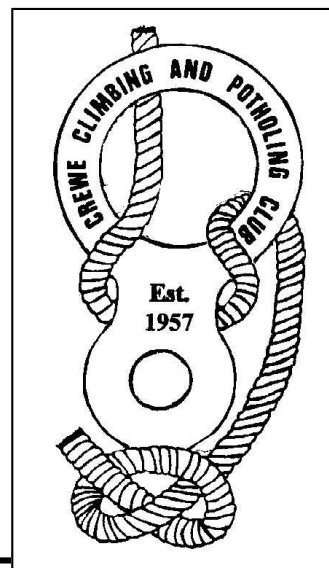


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 108. March 2013

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Peter Johnson 1949 – 2013

I was saddened to hear today of Pete Johnson's passing, suddenly last night, after a struggle with throat cancer. Pete was a member of Crewe Climbing & Pot-holing Club many years ago. Along with Ralph and Roger, there were Johnsons present on most of the Club trips I enjoyed so much back in the sixties and seventies, but eventually Pete and Roger moved on to other activities. Anyone who has one of Ralph's video or DVD productions on his shelf will be familiar with Pete's music, although they may not have recognised the name 'Snakey Jake' in the credits, or know that Pete was one of us.

Caving with Pete Johnson in 1970

The original 'Jan. '70 to June '71' CCPC Log-book article written by Ralph Johnson, with more recent additions (*in italics*) added by Steve Knox:

19th & 20th September 1970: Lancaster to Easegill

A number of Club Members arrived in Yorkshire on Saturday 19th September. Brian and John Mather, and Dave Wooliscroft descended Lancaster Hole during the afternoon, spent until 10.00 pm. caving, then slept in the region of Bridge Hall. They explored a large number of passages, including the high-level route towards Stop Pot, as far as Stake Pot with its phallic sculpture !!

In those far off days cavers were tough; oversuits and furies hadn't been invented, and there was no such thing as S.R.T.. Rigging Lancaster Hole meant using five 25 foot long electron ladders, joined with 'C' links, and with a lifeline rigged over a pulley at the top to protect the last man down – ideally using a single 250 foot rope, but more often with two 120 foot ropes and a knot !

Other Members arrived on Sunday 20th, and set about their various programmes. Only Pete and Ralph Johnson fancied 'the through trip' so they set off as soon as Brian, John and Dave had surfaced. On reaching the stream at the bottom of Fall pot they leapt in – and disappeared ! A short discussion ruled out backstroke, crawl, etc., so they took the high level route to Stop Pot where they sat down to wait for the mob coming in through County Pot.

For those not familiar with the system, there are two routes from Lancaster Hole to the Easegill Caverns end of the system; either at stream level, pushing upstream through deep pools and canyons from beneath Fall Pot to the bottom of Stop Pot (impossible in high water conditions), or high-level, climbing out of Fall Pot and then following a series of huge, dry fossil passages and chambers to emerge at the very top of the Stop Pot chamber. Ralph and Pete opted for the high, dry way, then abseiled down a blank wall to land on the boulders at the top of Stop Pot, pulling their rope down after them.

Meanwhile Steve and Dave Knox (plenty of family groups involved that day !), Dave Mason and Pete Steadman had done a 'sporting trip' through County Pot as far as Stop Pot, decided not to leave a note, and pushed off to Easter Grotto, Nagasaki, etc..

In our defence, we were soaking wet, and wearing wet-suits (the 'normal' kit of the day), and when we arrived at Stop Pot and found Ralph and Pete hadn't arrived we were too cold to hang around waiting for them to appear (there must have been some confusion over leaving a note !), and in any case they might have turned back to Lancaster Hole.. We needed to keep warm so we headed upstream to Easter Grotto, then pushed on to Nagasaki, before turning back to see if the others had reached Stop Pot.

At 3.00 pm. they (Steve's group) arrived at Stop Pot to join Ralph and Pete who were bloody frozen after a 2 ½ hour wait.

Meanwhile John Shenton and Jean, with Brian and John Mather, had attempted to do County Pot, but had been forced back by flood water in Lower Pierces Passage.

