

# **COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS**

## **British Caving Association**

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### **Reports for 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Committee Meeting**

#### **Chairman's Report**

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the CNCC officers and volunteers who have provided an enormous amount of useful information and infrastructure that northern cavers benefit from every week. The various officer reports that follow show the range and extent of CNCC's provision to Northern Caving.

We are always happy to welcome new talent to the CNCC. You do not need to sign up as an Officer to get things done. If you have a project that you think would benefit northern caving and feel that you require support from experienced practitioners – just get in touch.

Secondly, I hope to see a few representatives of the “instructed caving” world attending CNCC meetings. These caving instructors are the people who direct keen newcomers to the clubs and keep the club scene vibrant. I feel that CNCC has moved forward in recent times and that all branches of caving have a role to play in our future.

SABIC Ethylene Pipeline: I have to remind cave diggers that they need to notify SABIC if they are likely to undertake works within 50 metres of this gas pipeline. Most relevant to the Eastern Dales. More details can be found on the CNCC website.

I have received another booking from the British Ecological Society for a Cave Ecology summer school field trip in the Yorkshire Dales. This follows a successful event held at Scoska Cave in July last year. This is a tribute to our Cave Conservation Officer Kay Easton, who provides a really engaging experience for the cave scientists of the future. Next year the summer school students will be 6<sup>th</sup> Form 16-18-year olds rather than Graduate Students that we had this year. Any extra help from CNCC cavers with this group visit would be much appreciated.

I have some laminated copies of the CNCC Digging Guidelines for Caving Club Huts (notice boards or coffee tables). You can collect some from me at the Committee Meeting.

**Andrew Hinde – CNCC Chairman**

## Secretary's Report

Happy new year to you all.

Since the last meeting the full launch of the online booking system has been the star news, and Tim will update you more in his report. This has been a tremendous success. Gary and I decided that we would try a new way of communicating with people about this and decided to have a go at making a video instead. Gary has covered this in his webmaster report.

Geoff's skills at administrating the booking system (while also doing traditional permits on Leck and Casterton) have been invaluable in making this all work.

This highlights the importance of being creative with communication. Use of all available avenues is essential; Facebook, Twitter, our own website and newsletter, UK Caving, Descent (a more thorough article is planned for Descent next year), using both traditional and novel forms of media.

A few new cave descriptions have gone online since October; Harddrawkin Pot and Robinsons' Pot, both of which were submitted by enthusiastic individuals outside of the core CNCC team. A route description for the Ireby Fell Cripple Creek round trip has just come in at the time of writing this report. Many thanks indeed to those putting in the effort for others.

Perhaps the most significant addition has been the Caves of Scotland descriptions, written by Alan Jeffreys. These represent a lot of work from Alan, and I am most grateful for his generosity in letting the CNCC make these available. I am keen that we do not forget that we are also the BCA regional council for Scotland, and while it may be seldom that they need our help, I wish it to be known that we are here if they do, and we are proud of the caving Scotland has to offer. All the caves in the guide have been added to the CNCC website too.

I commend Tim on his efforts to achieve the Memorandum of Understanding with Langcliffe Estate and to showcase caving to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. This was great news to end 2018.

I have overhauled the outdated 'Access agreements' text on the 'About' section of the website. This section had slipped through the net with all the changes of the past few years and has been updated to reflect all the new arrangements in place (e.g. on Langcliffe and Ingleborough Estates) as well as some changes from a few years back at Stump Cross, Robinsons' Pot, Fairy Holes and at Birks Fell. Many thanks to Ric Halliwell for his assistance in getting the details corrected.

As you will see from Simon's report, a tremendous amount of effort has gone into identifying a new resin for future anchor installations. Addressing the resin shrinkage matter now will set us in good stead for the future, and I am proud that the CNCC (via Simon) is leading the way nationally.

My ambition stands for the CNCC to have a presence at more events, including and starting with Hidden Earth 2019. Gary has designed some stand up banners for which he will present print-outs this coming meeting, and I have put together a complete CNCC timeline since 1963 which I think will make some excellent content for the display. Work will continue through the year.

Thanks to all clubs who have submitted notification to stand for a Committee role next year. AGM documents will be available on the website no later than Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January.

There will be another CNCC newsletter around April, and I would welcome any content.

