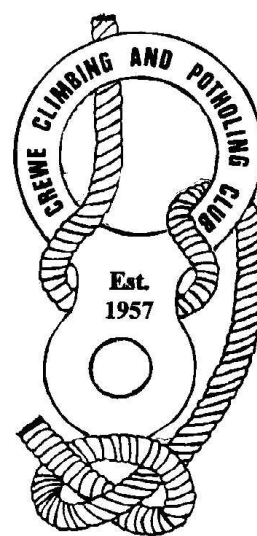
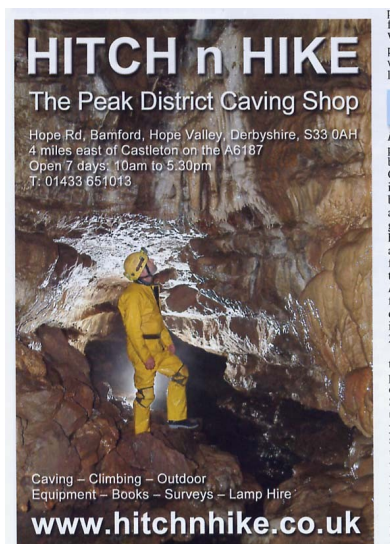


# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 100 Spring 2010

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**MONTANE CATALOGUE  
Spring-Summer 2010**



6 *Descent* (212) FEB/MAR 2010

It's some time since CCPC had a member appearing in a national publication but this month we have 2!! There are no prizes for guessing the names of the above two members or of the previous one who, being rather shy and reserved, wishes to remain anonymous. However we can reveal that he was selected as a centre-fold model in a national fitness magazine for his athletic appearance and amazing physique!

## Meets 2010

Members are reminded that these are the "official" trips, numerous other excursions take place both weekend, mid-week and evening. Many (if not all) of these are advertised on the "Yahoo" site.

Caving together is vital to a club's survival. If you are planning something and you are willing to include others please use the "Yahoo" site, and please try to arrange "private" trips avoiding clashes with club trips wherever possible.

Feb. 27 Lloyds Spar Mine AND DCRO Whitehall.  
March 14 Alum, Lower LC, Diccan. 21 DCRO Monyash. 27 Oxlow

	21-28 Majorca (I believe there is 1 place left!)
April	11 Lanc/Easegill. 24 DCRO trng & AGM & Slaughter Stream
May	9 Provi-Dow, 16 Peak Cavern etc. 29-30 Nenthead.
June	6 Hardrawkin/Sunset. 19 Pipikin-Link
July	3 DCRO training. 4 Smeltnill Beck. 17 Pwll Dwen
Aug	1 Notts Pot, 14-21 Kyrgyzstan. 21 Stoney Mid.
September	4 Disappointment Pot. 12 Ireby Fell, 18 DCRO trng/mtg/Pie n Pea. 25 Notts 2
October	10 Red Moss, 23 Swildons,
November	14 DCRO AND Peak Cavern. 27 Lanc/Easegill
December	4 DCRO Bag Pack, 5 Bull Pot, 18 Jack Pot.

### **Morocco Trip February 2010**

A week in Morocco

Sometime last August we got an email from a friend we'd been to the Alps with a couple of times asking if we were interested in a trip to Morocco in February to do a winter ascent of Toubkal, the highest mountain at 4167m. Of course we said yes so on Saturday February 6<sup>th</sup> nine of us caught the Easyjet flight from Manchester to Marrakech. We were met at the airport by our mountain guide for the week, Youssef, and taken to our hotel in Marrakech for the first night. Youssef directed us to a restaurant where we sat on an upstairs terrace looking out onto the big mosque, the tallest building in Marrakech.

Sunday.

This morning our bags were loaded onto the minibus and we were driven to Imlil, the end of the road for the minibus. We walked up a track to Aremd a few hundred metres higher at about 1900m. We carried our rucksacks but the kitbags were taken up in another vehicle. On the way up Youssef told us a bit about the agriculture there – we could see lots of terraces on the hillside and they were for walnut & apple trees. In Aremd we stayed in a gite (mattresses on the floor) and met our cook for the week, Mohammed. Fortunately for me there were 2 other vegetarians so a lot of the meals were meat free. We had beans of one sort or another most lunchtimes and loads of fruit & vegetables. Oranges in Morocco are plentiful and much tastier than at home. At Aremd we had the rest of the afternoon to have a look round. The village was built on the side of a hill and our gite was at the top so it wasn't until we walked down through the village that we got an idea of how big it was. The streets were all very narrow and a bit of a maze with the mosque at the bottom. Great view from the gite of the mountains.

