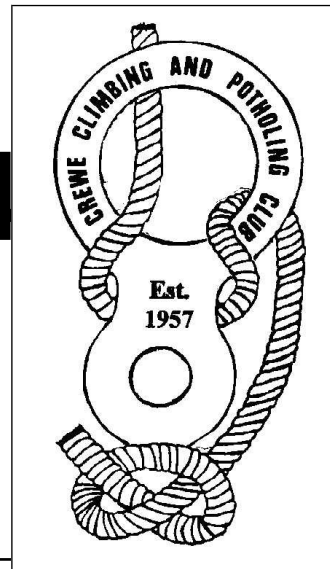


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 104 Autumn 2011

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A Blast From The Past. Giants hole 6 July 1974

Prior to the discovery of Bad Step Traverse which leads to Geology Pot the only way to reach Far Canal, the bottom of Giants Hole, was to bail Valentines Sump.

On 6 July 1974 five members of CCPC (Rob Heath, Tony Reynolds, Simon Leach and Greg & Alan Burns) arrived at Giants Hole with a view to reaching Far Canal by the original route then exiting via Geology Pot. They had been informed that if they checked that Far Curtain wasn't sumped they would be OK- this proved to be false!

Arriving at around 1030 they changed into wet suits and equipped with the necessary ladders and lifelines they set off. (*Wet suits were standard dress at the time and SRT was still in its infancy*) Rob & Tony were very familiar with the system so they led the other 3 to Valentines to start baling then went to rig Geology Pot and the Cascade below it checking Far Curtain at the same time which had the usual couple of inches air-space so no problem there. The flow of water in the stream was no worse than usual but they mentioned in their report that "Geology seemed to be quite wet".

They then headed for Valentines but met another group who asked them the way to East Canal. They took the group across "Bad Step Traverse", showed them the way on and then once again headed for Valentines. On route they did some digging "somewhere on the way to Maggin's Rift" resulting in 10 yards of new passage. (*Sadly neither Rob nor Tony are with us and we haven't managed to locate the whereabouts of this dig*)

Arriving at Valentines they found that the 3 lads had built a temporary dam and the sump was "almost bone-dry". (*The water in the sump was baled into a hole in the floor a short distance from the sump and it was usual to build a temporary dam to facilitate this*) All five went through the sump and descended The Filthy Five by a mixture of abseiling and "hand over hand". They had no problems here other than the shutter on Rob's camera jamming due to the incredible amount of liquid mud. Dog Kennel Pitch was the worst and as they descended 15' they landed in water which surprised them somewhat as the place looked unfamiliar. (*What they didn't realise was that the water level was considerably higher than usual, probably by 5 to 6 metres*) Fortunately they had not pulled down the final rope as they had done on the previous pitches.

They tried each passage in turn. Straight ahead led to a mud slope into a deep pool, beyond was a very muddy steep slope which they found too awkward to climb. To the right they found the passage

sumped. Rob used the rope to swing round into the left hand passage into deep water and swam to a point where it also sumped. *(By this time they realised that the water level was much higher than usual and their exit was under water)*

The five struggled hand over hand back up the first pitch but couldn't free climb the next one which they found too slippery due the amount of mud and the wet conditions. They had no option, they would have to wait to be rescued. They turned off their lead-acid miners lamps and settled down huddled together in knee deep mud. Rob produced an 8-hour candle which they lit which helped boost morale, what bit of emergency food they carried was pooled and consumed at intervals during the uncomfortable wait. *(Wet suits were de rigour at the time were ideal for caving in wet systems where you could keep moving but they allowed the body heat to escape rapidly when immobile.)*

Sometime later Rob's mother rang me expressing concern that Rob hadn't returned home nor had he rang to say he had been delayed. DCRO were contacted as were a number of CCPC's team G and I set off for Giants with Alan Walker. (In those days most of the major clubs had their own teams) We arrived, quickly changed, then I set off down Crab Walk and Alan via The Upper Series, this would enable at least one of us to meet the group if they were on their way out. Shortly afterwards Steve Knox and John Preston arrived and both set off down Crab Walk. The four of us met up and discussed our options. (Nobody can recall whether I had already collected ladders and ropes from Geology and the cascade below it or if I did this after we met.)