Perhaps the only other matter to raise in the recent BCA Council meeting (12<sup>th</sup> January), which was attended by Tim Allen and Andrew Hinde as CNCC representative and C&A respectively. For the first time, I attended too (with Gary), as I volunteered to take the minutes.

The meeting was a true eye-opener. While my participation was relatively limited as I was not a vote-holder (and I had my head down in a notebook frantically scribbling for six hours), I became acutely aware of some serious issues. The distaste of some participants for the CNCC was very clear to see, with obvious frustration about our finance proposals and efforts to see them either diluted or overruled. The Publicity and Information Officer (Jane Allen) was treated appallingly and deliberately chastised and made to feel her efforts were unwelcome. Jane presented on numerous excellent ideas she had, which, had they been within a CNCC meeting environment, would have got a round of applause and an unanimously supported vote of thanks. Instead she got quite the opposite. It is with massive regret that Jane has subsequently resigned from the role; and the BCA has lost one of the most competent and proactive leaders for change it has had for years.

There are glimmers of light. Modern-thinking and progressive new blood is appearing; however, they remain outnumbered and outshouted. The barriers to change are enormous, and sadly I feel many of these are entirely optional barriers that exist by the BCA Council's own choosing.

The future success of the BCA is imperative to caving. Let's hope the Vision and Reform group is successful, and that BCA Council, as per the ambition of the BCA Chair, serves only to 'rubber stamp' their proposals, which are hopefully progressive and deliver the substantial overhaul that is needed rather than just some sticking plasters over the cracks. There is a reasonable number of progressive thinkers in this group and I am excited to be representing the CNCC here.

Let's hope some progress can be made, and that whoever takes on the BCA Secretary role this summer is enthusiastic for the kinds of changes that are needed if BCA is to remain a valuable and relevant organisation for British Cavers; a status it must not take for granted.

Tim has also put together a report on the meeting from his perspective as CNCC representative.

**Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary**

## Treasurer's Report

### **Financial Status as of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019:**

Business Community Account: £1773.41

Business Saver Account: £18533.26

Since the October meeting, the following payments/receipts made:

- SIS payment (£117.90) for Foul Pot mileage claims has been received.
- Re: Anchor Replacement Project claim for £3900 – full amount received from BCA (£4000.00 transferred to Business Premium account).
- A copy of Northern caves purchased for donation as CHECC prize.
- Mileage payments have been made to CPC & BCP and a payment made to Marsden AES Ltd for GG track repair work. Funds to be re-claimed, as part of SIS project.
- Payment to Computer FX of £57.96 for email service to website.
- Refund of £15 to P. Monk for 1st Aid Course deposit.
- £10 received for the sale of 2 copies of Shuttleworth Pot guide.
- Mileage payments re: Southerscales work have been made.
- Payment of £250 made to Yorkshire Dales National Parks Authority re CNCC's contribution towards the cost of an interpretation board. (see Committee Mtg Minutes Oct 2016, para 9 – Other Business)

9<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Pete Bann – CNCC Treasurer**

## Conservation Officer's Report

### **Stories in Stone Projects:**

#### **Smeagols Pot Capping** – project 18, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018

Capping of an abandoned exploratory cave shaft dig on Ingleborough to make it safe and stock proof.

17 volunteers

119 man-hours

£850 in kind contribution

#### **Hurnel Moss Track Repair** - project 19, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Marsden AES contracted to repair GG access track after public winch meet.

Man and machine – 7 hours

Cost £324

#### **Southerscales Pond Clearance.** Project 20, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018

Clearance of soft rush from newt pond on behalf of YWT. This required cavers in wetsuits to work in water for a prolonged period.

7 volunteers

42 man-hours

£350 in kind contribution

### **Upcoming Projects:**

#### **Removal of farm waste from Shakehole near P5.**

Training on new petrol capstan winch required.

#### **Proposed Clean up at Crackpot Cave**

A suggestion from Rowan Worsman. Document overleaf.

