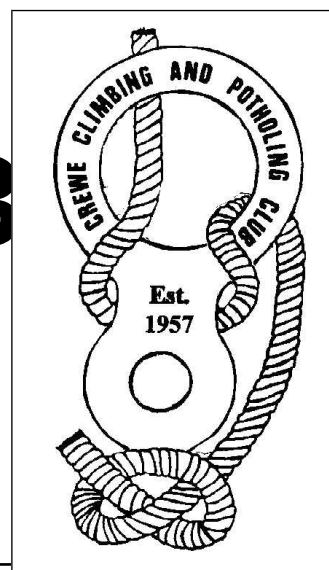


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 103 Spring 2011

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Majorca 2011

Weather was dry and getting really hot by the end of the week, most of us got burnt. Did 4 caves, Forat 502, Tancada, Coloms and Pesso. 1 Canyon, Coma Freda. Canyon with no running water and some smelly pools, Got rather hot in 5mm wetsuits.
Darren Conde.

Lanzarote Lava Tube Caves

Lanzarote is an island that was formed by volcanic action about three thousand years ago with the last eruptions about two hundred years ago. Thus, there are many extinct volcanoes on Lanzarote and several miles of lava tube caves that were formed during the early volcanic period. Lava tubes are formed when a volcano erupts and the lava expelled flows in channels away from the volcano. When the lava flow begins to cool, it may solidify at the edges and over the top, to form a hard crust. Then the solidified lava forms a tube and the lava flows inside it, if the viscosity of the lava is low enough. When the lava flow ceases, the molten lava inside the tube may drain out completely or partially, depending on the lava viscosity and temperature.

Carmen Smith of The Wessex Cave Club, with the help of her friends, has written a very good guide to the caves of Lanzarote, that can be downloaded as a PDF from www.cavesoflanzarote.co.uk Carmen helped me to contact Javier Trujillo, the president and Alexandre Perez Perdona, the club secretary of the '*Grupo de Espeleologia de Canarias*' to explore some of the best caves on the island. Javier and Alexandre were good company and I went on two very interesting trips with them. The first trip was into *Jameo de la Puerto Falsa*, one of the entrances into the extensive *Montana Corona* system. The *Puerto Falsa* entrance is quite large and leads into about a quarter a mile of spacious passage, with lots of sharp boulders and rock-falls to negotiate. There are balconies and upper passage in parallel to the main route, too. The main passage ends at a chain-link barrier protecting research work in progress and blocking the way into the superbly lit and beautiful show-cave '*Cuevas de Las Verdes*'. I was surprised at the silence and size of the passages we traversed. Another interesting feature was the volcanic dust on the floor. Javier told me that, on the other side of the barrier, past the research equipment, there are the archaeological remains of a refuge used by the inhabitants in ancient times to hide from pirates and slave-traders. They erected walls and there was a natural crawl to keep intruders out. They were able to drink the water that can be seen in the show cave and food could be lowered in from small holes in the roof.

The second trip that we did was to *La Cueva de Las Naturalistas*. This cave is about a mile long and reputed to be the 79th. Longest tube cave in the world. There are two main entrances and the passages are different in character from those in the *Montana Corona* system, having flat floors and a hemispherical cross-section, with occasional rock-falls. The walls are decorated with gypsum formations and the ceilings with peculiar 'lavicicles' and a type of crystalline helictite that I had never seen before. In one place the roots of plants hung down from the ceiling, proving that the surface was not far above. We climbed down into an entrance that would be difficult to find without local knowledge and came out of another entrance, in which pigeons nested, called *Las Palomas* (*The pigeons!*).

Our caving time was limited by my car hire and holiday time, so there is still lots of cave for me to visit next year. I particularly want to complete the up-flow traverse from *Jameo de la Puerta Falsa* to *Jameo de la Gente*, visit *Cueva de los Lagos* and as many of the other caves as time allows. Although there is a 95m pothole, *Sima del Diablo*, it peters out into a tight rift, so taking SRT gear on the plane is not worthwhile, in my opinion.

John Gillett 4th.April2011

Looking for a new undersuit or oversuit?

Try this:

<http://www.jumpsuits.randomstuff.org.uk/undersuits.html>

More info can also be found on facebook by searching for 'JumpSuits'

Pricing:

Polarfleece Undersuits (Basic, but top quality fleece) £50-00

Polartec 100 Undersuits £65-00

Polartec 200 Undersuits £75-00

Powerstretch Undersuits £80-00

'Digger' Oversuits £85-00

(A few prototypes available at £65-00 -identical to the Digger, but no patches)

Digger Specs:

Red Cordura 500 (heavy) body with black cordura patches on elbows, knees and seat

Internal pocket

Internal (elasticated) braces

Foldaway hood

Velcro adjust sleeves

'The Dig' has been attempting to test these suits to destruction before we marketed them, and has been very impressed by them so far!