Steve set off to the surface to inform those assembling of the situation while Alan, John and I baled the sump for the second time that day.

Back to Rob's diary.

The 8 hour candle had just burnt down when Rob hear a shout. Alan & John had laddered the pitches enabling the group to climb out and get back through Valentines which they noticed was filling up rapidly. The group were met in Crab Walk by a team made up from CCPC (team G) & DCRO team C (central team) and everyone continued to the surface arriving at 3.30 am almost 17 hours after entering the system.

Rob comments in his diary that "It was a good (but cold) trip and an experience he hopes wouldn't happen again." He goes on to add that next time he would either ladder The Filthy Five or do a more thorough check on the level of East Canal.

Some time after this it became impossible to bale Valentines Sump due to the "drain hole" in the floor becoming blocked presumably by silt from the sump. This remains the case at the moment but it is possible to siphon the sump from the top of The Filthy Five thanks to some ingenious work by the Eldon PC.

Many thanks to Colin (Steve) Knox, John Preston and the late Rob Heath for their assistance in filling in many of the gaps in my memory.

Ralph Johnson.

Slovenia July-August 2011

Sharon, Darren and Keith spent the last week in July walking in the Julian Alps. They were joined by Ralph, Paul (Holdcroft) and Ann for the first week in August which they spent at the Speleo Camp in Laze. A pleasant couple of weeks –the country is highly recommended for both walking and caving.

Top Tips for SRT - The Gentle Art of Derigging

I've helped put together a couple of basic SRT courses, and I'm currently in the throws of sorting out sessions for both SRT and SRT rigging at the moment.

It occurred to me recently that, although you often see rigging courses, you hardly ever see de-rigging courses. Perhaps they exist - perhaps they don't ... but I think it would be a good idea to put together some hints which will help folk to derig in a way which will help them to have a better experience, and which will also keep kit in better condition.

This should be seen as my "starter for ten" - I invite any members of the club to add to the list with any helpful suggestions which they have picked up over the years.

Derigging is not a Mug's Game

Caving is a team effort (even if there's only one member in the team!) and some jobs, like washing ropes, carrying bags and derigging, are less popular than others. But they still need to be done, so don't fall into the trap of thinking that the de-rigger is the dustman who sweeps up after the Lord Mayor's show. Far from it. Think of derigging is a very important part of the caving trip. It needs to be done safely and correctly.

What goes down, must come up!

Anything we take into a cave must come out. This principle, which has been generally adopted by cavers for many years, helps to preserve both the club's tackle and the cave environment.

Derigging is an essential part of the process of stripping our presence away from the cave, so that future cavers have as good an experience as we did, and it is important that every piece of kit is retrieved.

But don't get carried away like one well know caving club did in 2008. They had booked the whole Gaping Gill system for a big club trip, and, when they finally derigged, they weren't aware that a solo caver had entered the system via Wade's. It wasn't until they got to the Clapham car park that they noticed that they had gained a new rope! CRO found the poor chap curled up in a poly bag in SE Passage.

Don't Get Knotted

When you derig a pitch, don't undo the knots! Only undo the ones which need to be untied because they have been tied directly into hangers and naturals. Otherwise, simply take off the maillons and krabs and chain them separately. It is far easier to undo tight knots in wet rope when you're back home from a caving trip - much easier than when you're in the middle of a draughty and wet pitch.

Always go Tooled Up

We may not use spits and hangers much these days, but we still do sometimes (I usually carry two hangers just in case). In-situ anchors include goujon studs, have nuts which can become slack. Both krabs and maillons (personal ones as well as rigging) can occasionally want to stubbornly stay closed. For all these reasons, I'm a strong believer in carrying a small adjustable spanner in my personal tackle bag ... along with my knife, whistle, survival bag and small first aid kit.

Bag it up!

As you ascend the pitch you are stripping, stop periodically and tie an overhand knot in the rope below you, pull up the bag, clip it to the new knot and stuff the slack rope into the bag. If you leave the bag stuffing operation until the top of the pitch, as many folk do, you risk getting the rope unnecessarily dirty (when it gets yarded up and laid on the floor of the pitch head) or even getting the bag stuck on obstacles such as overhangs and narrow constrictions.

