

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 17th June 2021 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

Covid 19 recovery plan.

We have just learned that the much -anticipated release from remaining restrictions on 21st June has been put back by one month. This will be very disappointing for clubs with huts. Hopefully the financial backing they have had from Government will see them through. A relaunch of caving activity is very difficult without this facility. It has revealed their real value to caving. The CNCC is here to support these clubs in whatever way they need to transition back to their former level of service.

Cave entrance condition

Several cave entrances have been reported to be in a dangerous condition in the last 12 months. Some have been dealt with by clubs, individuals or CNCC volunteers with a quick turn around. However, Ayegill Caverns and Wretched Rabbit are going to be long term projects. We could do with some pro bono advice from professional civil or highway engineers. Please ask around your clubs.

BCA Council Meeting.

I am sorry to have to report that I missed the last BCA council meeting due to my personal incompetence in diary keeping. The main item on this agenda was the proposal to have Council look again at the proposal to pay qualified trainers a reasonable payment for their professional services at regional SRT training courses etc. This was raised by CNCC and approved unanimously by Council.

SSSI Cave Monitoring

A new round of SSSI cave monitoring has been requested by Natural England. CNCC may want to consider if it wants to charge for this service in the same way as previous rounds ie receiving funds for conservation works in lieu of payment for monitoring data. I clearly have a conflict of interest in this matter – being a Natural England employee.

Andrew Hinde – CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

In the last few months I have continued my administrative responsibilities, and am now also receiving all emails sent to the treasurer and access addresses, which I have been triaging, replying and forwarding as appropriate.

On the 16th of April I sent out an email asking whether we should spend approximately £4000 on setting up a series of training courses. Many thanks to Matt Ewles for his support in writing this, the exact email wording is below. In response, I received a 'Yes' vote from 9 out of the 13 committee clubs, and no reply from the remaining 4. This allowed Ian to proceed with his plans. All comments received were supportive and talked about this being an excellent and worthwhile endeavour.

"Dear CNCC Committee

Over the last few months, our Training Officer, Ian Patrick, has been working hard to put together a program of SRT-orientated training sessions, spanning SRT refreshers, rigging, rescue, skills for experienced cavers, and those leading novices.

The venue chosen for a number of sessions is the Yorkshire Dales Guides SRT barn; the same venue that had been booked for the February 'SRT refresher' course that had to be cancelled. We have now received an invoice for 13x sessions at this venue from May to September (plus one to replace the already paid for cancelled session). The cost is £100/day for barn hire (5 people) + £15 per additional person.

The CNCC Officers have discussed this, and while some initially felt this cost was high compared to the off-peak rate quoted in February (£50/day), the overall feeling was that this cost is not excessive for commercial hire of such a facility. For comparison, the YSS facility would be £50 for five people plus £10/additional person. However, we are informed by Ian that the YDG Facility is much better suited to the planned training.

The invoice originally came with a zero-cancellation policy, even if due to Covid restrictions, which CNCC Officers thought was unacceptable. This has been renegotiated to allowing any cancelled sessions to be rebooked up to April 2022, which is more acceptable.

Each session will also incur a professional trainer cost for the day (approx. £145/day), so over 14 sessions this would be £2030.

We are therefore asking for your approval for training costs of approximately £4000 to be incurred for these sessions (£3330 for venue and trainers and the remainder to cover additional participants above the five included in the venue hire and unforeseen extras).

We plan to charge participants for attending the events, and we would expect that very roughly half of the costs should be recovered in charges to the participants, thus allowing us to promote these events as being heavily CNCC-subsidised (the actual fee will vary depending on the nature of the training). Charging participants a fee is essential to ensure they are serious about the event and to reduce no-shows. Therefore, the actual net cost to CNCC will be somewhere closer to £2000 depending on how generously we choose to subsidise the events (your thoughts on that are welcomed).

Some of these costs should be reclaimable from BCA Training Committee (although the BCA policy on this is unclear at the moment).

At a time when many people will be returning to caving a little bit 'rusty' in their SRT skills we feel this is a really nice thing to be able to offer and a great use of our (and BCA's) funds post-pandemic. This would also represent the CNCC's most extensive training offerings for over a decade. However, as the costs are quite high we would appreciate your engagement in this decision.