Available in sizes S, M, L XL

Although we are not custom making these suits to order (proved unviable) we will tailor any of the available sizes to be the best fit for an individual.

Dennis is a member of Masson CG (don't hold that against him!!) an active caver and climber so he has personal knowledge of what is required.

Is this a coincidence?

A couple of weeks ago I had a call from Keith Mason (MCG) saying he had found one of our old journals-did I want it?

I collected it from the TSG chapel a few days later

At our May "monthly meeting" Nigel turned up with a copy of our local rag "The Sentinel", in it was a section entitled "25 years ago" when CCPC were involved in what could have been our

first and only tragedy. The original article follows below-if you are of a nervous disposition do not read on!

HAMMER POT – 3/5/86 – 4/5/86

I can remember when I first started caving and Brian used to say “It’s too nice to go underground today lads”; I never agreed with him as I was too keen in those days. However, on this particular day I wouldn’t have argued with him. We all lay outside the caravan sunbathing in the hot early morning sun. I for one had no desire whatsoever to go underground today.

The Bath party had set off early to rig the system and our party (Derek, Jane, Ant, Tipple, Paul, Rich (BUCC), Dave (BUCC) and myself) were to go underground at about 2pm and derig. At midday we walked up to Inglesport for a weather forecast for Hammer can flood very easily, as we were about to find out! The forecast for the afternoon was showers so we decided the trip was on provided the water level wasn’t too high in Sludge Crawl.

On arrival at Fountains Fell I proceeded to lead everyone about quarter of a mile past the entrance and insisted that the cave was over yet another ridge; at this point everyone turned around and went to look closer to the track that we’d been on earlier. I carried on oblivious to their shouts. Five minutes later I heard cries of “Paul!”; they were about 600 yards down the fell in a shallow gully. I ran down to them and found two Bath members at the entrance who had decided it was too tight and retired for the day. We told them that we expected to be out by midnight at the very latest and if we weren’t out by 1am to call out the C.R.O. the sky was clear and the sun shining (there had been a shower five minutes earlier) when we finally set off underground at 3pm.

There is an awkward S bend about 50ft in and Derek decided he didn’t like it and was going out. I told him it was easy if tackled properly and he got through it eventually. We all reached and negotiated the first pitch O.K. and set off into Stemple Rift – it was like a dream without tackle bags. We struggled slowly through and free climbed the second pitch. At this point it is possible for the first time to stand arms outstretched without touching the walls!

Arriving at the next pitch (50ft) I found the lifeline tied on the ladder about 10ft down as it was obviously too short. I decided it was better to fall 10ft if the ladder broke than 40 or 50, so I untied the rope and tied on to the main belay thus necessitating one to unclip near the bottom of the ladder. We soon met the other party who told us they’d been into the Master Cave but hadn’t managed to descend the final pitch of 50ft as the lifeline was too short. I was disappointed as it was my third attempt to bottom Hammer.

The fourth pitch was short but wet and consequently more enjoyable than the rest; Sludge Crawl led off from the bottom. There was flood debris on the roof as usual, which was a little off-putting, but the water level wasn’t too high. It seemed a long 400ft in the gritty cold water, but the roar of water ahead indicated that the end was in sight. I passed the inlet into the crawl and emerged into a somewhat disappointing master cave, only 10ft high and 8ft wide; I was expecting a streamway of O.F.D. proportions. One feature curious to the cave were the many rock/stal bridges which one had to constantly get down and crawl underneath or stoop under. Derek, Tipple and I arrived at a 6ft cascade and as there was rather a lot of water going down it we climbed above and to the side to descend a rift into the streamway below. Everyone had by now caught up and we decided to get out as it was 6.30pm. Tipple traversed out to look at the last pitch while Derek lifelined. I, for some unknown reason, had decided I didn’t particularly like the place and turned around to head out. It seemed a struggle

walking against the water; I tried in vain to catch the rest up who kept going out of sight. "It's flooding!" someone shouted, and I realised they were right. Everyone speeded up and countless straws were broken from the roof in the frantic id to get clear of the water. Sludge Crawl was spewing out water at a phenomenal rate. Paul Rich attempted to get into the crawl but was shot out like a cork from a bottle. He then became what I can only call hysterical, shouting "We're going to die" repeatedly. We eventually managed to calm him down somewhat and Jane assured us that we'd be O.K. if we climbed the mud bank she'd found behind her, as it was about 20ft high and appeared to be free of flood debris. My fear for the others was growing by the second so I decided to try and reach them by keeping out of the water. I progressed very carefully for about 100ft and then gave up all hope of reaching them as the water was already too high. On returning, the level had risen so much I had to get in at one point and found it extremely difficult forcing my way through the waist deep water. Helping hands reached down to pull me out and we all climbed as high as possible on the slippery mud. "We'll have to sit it out, everything will be O.K." said Jane; I wasn't so sure. Out came the survival bags, three of them and four of us, Jane being without one. At this stage I was more worried about the water level than keeping warm so I slid carefully down to the water's edge and sat watching the water rise slowly for 1.5 hours. Convinced we were in very serious danger of being trapped for days were going through my head; the whole situation didn't seem real.

