

CNCC OFFICER REPORTS – JUNE 2023

CHAIR'S REPORT (Andrew Hinde)

High Birkwith Access

I understand that a meeting between YDNP staff and the Landowner was scheduled for last week. I have not been informed of the outcome as yet.

Overground-Underground: Ingleborough Caving Project

This is a cave archaeology project under the umbrella of the "Our Common Cause" based on Ingleborough Common.

OCC commissioned Uni of Central Lancs to undertake a review of all existing archaeological material from Ingleborough and design a methodology for centralising documents and finds. The project is lead by Rick Peterson and he is keen to work alongside CNCC members with an interest in cave archaeology.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Jill Bolton)

Nothing very exciting to report, as I've basically been "housekeeping". For example, the email Sent folder contained over 30,000 emails!

Every time that Matt sends out a mailshot, approximately 500 emails land in my Sent folder . . . shortly followed by various Non-delivery messages in my Inbox. It's not a problem, just a feature of the way the system is set up. But it was time to have a tidy-up, filing the important emails and deleting the mailshot ones.

As well as familiarising myself with the admin systems, and various current issues, I've also checked that our volunteers are happy to continue helping run the CNCC. This identified a few vacancies, including the position of Youth & Development rep, as Livvy has decided to stand down. Fortunately, we already have a potential replacement, and I have included Aila's application statement in place of a Y&D Report.

There are occasional emails, for example, requesting information or passing on details of projects. I have dealt with these promptly, generally by forwarding them to the relevant officer.

The most important task has been to arrange the June committee meeting, and if you're all here, then I must have been successful!

Many thanks are due to Matt, for helping me to settle in, and to Josh for continuing to act as Minute Secretary. It's good to be part of a team that works so well together to support caving in the north.

TREASURER'S REPORT (Pete Bann)

Financial Status as of 31st May 2023:	£
Business Community Account	984.53
Business Saver Account	14693.34

Since the AGM, the following payments/receipts made:

	£
Trainers Costs	1190.00
Training Venue Hire	150.00
Deathshead work mileage	134.55
BCA claim 2022 paid to CNCC in full	4230.35
CNCC Trailer Repairs	111.73
Replacement Resin Gun (CNCC property)	34.82
Resin Purchase	78.86
Meeting Mileage claim	56.25
PayPal Credit from course bookings	2487.29
Paypal Refund (course not run)	30.00
Admin cost: Domain registration	22.80

CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT (Kay Easton)

Hugh Parker led a team to deal with a dying tree, which was part of the anchor system at Death's Head. The tree was trimmed back, and new anchor posts installed by Alan Speight's team to remove the need to use the tree.

Paul Moor is planning the stabilisation of Coal Hole, removing debris and installing a tube in the entrance.

CNCC has continued to give support to individual groups carrying out conservation work, for example RRCPC at Wretched Rabbit. In order to be able to reclaim money spent from BCA, we need to seek approval before work begins. If you have a conservation project in mind and are seeking CNCC support, let us know in advance what materials you may need, and how many people will be involved, and we will seek approval on your behalf.

A list of equipment available for CNCC members to borrow for conservation projects is on the CNCC website. (It's under the "About" heading rather than "Conservation" because the list also includes publicity and anchor placement items.)

Those who are planning conservation works are reminded that Sam Allshorn has money donated by Mike Cooper from sales of "Not for the Faint Hearted" which is available for conservation work on caves featured in the book.

TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT (Ian Patrick)

The Spring/Summer training workshops are ticking along nicely, pretty much all the workshops are "Full" and we have received some really nice feedback. We are now starting to think about the Autumn/Winter programme.

Assistant Training Officer role

I have asked if a "Co-opted" role of "Assistant Training Officer" can be created. I would then like to offer this role to Mark Richards.

Mark has been incredibly supportive and a big part in helping set up the training workshops from the very beginning, I regularly use him as a sounding board and highly value his expertise and knowledge.

Having this role may also be beneficial in the future as it could help recruit new people to the "Training Officer" / "Assistant Training Officer" position as it wouldn't appear as daunting.

A "Training administrator" is next on my list !

New Equipment

We have replaced our "Old Stops" with the new version, purchased some more "Frenios" and also purchased a Petzl Microtraxion, Roll Clip and some cord.

The funding for this equipment came from the CNCC and also from the Sale of the old style "Stops". The sale of the Stops was done by myself in my own name, I then purchased the Microtraxion, Rollaclip and cord.