Please reply with a vote yes or no to accept these costs and support CNCC offering this program of training opportunities. Additionally, if you have any comments or ideas, these would be greatly welcomed.

Your response as quickly as possible would be appreciated as we are keen to get this finalised and the sessions advertised (the first would be in May)."

Josh Young – CNCC Secretary

Conservation Officer's Report

Conservation work is beginning to get under way again with the lifting of restrictions. In May a team carried out work at Yordas, cleaning graffiti in the cave, replacing the sheep creep gate which had been removed by persons unknown as fuel for a fire, and tending to the planted trees. An exploratory visit to Long Churn to revealed that the widely reported graffiti had already been removed. CNCC volunteers assisted Tony Credland's clear-up of Starting Handle Hole on Leck Fell by winching the collected rubbish up the first pitch. A boulder blocking the entrance to Ireby Fell has been removed. Other problems have been reported to CNCC and dealt with by clubs. It is good to see how alert people are to problems, and how willing to help solve them.

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

Training Officer's Report

The CNCC training workshops are finally up and running.

15 workshops were added to the website, mainly one day workshops but a few are 2 days.

A variety of topics are covered; Intro to SRT, SRT Rescue, Rigging, Geology and a 2-day photography workshop run by Mark Burkey. Plans are developing for a paperless cave survey workshop in September.

SRT rescue and Geology were the most popular, we added extra dates to accommodate some of the excess demand.

At the time of writing we have delivered 2 workshops, both were very well received.

Special thanks to Gary for the IT help and the excellent information and booking system on the Website, I have no doubt that this has helped make them very popular.

Also thanks to Mark Richards (CNCC E &T Rep) for helping develop workshop content and structure, advising on compliance and generally been a great sounding board for me.

Ian Patrick – CNCC Training Officer

Webmaster's Report – Gary Douthwaite

The usual housekeeping tasks are ongoing. I have received very positive feedback on the new booking system which has been working well. A small registration issue was recently identified where some new registrations were being sent the wrong link to activate their account however this has now been fixed. There were no security issues relating to this.

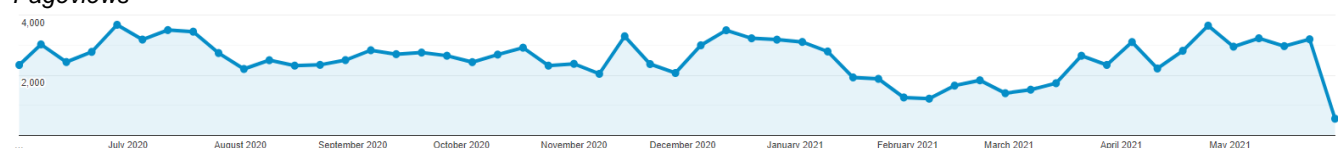
A few tweaks have been made to the training section as a result of its popularity. The list of workshops is now simpler with availability shown more clearly at a glance.

Several positive news reports have been added and pushed out to social media and there have been a number of new and updated rigging topos added.

Work on the redevelopment of the new public site is ongoing.

Google Analytics (1 Jun 2020 to 31 May 2021)

Pageviews



Gender: 69% male ↑, 31% female ↓

Age:

| 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 12.94% ↑ | 25.47% ↓ | 17.71% ↑ | 18.57% ↑ | 13.62% ↓ | 11.69% ↓ |

Facebook

As of 10 Jun 2021 we have 1236 page likes (+55 since March report) and 1361 followers (+67 since March report).

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

| Published | Subject | Reach (people) | Clicks | Reactions & Comments |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------|----------------------|
| 07/06/2021 | Mayday Hole anchored | 555 | 106 | 54 |
| 01/06/2021 | Boulder collapse at Ireby Fell Cavern | 929 | 26 | 30 |
| 27/05/2021 | Newsletter 11 out | 322 | 21 | 6 |
| 23/05/2021 | Marble Steps loose rock | 1500 | 52 | 44 |
| 20/05/2021 | Covid-19 guidance update | 288 | 37 | 2 |
| 10/05/2021 | Cleanup at Starting Handle Hole | 1000 | 93 | 24 |
| 04/05/2021 | New rigging topos added | 433 | 64 | 14 |
| 29/04/2021 | More anchor installations | 567 | 58 | 58 |
| 26/04/2021 | More training workshops | 568 | 44 | 24 |

Twitter

As at 10 Jun 2021 we have 466 followers (+7 since March report). 272 tweets have been made by CNCC.

