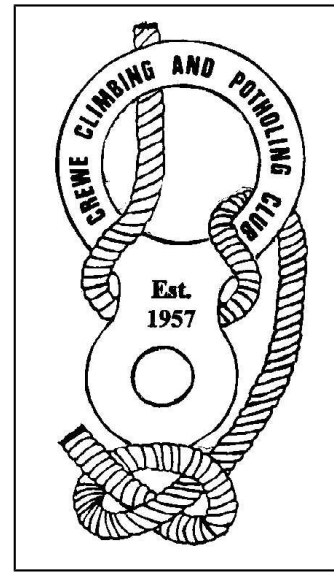


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 110. May 2014

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk



KEITH JOULE

Most members will know by now that Keith passed away suddenly on Sunday 20th April, while walking from Bull Pot to Upper Easegill during the C.C.P.C. Meet to Top Sink. Keith was in the company of other Club Members, doing what he enjoyed the most: going out caving with his friends. Keith became a member of Crewe Climbing & Potoling Club in February 2005, although he was already well-known to many of us through Derbyshire Cave Rescue, or from his job at Hitch & Hike.



He quickly became a familiar face on our Club trips. He was a highly skilled, technical caver, and his knowledge of Derbyshire's underground world was extensive. Keith was a brilliant club caver, supporting others, doing more than his

share, and adding something special to every trip. We will miss him! SK

Whalfe Climbing Shaft

As mentioned at the March meeting, Roy Rodgers, Ann Soulsby, Jenny Drake and I have been looking at a problem in Whalfe Climbing Shaft, which was first reported by Alan Walker and Chris Moorcroft of Eldon Pothole Club back in January. The shaft beneath the coe in the copse is narrow and ginged at first, but soon enters a stope with a column of stacked deads at either end. Whatever was supporting one of these columns has fallen away, leaving a jumble of crazily perched rocks, tailings and wooden stemples. It is well away from the line of descent, but, as the shaft narrows below, anything falling would be bound to hit any rope or cavers in the lower sections.

We are currently waiting for permission to do the work, as it is in an SSSI and needs the go-ahead from both the owner and Natural England, and this is being sought by DCA's Conservation Officer, Mel Milner. In the meantime, Roy and I have measured up the job and placed a warning sign on the lid. The measurements were sent to Len Kirkham, always a great source of information and advice, and Len has produced a set of "Kirkham Stemples" and a galvanised grid to assist with the work.

I first came across the Kirkham stemple while helping Len to underpin the crib and ginging on King Shaft at Thorswood Nature Reserve, where we used four of them to create a working platform fifty feet below the cap on the very deep shaft. Basically, it works like an acrow prop, but is much lighter, smaller in section and easier to use in awkward situations. A section of scaffold pole has a point welded to one end, and a washer-plate to the other. A length of 16mm threaded bar with a pointed end and a 23mm nut is slid through the washer to enable the length of the stemple to be adjusted.

Anyway, we decided that, while waiting for full permission, we would use these to make the "hanging death" safer - so that we will eventually be able to work underneath it, and just in case anybody ignores the warning notice.

The result is quite reassuring and feels much safer, although we still want to bind the stone with concrete, and place either mesh or scaffolding in front - but this will have to wait until the go-ahead comes through.

Since the photos were taken, the DCA Project Officer has given us the go-ahead, and in three sessions, we added four bags of postcrete and a bit of TLC, and I'm happy to say that the job is now done. Some mesh in front of the stack would be an improvement, and DCA are thinking about that, but it's now as stable as it was before the collapse.

But we should never consider any stope to be absolutely safe - we need to be careful whenever we're passing through.

