fine pitches.

Our description for Little Hull Pot has just been updated for greater clarity and to try to inspire more people to visit this pothole.

Little Hull Pot was brought out of the permit system a few years ago, but still seems to be frequently overlooked by many cavers.

The heavily downloaded descriptions for Ease Gill Caverns have also been updated, including the addition of a couple of new routes. We have added the seldom visited County Pot round trip via the Mancunian Way, Ease Gill Aven and Molluscan Hall.

If you're needing some inspiration for your 2018 caving adventures, then look no further! More descriptions and topos are expected to be added later this year.

Download from www.cncc.org.uk/caving



Molluscan Hall. Photo by Gary Douthwaite.

Boost to CNCC funds

In October 2017, Tony Harrison, of the Moldy-warps Speleo Group was presented with the opportunity to update the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) statements of five caves in the Dales following new discoveries over the last 30 years (one of which was the Three Counties System).

Tony agreed, and was contacted by Natural England to set him up for the work and to ask about his charges. Tony kindly volunteered to waive any fees for himself so that the money earmarked for this work could go to a caving charity or organisation.

It was agreed that the beneficiary would be the CNCC; thanks partly to existing financial arrangements we have with Natural England, making the transaction much simpler.

Tony completed the work in January, and £2500 was duly received by the CNCC from Natural England.

We would like to express our gratitude to Tony for undertaking this work to raise money towards CNCC funds. The CNCC has seen a significant increase in expenditure over the last three years (which has included £1500 funding towards publication of the current Northern Sump Index, £1500 donated for communications equipment across the three Dales-based cave rescue organisations, £3900 spent on 650 new IC anchors to support the new anchor program, not to mention money spent on several conservation projects).

Donations such as this are essential to ensure the continuity of our work; Thanks Tony!

Gaping Gill Mud Hall traverse



In early November 2017 the CNCC received reports of a collapse in Mud Hall, Gaping Gill. An inspection was performed on 16th November by members of the Craven Pothole Club and Bradford Pothole Club including John Helm, Ian Patrick and Simon Wilson. They found that there had indeed been a substantial fall of rock, clay and mud half way along the lower traverse which skirts around the top of Mud Hall. Their photos show the slumped ledge with the original rope now disappearing under the collapsed material, and also a caver inspecting the recently fallen large rocks at the bottom of the chamber.

Some gardening was done, and the traverse path with a guide rope was reinstated as best as possible. This rope should be considered a route-marker only, and not a safe belay, due to its unknown integrity and anchorage. Although now passable, extreme care is needed in this area until a more permanent solution has been found. The area has probably not yet reached equilibrium, and more movement may occur.

You are advised to check the CNCC website for any updates on the situation and to avoid the area if possible.



Promoting caving

In November 2017, representatives from more than 30 organisations met in Ingleton to discuss the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2018-2023. A previous public consultation identified caves as one of the top five 'loves' of the National Park, with the need for better cave access making a strong presence. The CNCC was represented by our Access Officer, Tim Allen.

During a few breakout sessions, Tim took the opportunity to raise the economic benefits of promoting caving and helping the interpretation of caving environments for non-caving visitors. This is all about promoting caving as a beneficial activity within the National Park, which can lead to an improved perception and local awareness of the sport (making future access negotiations easier) and ultimately, greater participation. We remain hopeful that the final Management Plan will include an increased focus on caves and caving for the next five years.

Tim has also used published media to promote caving. This has included an article in the Sunday Times covering the BCA CRow campaign and the Three Counties System.

A separate article was published in Yorkshire Dales Review (the magazine of the Yorkshire Dales Society/Friends of the Dales), focussed on recognising the importance and potential of the underground environment and promoting it to non-cavers and local communities. A similar article was written for 'Leck News' to urge better understanding of the caves in that area.

More recently, Tim has successfully managed to get an article about caving into 'The Visitor', which is the official guide to the Yorkshire Dales National Park; this splendid article is exactly the right kind of publicity caving needs.

Visit to the CSCC



Acting in his BCA role, Tim Allen, also CNCC Access Officer, recently visited the Council of Southern Caving Clubs. The CNCC took the opportunity of sending a gift in the form of a specially decorated chocolate cake.

