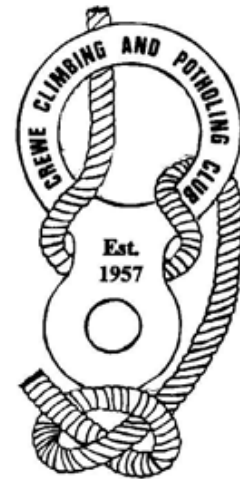




# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 139. November/December 2022

Log on to [www.ccpc.org.uk](http://www.ccpc.org.uk)

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## Planned Club Meets, etc., from November to December 2022:



### *Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club:*

Sun. 6th Nov.	Lancaster Hole / Easegill, Yorkshire.  Alt. Ireby Fell Cavern, Yorkshire.	Classic, extensive & varied system, with numerous routes & SRT pitches. Classic system - SRT.
Mon. 7th Nov.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. 8.30 pm. Usually also accessible to Members via Zoom.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent. ST7 3AJ.
Sat. 12th (or Sun. 13th) Nov.	Waterways Swallet, Hamps-Manifold area, Staffordshire.	Annual car-park clear-up (vegetation), followed by caving trip (no SRT).
Sat. 19th Nov.	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.  <i>Alt. Mandale Mine, Derbyshire.</i>	Major cave system - various route choices – all standards. Interesting Mine – wet wading in sough.
Sun. 4th Dec.	Minera Mine, North Wales. <i>Alt. Grand Turk Passage (same area).</i>	
Mon. 5th Dec.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. 8.30 pm. Usually also accessible to Members via Zoom.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent. ST7 3AJ.
Plenty of other trips continue to take place, often organised at short notice. If possible and practical, please let other Members know what you are planning, by using e-mail, and try to support Club trips when you can. <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Steve Knox, Ed.</b></p>		



### **Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation:**

DCRO team members continue to be ready to assist whenever required, and regular training continues, either at the DCRO base in Buxton, or at cave locations in the Peak District – both underground and on the surface.

<https://www.facebook.com/DerbyshireCaveRescue>

Tues. 1st Nov.	Casualty-Care scenarios.	Staden Lane, DCRO Base, Buxton.
Sat. 19th Nov.	Full day exercise.	Alderley Edge Copper Mines, Cheshire.
Wed. 7th Dec.	Use of Gas Detectors.	
Mon. 19th Dec.	Team Supper & Training Review.	



## Caving in Assynt, Scotland.

Alan Brentnall

As you may be aware, I kept up my CCPC membership when we moved to Scotland, and I really do hope that I will be able to occasionally, come down and join you on some of your caving trips. In the meantime, I have finally joined the Grampian Speleological Society (GSG) because I have very little knowledge of Scottish caves, and GSG is just about the only non-university caving club up here in Scotland, with members throughout the UK (and elsewhere). They have a mine of information on their website and within their membership, and they have just recently published a book about the Caves of Assynt – a history, as well as a description.

Alison and I first went to Assynt in 2006, when the Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon took place there. This was an annual two-day event where pairs of runners had to traverse from Inchnadamph to Glen Coul and back over the Assynt mountains, navigating to set locations on the way. Each pair had to be self-sufficient, and carry all necessary gear for the overnight camp at Glen Coul. The weather was OK, but the visibility was bad throughout, and we hardly saw any of the beautiful mountains through which we ran, not even the Munro (Conival) which we bagged on the first day. But we did win the veterans prize for our class - due to careful navigation, rather than speed!

We were aware of the caves there though (our first checkpoint was in one of the Bone Caves) but never got around to any actually caving. However, this month I was introduced to caving in Assynt by two of the older members of the GSG, Peter Reynolds and Bob Jones. We met at a layby near Contin, and we chatted about caving, access, and estates, as we drove past Loch Garve and up the glen alongside the Black Water, beneath Ben Wyvis to Loch Glascarnoch, Loch Broom, and Ullapool.

The Scottish version of the English CROW Act, known as “Right to Roam”, was enshrined in law in 2005, and definitely includes caving. The land where we would be caving today is owned by the Vesty family (remember “Vesta Curries?”) and Bob told me that Mr Vesty had been unaware of the extent of the caves on his land until GSG took some of his family on a short trip down one of the easier caves.

