

BCA Newsletter

Number 24 - February 2016

This newsletter was originally only published as a web page but has been re-created as this PDF in July 2019.

Chairman's Introduction

Although not strictly under the auspices of BCA, EuroSpeleo 2016 will showcase how we Brits do things, and clearly deserves everyone's support. The organising team is extremely grateful to its major sponsors: Dalesbridge, SpanSet UK and Teufelberger, and Craven Pothole Club Ltd. The most recent of these, SpanSet UK, in conjunction with the manufacturer, Teufelberger, has generously provided 6 km of rope allowing even more of our excellent caves to be rigged for the event. I commend the organising team for their hard work and ongoing effort and encourage everyone to get their tickets as soon as possible.

Also in progress is the organisation of the AGM/Party weekend. After the success of last year's event, when we combined with BCRC, we are joining with the Mendip Digfest this year and the AGM itself is set for the back bar of the Hunters – the ultimate Mendip location!

I don't know which was more challenging, co-ordinating their diaries, or successfully getting a pair of MPs down Bar Pot and into Gaping Gill Main Chamber in the week after Christmas. Either way, Tim Allen is to be congratulated for some excellent publicity for our sport. That they were also able to visit the CRO Headquarters in Clapham was a huge bonus.

The huge long term effort by CNCC to fund their conservation projects has struck gold. Congratulations to all concerned.

Finally, BCRA continues to produce some excellent publications. Tony Waltham has been working extremely hard on volume two of *Cave and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales*, with online chapters appearing regularly, and Phil Murphy has recently authored the excellent *Exploring the Limestone Landscapes of the Cumbrian Ring*. We also continue to owe Dave Lowe and John Gunn a great deal for the ongoing work with *Cave and Karst Science*. Thank you to you all.

Andy Eavis

BCA Chairman

Eurospeleo 2016 Update

A huge amount of work has been done and planning for the event is now entering the final phase.

A programme of talks, workshops and field trips will be on offer every day. For more information visit eurospeleo.uk and, to offer your services complete and submit the appropriate online form.

In the early evenings there will be a caving film shown by the La Salle 3D team. This is caving as you've never seen it (unless you've been lucky enough to catch the La Salle team elsewhere). Absolutely unmissable!

Later every evening there will be a bar and a variety of themed live entertainment.

The Cave Protection Commission will be holding a two day symposium on 15th-16th August at the EuroSpeleo venue. It covers protection and conservation under EU law for caves and karst areas. For more information visit the eurospeleo.uk website.

Tickets are still available at the discounted rates but the discount period ends on February 29th, so book soon.

To book at the current prices visit eurospeleo.uk/tickets

Pre- and Post-Congress Caving Camps

In the week before the congress there will be camps based at Llangattock in South Wales, Priddy in the Mendips and for mining enthusiasts, at Nenthead in Cumbria.

The Llangattock and Priddy camps will be repeated in the week after the congress and that week there will also be camps based at Penwyllt in South Wales and at the Orpheus CC HQ in the Peak District.

Each camp will offer a variety of guided trips in local caves and there will even be opportunities to avoid caving and take a day off.

Places at all the camps are limited and booking is now open.

Funding Cave Conservation

Is this the way forward or just magic? BCA's Conservation & Access Officer, Andrew Hinde, explains how CNCC managed to turn £2,000 into £30,000 to fund conservation projects.

The CNCC have joined forces with Natural England and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to undertake cave conservation tasks as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (A Heritage Lottery Funded project with a budget of £2million). In effect, the CNCC contributed £2000 and secured total funding equivalent to £30,000 for cave conservation projects. The CNCC can now tackle jobs that had previously been too costly, such as those requiring the removal of hazardous materials by specialist contractors.

Conservation projects include underground and surface clean ups and stock fencing around some open shafts. A vital part of the project is to involve the local community in taking an interest in their underground heritage too.

Details of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership project which is estimated to cost £2.6 million, mostly provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, are at <http://www.ydmt.org/idlps-about>.