The work in progress at Whalfe Climbing Shaft



Alan Brentnall

Bagshawe Cavern, Bradwell – 8th February 2014

Following a period of seriously unsettled weather, which left much of the Peak District saturated, our intended Club Meet to J.H.Mine, was abandoned, and instead everyone turned to the alternative, and less challenging, venue of Bagshawe Cavern.

old Mulespinner Mine, and can be easily divided into three sections: the Upper Series, the Lower Series, and New Bagshawe, although the New Bagshawe passages are beyond a locked gate, and are only accessible by prior arrangement and with a leader from Eldon P.C.

We met at Yonderman Café for a

The entrance is inside a locked

quick breakfast, before assembling at the Bagshawe parking area soon after 10.15., where it was a surprise to discover that a number of those present had never experienced the delights of Bagshawe before.

The system is entered through the

stone building, accessed by use of a key-code, and once inside we signed the Log Book, paid our fees, and headed off down the long, straight flight of steps. These were built between the parallel walls of the excavated vein, and equipped with

hand-rails, to make it possible for paying visitors to reach the cave passages when the site was operated as a show-cave many years ago.

At the foot of the steps the mined entrance passage intersects a greatly modified natural passage, where straight ahead (beyond a wooden barrier to keep guided groups out) there are further workings on the vein, but the main route turns sharply left.

The route is easy walking along a narrow passage, with numerous damaged formations at roof level. The floor has been concreted for the previous show-cave use, which has resulted in three brief flooded sections in dips, with water up to knee deep. After 165 metres a junction is reached with 'Calypso's Cave', where straight ahead at a junction leads into a decorated passage with old stone tourist steps leading up into a continuation which eventually chokes.

Back at the junction, turning left leads down hill, past several low crawl entrances in the left wall, to reach a more open section with a major bedding plane passage leading back on the left, to join with

the low crawls already passed.

A short distance further on, a flight of steps leads down into the Main Passage, with the edge of the pitch into 'The Dungeon', close by on the left. Normally 'The Dungeon' pitch, about 5.5 metres deep, provides an easy route into the Lower Series, but on this occasion it was flooded to a depth of at least 2 metres, with the ongoing lower passage being completely submerged.

The Main Passage, heading away from The Dungeon, is bigger than anything yet seen in the system, being generally about three metres wide and two metres high, with substantial breakdown blocks and slabs littering the floor. We ambled along, passing a few shallow pools, and eventually reached a gated passage in the right wall; the way into the New Bagshawe extensions. Continuing, we reached an area with a couple of wide pools to wade through and then, where the roof lowered into a constricted bouldery section, an easier crawl on the right led through into a parallel passage where a simple climb up and over massive blocks brought us to the start of a larger passage leading to 'The Hippodrome'.

We kept to the left, passing several small exit holes in the left wall leading out from the alternative route through the constricted bouldery section already mentioned, as we moved forward over breakdown into the wide, low, Hippodrome chamber. Following the left wall led us into a descending passage with old, mud-banks on either side, and after a slithery descent we were stopped by a static water surface where the passage was completely sumped. (Normally we can get much further, to a pool with a low archway at the far side, leading to the main stream-way, with sumps in each direction.) We sat around for a while, trying to discover if we had anyone in the group gullible enough to see how deep the water was, but there were no takers !!

Back up at the Hippodrome, we kept left, up slope, into the Hippodrome oxbow, and soon reached the start of a steeply descending rift passage in the left wall – ‘Glory Hole Passage’. Normally this can be explored for some distance to the ‘Glory Hole’ itself, but the high water levels in the system meant that the first enthusiasts to descend the fixed chain were back within minutes as the lower passage was completely

Following the oxbow round brought us back to the start of ‘The Hippodrome’ and the way over the blocks to the Main Passage.

Keith and Mark were keen to explore a steep, polished, vertical chimney up into the roof, which then led through a constricted horizontal tube to another steep, polished, vertical chimney back down into the Main Passage ! Surprisingly, most of the party were soon scrabbling up or down one or the other of these, although eventually common sense prevailed and a one-way route was established. Several people chose to be protected with a safety rope [‘you know it makes sense’] and I’m pretty certain at least one person decided not to bother at all !