I will add all our SRT equipment to the CNCC "Asset List" in due course.

First Aid workshop

Following an "advert" on UK caving we now have a new trainer onboard who will be developing and delivering first aid workshops aimed at cavers.

The new trainer is Nicky Credland who has a company called "React fast first aid" The workshops will be non certified even though Nicky is a qualified First aid trainer and could run certified courses.

By keeping them non certified, Nicky has a lot more flexibility to fully tailor the workshops to cavers, it also keeps the costs to participants down

Nicky has agreed to the standard trainer fee of £150.00 per day. As with all the CNCC trainers, this fee is significantly lower than the "market rate" and I am grateful she has come onboard.

"Leadership" workshops

We have put together some new style workshops, aimed at giving experienced cavers skills useful when in a position of "responsibility" for less experienced cavers.

One of these workshops has been run and it proved very successful. This is an area we will look to develop as we run more and get feedback.

(As an aside, with the addition of these leadership workshops, the CNCC now cover EVERY aspect of the whole BCA "Instructor" scheme, obviously without any "certification" which will absolutely not happen "on my watch".)

Thanks as always to the "training team" and others who without, these workshops wouldn't happen.

Thanks also to the YSS and CPC for the generous use of their premises.

TRAINING & EQUIPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Mark Richards)

Nothing to report, only that the BCA T&E Working Group is not functioning.

YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (vacant)

Statement from Aila Taylor:

"Aila is a BPC and RRCPC member who cares greatly about improving the accessibility of caving. Following her presidency of Newcastle University Caving Club she has spent 3 years on the committee for the Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs, first as Sponsorship & Publicity Officer and then as Welfare Officer, giving her an in-depth understanding of some of the issues young cavers face and how these might be tackled. She looks forward to working with the CNCC."

ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT (Adele Ward)

My self, Andrew Hinde, and John Helm met with Lisa Bowerman and her son Oliver (Stump Cross owners). They expressed a lot of concern regarding the potential consequences of cavers accessing Mongo Gill and their Business. It would appear that they felt there was some vetting system in place to make sure cavers previously accessing the system were competent. We explained that this wasn't the case, and would not be going forward. After much discussion, we agreed on a similar style to White Scar.

Stump Cross have added an online booking to their website. Therefore a permits officer is no longer required to manage access to Mongo Gill. The CNCC website has been updated with a link to this booking system. Matt has also released a statement regarding the CNCC position, of this being a non-CNCC facilitated agreement. Whilst this represents a step forward in terms of access, it is not ideal.

The updated Memorandum of Understanding for Langcliffe Estates has been sent to Phil Scott-Priestley explaining the changes. I've chased him for any comments.

ACCESS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORTS

Robinsons & Fairy Holes - only one permit issued for each
Excalibur - only a few visitors each year
Bowland - very few requests for permits

PR & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT (Matt Ewles)

Newsletter 13 has just been published and by the time of this meeting will have been circulated by post to all caving huts and Inglesport. This is a record issue... 12 pages (they need to be either 4, 8, or 12 due to the way they are printed). This is thanks to both the excellent work that everyone is doing, but also because everyone is very proactive in sending me news stories and photos, for which I am extremely grateful.

Within the first week of publication, the newsletter has received 171 unique downloads. For reference, Newsletter 12 (Oct 2022) received 223 unique downloads in the first two weeks. I'd be really grateful if our Committee (and member) clubs could circulate the link to this amongst your members.

The ongoing costs of printing and posting these newsletters is around £100 per issue, which CNCC are currently funding.

The Death's Head Hole story in particular demonstrated how responsive CNCC can be to major situations. Not only did we publicise the dead tree issue promptly, but we inspected it, engaged widely (including amongst the anchor installers and on UKCaving) on optimum solutions, and we innovated the ground spike solution, and then replanted the shakehole with trees for long-term stabilisation. This reflects seamless integration within the CNCC, from conservation across to anchoring, and I'm really proud of this story, and everyone who contributed to the successful outcome.

Elsewhere, our proactivity to the Ash Dieback situation, and our regular training workshop calendar (with lots of excellent photos from recent sessions) are showcasing the CNCC as delivering for northern cavers.

Our proactivity in inspecting and reporting on various issues at cave entrances is respected, with thanks to several volunteers who have helped at several locations.

