C.C.P.C. Newsletter 152.

March – June 2024

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

Editor: Steve Knox

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Planned Club Meets, etc., from March to June 2024

Mon. 4th Mar.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
Sat. 9th Mar.	Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbys.. *Alt. Neptune Mine, Cressbrook Dale.*	Outstanding, major cave system, with serious SRT route options. *Adit & workings. (A CCPC project.)*
Sun. 10th Mar.	Various Mines in Via Gellia.	'BATS' led by Jess Eades. Limited numbers.
Sun. 24th Mar.	Bull Pot of the Witches, Casterton Fell, Yorks.. *Alt. Mistral Hole, Easegill, Yorks..*	Fascinating complex of chambers and passages, with several short pitches.
	Moel Fferna Slate Mine, Glyndyfrdwy, North Wales.	An extensive multi-level complex of slate caverns.
	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
	Five Ways Pot, Dowlass Moss, (above Cold Cotes), Ingleborough. *Alt. Walk up to Gaping Gill & Ingleborough summit.*	Only opened in 2022. Long walk in; 7 pitches, which can be wet. *Park in Clapham for spectacular walk via Clapham Beck (£ small charge).*
	Giants Hole, Castleton, Derbyshire.	Always a favourite. Some SRT.
	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
	Slaughter Stream Cave, Forest of Dean.	Over 14km of passages – some SRT.
	Merlin Mine, Stoney Middleton, Derbyshire. *Alt. Nicker Grove Mine / Carlswark.*	Many alternatives possible here, including easy SRT / no SRT.

For Yorkshire trips it is always worth looking up (and printing) the route descriptions provided on the internet by **The Council Of Northern Caving Clubs**: www.cncc.org.uk/caving
The descriptions are regularly updated, and can be downloaded, as they are Licensed under a: *CreativeCommonsAttribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives4.0International Licence* (!!)

Please Note: After the recent discussions concerning the content and reuse of material from issues of the CCPC Newsletter, it is worth emphasising that all rights are reserved, and no part of this Newsletter may be reproduced in any form, or reposted, without the prior permission, in writing, from the editor, and/or original copyright holders. **Steve Knox, Editor**.

Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation: DCRO team members including a number from CCPC, continue to be ready to assist whenever required, and regular team training continues.
https://www.facebook.com/DerbyshireCaveRescue

There have been **three** call-outs so far, in 2024, with successful outcomes on each occasion.

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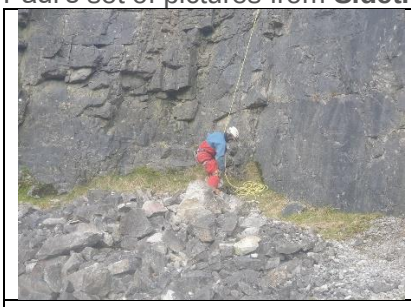
Sidetrack Cave & Convenience Cave, Eldon Hill Quarry. Sun. 28th Jan. 2024

Paul Griffiths

*[I must admit I was tempted to join this trip, but the guide-book description of the 520 ft. (160 metres) entrance crawl, some of it flat-out, persuaded me otherwise. – my mistake ! I didn't receive a trip report, but it seems that the members who took part had a really good trip. Later Paul Griffiths kindly shared his photos, and a selection from **Sidetrack** are included here.* ***S.K., Editor.]***

Paul's set of pictures from **Sidetrack** can be found at: https://photos.app.goo.gl/PisNy6ZhCF46Z8qs7



Dropping down onto the quarry bench, to reach the entrance of Sidetrack.



The entrance passage [-this part is clearly not as 'snug' as I thought it would be !



Beyond the crawl, the passages are much larger, and have many fossils, and fine formations.

CCPC has agreed to support the Derbyshire Caving Association Catchment Representative Scheme – by taking on the Hamps / Manifold area:

DCA are promoting a new system based on the introduction of catchment representatives who will help to monitor a catchment and be reactive to any issues that might arise concerning access and conservation. It might be that a problem gets reported to DCA, and needs checking out, and reporting back to the DCA access officer. DCA would email a contact in the club, and they could cascade it down to the membership for a volunteer to try to deal with. Reasonable expenses would be covered by DCA.