The caves we were to visit today were all in the Traligill glen, where the mighty upheaval, known as the Moine Thrust, caused tectonic movements, resulting in older rocks overlaying younger sedimentary rocks, leading to confusion amongst the early geologists, but ultimately giving the world a better understanding of the way tectonics work.



The walk up the valley was interesting, despite the fact that the mountain tops were cloaked in mist, and the view back to Loch Assynt was beautiful.

*View down the Traligill Valley.*

Our main cave today was Cnoc nan Uamh (Hill of the Caves, known to everyone as “Knockers”). It comprises three entrances: Uamh an Uisge (Cave of the Water), containing the formidable waterslide, leading down to a sump, which can be passed by divers, to the beautifully decorated “Northern Lights”, Uamh an Tartair (Cave of the Roaring), the main entrance, and the pothole entrance, which doesn’t have a Gaelic name.



*Main Entrance to Knockers*



*Looking out from Knockers*

Knockers turned out to be a fascinating trip through fossil passages above the river, comprising sporting climbs and short crawls linking fairly large chambers. It contains, I am told, three different types of limestone, one of which is very white. The furthest upstream end for non-divers is a long phreatic tube, floored in silt (containing the occasional earthworm) dipping steadily at about 25 degrees to the inevitable sump.



*Formations in Knockers*

Back on the surface, we had a brief meal and talked about caving to a couple of passing hikers, before taking a stroll up to the pothole entrance. This isn’t bolted as it isn’t necessary to enter the cave this way, although it was used fairly recently by SCRO in a practice using their Larkin Frame.



*Left:  
Pothole  
Entrance*



*Right:  
UCP*

Afterwards, we walked over into the main Traligill valley, a deep and rocky dry valley, with many stepped, dry waterfalls. We visited one of these, an intricate feature, not unlike Easegill Kirk. This was the remains of a pre-glacial phreatic cave known to cavers as 'UCP', but its full Gaelic name is Uamh Cailliche Peireag which translates to "Cave of the Old Woman of Peireag".

We spent some time exploring and discussing this fascinating and complex place. As it appears to offer much potential, it has been the site of many digs in the past, and there is certainly plenty of evidence. Following on, we walked down the valley, carefully avoiding any dry (but slippery) waterfalls, and at a major bend in the streamway, we came across Lower Traligill Cave.



*Lower Traligill Cave*

At this point, the Traligill riverbed becomes defined by the Traligill Thrust (part of the afore mentioned Moine Thrust), and the true right-hand bank is a series of often slippery limestone slabs, while the true left is a steep cliff – and somewhere below the intersection of these two features is a very active stream. Lower Traligill Cave is the first point at which this stream can be visited.

Immediately within the enormous entrance, the cave becomes a more narrow fissure, hading along the slope of the Traligill Thrust. This narrowing forces you to climb to higher wider sections which are fairly well decorated with straws and quite a few helictites.



*Lower Traligill Cave - Straw stalactites and Helictites*



Further along the gallery there are more speleothems, and a descent to the stream below.

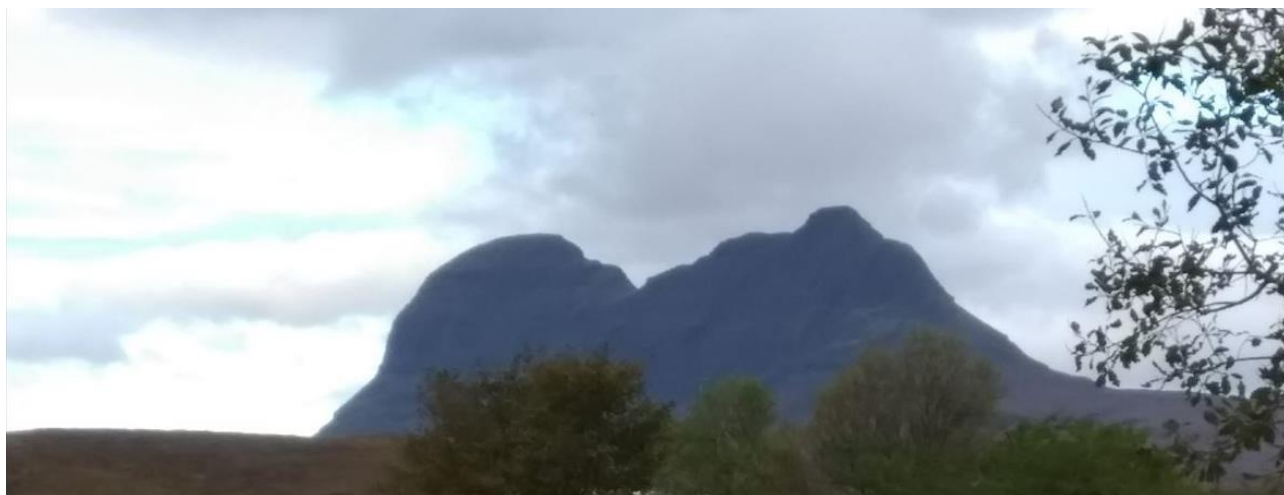
Following down the surface stream, there are some pre-glacial fossil cave entrances, but the next chance to visit the streamway comes at Tree Hole, a small entrance below the cliff, which enters a breakdown chamber leading downwards to the noisy stream, and there are dry crawls going parallel to the stream in each direction.