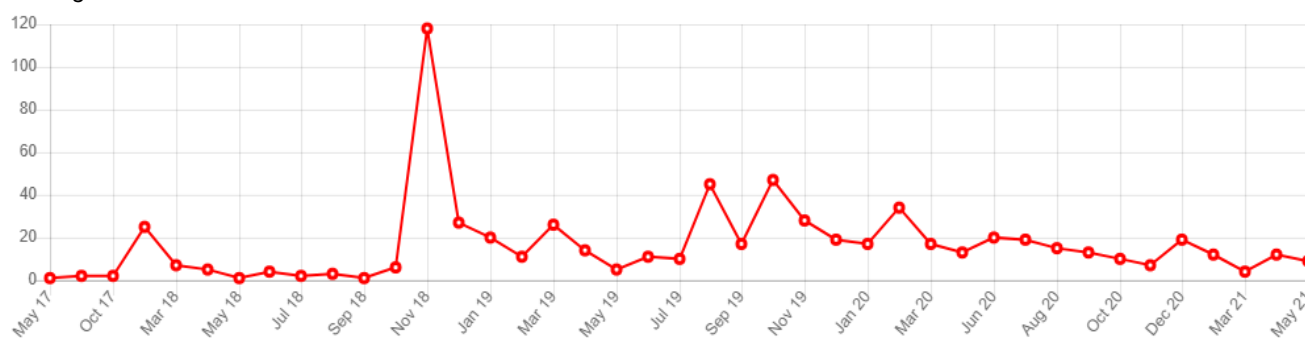
Instagram

As at 10 Jun 2021 we have 341 followers (+53 since March report). Typically posts receive around 40 likes each.

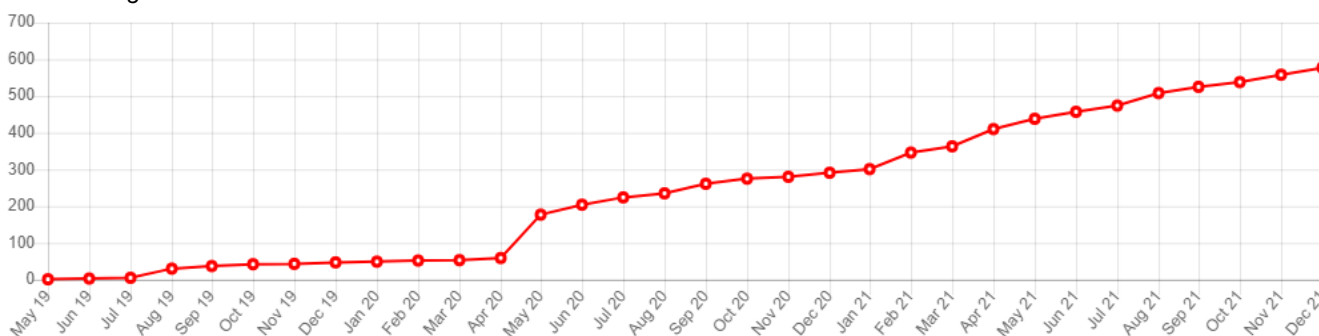
Online Booking System

- 686 registered users
- 2189 individual bookings have been made. This number includes 1837 approved bookings and 351 cancelled bookings.
- 130 (19%) made a positive statement that they are NOT BCA members.
- 478 (70%) said they are members of a club.
- Of the users who specified gender there are 101 female (14.9%), 498 male (73.2%) and 0 other (0%).
- The average age is 48 with the youngest 18 and oldest 80.