At 3.15 pm. the six of us set off up Lower Pierces to find the water HIGH, STRONG, and RISING. We reached a pitch, presumed to be Poetic Justice (actually White Line Chamber) which had N,000 gallons of water per second (approx.) pouring over it !

I clearly remember our struggle up the high, narrow canyon of Lower Pierces Passage, some of the time trying to traverse above the water to get some relief from the force of the water. At one point David lost his footing and was swept back downstream to be ably fielded by someone further back. It was frightening. We eventually reached a small, spray-filled chamber where the falling water made communication all but impossible. Although the electron ladder we had rigged earlier was invisible under the waterfall, at least we could see the lifeline and I struggled across to get hold of it. After several attempts I realised that it was not a rope, but was a thin line of white quartz (?) running down the wall – it sounds crazy, but there was more water than air in that place at that time. We abandoned our attempt to get out and headed back downstream, knowing that we could be trapped in the low area around Eureka Junction. Checking the survey later I could see that we had missed the right turn to Poetic Junction pitch (it was probably concealed by the floodwater) and had reached the twin chamber of White Line Chamber.

Note: The higher level exit route from Stop Pot into Wretched Rabbit Passage was unknown at this time, and Wretched Rabbit had not been connected to the surface.

We decided not to be trapped in Pierces by flooding at Eureka Junction but to 'nip back smartish' to Stop Pot. The water at Eureka was disturbing to say the least.

At 5.15 pm. the party were settled at the top of the boulder slope at Stop Pot, far above the highest possible water level. Initially we tried to overcome the barrier of the vertical wall above us, which would have allowed us to retrace Ralph and Pete's route through from Lancaster. After a couple of failed attempts to climb it I gave up, and instead we fashioned a bulky knot at the end of the rope, and tried throwing it up in the hope that it would jam. It didn't.

All six of us huddled together, backs against the wall, soaking wet and very, very cold. Our 'emergency kit' was less than minimal (I learned my lesson from this occasion), being a small tobacco tin containing a candle, wax-covered matches and striker, and a bar of chocolate, which I had stuffed inside my wet-suit jacket. We discovered that it is possible to make a tepid drink of chocolate-flavoured water, by melting a piece of chocolate in a tin over a candle flame ! Apart from any nutritional benefit, the activity of actually making the drinks was a great distraction from our circumstances.

The party sat, talked, cursed etc., at the bottom of the missing rope, waiting for help to come, presumably from Lancaster Hole.

At 10.10 pm. three Red Rose Caving Club Members arrived, through County Pot ! (Unknown to us our surface party at Bull Pot Farm had contacted Yorkshire Cave Rescue at 8.15 pm., and the Red Rose party had set off for County Pot at the same time.) We started out together and found that the water level had fallen considerably – 3 to 4 inches in the main stream at Eureka Junction, and even more in Pierces Passage. Needless to say we didn't admit our error when we recognised Poetic Junction Pitch (even if we had realised the error at the time, we couldn't have hung about 'exploring' with conditions as they were). We surfaced at approximately midnight, to meet a large number of YCRO Members, but we weren't too unpopular. Unfortunately, by de-laddering County Pot on our way out, we left a YCRO party stuck underground as they had decided to do the 'through trip' while searching. A relief party was dispatched to rescue them.

Red Rose Caving Club vowed they would fix a permanent rope or ladder on Stop Pot.

I'm pretty sure the fixed ladder there appeared very soon after this event, and must have prevented dozens of other possible 'strandings' over the years.

Looking back, it all seems a very long time ago, and somewhat softened by time, but there is no doubt it was a serious situation and not an experience that I would want to go through again. Even so, they were good times, with good companions, not forgotten.

Steve Knox 17th March 2013

A Grand Day Out: 7th January

I've been meaning to write this trip up for a while now but haven't got round to it !

It started with a simple invitation to have a go at caving; nothing too difficult, a sort of 'see if you like it' kind of day.

I was given a few tips about what to wear, and was told I would need to get a 4 ½ volt flat battery, the sort that goes into the front light on your bike. Anyway, the

day came, and I turned up at the meeting point with a brown, cotton boiler-suit, bought for five shillings from the Army and Navy Store, a pair of old flannel school trousers, two woollen jumpers and an old cotton shirt. At least I had my good walking boots on, with two pairs of thick socks, and, of course, I had my battery – ‘Every-ready’, in a bright blue cardboard wrapper.