Most of the "match funding" required by the Heritage Lottery Fund has come from CNCC conservation volunteers 'man hours' converted to a cash equivalent. Over 4 years this is a considerable amount.

Natural England can no longer be relied upon to finance this work directly, so partnership work on a "Landscape Scale" is a productive way forward.

This type of funding can only be realistically accessible through a "professional and experienced" organisation. It takes years in the planning and preparation for a bid to be successful. Most of our caving regions would have similar opportunities if they built partnerships with Local Wildlife Trusts, National Parks, National Trust and Natural England/ NRW/SNH.

MPs visit Gaping Ghyll

BCA's CRoW Liaison Officer, Tim Allen, organised a VIP caving trip to Gaping Ghyll in the Yorkshire Dales on 28th December. The trip successfully demonstrated the positive benefits of caving to the participants and the local community, and provided an opportunity to discuss the issues surrounding CRoW and caver access. The VIPs had a great day out and were very helpful and supportive of BCA.

The two Conservative MPs, former Shadow Home Secretary David Davis, MP for Howden and Haltemprice, and David Rutley, who sits as MP for Macclesfield and is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mountaineering, were joined by Dinah Rose QC and Richard Toon, Chairman of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and were supported throughout the trip by experienced local cavers. Before setting off for the cave, the team enjoyed a tour

of the Cave Rescue Organisation headquarters in Clapham, recognising the volunteer service which had recently been on stand-by for the widespread flooding in the region.

They entered the cave via Bar Pot descending the pitches using ladder and lifeline and on reaching the main chamber they and their companions enjoyed a snack of cake and hot coffee.

Having regained the surface, the two MPs agreed that caving was a large and growing source of income in rural areas, which benefited the economy while causing no damage to the environment.

Mr Davis said: 'The trip was a fascinating experience, and it was really great to see Britain's highest waterfall thundering down from a circle of daylight above – it was especially impressive after so much rain. It's clear to me that caving has nothing but a positive impact, both on its exponents and the communities where the sport takes place. I cannot see for the life of me why DEFRA is taking the wholly illogical stance of denying that caves are covered by the open access freedoms granted by the CRoW Act.'

Mr Rutley said: 'It was truly a memorable day out, and the Main Chamber and waterfall are just an incredible spectacle. We are fortunate to have an active population of cavers in the UK, which has a hugely beneficial economic impact on areas where there are caves. I look forward to working closely with cavers in future, as part of my wider efforts to get people off the sofa and to promote outdoor activities, and to show why access to caves should be recognised under the CRoW Act.'

This trip was well reported in the local newspapers. The full press release is part of the CRoW report to the January Council meeting and can be seen in the draft minutes of that meeting. [Editor]

Major Reorganisation of the British Caving Library

Jenny Potts and the library team have been working hard to integrate the huge quantity of acquisitions from the John Beck and Doug Nash legacy.

A major reorganisation of the British Caving Library is taking place in order to house the John Beck and Doug Nash Legacy. BCRA has leased a temporary storage facility for 6 months and it was agreed to pass Doug's specialist mining historical material, including the Nellie Kirkham legacy, to Peak District Mines Historical Society who have already begun to pass on original mining documents to the Derbyshire Records Office for specialist conservation and storage.

These documents will be available to the public and PDMHS will retain other mining related publications in their own Library, accessible to cavers and mining historians.

Already moved to the British Caving Library premises is an 8-drawer map chest full of cave and mine surveys, maps and aerial photos of the Peak District - this is just as John left it and we now have to catalogue the contents. Also transferred to BCL is John's A1 format printer with spare ink and paper rolls, ready to print surveys as soon as we have the cave-related software and files from John's computer, now stored on a separate hard drive ready for us.

Remaining at the storage facility together with all the publications are a second 5-drawer map chest containing maps, surveys and prints; 600 rolled maps and surveys (formerly held in two specialized storage cabinets); plus a further four tea-chest sized boxes holding several hundred more rolled large format surveys and maps. All this material will have to be sorted before it can be transferred; we have already spotted duplicates of items held by BCL and aim to pass these on to other caving libraries in due course.