We wandered back towards ‘The Dungeon’, where most people decided to have a go at ‘Agony Crawl’, the bedding plane route which joins the Lower Series via a climb, about 100 metres downstream from the bottom of the pitch (as expected, the Lower Series was flooded).

John and I left them to their fun, and headed out, looking into various little holes and bits of passages on

sumped.

Bagshawe was busy that day; we met a party of four heading in, on their way to 'The Hayloft' (I'm not familiar with this name - could this be our chimney up/tube/chimney down bit ??), and then at the entrance we met Alan Brentnall with a group of T.S.G. members. Soon the rest of our group started to emerge, and it was clear that everyone had

the way.

enjoyed a short, but very relaxed trip underground.

The cavers: Sharon Brandwood, Jason Brough, Jenny Drake, Mark Johnson, Keith Joule, Des Kelly, Steve Knox, Rob Nevitt, Steve Pearson-Adams, John Preston, Roy Rogers, Pete Savill, Dave Skingsley.

Steve Knox

Croesor-Rhosydd Through Trip (CRTT) 10 October 2010

Nine of us took the long walk up to Croesor initially via the 4x4 track to the North from the Cwmorthin car park. We then followed odd pieces of yellow tape to Rhosydd before crossing to the Croesor adit, a doddle above ground on a nice day. The mines closed in the 1930s and the lower halves are now under the water table. Getting through them means crossing many flooded chambers and the the trip can easily average 6 hours for well-prepared visitors, who know the route. Others may need to plan to keep themselves warm, fed and watered for longer as 15+ hours and a call-out to North Wales Cave Rescue is not unknown.

Once kitted-up and on our way, the first obstacle was not long in appearing. An 80ft abseil into the huge, crumbling Chamber 1 East. Waiting to go down the pitch we had time to admire the flakey roof and the floor strewn with massive boulders. We could hear slate falling as people abseiled down and I abseiled very gingerly when it was my turn. Nothing fell. At the bottom, I was on my own as the chamber is not safe enough for the previous caver to wait for you.

Unclipping from the rope, I tiptoed very quietly out into the middle of the chamber, unsure of the way on and having to decide whether to scramble over 10ft blocks or go around, whilst trying not to look at the roof. Al, who was in front of me, regularly looked out from the safety of a window at the far end of the chamber, which helped to guide me. A few years ago, a group was rescued from here after a massive block fell from the roof and although no one got squashed, the shock was enough to stop them in their tracks.

Next, another abseil of a similar size. Again, done with care to avoid loosening the slate above you. Many bits of rope protection such as garden hose had to be removed and replaced above you en-route and this prolonged the agony of feeling like a tiny fly just hanging there waiting to be swatted.

I am not sure about the order of the other obstacles but I think that the first boat trip was next. Here the water level (and boat) was two foot below the mine floor. With the aid of a knotted rope and Simon also lowering me on a safety rope, whilst holding the boat steady with a piece of string, I probably did a good bum-first entrance into the boat. One of our party fell in here and had no buoyancy aid but managed to grab the boat. He must have been very cold on the rest of the trip as it is very, very draughty all the way through.

The remains of the first bridge were a couple of comfortably thick dods of wood with safety lines to clip on to. Watching other people go across first and wearing a buoyancy aid meant that I was not concerned about crossing. Towards the end the wood felt soft and swollen though, so it is rotting.

The concentration required for clipping on to the right safety lines/zipwires etc means that you do not even notice the drop. In fact, I forgot to look. The various bridge crossings had better roofs than I expected. I had had visions of the

whole lot giving way and me being squashed or drowned and squashed. Throughout the trip, the fixed ropes and zip-wires were in good condition.

The main zipwire is really fast. I had to say "1, 2, 3" a couple of times before I walked off the ledge. Simon had told me to stop half way to get a photo but pulling on my safety connector didn't slow me down. Anyway, I grabbed the main safety line and sat there swinging above the flooded shaft while Simon took a picture, aware that I was hanging over a long drop into very deep, cold water.