The van arrived and I scrambled into the back for the journey out into the Peak District. Most of the journey was on reasonable roads, though with plenty of twists and turns, and the final stretch was along an unmade, moorland track at the edge of Buxton. Never the best of travellers, by the time we arrived and I climbed out I was feeling very sick and probably looked green, but I didn’t dare let on in case my two companions gave up on me.

We changed into our ‘caving clothes’ in the open, which was O.K., despite the freezing weather, and I was provided with an ex-NCB helmet, made of a material that looked like compressed cardboard. My light was a ‘headpiece’ fixed to a bracket on the front of the helmet, and a cable from this ended in two exposed wires which I had to wind round the flat, springy contact strips on the top of my battery. Some insulation tape ensured that the cable stayed fixed in place, and the light stayed on, and then the battery was slipped easily into the breast pocket of my boiler suit, out of the way. My helmet had no chin strap, was rather loose and kept slipping over my eyes so I surreptitiously jammed my folded handkerchief behind the inner cradle rim to hold it in place.

The actual cave was in the side of a nearby depression, and was really quite disappointing, just a sort of oversized rabbit hole with a few boulders round it. My companions had brought a length of rope, and one end was tied round one of the boulders and then the rope led inside. I was last going in – a sort of squirm into the darkness, head first, with little to see but the boots and backside of the guy ahead, but then he promptly began to drop into a narrow slot, slithering down feet first, between the rock walls. It looked horrible, but fortunately was only about ten or twelve feet deep, to some kind of floor. Ralph looked back up at me, and called out, “Nothing to it, just hold on the rope and let yourself slide down”. My eyes had adjusted to the darkness by then, and I could see that it wasn’t too bad, so down I went. Looking back I wasn’t too sure about the return, but that would come later. The way on continued as a drop down another, even tighter vertical slot for about eight or ten feet. I’m sure it wasn’t as tight as I thought at the time, but with a boiler suit, two jumpers and a shirt on, it felt snug, and I began to panic, and Ralph had to wait and reassure me. Next was a short passage high enough to stay upright, but narrow enough to mean you had to pass through it sideways, leading into a lower, but wider passage, where Roger and Ralph had stopped to wait for me.

Despite being only a very short distance from daylight, to me the place already seemed remote. I was already wet as I was crawling through a dribbly stream which ran along the passage, through a couple of puddles and into a pool directly ahead. It looked like the end, but the others just crawled straight through the water, and disappeared up into a larger space beyond. Staying dry wasn’t an option, and I followed, later discovering that this pool was called ‘the sump’, because the stream just went into it and disappeared.

Beyond the sump we emerged into a sort of irregular chamber, with a low roof, and with a number of crawls leading off but each one quickly emerged back into the main space. In one place we were able to scramble up into a couple of linked grottos, where a number of stalagmites, some over two feet high, were standing

on the boulders which made up the floor. Each was white, with a flaky surface, and had a bright orange top like a fried egg. There were also the remains of a number of tiny stalactites, like drinking straws, which had been broken off where other cavers had crawled through. 'Other cavers' ?? I suddenly realised that I wasn't worrying about where I was any more. I wasn't concerned about being wet and muddy, or about squirming through little spaces in the dark. I was actually enjoying being where I was.

The rest of the trip continued in a similar manner, although by that time there was very little of the cave that we hadn't seen. On the way back towards the entrance Roger crawled into a very small, sandy floored passage on one side, but he decided it was too tight and backed out.

I found getting up the first tight slot, from the sideways passage, very difficult, even with the rope to pull on, but Roger was behind me and quickly got himself into a position where he could give me a real push up, and of course, Ralph was above, so the difficulty was soon overcome. I could already see the natural light coming in through the entrance, and became aware of the totally different smell of 'outside'. Within a few minutes we were back on the surface, and Roger was pulling the rope out and coiling it up. I was wet, muddy, rapidly getting cold, but totally elated ! It had been nothing like I had expected; not in any way ! It had been very, very different, and much better - despite there being no bats anywhere (the one thing I had been certain I would see).