This was our last cave of a day which proved to be an interesting introduction to the caving and geology at Inchnadamph. In Traligill there are no less than 29 significant entrances to the underground system. None of these is particularly extensive by, say Yorkshire or Peak standards, but the potential is there, and I'm sure that there will be further discoveries as time goes by.

However, Assynt caving is not restricted to Traligill; nearby Allt na Uamh, another stream feeding Loch Assynt, holds the famous bone caves, and several significant caves which are constantly being extended, including Anus (a cave I'm to visit next month) and Uamh na Claionaite. There are also caves at Knockan, near where GSG have an excellent hut.

We visited the hut after we left Inchnadamph, and met two Mendip cavers there, who are currently extending Uncabac (Uamh na Clogaidean a bha Air Chall – "Cave of the Lost Helmet"). Cavers regularly visit the area from all over the country, and some Mendip clubs have an annual pilgrimage, when they attend to ongoing projects like these.

If Crewe ever fancied coming up here for an extended caving trip, I can really recommend the GSG hut. Not only is it an ideal centre for the Assynt caves, but there's tremendous hiking in the area with Suilven, Canisp, Culmor, Stac Pollaidh, Conival and Ben More Assynt right on the doorstep.



*View of Suilven from the GSG hut in Elphin*

So, having not caved since two solo jobs (for Gina Moseley and the DCA) in early 2020, I'm finally caving again, and, having never ever caved in Scotland, I'm presented with a whole new set of caves I have never heard of, and can hardly pronounce! And, in a couple of weeks, I'm heading down to Schiehallion [**See below**] to sample some of the many caves there, which I for one, never even knew existed!

Text and photographs: **Alan Brentnall**

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**Grampian Speleological Group Hut:** The Elphin Caving Centre (ECC) is a renovated and extended building in Elphin 24 km north of Ullapool. It has self-catering accommodation for 20 people, gas and wood fires, toilets, hot showers, gas rings for cooking, a microwave oven, parking for eight cars, etc.. **Ed.**

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## Cavers' Rites of Passage:

You know the sort of thing. There's short crawly oxbow at the upper end of Giant's Highway, the Cheese Press in Alum Pot, the crawl under the boulder in the lower part of Peak Cavern main streamway – or even between the spokes of the cartwheel at the Hill Inn!. Well here's a Scottish version on the north flank of Schiehallion.

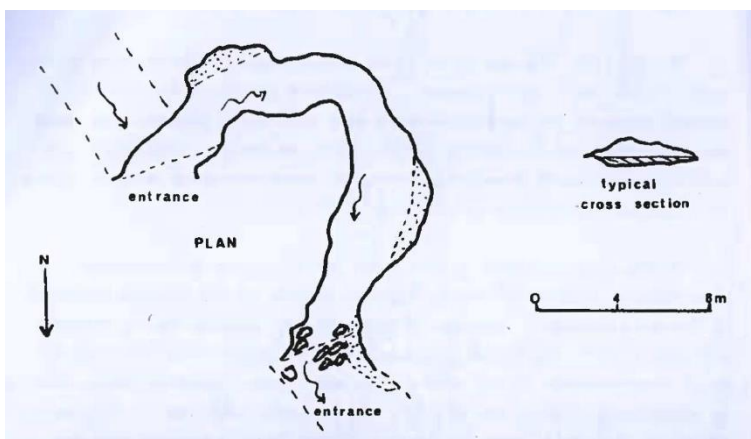
The cave is very, very short (thankfully) and it's known as U-Boat, one of the Lassintullich set of caves, near Kinloch Rannoch. A huge leaf of limestone has been left in-situ forming a short, aqueous crawl – at first upstream, followed by a U-bend, where the main stream is met, then downstream to the exit. Very refreshing!



