

York Caving Club

York Caving Club – Constitution and Code of Practice

Revised April 2011

SECTION 1: CONSTITUTION

1 Definitions

“YCC” or “The Club” means York Caving Club and may be used to abbreviate the clubs official name.

“YUCPC” means York University Cave and Pothole Club, a separate York club primarily aimed at students.

“The Committee” means the elected members of The Club. See section 5.

“BCA” means the British Caving Association – the UK body that provides information and insurance to caving clubs.

“Caving” may refer to the act of caving, potholing or mine exploration. “Cave” may refer to a pothole or abandoned mine.

“SRT” means Single Rope Technique.

2 Objectives

The objectives of YCC include:

- a) To promote the sport of caving, cave research and mine exploration worldwide
- b) To maintain an affiliation to YUCPC and to provide help and support as required
- c) To maintain the good reputation of the club in the caving world
- d) To establish and maintain a friendly and active club
- e) To adapt to fulfil the caving ambitions of its members

3 Equal Opportunities

The club shall be an equal opportunities organization. Discrimination will not be tolerated on the basis of sex, religion, creed, sexuality or ethnic origins. Likewise, any behaviour deemed inappropriate may result in membership being withdrawn. All club trips will be available for all full members to attend however (with the exception of where there are limitations on numbers). The Committee reserve the right to refuse individuals attendance on a particular trip if it is deemed that the cave exceeds the capabilities or technical knowledge (e.g. SRT skills) of the individual.

4 Membership

Full members of the club should have (A) access to the club website member area, (B) year-round access to club equipment with reasonable notice, (C) the opportunity to attend all club events with no additional club trip fees, and (D) the opportunity to attend the club Annual General Meeting (AGM), vote and stand for committee positions (in accordance with section 5.2).

4.1 Target Membership

Membership of YCC is aimed towards any caver with sufficient experience and equipment to be self-sufficient in a cave (in particular, this includes experienced members wishing to progress from YUCPC). New members should be experienced and competent in most aspects of caving, including as a minimum those skills set out in the code of practice, as the club is unable to provide any training and can not provide personal caving equipment (including clothing, lighting and SRT kits).

As an exception, the club may organise trips that do not require ropework skills, and therefore individuals who have caving experience but limited SRT skills could be considered for membership at the discretion of The Committee, and may be able to receive some in-situ training. However, it should be highlighted to the applicant upon joining that they may initially only be able

to attend some of the club trips due to their limited experience. The club is under no obligation to provide any form of training, however, it is anticipated that some members may be willing to help provide some in-situ training on occasions.

4.2 Membership Fees

Membership fees are to be reviewed on an annual basis by The Committee and will include optional insurance provided by the BCA. BCA insurance (which may also be held through a separate club) is a requirement to attend any YCC caving trip. Membership fees may be reduced for members joining later in the year – this should be reviewed yearly.

4.3 Processing of Membership Applications

Non-members wishing to apply for membership and returning members wishing to renew their expired membership will be required to complete a very short membership application form. This will be performed electronically using the club website, and submission of this will require the applicant to confirm that they have read and agreed to abide by the club constitution and code of practice. Upon receipt of this form, The Committee must decide whether to accept the application (for new members this may involve a discussion and meeting with the applicant to discuss their prior experience, at the discretion of The Committee). Upon payment of membership fees, the applicant will either be added, or their membership status updated on the website. The Committee should make every effort to assist new members to become involved with and integrated into The Club.

The application form may also be provided on paper if required.

4.4 Disputes over Membership

In the event of any member of the club raising concern over issuing of membership to any individual, this will be discussed by The Committee, and a decision whether to allow membership will be taken by majority vote of The Committee. Proceedings of the vote should be documented in club records, and if membership is rejected, reasons for this should be recorded. The reason for rejection does not need to be communicated to the individual; however this is at the discretion of The Committee.

4.5 Withdrawal of Membership

Membership may be withdrawn from any individual, with good reason (for example, inappropriate behaviour or conduct, or failure to adhere to the code of conduct). Decisions regarding withdrawal of membership will be taken by majority vote of The Committee, and membership fees will not be refunded if membership is withdrawn due to inappropriate behaviour or conduct.