The journey home was slightly uncomfortable, sitting in my wet socks in the back of the van, listening to Ralph and his brother Roger chatting, but I think I already knew it would be the first of many more similar trips to come.

Altogether it had been a grand day out.

Footnote: In those early years I must have visited that cave over twenty times, often with beginners, but I realise now that I haven't been back in over forty years. These days I would probably find that my increased bulk would prevent me passing the narrow rift anyway. In case you haven't already worked it out, the cave was Axe Hole on Stanley Moor, still shown as being only 200 feet (60 metres) long in the new edition of Caves of the Peak District. The year was 1967.

Colin Knox. 6th February 2013

NCC Shafts

NCC Shafts was discovered during 2001, the year of the Foot & Mouth epidemic, when the whole of Yorkshire Caving was put out-of-bounds and the poor old lads from God's Own County had to travel all the way down to the Peak District to get their subterranean fix.

During this period, some cavers from the Northern Caving Club (NCC) discovered the eponymous shafts at the end of Disappointment Rift, a remote part of the Peak Cavern system which could only be accessed by the M1, a tight crawl with W-bends at the top of Wigwam Aven. But what a find it was - a beautiful series of pitches, spectacular and well worth a visit.

Following the well-attended CCPC trip into the NCC Shafts back in November 2012, discussions between members revealed concerns about the rigging on the second pitch of the shafts going down. This particular pitch starts with an exposed hanging rebelay on the very edge of an overhang and this is followed by a descent onto the slabby wall of a deep gully where a tension traverse is necessary to reach a Y-hang at the lip of the gully where it emerges into the lower part of the shaft and overlooks

itches 3 and 4. While only the rigger had to do this tension traverse, it was felt that, if any of the cavers were to slip in the early parts of the traverse (even when fully rigged), there was sufficient rope in the system to allow a swing into some very sharp rocks at the head of the gulley, which could have disastrous consequences.

I couldn't make the CCPC trip to NCC Shafts, but I took part in the discussion as, having been involved in the rebolting of the shafts with Lee Langdon and Keith Mason of Masson CG in 2009, I knew the set-up fairly well. I agreed to take a look at the problem, and, on Sunday 16 December 2012 (the day after the CCPC trip down Bull Pot and Jangling Pot) I met up with Ade Pedley, Ann Soulsby and Dave Ottewell at the Chapel in Castleton and discussed the problem over breakfast before setting off into Peak Cavern to have a look-see.

In his book about Scotch Whisky, "Raw Spirit", Ian Banks describes various car journeys around Scotland as GWRs or "Great Wee Roads". Well, the trip into the NCC Shafts is a "Great Wee Caving Journey" with every step of the way something to be savoured. Just getting to Galena Rift is a five star trip in itself - you've either thrutched through the obstacle course to Galena Chamber, and then climbed the slippery fissure at the other side of the lake, or you've done the "round trip" to Surprise View and up to Squaw Junction, Main Inlet and Wigwam aven - all great caving!

Once at the end of Galena Rift there are four ways on. Two of these represent the ways you may have got there - either the double knee slither through from Wigwam Aven and Cadbury Crawl, or the rift passage from Galena Chamber itself. The third route is Rocky Tube, an uninviting, muddy crawl which does, in fact, get you into the NCC Shafts, but you need to be the size of Archie Andrews, Matt Ryan or Rob Evis to have any chance of success. The other way on, Galena Rift is a tall, narrow, muddy rift, and this is the preferred way into NCC Shafts (and the only route for those of us with normal sized bodies!!). But it's not a walk in the park by any means; it's good value, "sporting" caving all the way.

Squeezing into the rift, a few metres leads to the end where a fixed rope hangs from above giving a short pitch up into a muddy crawl through to an aven. Straight on a piece of wet conveyor belting leads the way into the old boulder choke which gives access to EMT Aven. Here fixed ropes take you up two pitches to a horizontal fixed line leading into a side passage to your right.

Leaving the rope behind, the next section, called Focal Recall, is a short crawl through a technical squeeze (which seems to get bigger every time I do it) to the foot of three fixed rope pitches, and these somewhat acrobatic pitches lead you to The Balcony, a great place half way up the NCC Shafts, with fantastic views up and down.