*Cavers queue at the upper entrance*



*..... and emerge from the bottom entrance!*



*Goon's Grade 1 Survey of U-Boat*

Text and photographs: **Alan Brentnall.**

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**'Selected Caves of Britain and Ireland'**, (D. Marshall / D. Rust) lists six caving areas in Scotland, including: 'Area No. 6: Schiehallion, Perthshire: Slim exposures of metamorphosed limestones at the base of the mountain possess small, awkward caves, in three groups'.

Schiehallion itself, at 1083 metres (and therefore a Munro), is a straightforward climb of about 2 hours 30 minutes from the B846, near Tummel Bridge. Superb viewpoint. **Ed.**

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## Wapping Mine and Cumberland Cavern.

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022.

There was a good turnout for this club meet, with eight Members and one guest meeting up outside the New Bath Hotel, in Matlock – our thanks to the hotel for generously allowing us to park on their property (previously arranged by a telephone call to Hotel Reception).

The Wapping/Cumberland complex is an easy caving option, but is interesting and impressive, and is quite complex in places.

**HISTORY:** According to the Derbyshire County Council Historic Environment Record (Ref. MDR9949) Cumberland 'Cavern' was opened as a show-cave in about 1780, and continued to operate for over one hundred years. There is an advertisement for the site in 'The Matlock Tourist' in 1838. Cumberland Cavern was originally **Cumberland Mine**, and like its neighbour **Wapping Mine**, was worked first for Galena (Lead Ore) from at least 1750. Later (about 1924-1936), Wapping was worked for Flourspar from the Moletrap Vein, and the area now known as The Maze. Further working took place between 1953 and 1956.

The workings in Cumberland Mine broke into a number of natural chambers, and these eventually formed the main areas visited by tourists. One notable visitor to the site was Queen Victoria - she visited Matlock twice, first in 1832, while she was still Princess Victoria, and again in 1844, when she was queen. After her visit the name was changed to **Royal Cumberland Cavern**. Visitors were still being guided round the show cave in the 1960s, using Tilley Lamps, but before 1970 the business finally closed for good. A group calling themselves 'The Troggs' then occupied the caverns, and used them for various questionable activities. They left painted graffiti over large areas of the walls, at least some of it referring to drugs.

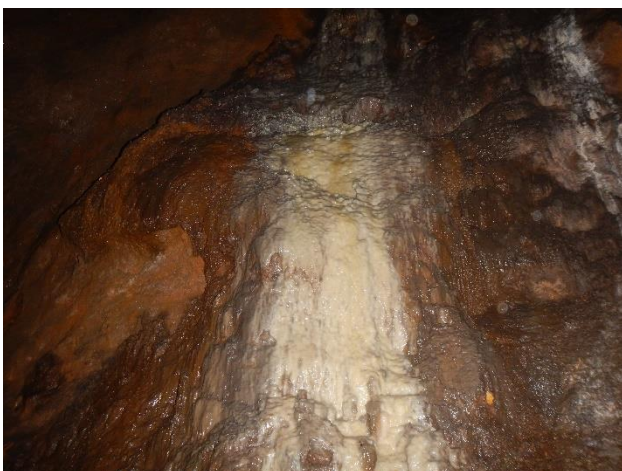
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*'Cumberland Cavern and Wapping Mine', by John Barnatt and Dave Webb, 2002, for DCA.'*

- This is a comprehensive 48-page document with surveys and photographs, which can be downloaded free from the DCA website – 6.2 MB, (or purchased for £11 + postage).