Congratulations to our access team for delivering what I think is a good solution at Stump Cross. This was clearly a very difficult discussion, and has been handled very well indeed.

Our mailing list of individuals continues to grow, at the time of writing this report (22nd May), we have 545 subscribers, an increase from the 460 that I reported back in January (and that's despite deleting about 20-30 from the list in March who's email addresses were generating bounce-backs).

I continue to send a roughly monthly news mailshot out, as well as more specific communications as required whenever there is a major safety issue, new training workshops announced, or major access changes.

Our Facebook following also continues to grow, but I'll let Gary report on that (although I write the content, Gary actually manages our Facebook / Twitter / Instagram presence).

Several topos have been updated over the past few months, including some minor changes in Notts Pot and a new route down the big pitch in FOUL Pot. Two new descriptions (The Mistral and Bull Pot of the Witches) have been added, sent to me by a very keen, and now regular and very welcome contributor.

In summary, a massive thank you to everyone who has delivered for the CNCC since the last meeting, you have made by job easy, and you continue to do northern cavers proud.

Regarding my Action Items from January:

The statement about leaving ropes in caves is now on our website, and has been publicised in our newsletter. This will hopefully become widely regarded as the go-to checklist for etiquette in such situations, and I will continue to publicise this now and again.

The Ash Dieback warnings now appear on all topos depicting trees for rigging. A similar warning also appears for the ground-anchor stakes at Death's Head Hole.

We have done all the PR we can to encourage more clubs to come forward to run more New to Caving events, but sadly, to the best of my knowledge, this has not yet been successful, which is a shame, but perhaps understandable given the manpower and equipment challenges.

WEB ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (Gary Douthwaite)

See separate document

AGENDA ITEMS 8.0, 9.0 & 10.0

SUBMISSION FROM TIM ALLEN

At this year's AGM I made several comments concerning the devaluation of CNCC reserve funds and whether this was an issue which needed to be addressed. I am pleased to see a number of related items on the agenda for the June council meeting. Please find below some further information and thoughts for consideration in case I am unable to make the meeting.

It is quite shocking to realise the devastating effect inflation and mismanagement of our economy has had on any retained funds. Over the last decade there has been a huge divide between the amount funds can earn in interest and the devaluing effect inflation has had on those funds.

For example;

If we consider £14,000 held in accounts for the last ten years (since 2013).

In order to have the same buying power as then we would now need to have £18,300 (Bank of England figures).

Or to look at it the other way round, the £14,000 we hold now will buy the same goods and services as £10,700 did ten years ago. Sitting on large sums of cavers money is not financially prudent. Interest rates will not have compensated for anything like this difference. Projecting forward from now, with even higher inflation, this money will be devalued significantly further.

The answer may be to find ways to spend at least some of the money rather than continually retaining it for a rainy day. Keeping large sums for a rainy day or budget float is very expensive, costing thousands of pounds in the loss of purchasing power. Most caving organisations have large sums of money stagnating in low interest accounts. Few recognise the devastating effect inflation is having on those funds and none are doing anything about it. CNCC could lead the way in this respect.

So, how and on what can excess money be spent to bring better value to the caving community. This is not easy. The success we had a few years ago in changing BCA regional funding policy means that very few things are no longer reclaimable from BCA. Exploration is the one aspect still unfunded by this route which was why I brought it up for discussion at the AGM.

It is worth stepping back for a minute to consider just how important exploration, and digging in particular, has been to northern caving. Dozens of caves have been entered over the years from Link Pot, Notts 2, King and Hopeless to name just a few. Often entered without the correct permissions but never the less still considered major parts of the Dales caving resource. It is easy to forget just how much the Northern Caves guide book has grown over the years, mostly by digging, typified by the current extent of the Three Counties System.

Offering grant support to diggers, especially with caveats and conditions attached will not encourage much interest as has been suggested by others. A central source of freely available common digging materials, such as scaffolding, planking, lintels, pipework, etc could be very useful indeed. Buying in bulk would offer good value for money if storage was available and I like the proposed idea of a CNCC store, not just to keep CNCC equipment in a central place, but also to potentially provide digging materials to support exploration.

Across the UK, a number of caving organisations are sitting on large pots of money and seem to be making no effort to spend it. It really is a scandalous waste of cavers money. I think CNCC need to be forward thinking and creative to avoid any further wastage. I hope you'll agree.

Good luck with your ideas.
Tim Allen