From here there are two options:- Up Pitches which lead to two destinations, including the grandly named Mark and Angel's Wedding Present, which are pre-rigged with fixed ropes (but ignore the tatty old rope that leads to Disappointment Rift - this dubious string is connected to 12 year old spits and should be removed), and the Down Pitches, which need to be rigged by the caver. Our job was to look at the series of Down Pitches, so I set about rigging, while Ade and Dave whizzed up the Up Pitches to have a look at the old bat skeleton and Martyn's dig.

Ann and I quickly got cracking in the opposite direction, and, pretty soon, we were sitting eating some lunch having bottomed the Shaft and explored the little pitch which gives the vocal connection with Rocky Tube, the only "viable" connection to Rocky Tube being a small hole some 30ft above us.

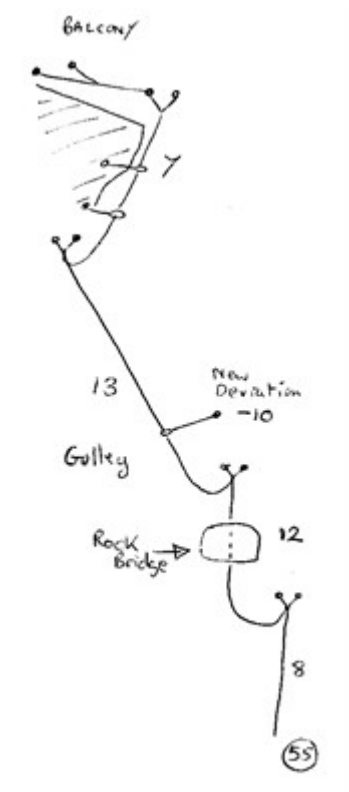
When Ade and Dave came down and joined us we had a look at some crystal formations, and some very good examples of crinoid fossils. Ade was worried that these might be destroyed if they weren't taped off, but they are tucked away on the wrong side of the pond in a little-visited part of the system so they're probably OK ... for now.

On the way back up the pitches, we looked at the problem as reported, and reckoned that an extra deviation or two - or maybe a small bolt traverse - might be needed, and we planned a return visit the following weekend. Unfortunately the weather gods had other ideas, and Saturday 22 December saw me, Lee Langdon and Ann sitting in the Chapel discussing the high water levels - it had been raining continuously since Wednesday, and Peak Cavern was already starting to flood. No way could we go

into the NCC shafts with any certainty of getting out before Christmas, so we opted for a quick thrash down Oxlow instead.

But, on the first opportunity after Christmas, I managed to get a small party of four (Ann, Lee, Ade and Christine Wilson) to meet at the Chapel for an evening trip. Access had been agreed with John Harrison, keys had been sorted via Ralph, and by 7:30pm we were strolling into Peak each carrying a heavy bag with either ropes, tools drills, bolts or batteries. Well, if it's a good trip in when you're just caving, it's even better value when your a sherpa!

As soon as we got to The Balcony, Ade rigged down to the traverse, while the rest of us put together the drill and all the other sundries (brushes, blow-pipe, bolts, Len's heavy battery ammo box, 3lb hammer, spanner) and hung everything from Lee like a Christmas tree, before pushing him gently towards the rope. To cut a long story short, there followed a discussion about the various options between Lee and Ade, while Christine and I hung on the ropes above in case anything extra was needed, and the outcome was a single deviation part way along and above the traverse, which will guide the caver to within a couple of metres of the Y-hang.



After a few minutes drilling, and placing a P32 "Goujon", Lee tested the finished product, and it worked a treat. Lee's not much taller than Ralph, but his short legs could easily reach both sides of the gulley and propel him back to the bolts. He also did a test fall, after which he simply bobbed up and down above the gulley, beneath the deviation - well away from the danger zone. Job finished, we retreated to the balcony, packed up and made our way out of the system - getting back to the Chapel at about 11:15pm.

Here's a rough sketch of the pitches. Note that there seem to be two deviations in the gulley. The correct one to use is the higher of the two - the other one is a rope tied off on the line down from Mummy Inlet, and should not be used.