The three of us huddled round Jane to try and make up for her not having a survival bag. I suddenly realised the seriousness of the situation; no-one had mentioned Dave, Tipple and Derek, everyone obviously fearing the worst. I wondered what was going through Jane's mind but decided not to say anything to her. There was one safe place between us and the pitch head, the narrow rift next to the 6ft cascade; if they couldn't reach this, they would have no chance at all of survival.

Time passed surprisingly quickly, we had started to play 'I-Spy' but given up as everyone was dozing off. At 1am we heard voices – they were safe! Dave didn't seem at all bothered by the situation, he treated it all with an unreal calmness. Tipple said that they'd watched the water level rise about 6' – it then being within 2ft of them! I was glad I hadn't been with them.

I soon discovered why we had all been so cold. We had been lying down rather than sitting back to back in the survival position; the difference was amazing. The seven of us huddled together as tightly as possible and tried to sleep. I had some strange dreams about possible means of escape including one where we were all asleep in Tipple's bedroom and we just had to climb out of the window! Then I awoke to the bitter reality.

At 4am Dave went to check the water level. It had dropped substantially since 1am, but Sludge Crawl was still not passable. During the night, Dave was to disappear a further three times up the crawl until, at 8.30am we heard the welcome sound of the C.R.O.

We all cheered loudly as they emerged from the crawl. "Is everyone O.K.?" "Yes", we all replied. "Then let's get moving now," said one of them.

The thought of seeing daylight again stirred us all into action; the crawl was still emitting a substantial amount of water but proved alright until we reached the flat out section. There were 4-6 inches of airspace, but with everyone moving so fast a surfboard wouldn't have been out of place! I heard Paul swallowing water and crying "Help" but it was every man for himself, and I crawled on to emerge in a more comfortable sized passage. Derek had

disappeared but the impetus to get out hadn't and my speed increased until I stood up in the small chamber at the end of the crawl.

The sheer sense of relief was so great that I felt like crying, but I managed not to, concentrating on stopping the uncontrollable shakes from which we were all suffering. We emptied an ammo box full of thick Spam sandwiched (the vegetarians amongst us too!) and drank 3 flasks of very sweet coffee.

It took me 3 hours to reach the surface. Derek and Dave had disappeared long before me and were nowhere to be seen when I reached the entrance.

I had a sandwich and a cup of coffee thrust into my hand while the C.R.O. doctor asked me if I felt alright. I assured him that I felt fine and set off over the ridge to the waiting Land Rovers.

I got in and sat down at the back of the C.R.O. ambulance rather sheepishly, the driver not even saying hello. I broke the ice by asking him if there had been any other incidents. "Yes," he said, "Six, including one fatality at Dale Head." I was shocked by this and realised that it could well have been us; I found out later that the Master Cave fills to the roof frequently.

Everyone else had surfaced by 12.30pm and the Land Rover set off across the fell to the road where our cars had been parked the previous day. I was approached by a reporter from the Daily Mail and another from B.B.C. Radio 4 with a small cassette recorder. They took numerous photographs and we finally managed to get changed and returned to the caravan (Anthony, suffering from slight exposure, via the local Mental Hospital, where he was bathed) First stop was the Marton Arms for a well deserved pint or two.

Paul Shenton

Up the Aranzadi Wall

The vast chamber of La Verna in the Pierre Saint Martin is now a show-cave! Three local communities around Sainte-Engrâce have invested capital in local tourism. They have built a reception centre, offices and a car park in the village, opened up a track to the EDF tunnel to take 4x4 minibuses, constructed a new cabin with a toilet, provided a flat concrete path along the tunnel to take wheel-chairs, constructed a viewing platform, installed a spot-light and fitted subtle lighting around La Verna chamber. You can walk up to the entrance of the EDF tunnel on foot, or pay to ride up in a 'camionette' and, for a fee, have guided tours of varying difficulty. Useful information about costs and booking a visit, can be found on the website www.laverna.fr (Click on the Union Jack for English) The La Verna cavern was once the largest in the world and is still in the top ten for size. It is near the bottom of the Pierre Saint-Martin system that is 1342m deep and has over 50km of passages. The depth quoted is from SC3, the highest entrance, to the bottom of the Aziza-Parment pitch. This point is reached by climbing the Aranzadi wall in La Verna, following the Aranzadi gallery to the Meandre Martine, then traversing this to descend a series of wet pitches and passages terminating in an impassably tight rift at the bottom of the Aziza- Parment pitch.