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Longcliffe Mine, & Son-of-Longcliffe. Sunday, 25th February 2024

A first official club visit to these two relatively recent rediscoveries near Castleton, though several members have visited with other clubs. We split in to two groups, with some doing Longcliffe and others Son of Longcliffe. Unfortunately, the person most familiar with Longcliffe descended Son of who and those doing Longcliffe had problems finding the correct SRT rigging route, leading to a long delay. When the Son of Longcliffe party returned to the surface, the last of the Longcliffe group were still on the surface. The rigging on the entrance pitch was soon sorted and some of the second party descended, meeting up with the first group. Between us we explored much of Longcliffe Mine. With it getting late in the day, the ladder and line were pulled up from Son of Longcliffe without a further descent.

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Longcliffe Mine and Son-of-Longcliffe Trip Report 25th February 2024

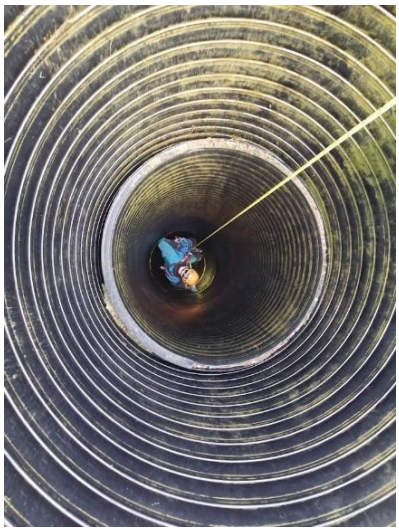
Jenny Drake

Entrance photo: Paul Griffiths.

Neil had arranged access for us with Phil W of TSG, and picked up the keys from the Chapel. It was a fine and sunny day, but being February, the sun never reached the steep north facing slope that Longcliffe is on, so it was chilly on the surface. Most of us parked at Speedwell for the shortest (but steep) climb up to the entrances.

This was a popular trip, so we divided into two teams: Neil Conde, Steve P-A, Dan Baddeley and Jenny Drake decided to visit **Son of Longcliffe** first; Rob Nevitt, Gaz McShee, Grace Chu, Paul Griffiths and guest Victoria Kocher descended **Longcliffe**.

Phil Wolstenholme had asked us if we could remove some galvanised steel hinges from the **Son-of-Longcliffe** lid. These were not working as intended, and succeeded only in making the lid very heavy to lift. We had brought our biggest spanners along and made short work of the nuts and bolts holding the hinges. Following some advice, we had brought along a ladder, as well as an SRT rope for the entrance pitch. In practice, we found no difficulty with SRT, and a ladder isn't necessary. The next pitch is equipped with resin anchored, stainless steel rungs, as an aid to free climbing. There are resin anchors for a rope too, should you wish. We shinned our way down this pitch and popped out into the main passage of the mine. Downstream (west), in mainly crawling and stooping passage on a worked-out vein, we followed the water through small pools, till it disappeared into a tiny crack. Trending up again, the passage eventually led to the run-in, currently blocking the connection to Longcliffe itself. We had a look east of the climb, with a larger and less muddy passage, to what looked to be another run-in, possibly from the now blocked adit entrance.