The current (11th Edn) CCPC Rigging Guide shows no pitch lengths for the Down Pitches. These have been added now, and are all accurate apart from the -10m distance figure for the new deviation which is an estimate at the moment. This diagram will form the basis for the next (12th Edn) CCPC Rigging guide for NCC Shafts when it comes out, and any comments and feedback from future trips will be much appreciated.

NCC Shafts is a classic trip - well worth the journey!

All ropes should be returned to the store(s) clean and coiled in the "approved" fashion. Other methods of coiling make life tedious!

If you are not sure how to do this either ask or refer to the article by Alan in the last newsletter.

If you require a copy of the newsletter let me know.

Ralph

Old Ash Mine [SK 269605] & Lords and Ladies Mine [SK 270605], Wensley & Snitterton Liberties, Derbyshire.

This was the first 'official' Club trip of 2013, and it was excellent to see it so well supported, with fourteen cavers gathering at Peter Dell's house in Wensley Dale. Why can't all caving trips start like this? – secure parking by Pete's house, and hot drinks in the kitchen !!

All changed, we followed the farm track across the hillside towards Snitterton, and the party split into two just at the top of Northern Dale (not a public footpath, but Pete had cleared our trip with the farmer in advance). The SRT group headed uphill to locate the shaft-top entrance to Old Ash Mine, while the others turned down the valley to the gated adit entrance.

There were a surprising number of shaft-tops to choose from, mostly covered with corrugated tin sheets or concrete sleepers, but eventually we located one with a neat caver's lid set into a concrete cap, with a pair of huge timber beams lying on the spoil heap, one on each side.

Good planning meant we had a short scaffolding pole to use across the opening as our main belay, sharing the load with an in-situ steel ring in the underside of the lid frame, but it took some creative lashing with a short length of rope, before everyone was satisfied that the pole was secure and could not 'creep' while someone was descending. Even so, the entry was intimidating as there was nothing below to stand on, and each person would have to

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Fortunately we had Keith Joule with us, and he boldly set off, where no man had gone before (at least none of us – we also thought he was fit enough to climb straight back out if the rope didn't actually reach bottom).

Time passed, and eventually it was my turn to descend as number 9 of the 10 in this group. The shaft is oval at the top, with 'ginging' (dry-stone walling) for the first three metres until it enters sound bed-rock, then it continues, roughly rectangular and about 1.5 metres wide by 2 metres long (cross-section). The whole shaft appeared to be hand-picked, and twisted slightly as it went down, passing through some kind of brownish limestone (rather than the pale, greyish stone found in the Castleton area).

At the bottom I emerged through the roof of Bridge Chamber, to find Pete, Peter Savill, and Bill Whitehouse sitting on a ledge on one side, the previous eight 'shaft-descenders' sitting on a ledge on the other side, and the continuing shaft dropping away between them. As Pete's ledge was the start of the way out it seemed more logical to swing over and join them, fortunately helped by Pete pulling me across.

Rob Nevitt was last man down (I missed his arrival as we were too busy looking at a tiny, furry bat, snuggled up in a little pocket in the roof), and then we started out towards the adit entrance, with the rest of the party traversing past the shaft on a narrow rock-bridge. The route was a labyrinth of low passages, worked out spaces and dead-ends, and, although varying from stooping to flat out crawls, it was

lower themselves through the opening until cows-tails and descender took their weight. Added to that, we couldn't see the bottom of the shaft (a long way down), and couldn't tell if the rope was long enough (the shaft was supposed to be 46 metres deep, according to the guide-book !).

Marek Malysiak generously set off uphill to de-rig the shaft-top, while the rest of us went off to investigate the lower entrance to Lords and Ladies Mine, about 50 metres away on the other side of the dale.

This was another maze of narrow workings, and we quickly reached a point where all ways on had been checked and discounted – except one. Rob squirmed forward until he reached an uninviting pool with limited air-space, and decided to return, but as all other options had been eliminated Keith went to have a look, and slithered through on his back. He confirmed that the passage continued, but the rest of us showed our true character and headed back the way we had entered !



straightforward with nothing tight, and we were soon crawling over dry leaves and out through the gate into the dale bottom. No doubt it would have taken considerably longer to find the way without Pete to guide us – he'd already been out and in again, as one party member had to leave early.