Monday

We were woken at 05.30 by the call to the mosque and after breakfast of bread, soft cheese, porridge, jam and tea/coffee/chocolate we set off walking. Today we had to gain the height of Ben Nevis to the CAF refuge which is the starting point for Toubkal. Our kitbags were taken up to the snowline by mule and then portered the rest of the way so we were asked to leave as much stuff as possible at the gite. All our food for the next few days was taken up by mule as well. This was when I realised how these expeditions are part of the economy there and although we could have carried bigger rucksacks and done it all ourselves we would be depriving the locals of an income. On the way up to the refuge we passed 2 places selling drinks – one selling freshly squeezed orange and another selling tea and bottled drinks. The walk to the refuge was surprisingly easy because of the well graded path. We arrived there and had lunch and then a play out on the snow to make sure we could all use an ice axe and get our crampons on the right feet. There were quite a few other groups there, mainly English, and it looked as though a lot of them had never used crampons before. Once we

were back in the hut we had tea. This was either mint tea or green tea at this time of day and the mint tea was usually prepared with sugar and was drunk in glasses. Also poured from 2 or 3 feet above the glass. After dinner we got verbena tea which was supposed to be relaxing. I think most of us found it wasn't relaxing enough to help us sleep all night in a dorm with 9 of us plus 4 other English blokes who all snored. The hut was cold and the only room which got warm was the lounge where there was a woodburning stove which we each paid 10 dirhams a night for (about 85 pence). All the locals got seats right in front of the fire! There were always several other groups in the hut and they all had their own cooks and guides.

#### Tuesday

We were up for breakfast at 06.30 but the weather wasn't good – gale force winds so it looked as though we would not get up Toubkal that day. We went for a walk up the valley to see what it was like and got hit with the wind blowing the spindrift around so decided it was not a day for the summit. After lunch it improved a bit so we split up and went out for various walks. Tea that day was accompanied by 'beghrire' which were small thin pancakes. While we had tea each day Youssef told us a bit about Morocco – geology one day, animals another and also discussed what we would do the next day. One of the other groups saw a lammergeier on their way up but we weren't so lucky. I did see a big fox slinking across the snow above the hut.

#### Wednesday

Better weather today so at 07.00 we set off up Toubkal. The refuge is at 3207m and Toubkal is 4167m so we set off at a very steady pace and zigzagged up the snow. Youssef was keen that we all followed him in single file so we couldn't go racing ahead! We had several stops on the way up to regroup all the same. The way up goes to a col and then up a ridge to the summit. Once on the ridge there wasn't as much snow but more wind. Good views from the summit but still a bit of cloud around. Because of the bad weather on Tuesday there were a lot of groups going to the summit today, some were going back down to the valley in the afternoon but others like us were staying another night in the refuge. We got down off the mountain a lot quicker than we went up. Youssef was keen on sliding down and doing ice axe breaks every so often to slow himself down. I discovered that I could get down just as quickly on two feet. Obviously he knew where it was safe to do this as he'd been up the mountain many times, I think he said about a hundred. There aren't any glaciers on Toubkal so no crevasses to worry about and we didn't need to rope up. We got down for another splendid lunch.

After lunch Alan & I went out to have a look at the ice formations in the river bed which were very impressive. Then we had tea and 'shfanje' which were a bit like tubular shaped donuts and discussed plans for the next day. Because we had lost a day due to the bad weather we could either go up another mountain and have a really long day as we had to get back down to Aremd, or we could go up to the col which was on our itinerary. In the end we opted for the col as some of the group didn't want to do another 4000+m mountain.