Another zipwire crossing is in the chamber that only has one sad and lonely cross beam suspended from the roof. Needless to say that I did not stop for the usual photo opportunity but lifted my legs and sailed over it to safety on the other side.

The final bridge is in two halves. The first half is a 2 inch wide tram rail, 15ft long, suspended half way by a rope, with safety wire and rope to clip onto. Then you stand in the middle on a large cross beam, haul yourself up a couple of feet to clip onto another short zip wire and safety line. This one is horizontal and there is no run up, so you pull yourself along. Don't forget your gloves!

Straight after this is the 'Chamber of Horrors'. From above you can see the sad remains of a couple of plastic boats under the water and you hope that your boat does not suffer the same fate. You abseil down 15ft into a boat, again trying to get in bum first so as not to tip it up. I landed okay but there was a horrible hissing sound at first which I promptly forgot as I was hauled across the water by a string pulley system. Before I got there and luckily while no one was passing in the boat, the pulley system dislodged a lump of slate from the central pillar, which splashed into the water and was large enough to have taken out the boat and the

occupant. We were going to cross this chamber in twos for safety as the boats do not last many trips due to the sharp slate. Unfortunately one boat only made it across once before it was unusable. Another member of our party fell in at the end of the second boat trip and started to sink but Evan was tied on safely and managed to grab him. Apparently, in caving suit and a furry, without SRT kit, you can swim/float for around 30 seconds, so if the idea of swimming a flooded shaft ever seems like a good idea, think again unless you have a buoyancy aid that you are sure will keep you afloat.

From this chamber a short prussic up takes you through to the last bit of Croesor and into Rhosydd. This mine was in a much poorer shape. A 40 degree slope of various sized slate scree, which moved as you ascended, was not my idea of fun and as we had to crouch under a low roof, we couldn't help but see it move. 'Oh no, I have undermined the slope' kept going through my head. Would it be my fault that the people below were buried or would someone above me be responsible for part of me being chopped off? Once we had climbed one, we had to go down another one. Same problem except you could see the friends whose lives were in your hands.

There is a collapsed 'Twill' (hole) where the chambers have broken out to daylight. It is very beautiful from below, you feel that you are nearly home and some groups choose the difficult walk out here. Another previous group was rescued from around here as they had started out late in the day and then thought that they were lost because they could not see daylight!

I was grateful when we made it to the adit to make our way out for the long walk back down to the cars.

For the last two years I have turned down this trip as trip reports made it sound like too much adrenalin for me. It is unlikely that I will be going back except a part of the Rescue Team for lost/strayed/injured/squashed.

As the mines are in a state of constant collapse, you need to carry the kit to get you through and to sit and wait for rescue. The route and kit required changes as parts collapse. Pulleys, boats, ropes, slings, floatation jackets, spare everything and an idea of how you would get out on your own are probably prerequisites to a trip. Better still go somewhere else.

Heather Simpson.

North Albania Kelman Province Expedition

28th Sep~6th Oct 2013

Carrying on from the expedition from last year in the same area, this year's trip comprised of myself, Martin Barnicott alias "Barny", and Bob Toogood who was recovering from a recent mild heart attack and had a stent fitted not to long before, he was on a cocktail of drugs including blockers but was keen to push his newly fitted stent to the limit to see how it performed, what better way than caving at altitude in a remote inhospitable area with the nearest hospital in Tirana some 120 miles away over many mountain passes and rough roads, between us we had 185years with such a big number we should do well, or that is how we looked at it!!