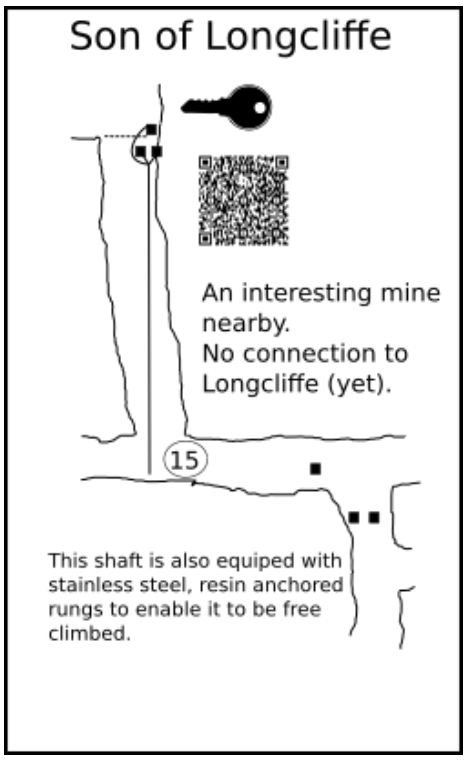


Back on the surface, we could see that Paul was still standing by the Longcliffe entrance. Making our way over, we learnt that Victoria had left, due to time pressure, and rigging the shaft had been very slow.

We found that the shaft had been rigged with a pair of Y-hangs, instead of using the deviation below the plastic entrance pipe. These were very awkward to use. The Y-hangs had probably been installed for hauling kibbles of rocks out during the 2010's project to reopen the mine, not for SRT.

Once the rigging was sorted out, Jenny, Paul and Dan descended the large natural vein cavity, in light coloured, and clean, limestone. We met the others at various points beyond. Steve P-A and Neil decided to call it a day, and didn't descend Longcliffe. Between us, we saw much of the mine. Although it is called a mine, much of it is natural cave, modified by the miners. There are artefacts, including miners' foot and thumb prints in the mud, clay pipes, and a wooden truck. The lowest point passes underneath the Speedwell Canal, but there is no connection.

Underground photos: Gaz Mcshee.



Eventually, we were all back on the surface. It was late in the day, so Son-of-Longcliffe was de-rigged, with no further descents. We slithered our way back down the hill to the busy Speedwell car park to get changed, and go our separate ways after a grand day out.

Paul Griffiths' photos of Longcliffe Mine can be seen here: https://photos.app.goo.gl/oGCfYdtMXHgXQ44c7

Left: A rigging topo for '**Son of Longcliffe'**. Likely to be added in the corner of the **Longcliffe Mine** topo in the Crewe Rigging Guide.

Further Reading, for more detail on these mines, their history and recent exploration:

Longcliffe Mine, Castleton Liberty; The Recorded History. James H. Rieuwerts. Mining History :- The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society. Volume 20, Number 5, Autumn 2019, pp 19 to 21.

The Re-opening of Longcliffe Mine, Castleton. Phil Wolstenholme, With a contribution by John Gunn. Mining History :- The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society. Volume 20, Number 5, Autumn 2019, pp 1 to 18.

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Bat Identification Day, Via Gellia. 10th March 2024.

Jess Eades is a caver with TSG and heavily involved in Derbyshire Bat Group. She is a certified bat handler and able to legally handle and work with bats. In January, she offered Crewe CPC a day learning about and identifying the different species of bats that we are likely to come across underground. This is something she has been doing with various local caving clubs to raise awareness of bats and get some more eyes underground to gain knowledge of their location and species.
We selected a day in March when Jess was free, and we had no club trips organised. This being a month when bats were likely to still be underground. Unfortunately, although we checked it wasn't Easter weekend, we didn't notice it was Mother's Day! This rather limited the numbers who could go, so out of a maximum of six people, only three were able to make it. Jess was still happy to go ahead, so we arranged to meet up at Woodside Cafe on the Via Gellia road, near Bonsall, for midday.