#### Thursday

Another 07.00 start. Outside the hut putting our crampons on we were watching a group of four blokes who we'd seen in the hut the night before. We were wondering what they were going to be doing as some of them had 2 axes and they had helmets on – must be going to do a route somewhere. We watched them set off just before us and then after about 10 minutes saw them turn round! Turned out they were going up Toubkal in all that gear but they'd set off the wrong way! We went up to the Tizi Ouanoums Pass at 3735m where there is a great view to the south. It was so windy at the col that I had to crawl along until in the shelter of some rocks. We had a superb viewpoint here but then another big group arrived

who didn't seem quite so aware of the situation and insisted on walking around as if they were down in the valley. At some point Youssef stood up to keep an eye on them and the wind caught his rucksack and took it down the wrong side of the pass. Our group set off down with the other group while he went to get it. Apparently it took him an hour to get back up to the col once he'd retrieved it so we were all back at the refuge well before him. Once back at the refuge we had to pack our gear for the porters and after lunch we set off back to Aremd. We had the usual mint tea once we got there and after dinner Youssef invited some of the porters and the cook in for one of us to give them their tips. We were just hoping that we'd given them enough.

#### Friday

Only a short walk back to Imlil this morning and the minibus was waiting to take us back to Marrakech. On route we stopped at a women's cooperative where they made argan oil and its products. None of us could afford to buy any but it was very interesting. At about 11.30am we got back to Marrakech and spent the afternoon wandering around. The main square is full of stalls selling freshly squeezed orange juice and dates and figs. In the evening we all, including Youssef, went for a Moroccan meal in the centre of Marrakech. It was a fantastic meal and they'd made a special 'pastilla' for the veggies. The traditional 'pastilla' is a first course with chicken and special pastry. Then we had couscous, vegetable tagine and meat, followed by fruit and little Moroccan cakes and then mint tea.

#### Saturday

We had most of Saturday to explore Marrakech as we didn't have to leave for the airport until 16.30. First of all we went to the Majorelle gardens, designed by a French artist Jacques Majorelle. It was full of different cactii and brightly coloured tubs and tiles. The only downside was it rained for the first time. After this we headed through the narrow streets and souks to the Palais de Bahia but by the time we got there it was shut for lunch until the middle of the afternoon. Just wandering round Marrakech is quite an experience. Traffic, including lots of scooters and bikes, goes everywhere.

It was a fantastic holiday. I'd been a bit dubious about having a guide, cook and porters but we learned a lot more about Morocco that way. Definitely a place I'd like to go back to. Here are links to some of our photos:

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/AlisonB99/Morocco2010#>

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/AlisonB99/Morocco2010Marrakech#>

Alison Brentnall

### **Lloyds Spar Mine**

As most of you know I have an aversion to water and old mines. For some inexplicable reason (maybe it was the mention of a bevy of attractive members of the opposite sex) I found myself "somewhere in North Wales" on a car park situated "back of beyond". Neil and Darren had visited the mine on a previous occasion but as usual neither of them appeared to have the slightest idea where the entrance was or even which direction it lay.

Eventually more by luck than judgement we found ourselves in deciduous woodland with several large holes in the ground- things were looking up (although we were looking down). One particular hole differed from the others in being equipped with two rather dubious looking

very old metal ladders. The oldest (I assume) ladder was lying at the foot of the 8metre drop in pieces and the other looked as though it was about to suffer the same fate! The top of the hole was overhanging in places and as usual we had to pass under the most evil looking bit.

One by one we descended, I think most of us had realised by this time that one at a time was probably pushing the limit and two at a time would have exceeded it by a considerable margin. At the foot of the drop there was a wooden structure that appeared to be holding up the roof- needless to say this was the way on! From here on things improved (they couldn't have got worse I suppose so I for one was glad of the improvement).

The mine is a massive stope on several levels, the bottom one being flooded on this occasion. There are quite a few drops and climbs, most of them being equipped with ladders or chains or a mixture of both. We saw loads of tiny gour pools, cave pearls and even a few bats. Sadly I couldn't persuade anyone to do the "bat recognition test" based on the flavour of their droppings.

Despite spending 2 ½ to 3 hours underground most of us stayed bone dry (except Ann who always insists on getting wet wherever she goes) and spotlessly clean due to the fact that instead of Peak District mud we were walking around in pulverised spar which is rather like the sand on Blackpool beach (only cleaner).

To round off an excellent and interested trip, even for a sufferer of mine-phobia, we ended up in a nearby hostelry with comfortable seats and excellent beer.  
RJ.

### **One of us is jinxed!**

**Spring 2008.** Trip proposed to climb Chimborazo in Ecuador. Just before we booked flights a nearby volcano erupted covering Chimborazo with ash making the snow/ice conditions too hazardous.

We booked flights to China.