Since I helped with the English translations, I was given a free guided trip up the Aranzadi wall as an 'Accompagnateur' to a group of local hill walkers. The 80m. free climb has a fixed 11mm. rope in place with three bolt changes. The paying members of the group were provided with strong waterproof overalls, sit-harnesses, cow's tails, ascenders and Petzl descenders. (It was interesting to note that they did not use 'Stop' Petzls. These were deemed to be too dangerous in case of panic as it was natural to grab the handle and thus lose control.) My ancient 'rack' and 'poignee' were a considerable source of interest!

The climb was made with each of us having an elastic band around our wrist that was looped into an ascender. The ascender then ran up the rope as we climbed using hands and feet. We were told not to pull on the rope and to keep as close together as possible to avoid stone-falls. I followed the last man of the group, with Michel behind me. The climb was fairly easy with only one or two sections having delicate holds. We followed the vertical line of a small water channel that ran down the face. Generally we kept to the left of this, but I found that the best holds were often in the water. The bolt changes were at small ledges and the last section was up a steep muddy slope where I just ran my cow's tails along the rope, using it as a hand-line. Needless to say, with La Verna illuminated below, the view was quite exciting!

We gathered at the top and, after shouting to the group that included our wives on the viewing platform on the other side, walked into the Aranzadi Gallery. This was mainly dry, but we climbed down to a small stream further in where there were some good formations. We continued as far as the Meander Martine and stopped for a snack. I went a short way along the meander. It seemed fairly easy to traverse on jagged holds until I came to what looked like a short pitch, where I turned back. My old friend Michel Lauga, who had arranged my trip, had provided me with a huge lunch, so the time occupied with eating was longer than expected! Cedric, our guide eventually called for a return and we were soon at the top of the Aranzadi wall again.

Our guide checked that everyone had their descenders ready and then Michel started down first, followed by me. He stopped on the first bolt change to help the others and I continued down on my own. The muddy 11mm. rope was a bit tight for my rack, so my descent was not rapid, but safe! At the bottom, I waited under an overhang as the others came down, with the occasional stone ahead of them. From the bottom of the pitch, we scrambled down to the pebble beach at the bottom of La Verna to see the initials of the first explorers and also to look for the rare insects that live there. Eventually we climbed up the rocky slope, back to the viewing platform, with Michel and me at the rear. Cedric's idea of returning to the platform '*doucement*' certainly had me '*au bout de souffle*' at the top! An easy walk along the EDF tunnel, with the wind behind us, led us back into the hot sunshine.

A group of visitors, who had just arrived in a '*camionette*', were gathered around the newly constructed cabin. They were interested in our climbing gear and asked lots of questions as many of them had never been underground before. We took off our muddy over-suits and climbing gear before taking our seats in the '*camionette*' that had brought us up that morning. Cedric drove us back down the hairy track to the reception centre to disperse to our cars. Michel asked the photographer, who had taken many shots throughout our visit, to e-mail us copies.

After saying farewells, Michel drove me back to his house at Issor to clean up and have aperitifs on the terrace with Dilys and Annie. They had returned home before us, after making the tourist visit to the viewing platform together. It was their group that had been shouting to us when we were at the top of the Aranzadi wall. We sipped our drinks with a panorama of the Pyrenees before us, exchanging details of our experiences. It was a most enjoyable ending to a memorable caving trip.

John Gillett 24th.May 2011

I wondered if we could insert a leaflet or somehow publicise your charity to members of Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club, I don't know if you have heard of us, please have a look at our website for more information on what we do. (www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk).

We have been going since 1924 and campaign to protect the landscapes and countryside of the whole of the peak district. It would be great to build closer links with organizations such as yours, whose members love and enjoy the Peak District, especially with it being 60 years since it became Britain's first national park (something our charity played a key part in making happen).

Forthcoming Meets.

- 25 June To be announced (Birks Fell was moved to 5 June)
- 3 July DCRO training.
- 10 July Box Freestone Mine (Wiltshire)
- 23 July Ibeth Peril (Yorks)
- 23 July Depart for Slovenia
- 31 July Group 2 depart for Slovenia
- 7 Snail Beach (Shropshire-booking to be confirmed)
- 10 Aug DCRO training
- 20-21 Aug Slaughter Stream & Miss Graces Lane
- 11 Sept Nettle Pot
- 17 Sept DCRO DCRO training, team meeting Pie n Pea Supper.
- 24 Sept Stream Passage/Gaping Gyll