**Andrew Hinde – On behalf of Kay Easton, CNCC Conservation Officer**

### **Crackpot clean up (suggestion by Rowan Worsman)**

Crackpot cave is owned by Gunnerside Estate. Outline:

- (1) Many of the stal formations are covered in mud due to being thrown there by people. This greatly distracts from the beauty of the cave.
- (2) It is proposed to clean the mud off these formations by using cave water from knapsack sprays and soft brushes.
- (3) A team of 8 to 10 people would be needed.
- (4) The aid of the CNCC, Council of Northern Caving Clubs and Natural England along with volunteers would be needed.
- (5) Equipment needed
  - Water carriers
  - Buckets
  - Pans and funnels
  - Storage barrels for water
  - Hand wipes
  - Tackle sacks
  - Knapsacks
  - Soft brushes
  - PPE like over suits, gloves and eye protection
  - People would provide their own wellingtons and caving helmets
  - Litter bags
  - First aid box
- (6) Method: Work would begin at the back of the cave and we would work forward to avoid re dirtying. We can only clean where we can reach. Any high-level mud will have to stay in situ.
- (7) Risk assessment: Separate document to follow.
- (8) People will be required to make their own way to and from the site. Car sharing may be an option. Permission will need to be sought from Summer Lodge for parking.
- (9) Liaison will be required with Summer Lodge to establish the quietest day for the work to be carried out.
- (10) People will all be required to have BCA insurance.
- (11) Before and after photographs will be taken.
- (12) All rubbish and equipment will be removed from the site.
- (13) A report to be produced for CNCC on the clean-up, so caving bodies can be aware of the work done and the need for conserving the cave.

## **Access Officer's Report**

Happy New Year to all northern cavers and visitors. I hope to see some of you at our meeting on Saturday.

### **Online booking system**

The new system has been up and running for a while and Geoff reports that all is working fine. Gary has made a few necessary tweaks as required. Now that we have confirmation that the system is operating well I have written to both the Shuttleworth and Whelprigg Estates to set the ball rolling there. I have yet to receive a reply from either but will chase in the coming weeks.

### **Langcliffe Hall Estate**

The memorandum of understanding was finalised and sent around the Committee for comment. I hope I answered all your questions. The MoU was then duly signed by both parties and CNCC advertised the new arrangements through our media outlets. There is now effective free access for all with no restrictions across the whole estate. The estate seems happy and cavers seem happy. I shall keep my ear to the ground while the new arrangements bed in.

### **Barbondale caves**

In my last report I highlighted some problems between the shoot syndicate gamekeeper and cavers around Barking Gill and Crystal Cave. I am still trying to arrange a meeting with the land agent and gamekeeper to find a solution. The shoot takes place between September and October so there is plenty of time.

### **High Birkwith Farm**

The sale of this farm has now gone through with the new owners moving in early in December. Alan Speight and YSS members alerted us to possible problems as at least one group experienced access problems. CNCC posted across social media a notice informing cavers of the changes and asking them to be courteous and respectful when visiting the farm. With caves such as Calf Holes and Browgill accessed from this land it is an important site for beginners, both clubs and professional cavers. Alan used his contacts to speak to the owners and we hope to arrange a meeting once the owners are settled in to see what CNCC can do to address any fears they have and maintain good access. Just before Christmas I called by with the last of the Cave & Karst books and presented it to them.

### **Interpretation board**

The long anticipated Three Counties interpretation board was produced after some delays and collected from the NPA. I installed it at Bull Pot Farm as shown below. The NP informed me that it cost around £1000 to produce and they appreciate the CNCC contribution of £250 as well as our efforts of making it happen. CNCC duly receive a credit on the bottom of the board.



### **National Park Staff Forum**

As reported in CNCC news at the end of November I was invited to give a talk to the annual NP staff forum. The audience numbered some 140 staff, the executive and guest of honour, Dame Fiona Reynolds. The talk centred on the caves as one of the special qualities within the park with great photos and maps on the Three Counties, GG and the potential to find more. I also highlighted the resources available to the park from the CNCC and the caving community. It was a great opportunity to get more of the staff on board and I received a very appreciative thank you letter from David Butterworth, the chief exec.

### **National Park Management Plan Forum**

I attended this on behalf of CNCC in December. The new five year plan was launched with several mentions of caving as one of the special qualities. There is no specific objective regarding caves but I think we can be fairly confident that any initiative we have in the next five years would receive a positive hearing. All the details of the plan can be found at this address.

<http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/ydnpa/how-we-work/national-park-management-plan>

### **Meeting with the NP Access & Engagement Officer.**

Rebecca Greenfield took over from Mark Allum in this post last year. We have been in contact several times since then but we had an 'official' meeting at NP Grassington in December. This was an opportunity to explain how caving 'works' in the Dales and some of our successes over the last few years; Improvements to cave access, cave monitoring scheme, CNCC website and newsletter, etc. We also discussed entry level issues into caving as well as better interpretation and education of



both locals and the non-caving visitor. We should see more mentions of caving in the Dales and Visitor magazines and there is an opportunity to work on a display for the revamped Grassington visitor centre (any offers?).