Within days there was civil unrest along the Tibet/China border which fortunately seemed to quieten down.

#### **Summer 2008**

An earthquake then erupted close to Chengdu. This is where Matt lives and where we had planned to climb. Our insurers refused to cover us so the visit was "put on the back burner".

#### **Spring 2009.**

Trip to China planned for Easter

48 hours departure the Chinese government withdrew our permit to climb in the region planned

We finally made it and had a good trip to Inner Mongolia (China) almost climbing a 6000+ m peak. Days after our return ethnic riots broke out in the region resulting in a large number of casualties!

**Winter 2009** Decide to visit Tibet, which got switched to Chinas then Kazakhstan then Kyrjzstan!

**Spring 2010.** Successful trip to climb Toubkal in Morocco.

Successful trip to Majorca

.Flights booked for a trekking/climbing trip to Kyrjzstan.

**Late spring 2010.** No doubt you've all seen the recent news. Kyrjzstan: Riots, government deposed and "rival" government set up.

Anyone fancy Blackpool? Better not, the pier could collapse!

### **Congratulations!**

Alan & Alison haven't emigrated – they've been busy walking in Scotland and running in Ireland! Having now won the first two races in the English V60 championships Alison now leads the field and is currently lying 3<sup>rd</sup> in the British V50 championships. Not wishing to be outdone (well almost outdone) Alan came 5<sup>th</sup> in the men's event.

### **Hillocks- the new entrance!**

Well almost! Despite some determined digging the "collapse" in the field to the southwest of Wharf Engine Shaft has not led to caverns measureless to man, now there's a surprise!

### **Rob Farmer Memorial Training Fund**

Members are reminded of this fund that provides up to 50% of the cost of courses related to caving. If you are interested contact Izzy with details of the proposed course and she will sort you out!

### **TRIP REPORT - SEATHWAITE WAD MINE (BORROWDALE)**

Remember the weekend the clocks changed in October 2008? That was the date of the OMM event in the Lakes: you know, when the papers reported that 7000 fell runners were stranded and hypothermic, and when the owner of the Honister Mines went on record stating that the OMM event organisers had nearly turned the Lake District into a morgue!! None of this was true, of course, but it did sell a lot of newspapers, and it did publicise the mine at the top of Honister which is also a tourist attraction, slate shop and cafeteria!

At some point just before our start on that same event, my running partner, Lee Langdon, and I were queuing in a muddy field in Seathwaite, waiting for a vacant portaloos, and discussing things in general. You may know Lee - he's a very active Masson caver and a DCRO underground leader, and he's been responsible for some of the recent bolting in NCC Shafts and Cliff Cavern. As we're both cavers as well as runners, I pointed out the obvious mine tips extending vertically up the fellside at the back of the portaloos. Lee told me that this was a wad mine (wad being the local mining term for graphite) which he'd been through and that it was P-bolted and worth a visit. I squirreled the information away, thinking that some day I must return and see what it was like for myself.

As luck would have it this year I have opted to join the Masson trip to the Gouffre Berger in Vercors in August, and, as part of the deal, I have had to temporarily join Masson as an associate member ... and what was in my first Masson Newsletter but an option to join a trip with Masson member Paul Chandler down the Seathwaite Wad Mine. How could I resist?

So Saturday 20 March saw me parking up in the pouring rain at Seathwaite (confirmed as the wettest place in England, if not the western world!) and walking along the long line of parked cars looking for anybody who might possibly be a caver. As I did this, I happened to notice an oldish bloke who was walking the opposite way and who was also peering into cars - but he was obviously not a caver so I ignored him.

On my second circuit of these cars, a lady leaned out of a landrover and looked to be about to say something to me. "Are you Masson?" I asked. "No," she replied, "I'm Puddums! And that's my husband looking for other Puddums in parked cars." She pointed to the oldish bloke who was now talking to a couple of odd-looking characters who were holding umbrellas.