Paul Griffiths and Steve Knox travelled over from Crewe and Alsager, picking up Jenny Drake in Bakewell. The weather was foul, with rain all day. We had a brew in the café, with condensation streaming down the windows, while Jess went through an identification flow-chart to help narrow down which of the 18 UK resident breeding species we might expect to see and how to tell them apart.
[*Field Studies Council – **Bats Guide** – Jones & Walsh – 2001 – ISBN 9781851538751 - £4.00.*]

Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats have horseshoe shaped noses and sleep with their wings folded around themselves, but they are soft southerners and don't make it as far as Derbyshire. A bat's ear size and spacing helps with identification, followed by details of wings, claws, and fur colouring.
The café staff wanted to close and go home, so we retreated outside and used their smoking area to get changed under some shelter from the rain, into minimal caving kit: wellies, boiler/oversuit and helmet/light. We made our way up the valley side to an adit entrance and were told to make our way

in, very slowly, looking for bats lodged in crevices in the rock. Paul spotted the first one, a Brown Long Eared Bat, within three or four metres of the entrance. Moths and the usual, unnecessarily large, cave spiders were around in abundance. We soon had our second bat, which Jess called a **WAB** bat, being either a **W**hiskered bat, an **A**lcathoe bat (very unlikely), or a **B**randt's bat. These cryptic species look almost identical and can't be told apart without handling. Alcathoe bats were only identified as a separate species in 2001, by DNA testing, and were found to be present in the UK in 2010.

Left: Jenny, Paul and Jess, peering into every crevice in search of the elusive bats.

We carried on along the adit, but it was a bat-free zone from then on. One place looked an obvious roost site and sure enough, there were bat droppings below, but no one home.

Right: The tiny black bits are bat droppings. They actually vary in size and shape, depending on the species, and feel dry and powdery when you crush them between your teeth .... Sorry, I meant fingers !!!

We admired the miners pick marks and the gunpowder soot still in and around some of the shot holes. Much of the adit was through solid limestone, with only occasional bits of mineralised vein showing any sign of being worked.

Left: Much of the adit was cut as a superb coffin level.

Turning round, we slowly made our way back to the entrance, making use of the different angle so we might spot any bats we had missed on the way in. Unfortunately, there were no more that we could see. Jess speculated that the poor haul could have been due to the mild weather in recent weeks, leading to the bats basing themselves close to the outside in various holes in the rocks, or even in trees.

Right: Paul, Jenny & Jess.

Thanks to Jess for a fascinating afternoon. She is happy to organise another for the club around this time in 2025. We will try and be more careful in picking the day!

Jenny Drake *Photos: Steve Knox*

A Simple Rope Washer Design

If you have some club rope to clean after a trip, or if you have personal caving rope, then you'll need some way to wash it. If you aren't happy to, or daren't use the domestic washing machine, then there are lots of designs out there, all the way up to large wall mounted units in caving huts. Here is one design that works if you have access to an outdoor hose pipe, yet requires little space to store when not in use. It can be adapted to make use of what materials you may have available. If you have a different, or better one, or can suggest improvements, then please let us all know!

The rope washer is mostly made from 40mm nominal diameter PVC waste-water pipe and solvent weld fittings, as often used in domestic plumbing. This sort of pipework also comes in forms for push fit and compression fit assembly, but solvent weld is going to be the most robust for a washer. For the 40mm PVC and 15mm copper pipe, you'll only need short sections, so many washers can be built from a single pipe. Likewise, the solvent cement and coir mat will make many washers. Other components may be cheaper in bulk, so a batch could be built, if there is the demand.

Parts List:

- 40mm diameter solvent weld pipe. For example, Toolstation p/n 87411
- 40mm solvent weld T joint. For example, Toolstation p/n 30733
- 40mm access plug. For example, Toolstation p/n 49547
- PVC cement. For example, Toolstation p/n 70177
- ½" BSP to 15mm compression union. For example, Toolstation p/n 91660
- Hozelock ½" BSP threaded tap connector. For example, Toolstation p/n 30324
- 15mm copper pipe. For example, Toolstation p/n 78209
- Artificial grass, or coir door mat. For example, from The Range

Construction:

1. Take the 40mm access plug and drill a 20mm diameter hole in the end.
2. Screw the compression fitting end of the union into the 20mm hole. It should self-tap its way in. Use the nut, without the compression olive to secure it. See Image 1.
3. Screw the Hozelock ½" BSP threaded tap connector to the ½" BSP end of the union above. PTFE tape isn't needed.
4. Solvent weld the access plug to the diverging arm of the 40mm T joint.
5. Solvent weld a couple of lengths of 40mm pipe to the other two arms of the 40mm T joint to give an overall length of around 200mm.
6. Cut artificial grass, or coir door mat to the length above and of a width that it can be curved to fit inside the 40mm pipe with a small gap. A coir door mat may need to be in several strips.
7. Cut the 15mm copper pipe to be longer than the length of the washer. Enough to get a grip on it with your fingers. 300mm will be fine.