Heading towards the higher caving area

Barny had already been out a couple of times this year and had bottomed the 150m shaft in Taluski which we discovered last year, this turned out to be the bottom unfortunately at 260m deep of spectacular easy caving, this pitch took an enormous amount of water which sinks through the floor Barny proved this by removing some rocks and a howling draft came out, to me this shows lots of promise but the dig here could go easy through what is an obvious boulder choke or not at all, this is however a dangerous pitch in bad weather so is a place reserved as a future dig in settled weather or maybe swing into one of the higher rifts and find a way round the choke.

After a rest day in the digs drinking Racki and consuming cheap beer in the bar during some massive thunderstorms, we drove into the next valley to Nikc to check out another resurgence at approximately 700m elevation, this is powering a grinding wheel and provides the village with drinking water, from what we gathered this is always flowing even after a long drought indicating that there maybe an underground lake storing the water, all speculation but entirely plausible, we feel that this could be one of the resurgences for our caves as they are all trending towards this area at an elevation of 1500 to 2200m and approx 6km away.



Resurgence Cave

We discovered another 3 new leads to go at, all in the most unlikely of places proving that this terrain really does produce the unexpected!!, two shafts are located at 2160m on top of a small peak, after two pitches I was looking onto a snow plug which looked tight to get around, and the other cave was a small and a bit nasty which led into a sizable rift with a large perched boulder, they are both close together so may lead into one system.

The fourth shaft we found in another unlikely spot was along a ledge next to a cliff, an easy 30m pitch led to a scree slope and a rift which was blocked by a flake of rock, after i chucked numerous rocks down I could see they dropped off down a rift for a good way judging by the sounds, the flake of rock should be easy to destroy with a large hammer. Prussiking back up this pitch at 2200m felt harder than an equivalent pitch in the Dales!!, I passed a superb birds nest on the way back up perched very delicately on a ledge

inspiring me to think that we should name it “Birds nest pot” in Albanian of course!!.

We also found a big resurgence in the woods coming through the side of a cliff, this proved impassable after 100m in the water conditions but is heading into a completely new area!!

All the areas visited are just the tip of the iceberg, there is still massive potential for new caves, climbs and ridges/scrambles to be done, there is still much ground to be covered which is as yet unexplored, much of the walking is through beautiful beech forest in totally unspoilt areas there are changes coming though!!, the road into the valley upto Tamara is being widened and improved which will inevitably bring in more tourism, from here the road to Lapushe is remaining unsurfaced narrow and dangerous so should deter most!!

Myself, I fancy going back out again next year for a couple of weeks but driving down and taking some climbing gear as well to tackle some of the more easier looking lines there of grades upto perhaps HVS, giving a chance to get a feel for the rock and spy out some of the more adventurous looking lines there, I would also like to do some of the ridges there which I think in themselves would prove quite a challenge, so if anybody fancies that then let me know!!

Bobs new stent performed well and stayed intact, even after fagging his way upto the higher caves, he also showed amazing agility for a man of his age whilst avoiding getting flattened during the bar brawl one night!!, all part of the spirit of things.



Some of the climbing potential

Adrian Pedley

- **Meets etc.:**

2014 Dates	Venue -often with easier alternatives	Comments
Sun. 18 May	Nettle Pot, Derbyshire.	Serious, deep, multi-pitch SRT trip. Snug in places.
Tues 20 May	DCRO Training	Search / Navigation: Burbage, Stanton Moor.
Sat 31 May	Nent Head Mines, North Pennines.	Extensive mine workings. SRT unlikely.
Mon 2 June	CCPC Meeting	8.30 pm, The Bleeding Wolf, Scholar Green.
Wed 11 June	DCRO training	Communications.
Sun 15 June	Red Moss Pot	No gear needed! (maybe a handline) Long paddle!
20+21+22 June	Ralph Memorial Meet at Monyash	Caving, walking, socialising week-end.
Sat 28 June	Miss Graces Lane Cave.	Forrest of Dean
Mon 7 July	CCPC Meeting	8.30 pm, The Bleeding Wolf, Scholar Green.



Keith Joule

28 June 1955

-

20 April 2014