#### **Caves & Karst books.**

I gave the last book I held to the new owners of High Birkwith Farm. I think we should purchase some more from BCRA and give them away at our discretion. We still have some of the donation left which paid for these and we should make sure it is all spent on PR as requested.

Another small **PR story** for Dales caving. Due to my involvement with the Kendal Mountain Festival I was contacted by their PR people to develop the idea of taking Mike Bushell from BBC Breakfast caving. Mike, apparently, holds a world record for trying out the most sports but had never been caving. The idea was to give the festival (and caving) a plug the weekend before the festival began. Arrangements were duly made with Yorkshire Dales Guides helping out and Mike enjoyed a successful trip down the Dolly Tubs. The item ran several times during the morning breakfast programme together with pieces on Facebook and the BBC website. All in all, a great promo for Dales caving and although not directly anything to do with CNCC of course it cannot do our clubs any harm.

Finally, finally I repeat my statement which concluded my last report. I am much more familiar with the popular caving areas of the western 'Yorkshire' Dales than anywhere else in the north. I don't get to hear of many problems from other CNCC regions, such as the eastern moors or Scotland which we also represent. I am happy to help out with any access problems if I can, but I shall be relying on the knowledge and support of local cavers or those more familiar with the area in order to do so. Don't be afraid to ask.

**Tim Allen– CNCC Access Officer**

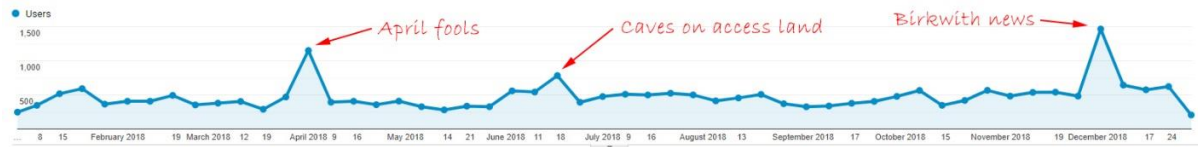
#### **Training Officer's Report**

No report provided. Maz Holloway will discontinue the Training Officer role in March. Despite ongoing discussions with a few potentially interested individuals, nobody has put themselves forward for the deadline. Anyone interested will be able to stand at the AGM itself.

## Webmaster's Report

### Google Analytics

Page views (per week) from 1 Jan 2018 to 31 Dec 2018.



Total page views in the last 12 months: 101,432.

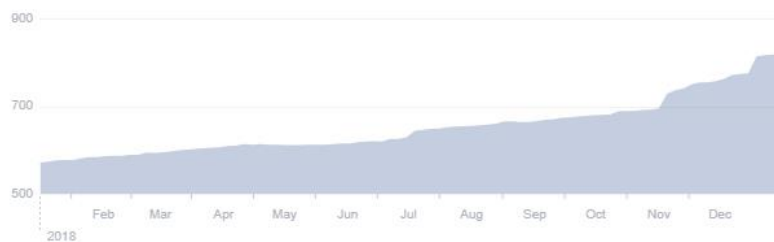
Previous 12 months: 66,464 (53% increase).

Jan 18	Feb 18	Mar 18	Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18	Jul 18	Aug 18	Sep 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18
7333	7882	6322	8254	5334	8381	8940	7682	6850	8856	13082	12516
+8%	+30%	-49%	+83%	+19%	+38%	+107%	+24%	+66%	+33%	+72%	+140%

% is increase on same period in the previous year.

### Facebook

As at 14 Jan 2019 we have 828 page likes (+147 since last report on 1 Oct 2018) and 859 followers (+152 since last report).



Page likes in the last 12 months.

### Twitter

As at 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019 we have 357 followers (+18 since last report on 1 October).

### Online Booking System

The online booking system was official launched to the general caving public on 1 November 2018. So far it has been very successful with only minimal bugs reported. It has been extremely well used with several very active and regular users since its launch.

To date, there are 215 registered users and 283 individual bookings have been made. More detailed statistics will be presented once more data is available.

The booking system was promoted online by a short video created by me and featuring Matt explaining the system. It can be seen on the CNCC YouTube channel, UK Caving and on Facebook.