Use:

Image 1. Using a 15mm compression nut, without the olive, to secure the union that will take the Hozelock fitting.

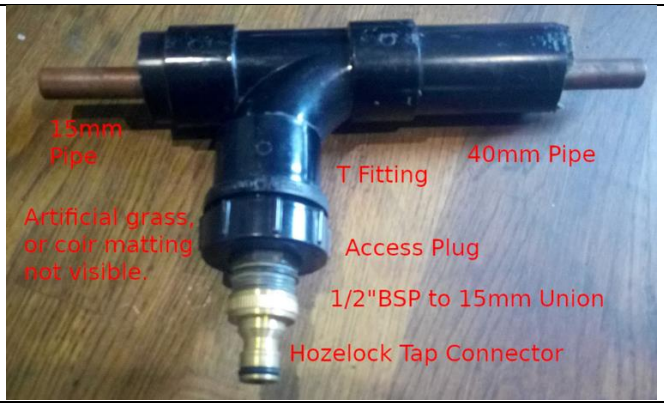

Image 2. Overall view of the rope washer, with copper pipe ready to insert the rope to be cleaned. The Hozelock fitting and union aren't the same as the ones in the parts list, but will work as well.

Image 3. An end view of the rope washer, showing the artificial turf used to scrub the rope sheath. Strips of rubber backed coir matting can be used instead. Note that the gap in the grass is aligned with where the water from the hose pipe comes in

Image 4. The washer loaded up and ready to connect to a hose pipe.

1. Roll up and insert the artificial grass, or coir mat in to the washer, with a gap where the water enters. See Image 3.
2. Push the 15mm copper pipe through the middle of the artificial grass, or coir mat. See Image 2. Thread the rope through the 15mm pipe. This will work for 10mm, or 9mm diameter rope. 11mm rope is usually stiff enough to push through the washer without needing the copper pipe.
3. Withdraw the copper pipe (if used). See Image 4.
4. Connect the washer to the hose and turn on the water.
5. With a foot on the washer to hold it in place, pull the rope back and forth, through the washer till the water runs clean. You will get wet!
6. Pull the rope through and turn off the water supply.
7. Coil the rope and hang it up to dry, out of the light, ready for the next trip.
8. Thread up the next rope and go back to step 2, till all the ropes are clean ! **Jenny Drake**

CCPC HISTORY, & COPYRIGHT:- Many hours of searching the back issues of the **Crewe Chronicle** have resulted in the location of about thirty published, news items, concerning C.C.P.C.. They give an insight into some of the early adventures of club members. Despite several attempts to get permission, it seems clear that **Copyright Regulations** will prevent me from reproducing the texts as scanned images, and that applies, even if I just type the items out in their complete and original form, to include them in the CCPC Newsletter – who knew ?
However, it appears that the information included in each item can be used, and direct quotes of limited amounts of the original text are acceptable – or I can just wait for seventy years after the item concerned was originally printed, for Copyright to expire (I'm not sure I have that long left !!).