Outside we wandered up the dale for 50 metres or so and found the upper entrance. This led past an entrance pool and through more crawls, climbs, and worked out cavities to a low section with a familiar uninviting pool with limited air-space. Four brave souls completed the through trip to the lower entrance, while the rest of us stayed dry and headed out.

Before long we were all back getting changed at Pete's house, after an easy but most enjoyable day's caving. The perfect ending was provided through Pete and Jules' generous provision of a great pan of steaming Chilli, piles of rice, baked potatoes, plus bread, tea and coffee. Others contributed cake and flap-jacks, and as we sat around eating and talking it was clear that the friendships forged within our Club are what make our Club so special.

Later that evening Marek posted his photographs on-line, and added, "As we all know, people make good trips, not places."

I couldn't agree more.
Colin Knox. 7-1-2013.

Those involved:

Peter Dell, Georgi & Venda Georgiev, Keith Joule, Steve Knox, Marek & Agniescka Malysiak, Rob Nevitt, Steve Pearson-Adams, Peter Savill, Heather Simpson, Dave Skingsley, Bill Whitehouse, Renuka Russel

Lloyd's Spar Mine [SJ 187673] Hendre, Flintshire, North Wales.

The third 'official' Club trip of 2013, and once again, well supported with eleven Members taking part. We successfully met up at Mwynbwl Farm, high up above Hendre, at the end of an unmade road, beyond a series of narrow lanes. The farm owners had agreed to allow us to park at their premises, following a previous visit when several of our Members had assisted in recovering the family dog from the bottom of a nearby shaft.

After searching the internet prior to the trip, I discovered little information about the mine, other than a few underground photographs, but it seems the mine was operated exclusively for the extraction of Calcite.

We crossed a couple of small pastures north of the farm, and passed a large, fenced off, open rift, before entering an area of steeply sloping woodland. Clear evidence of mine working was visible in several places across the slope, but we quickly spotted our objective, marked by the top of a metal ladder protruding from a wide, open shaft surrounded by barbed wire. There is a second ladder in the shaft, but it is missing about half of its rungs, and seems to be more rust than metal.

We descended easily, landing on a cone of mud, leaves and other washed in debris at a depth of about 5 metres. The upper part of the shaft walls comprised compacted layers of clay, sand and cobbles, some clearly rounded by water action, and appeared to be glacial in origin. From the bottom a horizontal level led off (we later decided that this was the most constricted part of the mine complex as we actually had to bend over slightly to walk through) which led into the end of a huge, worked-out rift. The passage ahead of us typified much of the mine, with generally level or slightly inclined floors, walls leaning slightly off the vertical, and at least 4 metres apart, and a roof made up of vast, near horizontal surfaces, far above. The most immediately obvious difference between this site and the more familiar lead mines of Derbyshire was the sense of empty space - where were the stacks of waste rock, the packs of 'deads' ? It seems that in this mine the voids were created by the complete removal of the mineral body from between the mass of native limestone on each side, with only minimal waste rock created in the process.

Almost immediately we spotted our first bat, hanging motionless like a small, black, scaly plum. He was not alone, as a quick scan of the walls and roof revealed dozens of others, all apparently the same type and (confidently) identified by the more knowledgeable cavers present as Lesser Horseshoe Bats ('*Rhinolophus hipposideros*' - that bit came out of a book later !!). Although most individuals had selected roosting spots high up and well out of the way, there were odd ones close to floor level, so we were careful to keep a close watch to avoid unnecessary disturbance as we moved through the passages. Later I saw a single specimen of Daubenton's Bat - I think - ('*Myotis daubentonii*'), totally on its own in a side passage.

The mine appears to have been developed as a series of huge levels, each immediately above the one below, and with a thick bed of vein mineral left as the floor/roof separating the levels. At intervals there are communicating shafts or holes between neighbouring levels, and some of these have been equipped with

'modern' aluminium (builder's style) ladders which permit passage from one level to the next.