It is reasonable to say that our two councils have taken a very different standpoint with respect to the BCA CRow campaign; but we are keen to avoid this creating divisions.

The meeting provided the opportunity to explain why we strongly support the campaign; namely because of the benefits CRow access will bring to our area for cavers from all regions.

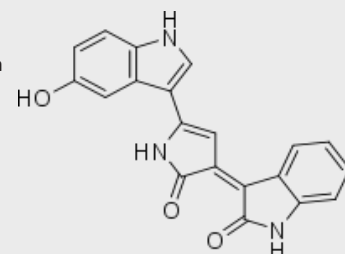
Caves and new drugs

During late 2017 the CNCC contributed a small amount of funding to enable a site visit in support of the scientific research of Dave Hodgson (CPC/CDG), who is looking into a purple bacterium found in certain caves. Dave has commented that;

"Our first attempts at trying to cultivate the purple bacteria in the lab was unsuccessful but did show the existence of two species of pseudomonas, one of anthrobacteria and one serratia species. However as none of these would produce the purple pigment, we had to re-sample several times before we succeeded. By genome sequencing we were able to establish the purple bacteria as Janthinobacterium lividum. The compound causing the vivid purple is violacein and it is linked to the bacterium's survival in extreme habitats. The next step is amplicon sequence analysis; that means bringing samples out of the cave on ice and getting them down to Norwich. This will ensure we get as clean a sample as possible into the lab for further work. This will be done as soon as all the sterile equipment is with me."

So why is this work important? Violacein (shown here) is a compound of considerable interest owing to its antibiotic, antifungal and anti-tumour properties. Understanding the biological role of violacein is critical to understanding its potential therapeutic applications. Furthermore, artificial synthesis of violacein has proved difficult, and biological production may be necessary to achieve the yields required for drug trials. Understanding the purple bacteria in which this is naturally synthesised and how to cultivate it in the laboratory will be critical to achieving these goals.

What better example of the need to study and conserve our caves; they may provide the key to the next generation of drugs!



benefited from new CNCC-approved IC-resin anchors and entrance stabilisation works. A rigging topo and route description can be found on our website.

Dale Head Pot has come to the attention of many since the publication of 'Not for the Faint Hearted' and is a great example of a more challenging pothole with the added benefit of being conveniently close to the road. Discussions are currently ongoing to consider making the entrance of this cave safer for livestock, and work is planned to replace the current unapproved anchors with CNCC-approved resin anchors.

Fairy Holes



Over the last few years, ownership of the quarry containing the entrance to Fairy Holes in Weardale has changed, and the CNCC has been working hard to identify and build relations with the new owners.

In late summer 2017, we successfully established an access agreement with the new quarry owners. Not only is this a CNCC-styled agreement (hence no administration fees to produce) but this has also given us the opportunity to make permits available to individual BCA members (CIMs and DIMs) as well as to clubs.

Access is still limited to the first Saturday of the month, but this is something we will try to extend, if visitor numbers demand this.

Details of how to apply for a permit can be found on the CNCC website. Full details (and an excellent description and survey of the cave) are supplied with the permit.

A trip to The Sarcophagus in Fairy Holes is an outstanding trip through an excellent and quite classic northern Dales stream passage. We strongly encourage cavers (clubs, and now individuals) to take full advantage of the access opportunities we have here.

One unusual condition of access was that the landowner wished to visit the cave for himself. Our Chair, Andrew Hinde arranged this and has reported below on how this went.

Landowner visit to Fairy Holes

On the 13th of August I was able to arrange a visit to Fairy Holes Cave (Weardale) for the new owner of the quarry site. The quarry site is now part of the wider Grouse Moor holding.

A trip to Vein Chamber is quite impressive for a first trip underground. The day was a great success. Mark (the landowner) was genuinely astonished at the scale of the underground landscape he was seeing for the first time.



Andrew Hinde and Graham Coates with the new owner of Fairy Holes in Weardale, about to set off underground.