Anyway, here goes :-

The earliest reference (so far discovered) of Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club appeared in the ….. CREWE CHRONICLE : Saturday, 28th February 1959:

Modified text follows:-
It referred to a '**Rope Ladder lost at Eldon Hole':**
On the 15th and 16th of February 1959, six members of CCPC (at that time called '**Crewe Cave & Pothole Club**') could be found exploring caves in Derbyshire. On the 15th they were facing extremely wet conditions in the sinkholes of Stanley Moor, near Buxton, but succeeded in descending Axe Hole (identified from the description of five white stalagmites with red tops).
The following day they hiked for seven miles to Perryfoot, then attempted to descend the 200 feet deep Derbyshire pothole called Eldon Hole. The descent began with a 70 ft. rope climb down a steep slope, followed by a vertical drop of 120 ft. requiring a rope ladder (the club ones were home-made) to allow the bottom to be reached.
A dead cow, and a loose debris slope, with disturbed rocks falling as each person attempted the climb, made conditions very unpleasant. Three members descended and came up again, but time was running out, so no further attempts were made. When they attempted to pull the ladder up, it jammed in a narrow rift about hallway up. In an attempt to free the ladder, the 100 ft lifeline was tied to it and was pulled from the opposite side of the shaft (Eldon Hole is an open fissure 110ft. long, by 20ft. wide). The ladder was pulled up about 20ft. then jammed again. With four members pulling, the rope suddenly broke, and the ladder fell to the bottom.
Club members are now working on the construction of lightweight metal ladders ready for the club Easter Meet, in Yorkshire.

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Note: The original name of the club was '**Crewe Cave and Pothole Club**', and **No !!,** before anyone thinks it is a good idea**, we are not going to change it back (- the idea was discounted years ago) !**

Ralph told me this story a number of times over the years, and his write-up of the event appeared in C.C.C.P. Newsletter No. 9 – April 1985, twenty-six years after the event.
The 'rope ladders' were made 'at home' out of drilled 2" by ¾" wooden battens, threaded onto hemp rope which was about washing-line standard, and with knots to stop the rungs slipping ! The 100-foot life-line rope was sisal (or hemp ?), and was purchased from Peak Cavern, where it was probably made, as the ropewalk was still in operation at that time [the last ropemaker was Bert Marrison, born 1884 – retired 1974, aged 89 years].
I can't help thinking that it was probably fortunate that the ladder was lost – who knows what might have happened on a future trip ?

Steve Knox

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Editor's Final Comment (Again !) :- There would be no Newsletter without the contributions made by Members. As Editor, I do sometimes 'tweak' write-ups, with very minor changes, perhaps to a particular word or two – please don't be offended, as this is not a criticism, but I sometimes find it necessary for our wider readership. Please keep writing in your own style, and leave it to me to mess it up ! **The End !**

'Crewe Chronicle' items concerning CCPC. – in case you want to check !

1959.02.28 – Lost ladder in Eldon Hole.

1959.04.04 – Cave of Death – Peak Cavern.

1959.04.11 – Return to Peak Cavern.

1959.04.18 – Oxlow Caverns with wire ladders, & Giants Hole.

1959.05.02 – Stanley Moor.

1959.05.30 – Giants Hole.

1959.06.13 – Redhurst Swallet.

1959.08.29 – Giants Hole.

1959.11.21 - Potholers forced up after 9 hours.

1960.03.12 – Giants Hole.

1960.09.03 – Sheffield Rescue Team call-out.

1965.12.09 – Potholing is safe.

1966.08.18 – P8.

1966.09.01 – Carlswark.

1966.09.08 – Climbing on Roaches & Stanage.

1966.09.22 – Climbing at Castle Naize.

1966.10.13 – Nant Francon Pass & Tryfan.

1966.11.10 – Climbing at Castle Naize.

1966.11.17 – Climbing at Castle Naize.

1966.12.01 – Climbing at Baslow.

1967.02.02 - Climbing on Roaches.

1976.04.29 – Giants Hole.

1976.10.07 – List of Societies.

1977.06.30 – Jubilee Passage in Giants.

1977.10.13 - List of Societies.

1979.06.28 - List of Societies.

1980.07.24 - List of Societies.

1982.04.24 - 25 Years Safe Caving.

1984.06.07 – 25 Years ago – Giants Hole.

1991.06.19 – Gouffre Berger.

1993.10.27 – Tight Squeeze Photo.

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