The Facebook video has been boosted at a cost of £30 and as a result generated a great deal more views and traffic to the website. The advert was seen by anyone on Facebook with an interest in caving or similar outdoor activities. The video has had 10,200 views (with 3,319 of those coming from the paid advert) with a direct engagement of 1,700 people.

Feedback has been 100% positive with lots of people contacting me just to tell me how useful it is and thanking the CNCC for our great efforts in access.

I would like to also thank Geoff, Tim and Matt who have also put a great deal of work into this project.

### **Scottish Caves**

Several of the more popular Scottish caves have been added to the CNCC database with the aim of better highlighting that we also represent Scotland. In addition, descriptions have also been added for most of them which have received. Thanks to Matt and Goon for putting together the content for this.

Since being added on 22 December, the descriptions document has been downloaded 250 times.

### **Download Statistics**

The website has been re-engineered to better record download statistics. The previous system could only report the total amount since its creation several years ago, however the new system now records the date of the download and can work out if it is a repeat download or a unique one. It was implemented for publications on 16 September 2018 and on 20 November 2018 for descriptions and topos.

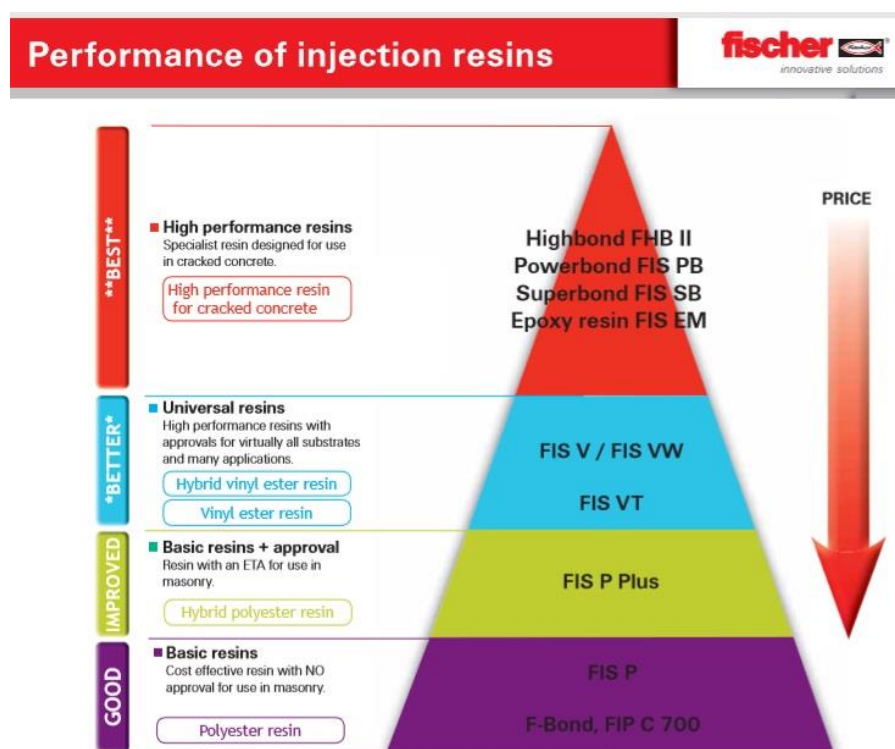
- From 16 September 2018:
  - 916 publications downloads (703 unique)
- From 20 November 2018:
  - 3,867 topo downloads (2,928 unique).
  - 2,049 descriptions downloads (1,543 unique).

**Gary Douthwaite – CNCC Webmaster**

## Anchor Coordinator and E&T Representative

### Request for the CNCC to approve the use of Fischer FIS EM in fixing anchors

It was hoped that the more efficient design of the IC anchor combined with the use of Fischer FIS V resin would mean that we experience no more loose anchors but some IC anchors have come loose. Investigations led me to the view that there were probably several factors causing anchors to come loose but probably the main one was resin shrinkage. All of the various resins used in the past by the CNCC and the BCA have been polyester or vinyl-ester resins that are known to have significant shrinkage. Fischer FIS EM is a pure epoxy resin which Fischer state to be a high performance resin with very low shrinkage.