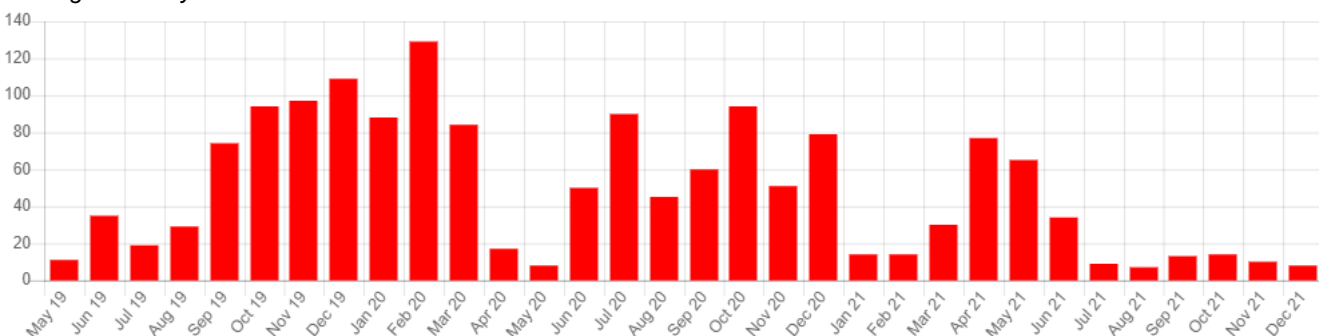
New registrations:



Total bookings:



Bookings count by month:



Mailing List

The mailing list contains 234 people (1 have requested to be unsubscribed).

Media Download Statistics (to 31 May 2021)

| | Total | Average / month | Dec 20 | Jan 21 | Feb 21 | Mar 21 | Apr 21 | May 21 |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Publications | 9249 | 264 | 172 | 125 | 70 | 208 | 266 | 483 |
| Topos | 70833 | 2214 | 2371 | 1483 | 1013 | 1945 | 2353 | 2249 |
| Cave descriptions | 58356 | 1824 | 2444 | 1320 | 1219 | 1492 | 2187 | 1829 |

Top 5 media downloads (six months to 31 May 2021)

| Topos | Descriptions |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Alum Pot - 493 (4.1%) | Alum Pot and Long Churn Caves - 654 (6%) |
| Lost Johns' Cave - 398 (3.3%) | Little Hull Pot - 629 (5.8%) |
| Yordas Pot and Cave - 305 (2.6%) | Fossil Pot - 509 (4.7%) |
| Jingling Pot - 302 (2.5%) | Ease Gill Cavern - 484 (4.5%) |
| Notts Pot - 266 (2.2%) | Caves of Scotland - 467 (4.3%) |

PR & Communications Officer's Report – Matt Ewles

It has been a busy time since the January Committee meeting, with plenty of positive caving news, which makes my job easy and rewarding.

Covid guidance has been kept updating as we progress through the roadmap, although I have kept this lower key than before Christmas, as the Government guidance has been somewhat clearer than the former tiered mess, meaning people need less advising of what it all means for caving.

As soon as the final restrictions are eased (21st June, or whenever it may be), all Covid related notifications on the website will be removed.

The CNCC's caver mailing list now has 234 subscribers, up from 161 in January, thanks to Gary introducing the option to join it when registering for the online booking system, and some gentle reminders in several places (including the new newsletter) to get people to join. Since the last meeting, I have sent out six mailshots, so roughly one every four weeks, including:

- AGM notification
- AGM summary
- Training opportunities (x2)
- General May updates and news
- Announcing Newsletter 11

There has been no shortage of great news to promote, including the work of our anchor installers, who have obliterated our backlog of defective anchors to inspect and replace, as well as completing new installations in Broken Finger Pot, Newby Moss Cave and Langcliffe Pot. I believe work is also complete in Scanty Lardos and Curtain Pot, but I am waiting on the green light to publicise these as they will appear in Descent first. Work is finished in the newly discovered Mayday Hole and a topo and description will be published soon. Therefore, plenty more anchoring news to come.

On training, I have worked with Ian to promote his excellent catalogue of training courses that we have lined up for the rest of the year. Take-up for these has been excellent.

The work at Knacker Trapper Hole and Starting Handle Hole generated plenty of interest and kept CNCC's conservation in hearts and minds.

Finally, there have been the usual warnings about collapses, blockages etc. that have been circulated (Great Douk, Aygill, Wretched Rabbit, Notts Pot). I have kept our website up to date with these warnings too, including removing them when resolved.