4.6 Use, Storage and Availability of Member Data

All data submitted to The Club by members (including name, contact details and any additional data) will be held within the club records, either as hard-copy or electronically or both. No data will be passed from The Club to any other organisation or made available to any non-member. Upon joining, member's names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers will be made available on the members section of the website (viewable by members and club associates, but not non-members) for the purposes of assisting club communication and event planning. Any members who do not wish their contact details to be made available to other members may request this on their application form, or by E-mail or in writing at the time of joining.

5 Committee

All business of The Club shall be controlled by The Committee which shall consist of at least three Officers (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer), elected by a vote of members of the club at an Annual General Meeting. Several other optional Officers as detailed below may be present on The Committee, or their functions may be performed by other Committee Officers.

5.1 The Club Officers

5.1.1 Chairperson (required post)

- a) Represent the club at official meetings and events
- b) Organise the general running of the club and chair meetings
- c) Regularly check / respond to / forward email messages from the main email address
- d) Liaise with members, and members of other clubs, in particular, YUCPC
- e) Apply for permits and arrange meets

5.1.2 Secretary (required post)

- a) Organise BCA and BCRA membership and insurance
- b) Arrange overnight events (e.g. Christmas meal and weekends/trips away)
- c) Take minutes of meetings wherever appropriate
- d) Organise club merchandise

5.1.3 Treasurer (required post)

- a) Keep the club accounts in order
- b) Organise and collect membership and trip fees

- c) Update membership status upon receipt of membership fees
- d) Prepare an annual budget if required
- e) Reimburse costs

5.1.4 Socials organiser (optional post)

- a) Arrange and encourage regular pub meets and social events
- b) Help welcome new members to the club by inviting them to socials

5.1.5 Equipment Officer (optional post)

- a) Gear maintenance (this does not replace the need for all members to check the safety of equipment)
- b) Monitoring the condition of the club equipment and maintaining an inventory
- c) Submit a replacement and renewal schedule to the chairperson and treasurer

5.1.6 Webmaster / Librarian (optional post)

- a) Keep the website and E-mail system up to date and free from errors
- b) Store and maintain club books, documents and other paperwork, both hard copy and electronic

5.1.7 Founder members (optional post, 2009-2019 only)

To ensure the continuity required for the smooth running and establishment of the club over its first ten years (2009-2019 inclusive), founder members (ME, GD, LB, ND and AT) who established the club in 2009) are automatically entitled to request a 'Founder Member' position on The Committee, if they do not already hold one of the other Committee positions.

5.2 Election of Committee Members

Only full members who have held membership for longer than six months may hold a position on The Committee. Members may be nominated or may volunteer for positions on The Committee. All of the positions shall be decided by a simple majority vote of all full members present and voting at a General Meeting. The method of voting can be decided at the time of the elections and should be documented, along with election proceedings in the minutes. Officers are elected for one year but may be re-elected. An Annual General Meeting will be held once a year at a convenient time and minutes should be available to members if requested. Every effort should be made to ensure maximum attendance for an Annual General Meeting.

5.3 Roll of The Committee

Additional points that the whole Committee should consider each year include (but are not limited to):

- a) What the membership fees and trip fees should be for the year
- b) What club equipment may soon require to be purchased
- c) Reviewing the club constitution and code of practice
- d) Improvements to the way the club is organised
- e) Ensuring that members are satisfied

With the exception of the individual roles detailed above, the job of The Committee is to ensure the smooth running of The Club, in such a way as to meet with the clubs objectives, while ensuring the club is run in accordance with the rules and requirements detailed in this document. Any change to the details set out in this document, or any other change to the way in which The Club is run (i.e. one that will significantly affect the functioning of The Club or one where the views of The Committee are clearly split) must be discussed and then voted in by a minimum of a 2/3rd majority decision of all members of The Committee.

6 Club Equipment

6.1 Access and Storage

The equipment must be stored in an appropriate location, where ropes are able to dry and be protected from freezing. Access to this location may be controlled (i.e. locked) by The Committee for security reasons however every effort should be made to ensure that access is available to all full members whenever equipment is required. Members are advised to contact the Equipment Officer (or acting Equipment Officer) in advance to communicate their equipment requirements.

6.2 Priority

Use of club equipment is prioritised to planned club meets organised in advance (for example, pre-arranged permits, weekends away or trip planned and advertised significantly in advance). In the event of two events competing for equipment, agreement between individual members is desirable, however failing that the decision of The Committee will be final.