And so I approached this mottley group and introduced myself. "Ah, you must be leading the trip, then?" they said, hopefully. When I replied that I believed that that particular job was to be done by Paul Chandler, they shook their heads and said that he had opted to go down Goldscope Mine. I asked if they had any rope, and they said they hadn't and, just as we began to plan a trip which might involve

entering and exiting the mine at each of the several adit entrances, a car looking not unlike a hearse turned up containing two CAT (Cumbria Amenity Trust) members who were to be our guides. Phew! The CAT guys were both called John - this made conversation and pitch shouts easy (although I never did find out the names of the PDMHS folk). The Johns had visited the mine the previous day and, with an efficiency which was probably lost on the PDMHS chaps, had already rigged all of the pitches. We were to climb to the highest adit and enter Gill's Stage (point of information: all the levels in this wad mine are called stages) and pull-through the first three pitches. We would continue to the lowest level (Gilbert's Stage) as a through trip, but the lower pitches were not suitable for a pull through, and a different strategy would be adopted.

The hill is pretty steep, but sharp eyes should be able to spot the remains of an old track which zig-zags its way up the hill at the far (north) side of Newhouse Gill. Gill's Stage has two entrances and the best one for the trip is the higher of the two, as this lands you on the side of the pitch with the bolts! However, before descending the pitch we explored Gill's Stage but, unfortunately we didn't have time to take in the raise up into Harrison's Stage - in fact this particular trip concentrated mostly on the through trip and there was quite a bit a mine left for future trips to explore. (I'll definitely be back!) Back at the bolts - these are a mix of P32 Goujons and Fixe glue-ins. Although there are a lot of old spits and rusty hangers, these seem to have all been superceded by decent stainless kit - and that includes the lower pitches too.

The mine was a pipe working, and this has left mostly solid and decent-sized galleries and passageways. There is much evidence of rail track (both standard and flanged) and one level where there are two good examples of the old man's coffin level. Pitches are mostly slanting, rather than vertical (angle similar to Robin's Shaft), the main exceptions being the bottom three pitches - the ones where you can't pull through.

The first of these (the lower part of the Grand Pipe) is an abseil down a slabby wall, followed by an energetic and acrobatic tension traverse (with the aid of a high deviation) into a passage part way up the opposite wall.

The last two pitches, known collectively as Dixon's Pipe, are quite wet. The upper part is slanting (but much more vertical than Robin's Shaft) and this lands on a floor of loose rocks above a square hole leading to the more vertical (and wetter) lower pitch. The foot of the lower pitch (not a place to linger because of the loose rocks above, and the water) leads through a short crawl (the only crawl we did!!) into the final adit of Gilbert's Stage where daylight and the exit can be seen.

On arrival at the foot of the last pitch, the two Johns dropped the last rope down to us so that we could take that and some other kit out, leaving them to return to the top of Grand Pipe, derigging as they went and exiting via Farey's Stage.

An interesting mine, and certainly easy as far as we went. I'm definitely keen on a return trip if anybody fancies a Lakes mining outing.

I have an electronic copy of a written guide to the place which includes a good survey. Email me if you want a copy. It's not quite up-to-date as it still talks about poor bolts, a situation which is now improved, and directs you down a different second pitch to the one which we took - but it is still useful.

Alan B.

### **Mallorca Trip 21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

Intrepid explorers were :-

Darren Conde, Neil Conde, Will Cooper, Izzy Babin-Cooper, Des Kelly, Gill Kelly & Martin Kelly.

After arriving at Liverpool (John Lennon) airport in the wee small hours of morning with sleep still in our eyes & a sense of reluctance at having to rise from a warm comfortable bed so early on a Sunday morning, we sorted the equipment, weighed the bags, checked in & lounged around waiting for the off. Somehow when it was time for departure we ended up being the last people to board the plane. Des

made a beeline for the only seat left that had a little extra leg room & the rest of us just took what & where was left.

We arrived at Palma airport only to be greeted by dull grey skies & the remnants of a light shower ensuring we felt at home immediately. Not the ideal start to the idyllic sun, sea & Sangria holiday that is usually associated with the Balearic Isles, but onwards & upwards. After sorting the car hire, finding the cars, driving to the apartment (with Neil at the wheel still I fear thinking he was in the UK) scrambling for who gets which room, dumping our stuff, we decided food was next on the agenda. Des & Martin wanted to watch the Man U v Liverpool match & after a consensus of opinion against, the 2 dashed off anyway towards the harbour, window shopping in every restaurant until they found one with a T.V showing the match while the rest of us just meandered behind. (Man U won 2-1 for anyone interested). After stuffing our faces at the restaurant, we found a Spar open to get the important bits & bobs (mainly alcohol). Went back to the apartment & discussed our weeks activities (I was exhausted just talking about it, but the alcohol intake made it seem do-able)