After the caving trip we were invited for a late lunch at our hosts new shooting lodge just up the Dale. The table was heaving under the weight of delicious left-overs from the previous day inaugural shoot festivities that had gone on 'til dawn. Mark showed no signs tiring despite the late-night revelries (he clearly has what it takes to be a caver). Excursions for other members of the family may be requested in the future!

A landowner with a positive experience of caving is a very helpful asset to CNCC. Thanks to Graham Coates and Ray Duffy for providing essential backup and friendly advice along the way.

Andrew Hinde, CNCC Chair

Online cave booking moves one step closer

Back in 2016, Tim Allen (Access Representative for the CNCC at the time) managed to arrange a meeting with some of the key cave landowners in our region, including the owners/agents of Ingleborough, Leck and Casterton Fells. The purpose was to gauge their opinion on CRoW access and discuss the requirements of both the modern caver and the large landowner.

The landowners were united that they would dutifully accept caving under CRoW without any reprisal if that was recognised in law; one of the reasons that the CNCC has given such strong backing to the BCA's CRoW campaign.

The landowners would, however, prefer a managed access system for cavers, and until such a time that the BCA CRoW campaign is successful, this is what the CNCC must support.

The current 'permit' approach to managed access has many drawbacks. Individual BCA-member cavers are excluded from two out of the three large fells, and non-BCA member cavers are excluded from all. Approval of applications can take time. The permit system provides no structured means for cavers to be made aware of warnings relating to their chosen cave, or to agree to a participation statement showing that they have understood the risks; such diligence is becoming more expected of organisations such as the CNCC who facilitate access.

Following the meeting, Tim put forward a compromise proposal. This new proposal would see us transition from a permit system to an online calendar-based cave booking system.

Such a system would allow cavers to see a live diary of availability for caves, and book access without having to wait for approval (one booking per entrance per day). Access will be available to all cavers, not just clubs and/or BCA members.

As part of the booking process, registrants would agree to a participation statement. Furthermore, any messages from the landowner, conditions for access, or warnings could be efficiently communicated as part of the booking process.

Finally, an online system would also allow statistical analysis of bookings to be provided to landowners, something we understand remains important for them.

Tim successfully obtained an agreement in principle from Ingham and Yorke who represent Ingleborough Estate, with further discussions pending the development of a suitable system. This not-inconsiderable challenge was then handed over to the CNCC webmaster, Gary Douthwaite. Gary was faced with the task of developing a custom online system which would allow thousands of users, with many online at any one time. The system needed to be secure, user friendly, linked to CNCC databases, usable on smartphones/tablets, and able to fulfil all the complicated requirements discussed above.

Once Gary had developed a working mock-up, Tim presented it to Patrick Holmes of Ingham and Yorke. He was impressed and suggested that we should continue the development. Since the last newsletter, development has been completed, and Geoff Whittaker, the current Ingleborough permit secretary, has kindly volunteered to take on the role of system administrator.

With the system having been extensively tested by Gary and Geoff, Tim met again with Ingham and Yorke in early 2018, and received the final go-ahead to move ahead with live testing.

All existing permits for the year have been entered into the system, and during testing, selected volunteers will use it to book access. This will allow any glitches to be ironed out, and for Geoff and Gary to monitor the performance and to refine the inner workings.

Once the testing is complete, we plan for the system to be made available for all, covering all caves of Ingleborough Estate (Gaping Gill, Newby Moss and The Allotment areas). Anybody will be able to register and book access online. Booking of access via the system will remain a requirement; and we hope cavers will respect this; but will also find the system beneficial to see which cave entrances are 'free' to help avoid congestion and spread caver traffic on busier days.

The system will rely on cavers using it responsibly. This includes minimising bookings made 'just in case'. The ability to see availability and book access right up to last minute should mean that there will no longer be a need for 'backup' bookings. If your plans change, simply go online and see immediately what entrances are 'free' and make your booking instantly.

Once the system has proved itself on Ingleborough Estate, all signs are positive that Leck and Casterton Fell estates will follow suit.

We will be keeping cavers posted on progress via our website news page and newsletter, and also through UK Caving and Descent. However, for the most regular updates (on this and other news) we recommend following us on Facebook.