6.3 Rules for Use

For every trip it is the responsibility of all attending YCC members to ensure that the equipment is used appropriately and returned CLEAN after use, particularly with ropes washed and shanked (the club should endeavour to provide a rope washer for this purpose). If the returning or cleaning of equipment is not possible immediately after the trip, the Equipment Officer (or acting Equipment Officer) should be informed and arrangements should be made to ensure the gear is returned and cleaned as soon as possible. The member packing equipment for the trip should ensure that all items taken are accounted for on return, and any losses or damages to club equipment during the course of a trip should be reported to The Committee immediately.

6.4 Maintenance

A live inventory of all club equipment should be kept and updated regularly. Regular dedicated audits or inspections of club equipment are not considered necessary; however, instead, all equipment should be inspected before and after use (particularly ropes, which should be inspected for defects during packing and washing). Ropes and slings should be assigned a maximum working life of 10 years, after which time they must be decommissioned irrespective of their condition. Any rigging item with a suspected defect should be immediately withdrawn from use pending investigation. Repairs to non-rigging items such as tacklesacks should be performed when deemed necessary.

6.5 Decommissioning

Equipment that is decommissioned due to age or defects should be removed of the YCC black and orange markings and either disposed of, or if being retained, should be clearly re-marked as decommissioned (using non black or orange tape) and stored separated from active equipment. The decommissioning of any item of equipment, and the fate of all decommissioned equipment should be recorded in the equipment inventory.

6.6 Losses and Damages

All trip participants must report any damage or loss of equipment on the trip to The Committee. Depending on the nature of the damage or loss, individual members may be responsible for funding the replacement costs of the equipment.

7 Non Members and Club Associates

7.1 Definitions and Entitlements

7.1.1 Non Members

Non-member refers to anyone who is not a full member or an associate of the club. Non-members will not have access to log into the club website and may not sign up directly for any trips or events. However, non-members may attend club trips in the company of full members, on the conditions set out below.

7.1.2 Club Associates

Individuals who are not full members of the club, but who have expressed an interest in attendance on occasional trips, digs or social events may be given the status of club associate. This position should only be given at the discretion of The Committee and is not an entitlement. Club associates could include (a) those involved solely in the digging activities of the club, (b) those who wish to be involved socially with the club only, or (c) those who wish to follow the proceedings of the club and take an occasional underground involvement, but not regularly enough to warrant full membership.

Members who do not renew their membership will be automatically downgraded from full member to club associate upon expiry of their full membership. During the first few months of each year, the list of club associates should be reviewed at the discretion of The Committee and those deemed not to have a valid reason for being a club associate, or who have not participated significantly in the club during the last 12 months will be returned to non-member status.

Club associates may access the member's area of the website and may sign up for events on the conditions set out below.

7.2 Attendance of Non Members and Club Associates on Trips

Non-members and club associates are welcome to attend any YCC event with the following criteria:

- a) At least half the people attending the trip should be full YCC members.
- b) The non members and club associates must be covered by BCA insurance.
- c) The non members and club associates must pay a trip fee if appropriate (see below).

Non members and club associates may attend a maximum of two sporting caving events per calendar year. The first trip will be free for individuals who have been a non-member throughout the current and previous calendar years. The first trip will incur a trip fee for club associates and non members who held full membership during the previous calendar year. The second trip will incur a trip fee for all non-members and club associates. Attendance on a third trip will require full membership to be purchased,

although any trip fees paid for the second trip will be deducted from the full year membership rate (but not from any partial-year discounted membership rates).

It is the responsibility of the YCC full members on the trip to ensure equipment is booked out and returned clean and that trip fees are collected and passed to the Treasurer. Where space is limited on any trip or event, priority will always go to full members, followed by club associates irrespective of when the individual signed up for the event.

7.3 Exceptions

Note that these are general conditions and rules and for many events and situations, exceptions to the above may apply. Deviations from the above that are deemed to be in the interest of The Club or fairness to members or potential members may be made at the discretion of The Committee

8 Trips and Events

8.1 Organisation of Trips

The Committee will organise several events in advance at the start of the year. Ideally these events should encompass a range of types of caves and potholes, and should aim to reflect the wishes of the club members. Further events may be organised throughout the year at shorter notice by The Committee or individual members or associates,

Club trips will be made available for members and club associates to sign up to. Places on trips organised by The Committee but with limited spaces will be on first-come first-served basis (with full members taking priority over club associates). Members may suggest trips or may represent the club for organising a trip (although The Committee should be kept informed), in which case, the member(s) specifically suggesting, requesting or organising the trip will have discretion over who has priority attendance.