Please be aware that my cave description/terminology from this point will not be what your used to from this kind of report as I have no sense of direction (I could easily get lost in an empty room) & I never remember what different things are called in a cave ( it's just, WOW that looks nice)

#### Monday 22nd March 2010 - Cova De Les Rodes cave.

The drive to Pollensa to find a map didn't go quite as planned. It started well with Neil leading the convoy & Will bringing up the rear. No more than 5 minutes into the journey we lost Will only to discover when we found him again that he had come close to being arrested for almost running the locals over on a Zebra crossing. After settling down the giggles we got the map, studied it a while then drove to Cala de St Vincenz. We parked on the edge of the village, sorted the stuff & headed up the dirt track. The entrance to Cova De Les Rodes cave is about a 200 yard walk from the road in a wooded area on the right. The entrance is an open chamber leading to an easy yet slippery climb down, followed by a short hand/knee crawl into a chamber with some nice formations up on the left. the passage continues about 30ft leading to a large chamber & the head of the first pitch of approx 20ft (all 3 pitches are spits with some natural belays) Will rigged & abseiled the first pitch (reporting a fast decent on the new rope) followed by the rest of us. The way on was a large passage that reduced to a short crawl leading into another large chamber with stalactites & flowstone, further on, up & over a muddy bank, through a hole led to the 2nd pitch approx 12ft. This lead to a low muddy crawl approx 30ft almost flat out near the end, the way on is up 2 very steep awkward slippery muddy banks where the passage way opened up enough for the paparazzi (Des, Neil & Will) to request a pic or 2, food drink & photo's for all. After the photo shoot we pressed on & the passage narrowed to a rift with a short traverse to the head of the 3rd pitch. The 3rd pitch is a split pitch, the first part is approx 15ft starting with a slightly awkward squeeze down though the rift opening up to land on a ledge with a rebelay to the 2nd part of the pitch approx 15ft starting with a wiggle through a narrow rift, (more awkward on the return journey) then opening up for the rest of the decent, swinging out slightly to the left at the bottom to avoid getting your knickers wet. Just in front round a corner is a static hand line of approx 10ft (of very dubious age & quality, separated sheath about 3ft from top). The way on is an easy walk down then a hand climb leading to a chamber, then down into the final chamber & the sump. The air in the final chamber with very thin so we didn't hang around long to explore in any great depth. After getting back to the cars & cleaning up, we drove to the centre of Cala de St Vincenz & strolled down to the bay. Myself & Izzy went for a paddle in the water (wishing we had brought spare clothes) only to be greeted by Darren wearing nothing but his Speedo's, a hasty retreat was made & a drink was needed.



## Tuesday 23rd March 2010 - Canyon Biniaraix

Early rise for all, excitement & trepidation for the Kelly's first experience of canyoning & using a figure 8.

We parked in Biniaraix village & after Des scaring the natives with his fashion sense (loud bermuda shorts, red knee length wet socks & no t-shirt) we started our ascent (approx 500m on zigzag paths) . As yours truly is the slowest of the group (at this walking lark) it took a little longer than first planned to reach the top (enough time for the rest of the group to have a siesta). The scenery was beautiful & I had to have a few stops to fully engulf myself in it's splendour (that's my excuse & I'm sticking to it). We started the ascent in lovely sunny weather but 3/4 of the way up the clouds rolled in. We arrived at the top around 11.30, changed, & off we went down the river around 12.00. The first pitch was rigged & Neil descended only to be greeted by a dead sheep in the water. It was reported that the water levels this year were higher than 2009 making it a more sporty trip. More clouds seem to roll in the further we descended, we was about 3/4 of the way down before we saw sunlight again & caught a glimpse of the spectacular panoramic view. In total we abseiled approx 20 pitches of all shapes & sizes, all wet but all fantastic good fun. We reached the bottom around 5.30pm. Not bad timing I thought for a group of 7, 3 of which total novices to canyoning & using figure 8's. Just as I was revelling in the thought that it was all downhill back to the car, the Conde's true to form chose a different way back which involved more ascending first. Arrived back in Port Pollensa quite late & rounded off a fantastic day with a meal & a few drinks.