Training

First aid training for cavers



On Saturday 10th February, the CNCC put on a first aid course specifically tailored to the needs of active cavers. Our Training Officer, Marion 'Maz' Holloway, booked Dales Training based in Settle and run by Sean Whittle. As well as running first aid courses, Sean is an active caver and climber living in the Yorkshire Dales. He has been teaching first aid and incident management for nearly ten years. Sean is also a member of the local Cave Rescue Organisation and has a wealth of relevant experience.

The course took place at Austwick village hall and seven enthusiastic cavers turned up for the one-day course. Having previously done first aid at work training, this course was a revelation for me. The focus of the whole day was on managing typical underground scenarios where an unfortunate caver has had an accident. The attendees were split into smaller groups of two or three and presented with some thought-provoking situations typically found underground.

For example, a caver falls down a rift, lies unconscious with his face in the water. Each team leader then had to make quick decisions and assume control of the group. A quick but thorough assessment of the injuries of the

casualty followed. Then the team leader had to direct members to move the casualty to a safer position. Once stabilised the team leader then had to make decisions about sending for help and keeping the situation under review.

Assessment of candidates was carried out as the day went on and lively discussions were supplemented by some graphic photos of just what can happen when someone takes a fall underground.

A most enjoyable as well as highly instructive day. Well done Maz for organising this and thanks to Sean for giving us lots to think about.

Pete Monk, Northern Boggarts

First aid training: Wish you'd come?

The CNCC intend to organise more of these courses over the coming few years. Sadly, this course ran with only half the spaces taken, so the frequency will be determined by the demand.

If you would like to attend one, please help us assess the demand (and enable us to make you aware of the next course as soon as it is announced) by registering your interest with our Training Officer (training@cncc.org.uk).

Introduction to paperless surveying

Our next training opportunity is a BCRA Cave Surveying Group course. The course lasts three days, spread across three sessions on the 24th March, 21st April and 19th May. This aim of the course is to help people be confident in working with the DistoX and a PDA for collecting survey data, using Survox and Therion software, and processing the data to output maps and 3d models.

All sessions are to be held at How Stean Gorge, Nidderdale. To book a place and for more information, click on the event on the homepage of the CNCC website.

Conservation

It's been a quiet winter for CNCC-organised conservation projects, for various reasons.

We are looking into possible stock-proofing works at Dale Head Pot, and examining reports of a couple of unstable entrances on Leck Fell (Meridian Pot and, more recently, Voldemort Hole), but no work has been performed.

We would like to remind everyone that if you spot rubbish in a cave, why not bring it out and post your efforts (with a photo) on UK Caving? They operate a Cave Conservation Rewards Scheme, which in the last six months alone has seen people removing rubbish from the Rowten sumps, Notts II, Boxhead Pot and Car Pot.

If the conservation job is a bit more than you can safely handle, please report it through the conservation section of our website or email: conservation@cncc.org.uk

This might include cleanups inside caves, or surface works such as entrance repair, shakehole cleanup, stock-proofing, fence, footpath and walling repairs. We can undertake work through our conservation volunteers or provide materials and funds for your group to tackle the project.

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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Anchors

IC Anchors received



In the last newsletter (number 6, August 2017), we reported on the new CNCC anchor scheme.

We have now received the production batch of 650 IC anchors. These have been inspected by our Anchor Coordinator, Simon Wilson, and are now available for approved installers. Many have already found their way into caves across our region (more news to follow on that).

Want to become an installer?

Our anchors must be installed by approved and trained installers, in accordance with BCA anchor policy. The efforts of a trained installer command the upmost gratitude from the CNCC; but the role does require passion and involves a substantial commitment of time and effort.

At present, installers are expected to provide their own tools (drill and resin gun), although as the anchor scheme develops we hope to be able to loan these out instead. You will be provided with the anchors and resin. You will be expected to draw a rigging topo for publication on the CNCC website and keep full records.

We ask that before any training is scheduled, all potential installers share with us a proposal for what projects they wish to undertake.

If becoming an installer is something that interests you, please do get in touch with the Secretary (secretary@cncc.org.uk), who will put you in touch with our Anchor Coordinator.