Gary has revamped the booking system (see his report), thus keeping access in the spotlight too, and I have provided reminders of the situation at High Birkwith and kept the pages for the Birkwith caves updated with the current situation there. Access Officer volunteer needed to progress this!

I have now received the large gallery of beautifully printed and mounted cave photos, discussed in my previous report. My thanks to Mark Burkey who has given up his time in producing these, and in mounting them, all at no cost to CNCC; thanks Mark! They look great. I need to procure some frames for these and then you will all be getting nagged to help me find willing venues to display these, so expect to hear more about this over the coming months. There are some perfectly good 'cheap and cheerful' frames available for about £12 each; is everyone happy for a £250 estimated budget?

After limited success in getting an article on Crackpot cave anywhere, I received responses from both Dalesman magazine and The Visitor magazine in the same week, and have worked with both to put together an article, both based on Crackpot Cave. The two articles are similar (hopefully this won't upset anyone), but of course are aimed at totally different audiences and each were amended based on this. These should be appearing over the coming several months.

In addition to this, I have written a substantial article on caving in the North York Moors for the North York Moors Association Magazine (July issue), the first in a two-part series. All these articles present a positive portrayal of caving and have directed people to www.newtocaving.com to find out more information, assuming BCA keep this site well-maintained.

Gary will be able to update on our engagement and reach on our social media platforms (he manages them). We continue to use UKCaving with plenty of engagement.

Finally, after a lengthy delay, Newsletter 11 was released in May. This is a bit of a retrospective on everything that has happened since Newsletter 10 in September 2019, but with club huts and cafes due to reopen fully, I wanted to get a proper printed newsletter into national circulation. Copies have been posted to all huts and major caving venues. Please don't put them on the fire!

BCA E&T Representative's Report – Mark Richards

Following on from the minutes of the AGM: "The report mentioned that while the BCA were endorsing the use of a new resin, they were not discontinuing support of the older type partly because the new resin had not been tested in rocks other than limestone. SA mentioned that the IC anchor had only been tested in slate with 'not the recommended' resin."

I have followed up. The IC anchor was in fact installed and tested (in the NW BCA testing exercise) with resin that was not suggested by Simon as the IC anchor become available later on in the NW testing bed exercise. As a result in testing with KMR resin in the NW testing exercise, it passed all the tests as required, thus demonstrating it was fit for purpose for use in NW slate beds (15kN axial pull required for the EN959 standard).

Anchor Coordinator's Report – Alan Speight

Nothing much to report this time.

All defective Anchor reports have been actioned and completed.

Mayday Hole has been anchored and the topo placed on the CNCC Web site.

After a request from Andrew Atkinson from Mendip, 24 anchors, one tube of resin and a resin gun have been provided by the CNCC for them to install anchors in Rino Rift.

Bowland Area Access Coordinator – Tony Brown

We have had two requests for permits in the last quarter.

Acting BCA Representative's Report – Andrew Hinde

Report on the BCA Council meeting 30th March 2021

1. The BCA Chairman announced the withdrawal of BCA involvement in the 3 Counties Traverse Project. It will be run by CDG.
2. Accounts for 2020 as presented by the Treasurer and independently audited were accepted by Council
3. New wording has been introduced to the landowner liability insurance cover to ensure that all cavers are covered (not just BCA members). This restores the cover which had been dropped in 2020 without informing BCA Council. It was CNCC who had to bring this to Council's attention.
4. A new BCA Membership IT system is under construction which should simplify the process and improve membership retention.
5. Realistic payments (not just travel expenses as agreed at a previous Council meeting) for providers of training will be discussed at the next Training Committee meeting. This will be brought back to Council for approval. This was an official request in writing from CNCC prior to this meeting, but it did not get onto the agenda for this meeting. Fortunately Council agreed to accept my proposal from the floor.
6. The previously circulated "Conflict of Interest Policy" was approved by Council.
7. Funding increase up to a ceiling of £90K was approved for pursuing the CRoW legal case in the High Court. Anything beyond that would be crowd funded if needed.
8. The Covid 19 Recovery Plan developed by the P&I committee was adopted by Council.