As performance increases so does the price. We have been paying around £14 per tube for FIS V and the price of FIS EM is £18. However, the epoxy resin has a much longer working time which when installing multiple anchors will economise on both resin and nozzles. FIS V remains useable in the nozzle for around 15 minutes whereas FIS EM is useable for 2 hours which is enough time to move to another site and install an anchor. The extra cost of the resin will be offset by the economy provided by the increased working time.

The IC anchor was designed with vinyl-ester resin in mind and has the optimum strength with that resin. The extra strength of the epoxy resin is not desirable but we will have to accept it. FIS EM is approved for use in diamond-drilled holes, in water-filled holes and underwater. These are all advantages over FIS V. FIS EM has a longer shelf life; tubes bought in December 2018 have an expiry date of October 2021.

The change of resin will be straightforward because the new resin uses the same guns and nozzles.

More information can be found on the Fischer website and there is a link to the European Technical Approval which provides the most detailed information.

<https://www.fischer.co.uk/en-gb/products/chemical-fixings/injection-mortar/injection-mortar-fis-em-plus>

I have load tested three IC anchors using FIS EM and all three anchors pulled out cleanly leaving a reusable hole. The peak loads were 40.00 kN, 39.17 kN and 39.01 kN which is about 10% greater than the characteristic load using FIS V.

Fischer approves FIS EM for use in overhead positions which tells us that it should not run out of the hole. It does not tell us if it will support the weight of an anchor. I have placed one IC anchor in an upwards hole and it did not fall out to any amount discernible with the naked eye. Installers will have to be wary about overhead installations until we have established that they are sound in all situations.

**Simon Wilson – BCA E&T rep and CNCC Anchor Coordinator**

### **Meet's Secretary Reports – Ric Halliwell**

I mainly issue permits for caves with restricted access and I like to issue the maximum number of permits I can, to prove then need for an access agreement granting the current number of permits.

#### **Fairy Holes**

Twelve permits a year are available taking place on the first Saturday of each month. So far I have only received requests for the January and July 2019 permits.

#### **Robinson's Pot**

I am only allowed to issue 9 permits per year (I negotiated a rise from the original agreement of 3 permits because I argued I was swamped by demand). Permits are available on the first Saturday of June and August and the first and third Saturday of May, July and September. So far the only request I have received is for the June 2019 permit.

**Birks Fell** is available all year except for April and May but so far the only request I have received is for 15 September 2019.

**Mongo Gill** is equally available all year except Bank Holiday weekends but again the only request I have received is for 7 April 2019.

### CNCC/BCA Representative's Report

With the BCA council meeting only taking place last Saturday there is very little time to compose a report. The fact that it was a six hour plus endurance event has also dampened my enthusiasm for reliving it all in a report. Also you should all know it was a dreadful meeting and a disgrace to British caving. It was fortunate for me in one way because you will not just have to rely on my reporting. Andrew attended as usual but so did Matt and Gary (with Matt taking the minutes – 40 pages I believe).

The CNCC proposals were not given a fair hearing in my opinion and were argued out by just two individuals who dominate BCA and hold a disproportionate influence over decision making. I think it is no exaggeration to say that for unknown reasons they appear to hold CNCC in absolute contempt.

The second event of note concerned the presentation from the Publications and Information Officer, Jane Allen. She presented ideas on new BCA adverts, logos, a leaflet and how a new BCA website could look amongst other things. The response she got from some quarters was negative, embarrassing, unprofessional and not what you would expect from a national association council. The next day she resigned. Her resignation letter was addressed to all BCA members, so I repeat it here;

*For the attention of BCA Council and BCA members.*

*I am tending my resignation as BCA Publications and Information Officer with immediate effect.*

*It had been my hope to help BCA promote the organisation in a positive manner to its members and the wider caving community.*

*It had also been my hope to help promote caving to those who have yet to discover our great sport.*

*I had thought my professional sales, marketing, PR and social media experience would be of value to the organisation.*

*I had looked forward to showing Council examples of what change might look like, however the reaction I received from some members left me feeling humiliated, embarrassed and chastised. It was a pretty awful drive home and I feel little better today.*

*The effort I believe it would require, once a P&I committee was set up, battling against procedure and the dominance I see of BCA by a few people is simply too much.*

*It's little wonder, BCA struggle to enlist and retain volunteers, particularly women.*

*Regards, Jane Allen*

I am sure any of us would be happy to explain elements of the BCA meeting as best as we can.

**Tim Allen – CNCC Representative to the BCA**