Our party split into several groups and wandered about exploring the limits of each level before following the ladders up and down to other parts of the mine. There were various small crawls leading off, but generally we were all content to amble about, keeping clean and dry and enjoying the huge spaces. The large, open collapse, passed on the surface, was accessed at several levels, with daylight streaming down from above making a fine scene - this was where the lost dog was recovered from on a previous visit.

At the lowest level we reached there were a series of rectangular pools of deep, deep water, clearly being the top of shafts leading into the totally flooded part of the mine below our feet. Heather explained that on previous visits the water levels had been much lower.

Apparently there are a couple of 'practice' SRT pitches somewhere in the complex, but I must have missed them.

After a couple of hours of very easy and relaxed caving we emerged to sunshine, and wandered back through the woods, spotting other open shafts which we would 'definitely' go down next time (maybe).

A brilliant day, though the pub later was absolutely the worst ever !

Colin Knox. 3-2-2013.

Those involved:

Darren Conde, Georgi Georgiev, Steve Knox, Marek & Agniescka Malysiak, Paul Nixon, Steve Pearson-Adams, John Preston, Peter Savill, Heather Simpson, Dave Skingsley.

The 'I' word again!

Memo from British Caving Association Legal + Insurance Officer: David Judson, Hurst Barn, Castlemorton, Malvern WR13 6LS

LIABILITY INSURANCE NOTE

BCA THIRD PARTY INSURANCE SCHEME and ACCESS TO CAVES

BCRA/BCA have been running a Public Liability/Third Party Insurance scheme specially designed for cavers and caving activities for over 30 years.

Recently it has come to the notice of BCA Council that there appears to be a widespread misconception about what this is and what benefits it gives to our members. Many appear to believe that it exists merely to satisfy a few landowners so as to gain access to the caves of Leck and Casterton Fell, Dan-yr-Ogof, and Peak Cavern, for instance. Caves where particular owners have insisted upon cast-iron indemnification against risk and loss as a result of allowing access to their property.

Our scheme does do this, but it also does much more; it covers members against the risk of a third party claim resulting from any caving related activity, above or below ground. In effect it helps cavers to gain access to all of the caves that they seek to visit, by removing landowners' concerns that by allowing a caver onto his property he is incurring a risk of being sued for damages – that might be damages to themselves, or to other visitors, e.g. walkers, cyclists, etc.

Our scheme also covers so called member to member claims. This might be an experienced caver looking after a comparative novice, or a genuine 'vertical' accident, where someone falls or a rock is accidentally dislodged, etc., and more than everything else, it really does cover all genuine caving related activities:

e.g. Attending a meeting or the national caving conference, or during training activities, etc..

You might be digging, surface or underground, or negotiating a stream on the way to a cave, or making or improving some caving equipment – all of these caving related activities, and many more are equally covered.

Until 2012 cover on any one particular claim has been limited to £2,000,000 but from the start of 2012 this was increased to £5,000,000.

N.B: this is not a personal accident policy, i.e. it does not cover you damaging yourself, but it does cover accidental damage to all others, including your colleagues and quite possibly your enemies! But most of all it covers accidental damage to all affected landowners and/or their property – people on whom we are all completely dependant for continued access to cave systems, both at home and abroad!

David Judson, November 2012

UPCOMING MEETS etc

| Date 2013 | Venue | Comments |
|-------------|--|---|
| Sun.31 Mar. | Swinsto/Simpsons Pots, Kingsdale, Yorks | Superb multi-pitch SRT. systems with several routes possible. |
| Sat.13 Apr | Lancaster Hole / Easegill System, Yorks. | Outstanding & very extensive system, with multiple route choices |
| Wed. 24 Apr | D.C.R.O. H.Q., Buxton | Cave Rescue Team training. 7.30 pm. – subject to be announced later. |
| Sun.28 Apr | P8 / Jackpot, Derbys | Classic cave system with straight-forward SRT. |
| Sat.11 May | Red Moss / Old Ing / Dismal Hill caves, Yorks. | A selection of shorter caves with plenty of variety. Limited SRT opportunities. |
| Tues.21 May | D.C.R.O. H.Q., Buxton | Cave Rescue Team training. 7.30 pm. – subject to be announced later. |
| Sun.26 May | Dan-yr-Ogof, South Wales. | To be confirmed. Limited numbers. |