We also have Doug Nash's computer, which holds his catalogue of the 2800 publications (books, periodicals, etc.) owned by himself and John, which will help in sorting these ready for transfer to BCL.

The one map chest, some shelving and a few publications have already been moved to new positions at BCL, some more recently donated shelving has been installed and we now intend to buy another complete shelving unit. This will increase the available shelf space to over 250 m, which is probably the maximum we can accommodate. (For comparison, the original BCRA Library occupied approximately 70 m of shelving at the Matlock Local Studies Library.)

Derbyshire Caves and Mines

DCA have been preparing an online access guide for the past few months and it is due to go live in stages throughout the first quarter of 2016. The guide is using software based on the MCRA model which has been adapted by Matt Voysey of MCRA for DCA use.

Designation of Anchors for use in North Wales Slate

With increasing interest in visits to the mines of North Wales, Bob Mehew reports on an E & T project to test anchors in the local slate.

This project grew out of work conducted by Gethin Thomas and others in 2012 and 2013. A proposal was made to the BCA's Equipment and Techniques Committee for funding to purchase a range of anchors of different types for testing in several types of slate. Following discussion, it was agreed that the project should focus on testing the Collinox and Goujon anchors together with E&T's currently preferred anchor, the Bolt Product (BP) GP8-100-16A4 resin bonded anchor. Subsequently Simon Wilson made available some IC anchors for inclusion in the project.

The proposal was to locate a moderate number of anchors in 4 different types of slate located at the Cwmorthin slate mine, Blaenau Ffestiniog in both the Back Vein and the Stripey Vein, together with locations at Cambrian slate mine, Llangollen and Braich Goch mine, Corris.

The anchors were placed in December 2014 and extracted using the BCA anchor puller in January 2015. Details of the work and results can be found on the website. The broad conclusions were as follows:

The results show that BP anchors meet the E&T criteria for adoption in the four types of North Wales slate of Cwmorthin Back and Stripey slate, Cambrian slate and Braich Goch Corris slate.

As a consequence E&T agreed to designate the BP anchor for use in slate mines which are located in those four types of North Wales' slate.

The results also show that both Collinox and 12mm Goujon expansion anchors coupled with the Coeur hanger meet both the European Standard and the UIAA criteria in the four types of North Wales' slate.

The results for Collinox anchors support a claim that Batinox anchors are likely to also meet the European Standard and the UIAA criteria in the four type of North Wales' slate.

The results show that IC anchors with KMR resin meet the European Standard and the UIAA criteria in the four types of North Wales' slate. Although the results are strongly indicative that IC anchors using Fischer resin would meet E&T's criteria, a new test set using the approved resin is required to be conducted before E&T should consider adopting the IC anchor for the four type of North Wales' slate.

Caving and the Rural Economy

As part of his CRoW liaison role, Tim Allen has been researching the financial value of caving to local communities and this fits in well with recent parliamentary focus.

David Rutley MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mountaineering, secured a Westminster Hall debate on the 'economic value of outdoor recreation'.

The Minister of Sport attended this debate and pretty well every speaker said that outdoor recreation is fantastic – key reasons being the promotion of physical and mental well being and the money it puts into the economy.

To establish the value of caving to our rural economies Tim has focussed on the northern caving region where it is estimated that there are 70,000 instructor-led caving trips each year.

Here, preliminary study of fact and estimate show a value between £3-4million per year (excluding commercial businesses such as outdoor shops and show caves). Extrapolated across all caving regions it is easy to see that this would amount to £10million per year and have a significant effect on the specific areas frequented by cavers.

Outdoor recreation is now a key feature of the new Strategy for Sport which will bring together government departments such as Health, Sport, Local Government and Environment.

NAMHO Conference - Mining and Social Change

This is the theme of the NAMHO Conference which is being hosted by the MHTI on the 17th-19th June 2016 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of NAMHO and the 1916 centenary celebrations. The meeting will be based at Dublin City University, which is handy for the airport in the north of the city.