With nine of us caving it was convenient to split up into smaller groups as we explored the passages. John Preston and I set off first, and scrambled over the partially walled-up entrance into the first stope of Wapping Mine. After just a few metres, passing some collapse debris and displaced timbering, the passage becomes huge.

There are various scrambles up and over rubble heaps, where the level passage at floor level has become blocked, but it is all easy caving, with odd patches of flowstone, where water dribbles in from above. The mineral deposits must have been amazing at one time, but 'collectors' have hammered away at anything really good, leaving areas of smashed crystals, and debris to show



where they have been. High above there are tantalising openings to other workings which are probably inaccessible now, without some challenging climbing.

*Left: Flowstone in the main passage of Wapping Mine.*

At the end of the main passage, shown as First, Second, Third and Fourth Stopes on the survey, there are two obvious ways on. Down to the left leads into the lower workings, known as 'The Maze', for obvious reasons, while climbing up

large boulders on the right reaches a higher level which leads through a narrow passage into Cumberland Cavern.

This was the furthest point reached by the guided tourists from earlier times, 'though their route started from the original Cumberland Cavern entrance, much further up the hill from the Wapping Mine entrance – the way we had entered. It seems that the early guides allowed, or encouraged, their charges to write their names, with dates, on the pale surfaces of the final passage to show the limit of their exploration. It is fascinating to discover hundreds of pencilled names and dates, some from the early part of the nineteenth century, still very easy to read, and others with dates well into the twentieth century. When those visitors wrote on the walls and roof they created



something which we now recognise as 'historic graffiti', and consider it to be worthy of preservation, yet we are offended by the contributions left by 'The Troggs', and others, over a hundred years later. We glibly label the more recent additions as vandalism, and it is often suggested that such modern graffiti (along with painted arrows, etc.) should be removed. There is no easy answer to this contradiction – what should be left, and what erased ?

*Left: One small section of the graffiti wall in Cumberland Cavern.*

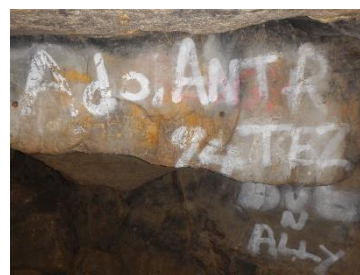
*Graffiti Includes: Florence S. Lees July 24 1860      R.T. 1835      Mary Corcoran London 1857  
Moorland Ramblers Club 1954      J.(P) Hall Coggeshall Essex 1860      W. Moore 1927*

Beyond the graffiti, the smoothly chipped floor of the tourist pathway winds through a number of large chambers, although at times it is lost as slabs have fallen and obstructed the route. A deep hole is passed, 'The Devil's Pit', which is an alternative cavers' route down into 'The Maze'. On through the chambers, passing the 'Harpichord Rock', and under the 'finest Natural Flat Roof in the World' eventually reaches the first of three staircases which allowed the visitors to reach, and later return from, a lower level where the main attraction was the Wishing Well. Sadly, any attraction the Wishing Well might have had to visitors with candles, is long gone, and today it is a rather sad spot with a shallow wall holding back a small, uninspiring pool.

It is on the walls of the tourist path chambers that the majority of The Troggs graffiti can be seen. The chambers are generally dry and draught-free, and must have been a reasonably comfortable place for their meetings, and the blank walls would have been irresistible.



*Left: Examples of the graffiti, at least some of it left by The Troggs (their logo is in the centre of the photograph), although no doubt more has been added in the years since.*



*Left:  
More recent graffiti perhaps.*



John and I explored numerous small chambers and crawls in the Wishing Well area, and then made our way up the 'Third Spiral Staircase' (hardly a spiral at all !) to reach the original sloping entrance passage.

Much of the passage has a fine roof made of sloping slabs of rock, resting on the top of a wall of stacked rocks at the lower side, and then leaning across the passage onto the opposite wall, and possibly supporting many tons of waste rock above. At the upper end of the passage, the roof has collapsed, or been intentionally pulled down to block the way in from the original tourist entry, but the remainder of the roof is in good condition.



*Right: John Preston in the old entrance passage.*

We passed the others, still exploring every possible crawl and alcove, and headed back to the Cumberland/Wapping link, then down into Funnel Cave, the end of Wapping's Fourth Stope, and turned right, down a sandy slope into the lower workings of 'The Maze'.