8.2 Access Permission

All club trips MUST obtain the appropriate access permission, i.e. a permit, or permission from the landowner. Typically a selection of club permits should be organised in advance by The Committee, however, all members are welcome to use the club name to apply for any permits or permission throughout the year, provided The Committee are kept informed. No members of YCC should under any circumstances knowingly breach access restrictions or 'pirate' any cave as such actions could compromise the reputation of The Club and may result in withdrawal of membership without refund.

8.3 Additional Trip Costs

Petrol costs, and all other associated costs for all trips (including bunkhouse and camping fees and land access fees) will be split between individuals by personal agreements, and are independent from the club funds except at the discretion of The Treasurer.

9 Dissolution of The Club

9.1 Reasons for Dissolution

The dissolution (termination of the existence) of The Club may occur under the following circumstances:

(a) If there are insufficient members to form the minimum Committee (Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary), in which case The Club should be put into suspension for a minimum of 12 months prior to dissolution while new members can be sought.

(b) If the decision is taken by a 4/5th (80%) majority of all full members of The Club to terminate the existence of The Club. This must include the full approval of the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and all active Founder Members.

9.2 Actions in the Event of Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of The Club, all money in the club bank account will be used to pay any outstanding club debts (including any debts outstanding to members who have loaned money to The Club, or are owed reimbursements by The Club). Any remaining money will be donated to the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association. All club assets, including ropes and all equipment will initially be offered as payment to any member owed money by The Club (if the person owed money agrees to accept equipment in payment or part-payment, assuming all used equipment to be valued at 50% of the current replacement cost) or sold to raise as much money as possible, with all proceeds being used to repay debts and the remaining going to Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association. No member may profit from dissolution of The Club.

SECTION 2: CAVING CODE OF PRACTICE

All members must read, understand and agree to the following information:

This code of practice is aimed at ensuring all members are familiar with what is expected of them, in terms of caving skills. This is particularly important as YCC is not able to provide any training facilities, and can provide limited in-situ training. All club trips will assume the following levels of understanding and competence, as well as an appropriate level of fitness, and by signing up to any trip you must agree with the statements set out below.

1 Single Rope Technique (SRT)

Before taking part in a caving trip involving the extensive use of SRT (where convenient in-situ training and instruction may not be easily provided), you must be capable of the following:

- Safe and controlled abseiling and traversing
- Passing all manner of re-belays and deviations
- General pitch etiquette and safety

Some trips may require SRT to be performed in awkward and constricted spaces, often requiring a very advanced understanding of the above. For many trips this is not essential, however, it is your responsibility to obtain the necessary information about individual trips before signing up to ensure that your capabilities match the requirements of the trip.

2 Rigging

Rigging skills are not essential (there are always other members who are capable of this, and often trips that do not require ropework), however, if you are involved in rigging you should understand the following:

- The ropes should be clear of water and mud and should not be against rock without protection
- Ropes should be attached to at least two sound belays (check the condition of P-hangers and spits)
- Damaged or worn rope should not be used and should be brought to the attention of The Committee

3 Team Work

In general, all trips will have a main organiser who will consider the capabilities of the team, the equipment requirements and the risks associated to that trip. The decisions of the trip organiser are final, however, as a member of the team you must express any opinions on matters concerning the safety of the caving trip, even if they contradict the opinions of others, including:

- Danger of flooding or loose rocks
- Inexperienced or incompetent member(s)
- Dangerous rigging or equipment

It is the responsibility of all team members to look after each other, always ensure that those in your group are well and offer assistance where appropriate, for example, by taking a tackle sack from tired individuals or by offering a helping hand to those struggling with challenging climbs. YCC is a team-orientated club, and an entirely self-orientated attitude to caving is discouraged. You must not do anything to put either yourself or other members of the team at risk.

4 Conservation

You must understand the need to conserve and respect the cave environment, including

- Not leaving litter or removing anything other than litter from the cave
- Not damaging cave formations by touching or climbing on them
- Not using flash photography where bats may be in habitation
- Ensuring the country code is followed at all times

5 Protection of Equipment

You must try to avoid damaging/losing any equipment owned by The Club. All damages/losses should be reported to The Committee. All equipment will be checked regularly and replaced when deemed appropriate. The Club reserves the right to charge relevant member(s) for damage to any club equipment.