## Wednesday 24th March 2010 - Cova Des Pont Pirata & Cova Des Coloms 1

The alarm sounded to another early rise, breakfast & equipment check (oh & birthday cards & a Where's Wally T-shirt for Neil). We started the day with an hours drive over the island parking at the bottom of the long dirt track (a track notorious for car break-in's) we emptied the cars of everything & headed back down the track to discover the gate was locked. We came back past the cars (A good job as Neil had left his mobile on the wall near the car) & entered the pathway across scrubland towards the coves. Walking across the headland (fighting brambles & a grass snake) passing coves until we reached Cova Des Coloms. We hid our gear in a cave & headed back for Cova Des Pont Pirata first. After losing our way we finally found the gated entrance hidden in a clump of trees & bushes. Cova Des Pont Pirata is an old show cave. Once through the entrance, stopping in the main chamber for the obligatory group photo we started on the main path only to discover many other routes leading off for exploration. We all seemed to drift apart engrossed in our own sight seeing tour (only to be reminded that the others were there by cries of WOW look at this). This cave is full to the rafters of beautiful formations & has a crystal clear large deep sump (well worth the bramble scratched legs).

We headed back to the bay, changed into our wetsuit & headed off on the approx 300ft sea swim to Cova Des Coloms. Neil, Martin & Will scaled the rocks half way round the bay where Neil & Martin jumped into the sea & swam the rest of the way to the entrance (leaving Will still contemplating). Izzy, Darren ,Des & myself launched from the bay. Des turned back half way as he had no buoyancy aid & had used up all his energy swimming against the tide. Will joined Des back at the bay & they spent a few hours basking in the sun.

Cova Des Coloms is by far the most spectacular cave I've ever encountered. It has everything (barring pitches), stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, colonnades, formations, flowstone, curtains, straws, gours & crystal clear slightly salted deceivingly deep water pools. This cave is beautifully decorated with a silent, clean, undisturbed feel about it & for anyone that has never been I urge you go on the next available flight, you won't be disappointed.

After reluctantly departing the cave, Martin & Izzy swam back to the bay while Darren, Neil & myself swam & traversed around the coastline half way then climbed up the rocks & walk the rest of the way.

We headed back to Alcudia, did some food shopping (& alcohol of course) then back to the apartment where Martin cooked us a lovely BBQ on the apartment roof (although the rest of us all stayed indoors as it was dark & getting a little chilly) We ended the night with a surprise birthday cake that Izzy had arranged (with a lot of re-lightable candles on it) to celebrate Neil's birthday.

#### Thursday 25th March 2010 – The Bernat Ridge

Well you guessed it, another early start to breakfast & a short drive along the stunning mountain road to a large dirt clearing where we emptied the cars of people & gear. Neil & Darren went to park the cars while the rest of us played frisbee. We were surprised to see both cars return & discover that we were in the wrong place (not just the wrong place but on the totally wrong ridge, (of course it was Spanish cartographers misplacing the ridge not our map reading skills). Well we bundled everything & everyone back into the cars & drove along more stunning mountain scenery to the right car park. After unpacking the cars for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time we headed off up the path. After walking less than 100 yards I decided I was too exhausted after yesterday's trip to participate in this trip. It was decided that Neil, Darren, Martin, Izzy & Will would take the high road (the ridge walk) & Des & myself would take the low road (the nice flat, easy route) & we would probably meet at the end somewhere. We exchanged mobile number etc then went our separate ways. I'd forgotten something in the car & Des went back to get it. While waiting for Des's return I heard Will cry out the group chant (a chant that Des had started earlier in the week) it sounded like it was coming from behind me, to the left but way up high) I returned the chant to give away my position (about 10 yards from where they left us) then heard Des chant & I knew he was on his way back. Des & I meandered along the path & from the occasional group chant were able to see how far along the ridge the group were. We decided to climb up & met the group half way along the ridge (think it came as a shock to see us waiting on the top for them). We all had a break, then set off along the rest of the ridge. Des & I followed for a little of the way then descended back down the ridge to the comfort of the easy, flat path & waited at the end for their arrival. The ridge walk I'm told (as I myself only did a very small part of it) is a scramblers paradise, walking over knife edge limestone rocks & windows overlooking the steep plunge into the sea some 1000ft below. The rest of the group descended & we all made our way back to the car.

After again stopping for food on the way back to the apartment, we arrived back & Izzy & I set about making a thrown together sort of spaghetti bolognese meal (once we'd got to grips with how to stop the cooker switching itself off every 2 minutes) while the lads downed & few drinks & chatted about tomorrows Gorg Blau trip.