On Saturday there will be a day of lectures with the theme Mining and Social Change. The conference dinner will be in the evening, followed by musical entertainment.

On Sunday there will be field trips to the copper mines of Avoca, Wicklow, which have been much in the news lately due to consolidations works, and the silver-lead mines of the Wicklow Uplands, where recent research and survey work has made major new discoveries.

EuroSpeleo Federation Newsletter

The English version of the latest European Speleological Federation newsletter can be downloaded at http://www.eurospeleo.eu/images/stories/docs/eurospeleo-news/FSE_Newsletter_January_2016-EN.pdf

BCA Online & the BCA Newsletter

Once again this edition of the newsletter will be distributed as an email attachment to those members who have registered to receive it.

Simply by supplying BCA with an email address, members can receive administrative email that is necessary to run BCA/BCRA, for example renewal notices. But to receive other more promotional material, such as the Newsletter, members must also register with BCA Online and update their email preferences accordingly.

I make no apology for banging on about this yet again. The fact is that I very much want members to opt in to receive this newsletter. Please, if you are registered, bully your friends and persuade them to do the same.

The process isn't difficult – click here: http://members.british-caving.org.uk/users/request_login_details. Then fill in your email address and click the green submit button. If your email address is found, the system will send you an email with a link to allow you to set your password and log in. If your email address isn't found, please follow the instructions on the screen.

Once you have logged in, you can click on "Email Preferences" to opt-in and receive the BCA Newsletter direct to your inbox. Please note you can opt-out of email communication at any time by using the same screen.

Whilst there, you can also quickly click on "Your Profile" to check that BCA has your correct contact and insurance details.

Robin Weare

BCA News Editor

Pollution Risk to Otter Hole

A planning application for a development which has raised concerns of a risk of pollution to Otter Hole has been submitted to Monmouthshire County Council.

The development is only a short distance from the line of known cave passage and a nearby sink has been dye tested to the cave.

Past pollution, which had been connected to a similar activity in the same area, has not been noted since that business closed. This has been pointed out within detailed concerns expressed by local cavers and clubs who have made submissions opposing the development. Submissions in support of their opposition have also been made by the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation & Access Group, Natural Resources Wales and the conservation officers of both the British Caving Association and Cambrian Caving Council.

As a direct result of this action a revised planning application has been submitted. This revised application addresses some of the concerns raised by the caving organisations.

Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales

Work on volume 2 of this BCRA publication continues with two more chapters published online in November and another updated.

Two further chapters of this book have now been completed - ch. 29, Caves of Nidderdale by Chris Fox, and - in addition to the original planned contents - ch. 33, Caves of the North York Moors by John Dale and Carl Thomas.

Chapter 25 (Caves around Malham and Settle) was updated in January 2016 to describe the flooding event in December 2015, which saw a waterfall at Malham Cove, and was almost certainly the first time that this had flowed on a significant scale since 1824.

The most easterly of Yorkshire's glaciated dales, Nidderdale has a significant group of caves beneath inliers of Carboniferous limestone exposed in its upper reaches. Far from the axis of the Pennine anticline, the Great Scar Limestone lies well beneath the valley floor, and the caves are formed in coalesced limestones of the Yoredale Group. Upstream of Lofthouse village, the River Nidd and its major tributary, How Stean Beck, both drain Lodge Moor, on the eastern side of the great expanse of grit upland known broadly as Grassington Moor. Both rivers cross the limestone inliers and both have formed significant cave systems, which are morphologically distinct from most other caves in the Yorkshire Dales.

Separated from the Yorkshire Dales by the Vale of York, the North York Moors lie across a broad, north-facing escarpment of Jurassic rocks, and are completely different in character from their Pennine neighbours. The bulk of the Moors' rocks are sandstones, but the Upper Jurassic succession includes two beds of oolitic limestone. These are most conspicuous where they form the Tabular Hills on the southwestern corner of the main dip-slope, and also the Hambleton Hills just to their west. These limestones contain the various caves known beneath the hill country of the North York Moors.