The area is well named ! Even with a survey (but without glasses) I quickly lost any certainty about where we were, so we just wandered about – left or right ?? – whatever ! John disappeared up many crawls / climbs / strolls, only to find another dead-end, or to re-emerge in passage we'd already visited. I know that on previous visits I have been along 'Stream Passage' to the 'Devil's Pit' connection to Cumberland Cavern, and also explored the 'Main Stope' somewhere in the lower workings, but both eluded us this time. There were small areas of undamaged mineralisation, and John found some lovely cave pearls up a short climb in an alcove with water dribbling down, but, not surprisingly, there were few formations in this essentially excavated area.



*Above: Cave pearls and flowstone in an alcove in 'The Maze'.*

We headed out to daylight, with the others following soon afterwards. It had been an easy, but very pleasant trip.

For some interesting vintage photographs, and early advertisements for Cumberland Cavern, it is worth checking the following site:

[https://www.andrewsgen.com/matlock/pix/matlockbath\\_cavern\\_cumberland1930s.htm](https://www.andrewsgen.com/matlock/pix/matlockbath_cavern_cumberland1930s.htm)

Text and photographs: **Steve Knox**

Steve Pearson-Adams turned out for the annual parking area tidy-up, and vegetation trimming session, but unfortunately no-one else was available to help this time. Steve spent a couple of hours cleaning up the parking area and checking the entrance lid, but the vegetation at the back of the parking area still needs attention.

**Alan Brentnall** commented: *‘Waterways Swallet is a unique cave in the Peak District, and even more so in the small area of Staffordshire with sufficient limestone to support cave development. Maintaining both the car park and the entrance "guards" are both requirements of the access agreement between the DCA and it would be a great pity if this access was lost.’* **Ed.**

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**West Mine, Alderley Edge Copper Mines. - DCRO Training.**  
**19<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

This was a full-day DCRO team training session, set in West Mine, Alderley Edge, which is ideal for providing a dry, spacious, underground location for ‘hands-on’ training. After a briefing on the National Trust car park, about twenty-five of us set off through Windmill Wood to the manhole entrance. A fixed ladder drops into a walking height passage which led through a number of chambers, past ‘Twisted Pillar’ (no longer intact) and down into the enormous Sphinx Chamber, with its sandy floor (4 metres deep, Mick Potts told me).

**Scenario 1:** We discovered an ‘injured caver’ lying, semi-conscious by a boulder, and were given comprehensive instructions on what to do next, and what to prioritise in order to give the victim the best chance of survival and recovery. There was plenty of time for discussion and questions.

**Scenario 2:** We packaged the ‘casualty’ in a ‘Cas -bag’ and strapped him into a ‘Slix’ stretcher, then set off carrying him on a route chosen to have as many handling problems as possible. This involved various changes of level, up rock steps and steep slopes, with the stretcher needing to be passed on to waiting rescuers, and safe-guarded with basic rigging.

**Scenario 3:** The stretcher, with the ‘casualty’ now changed for another volunteer, had to be hauled up a series of three vertical shafts in a single lift. This was necessary as the shafts had insufficient space to set up hauling teams for each shaft separately, but more importantly, because the sandstone passage walls will not take standard anchors, so very, very long anchors have been installed in the spacious passage above the top shaft, and on the intermediate ledges, especially for use in a rescue situation. The haul was further complicated because the shafts are not perfectly aligned, one above the other, and because there are metal ladders obstructing the route. To ensure the stretcher could be hauled without coming into contact with the walls or ladders, a series of releasable deviations were used. Although seeming to be quite complicated, the rigging had been carefully planned beforehand, and the actual haul went very smoothly. Everyone seemed to enjoy, and benefit from the day, and it was very good to go home with dry and clean (very dusty) kit.

**Steve Knox**

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My thanks, as always, to everyone who contributes to the CCPC Newsletter, with text, photos, additional comments, etc., and also to those who acknowledge receipt afterwards – it’s good to know that each edition actually reaches the Members, and even gets read. All errors, changes, or corrections are mine – my apologies.

Finally, a **Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year** to you all ! **Steve Knox, Editor.**

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