Quite often this mid-pitch rope stuffing can be done just before a deviation, or just after a rebelay. It helps to do it before a deviation, rather than after, because, if removing the deviation might cause a big swing, it is better if the derigger and bag swings "as one", rather than as a series of separate objects connected by a rope.

But removing a deviation need not cause a swing at all - read the "Dealing with devious deviations" section below.

Dealing with devious deviations

Sometimes removing a deviation can cause you to swing alarmingly across a pitch, maybe hitting the opposite wall (as on Eldon's East wall deviation, or the deviation near the top of the 1st down pitch in

Wynnats Head), or even plunging into the middle of a waterfall. This used to be a real problem in the days of spits and hangers, but the advent of the P hanger has given us an option to reduce this problem.

- Before you remove the deviation, feed a bight of rope through the P hanger from your bag (which you have just stuffed, so it is just below you) and clip it to your short cows tail.
- Hold the rope at the mouth of the bag firmly with one hand.
- Remove the deviation. **Top tip:** if the deviation is a bit acute (or “Yorkshire-ish”, as they say) a pull on the bag-side rope should relieve the tension and make unclipping easier
- Now feed rope slowly from the bag until you drift gently across to the new position in the shaft (without swinging).
- Once you’ve relocated across the pitch, unclip the bight from the cow’s tail, and pull the rope back through the P hanger, stuffing it into the bag.

Look after all those Krabs and Maillons!

When you remove maillons, link them together and screw them up completely. This will prevent them from getting strained and becoming difficult to open and close. Maillons tend to get strained when chained with their sleeves open because they are very weak when in the open state, and the slightest weight can deform them.

Try not to put krabs and maillons away in the bag with the wet rope. “Out of sight, out of mind”, these important pieces of kit might get forgotten if they aren’t obvious, and the fuggy atmosphere in the rope bag is certain to start any soft iron parts rusting.

What’s in it for me??

Well, for one thing, your club mates will think a lot more of you if you take an active role in a caving trip, rather than just following the line of rope put in place by the rigger. And, although there is less skill required to derig than to rig (because you don’t need to work out where the bolts and other belays are, or to know the knots, constructions for Y hangs etc), you will gain an important insight into rigging as you disassemble the SRT line. You will start to understand what goes where, and it will be a great help towards you becoming a rigger.

Lastly, as the derigger, you get a great perk - you will never suffer from the problem of “rope-ride” (where you need to physically pull the rope down through your croll) after passing a rebelay.

But don’t be a bag man!

Finally, you may be derigging, but that doesn’t mean you have to carry absolutely everything. As the bags fill up, pass them onto your mates in front, and let them carry them and haul them up the higher pitches.

After all, it is supposed to be a team effort - isn’t it?

Xmas Dinner

Don’t forget the Xmas dinner on Saturday 21 st January 8pm at The Bleeding Wolf. Cost is £10 payable to “Isabelle Babin Cooper”. There is a carvery (plus a vegetarian option) followed by dessert. As usual numbers are limited so don’t delay!

Plans are afoot to organise a club meal in the summer of 2012, probably in The Peak with camping facilities nearby.

SRT Training.

SRT training at any level has been arranged for 1st 8th 15th November at the Upper Limits Climbing Centre in Leek. The centre is based at Leek High School.

Travelling from Leek towards Buxton take the road on the right immediately before the pedestrian crossing, it leads to Leek High School and the fire Station. The school is on your left, enter via the first gate and park at the top of the drive. Bring your own kit, if wish to borrow anything (or try out a new piece of kit you are unfamiliar with) give plenty of notice. Primarily aimed at basic SRT there will be

space and the opportunity for more seasoned members to try out new ideas such as mid-rope rescue. The climbing wall will be open from 19 00, courses start at 19 30 and run until 21 30, no doubt there will be time for a pint afterwards.

Remaining Meets 2010.

23 Oct Peak Cavern, Titan, FSE etc.

6 Nov Lancaster – Top Sink etc.

19 Nov Giants Hole

4 Dec Alum LLC etc.

Dec 17 Knotlow-Hillocks-Wharf.

Darren has virtually finished the 2011 programme so if you are desperate to do something don't delay- you may already be too late.