Malham Cove and Gordale Scar are two of the best-known limestone landforms in Britain and the surrounding limestone uplands are among the finest glaciokarst landscapes in the Dales. In the heart of this terrain, Malham Tarn occupies a glacially excavated bowl floored by impermeable rocks that lie beneath the limestone. Surface karst features include great expanses of limestone pavement and numerous dolines, large and small, in addition to the Watlowes dry valley above Malham Cove, and the limestone gorge above Gordale Scar. This chapter was updated in January 2016 to describe the flooding event in December 2015, which saw a waterfall at Malham Cove, and was almost certainly the first time that this had flowed on a significant scale since 1824.

Each chapter may be downloaded <http://bcra.org.uk/pub/dales/index.html>

Crowdfunding a Cave Dig

Nigel Steel gave a talk at Hidden Earth about the archaeological dig at Victoria Cave. The finance for this dig, and the associated scientific work, has been obtained from all over the world - through crowdfunding. Is this the way forward?

So you want to do a cave dig but need the funds to start your project, have you thought about crowdfunding? It is a big world out there and many people have many interests other than the joy and fascination that they derive from their jobs. People are looking to exchange their hard-earned cash for life experiences. There is a movement that is drifting away from spending money on consumables and threading into something more tangible and this is where your crowdfunding comes in.

Crowdfunding can include a wide range of services that will benefit the organisers and will give participants a sense of ownership and achievement. One way of setting up your crowdfunding project is by using an online platform. There are two platforms to crowdfunding, 'keep it all' and 'all or nothing', the "keep it all", as the name suggests, means that once the project has reached its objective (or not) you keep all the money, which means that you can put the money in the kitty for your next project.

Crowdfunding can, with the help from your community, raise the funds for your project and digital communication is paramount to the success of your model, by doing this you can reach out to a far greater audience. The wide demographics means that your project will become more creative, it is not just about the dig it is about everything that surrounds the dig, this means that you have to keep your community informed with regular updates, when you dig or discuss the dig or go out and think about the dig, blog or put together a short film and post it 'live', this gives your community the impetus to become active and creative.

A number of practicalities should be considered before you think about pressing the GO button.

- Decide which platform will you use
- Define your value proposition
- Design your benefits
- Build a communication structure
- Use social media efficiently
- Plan key targets
- Manage a launch campaign and back this up with regular 'live' stream
- Think about your new community, what do they want from your project?
- How can you deliver the needs of the community?

And remember that each participant has a small role that combined will work towards the greater good. For more information regarding crowdfunding and to see how it can be applied successfully visit <http://digventures.com>

Cave Access Update

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (South Wales)

At the December meeting of the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Cave Management Committee it was agreed that permits could be issued to Direct Individual Members of BCA, whether or not they are club members. Specific rules and guidelines for the visit can be obtained by e-mailing the permit secretary at ofdaccess@hotmail.co.uk - it is advised to make contact at least fourteen days before your planned visit.

Thistle Cave (Yorkshire)

There are reports of a rock fall in Thistle Cave at Ribbleshead, just downstream of the entrance. Any visiting groups are advised to take extra care.

Garden Path (Derbyshire)

As a way of ensuring closer adherence to the spirit of the owner's licence, access is being streamlined. Interested parties should email legal.insurance@theDCA.org.uk for a permit, giving brief details of party, proposed date of visit, insurance cover, etc. The applicant should also give a contact address and phone no. The permit can be printed out and exchanged for a key from Bob Dearman at Chelmorton. This revised procedure will run for a trial year. Please Note: it continues to be the case that a permit cannot be issued for trips which are for purely recreational purposes - take a camera with you, or a gas sampling device, or something. Work has already been done to remove the old wooden platforms from the shaft, and new bolts have been placed for the slightly different SRT rigging now necessary - a new topo will be made available when the revised system goes ahead in the New Year.

Eyam Dale House Cave (Derbyshire)

There is currently building work going on in the vicinity of the cave so it's likely that a new arrangement will need to be made to allow access.