#### Friday 26th March 2010 - Gorg Blau

Well the time had come to do the Gorg Blau affair. A little apprehensive as earlier in the week quite late we'd passed that area to find a group of 4 girls by the side of the road at the exit point waiting for rescue services.

It was on our agenda so the day started with the by now usual early rise, breakfast & gear check. We drove to the aqueduct, emptied the cars at the start & got changed while Darren & Neil drove the cars back to the closest lay-by near the end. We set off (in lovely sunshine) on the pathway down to meet the river, put on the rest of our gear, posed for the group photo then off down stream. There's quite a long walk/scramble down stream before the first pitch. Again a more sporty trip than last year as the water levels were higher. The canyons between pitches were all swims & most exits off the pitches were done treading water (I'm so glad I wore my buoyancy aid for this one). The deeper down we got the more the light faded & the colder the water felt. It took approx 5 hrs to reach our proposed exit

point some 20 odd pitches later (a simple via ferrata we thought). After ascending the via ferrata of about 10 rungs it became apparent this was not going to be the simple climb out we had anticipated. Out of 7 only 4 had brought full prussik gear (my instant reaction was one of panic only to be told by Darren that this was not yet a crisis & that we would just make do). After some to-ing & fro-ing of pieces of kit up & down pitches & along traverses we eventually emerged triumphant approx 3 hrs later and some 400 – 500 ft higher.

A great trip had by all & some new tricks learned.

After changing & having a ritual farewell to our castaway footwear we headed back to Port Pollensa only to be confronted with dodgy chicken & chips, and then back to the apartment for cheese & cocktails (haribo & lager)

### Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – Shopping & Cova De Cal Pesso

A lay in, finally (well compared to the rest of the week). We headed off on a shopping trip to find the usual holiday souvenirs. We spotted an open market (heaven & a must to stop) by the side of the old town of Alcudia. After having a peruse & doing a bit of bartering we went inside the old town for another look round the shops, admired the beautiful architecture itself & ended with a well earned lunch break.

In the afternoon Darren, Neil & Will went off on a short caving trip in Cova De Cal Pesso while Des, Martin, Izzy & myself carried on shopping down at the harbour in Port D'Alcudia. While shopping I spotted a very apt T-shirt for Darren, it was depicting a typical tourist wearing shorts with his tackle hanging out the side with 1 you know what bigger than the other (Darren had sustained an injury at the start of the week & after declining Izzy's request to take a look, had been advised to put a bag of frozen peas between his legs for 15 minutes each night to help calm down the swelling) I showed Izzy the T-shirt & after us having a really good laugh about it, we couldn't resist buying it. Izzy bought a "no farting zone" T-shirt for Will & I bought an "alcohol is the best meal" T-shirt for Martin. Izzy also spotted a "give peas a chance" badge (a splendid accessory to Darren's T-shirt)

We all met back at the apartment & swapped stories of the afternoon's events. Yet again Neil had mislaid his phone, assuming he'd left it back at the cave entrance, he panicked and was halfway out the door before Darren produced it (another near miss encounter for the phone)

The lads tried on their new T-shirts. Izzy & I insisted they wore them out for our last meal together & in the great spirit of things Neil joined in and donned his "Where's Wally" T-shirt.

We strolled down to the harbour & ate at a TexMex joint. The food was ok but what interested us more about the place was trying to name the famous film stars on the walls.

We ended up in an Irish bar where Izzy beat Darren at connect 4 (but Darren beat everyone else that played)

### Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – picnic & home

Being the last day was a relatively late start. Had breakfast, packed & cleaned the apartment. We concocted a picnic out of the remnants of the weeks shopping, checked the map & decided to go for a walk from Mancor De Le Vall up the hill to visit the Chapel/Monastery. Set off up the hill (leaving Martin asleep in the car, not feeling well), took a wrong turn at the crossroads, asked a local where the Chapel was only to be told we were on the totally wrong hill. After deciding to explore the path we were on we ended up having our farewell picnic overlooking a picturesque quarry, complete with JCB (Will was in his element)

Then back to the airport to begin the tedious, end of holiday journey home.

Well that's all folks

For anyone that has never been on this kind of trip before, I thoroughly recommend it.  
Gill Kelly.