Ogof Marros (South Wales)

A full report on the excavation of this new site appears in the January edition of the Cambrian Caving Council newsletter. Please keep away for now as access is at present restricted to the digging team to allow for safety work, exploration, scientific work and surveying.

Owlet Hole Mine (Derbyshire)

Unfortunately there have been a number of people breaking into this mine. It needs to be kept properly secured as it is considered part of the Temple Mine complex and hence 'active' under Mines and Quarries legislation; also it opens into Gulliver's Kingdom. The locking system on the lid needs to be revised so that the padlock cannot be forced, once this is done the previous access arrangement of getting the key from the Mining Museum can resume.

Access at Giants Hole (Derbyshire)

The landowner at Giants hole requires that visitors pay the small sum of £3.00. The Trespass Fee is to be put in the envelope supplied with car registration number(s) written on it and placed in box by the notice. (Payment by cheque is acceptable - payable to "Peakshill Farm") DCA is negotiating for access to other caves on Peakshill Farm land so it will be to everyone's benefit to ensure that all cavers comply with the current system for access.

Ashford Black Marble Mine (Derbyshire)

It has been noted on several occasions recently that someone unknown appears to have been chipping away at minerals in one part of the mine and debris has been left on the floor. Please note that the access agreement with Chatsworth Estates does not allow the extraction of any minerals. The debris has now been cleared, so please inform the DCA Secretary if it appears again.

Devon & Cornwall Caves and Mines

DCUC has a [\[\[http://dcuc.org.uk/|new website\]\]](http://dcuc.org.uk/) and content is still being uploaded. If you are looking for information on Cave and Mine Access, it would be best to use the link on the home page to e-mail the access officer until work on the site is complete.

The Garden Path

When I read the access item (above) I found myself wondering about the relevance of garden paths to caving so I asked Jenny Potts to explain. Her reply was fascinating and may be of interest to others who (like me) only visit the area occasionally. [Editor]

Garden Path (Entrance to Lathkill Head) is the artificial shaft sunk 35m to reach the inner chambers of the Lathkill Head cave system which is an SSSI over 1km long. The main entrance is a natural resurgence - the huge entrance of "Lathkill Head Cave" in Lathkill Dale - the way on is almost all flat out crawling, normally flooded unless it's exceptionally dry weather.

A Derbyshire caver called Ben Bentham penetrated the flat out crawls and the "Tiger" section in the 1990's and reached a 35m high beautifully decorated chamber, which he called "Dream Time". He persuaded the then English Nature and Chatsworth Estates to allow him to sink a shaft from high up on the flat land above the dale side, which opened out into the roof of Dream Time. Originally he installed wooden staging at intervals and fixed ladders, ostensibly to allow "cave scientists" to be able to access the chamber - which was how he got his permission.

In fact it was never used by cave scientists and the requirement that it not be used for "tourists trips" and that a report be sent to EN and Chatsworth after every visit meant it couldn't be visited by ordinary cavers either. The fixed ladders were unsafe and were removed within a couple of years of being installed and P-anchors were installed so that people could use SRT and stand on the platforms to effect change-overs. The wooden platforms have been gradually deteriorating since - they are rotting and also, being organic, they are growing mould, fungus, etc. DCA finally persuaded NE that the platforms were introducing pollution into the pristine inner section of the system and should be removed and, since their removal meant a change to the rigging to avoid damaging delicate roof formations as you descend the last rope length, the lower section of the shaft had to be re-bolted and a deviation put in. All the work has now been completed and cavers can have access via a new permit system and key by emailing their application to the DCA Legal & Insurance Officer: legal.insurance@theDCA.org.uk.

There is one other entrance into the inner Lathkill Head system: "Upper Entrance (into Lathkill Head)" - which is a natural shaft about 40m deep found on the hillside above the dale, leading into a chamber called "The Waiting Room". In exceptionally dry weather it is possible to crawl through from there into "Dream Time".

Everyone in Derbyshire knows what you mean by "Garden Path", as opposed to "Lathkill Head Cave" and "Lathkill Head Top Entrance" but it's a bit obscure to others.

Please note: The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the formal view of the British Caving Association.