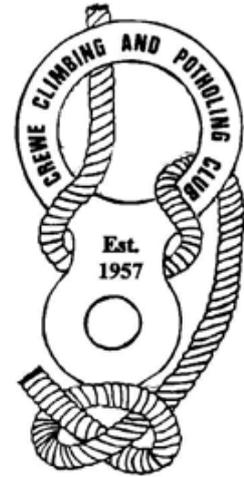


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 125. December 2020

Log on to
www.ccpc.org.uk

The 'Vaccination' issue !

Editor: Steve Knox
colinknox@btinternet.com



Editorial: It is hard to believe that after a year this pandemic is still limiting our efforts to get underground, or on the hills, wherever, and whenever we would like. Fingers crossed that the vaccination plans work out, then all us oldies will be prioritised, and can get out caving with our Zimmer-frames first, before all you youngsters get the jab and get in our way. Continue to keep safe everyone, and use Social Media, telephone, e-mail, or whatever, to keep in touch. Monthly CCPC Meetings have continued successfully on-line. I'll probably just about be confident about how to connect properly when we go back to normal meetings.

We've had a DCRO on-line information session which provided a good insight into the extensive copper mine workings at Alderley Edge – this was instead of our annual rescue-training session there, and on-line equipment familiarisation and use training. All outstanding efforts under the current difficult circumstances.

17th January 2021.

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This is yet another very limited Newsletter – **Many thanks to those who share accounts of their adventures, and amazing photographs, with the rest of the club membership. It is greatly appreciated.** (I blame the Christmas postal service for holding back all the offerings from the other Members !!) Please consider sharing something during 2021 !!! Anything welcome. Steve Knox.

Club Meets, etc., from September 2020 to Christmas 2020:

Sat. 21 st March.	National Lock-down began, followed by regional regulations, and a further lock-down.	All CCPC Club Caving Meets and activities cancelled. Face to face Meetings replaced by on-line Meetings.
13 th Sept. 2020	Giants Hole, Derbyshire.	Cancelled.
26 th Sept. 2020	Slaughter Stream Cave, Forest of Dean.	Cancelled.
11 th Oct. 2020	J.H.Mine, Derbyshire.	Five Members reached 'The Workshop'.
27 th Oct. 2020	Pasture Gill Pot, Yorkshire.	Replaced by Hagg Gill Pot, due to excessive water in Pasture Gill.
8 th Nov. 2020	Poacher's Cave, North Wales.	Cancelled due to Welsh border restrictions.
21 st Nov. 2020	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.	Cancelled due to National Lock-down.
6 th Dec. 2020	Crisp Delph Sandstone Mine, Roby Mill, Skelmersdale, Lancashire.	Cancelled due to Covid restrictions. Alternative trips made: Jug Holes, Bull Pot of the Witches, Knotlow, and Oxlow Caverns.
12 th Dec. 2020	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.	Cancelled due to Derbyshire Restrictions.
19 th Dec. 2020	Robin's Shaft (SRT) and Masson Mine (no SRT), Derbyshire.	Successful socially distanced pre-Christmas social get-together in Great Masson Cavern.
Limited privately organised activities have taken place as, and when, permissible, under the government restrictions. Some Members continue to be self-isolating or 'shielding' during this period.		



Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation:

DCRO team members continue to be ready to assist whenever required, throughout the present period of the Pandemic, and will use PPE, where appropriate.

<https://www.facebook.com/DerbyshireCaveRescue>

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Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club – James Hall's Over Engine Mine (J.H.), Derbyshire - 11th October 2020:

Party members: Jenny Drake, Ruth Rabinowitz, Steve Pearson-Adams, Rob Nevitt, Gaz McShee.

A report on a socially distanced Club trip to James Hall Over Engine Mine, with text and photos by Gaz McShee.

I dropped my daughter off at work and got into Castleton for 8.15 am and was surprised to find that nowhere was open for a bacon butty. Not to be put off, I got all techie and got Tilly's off Google, opening at 9.00. I had a walk round, then back to Tilly's for a sarnie and coffee, then headed up to Rowter Farm to meet up with the others. Once assembled, Jenny, Ruth, Steve, Rob, and I headed off to the lid for a run down to the workshop, sadly, but gladly, not on down the mighty Leviathan.



Ruth descending the 50 metre entrance shaft.



Rob preparing to descend Bitch Pitch.

Having never been in before it was a 'rush' to head down the first pitch, only to pass the rebelay and have to changeover and climb back up to correct my mistake. Once down we all headed along the Cart Gate, over the flooded stopes and down the strangely named, at this point, Bitch Pitch. We got to the workshop after a tussle with another set of ropes in situ that made life awkward, but gravity was kind, and we had a good look round before heading back up.

If those ropes were a nightmare going down, damn were they a bloody pain going back up, and those deviations, that were a dream going in, were awful the other way round. The last deviation in particular was set by either Coco the Clown, or a pest controller, as once you were past it you swung straight into the tightest bit of the pitch, where you couldn't get your knee up to make progress unless you turned side on, but then your shoulders wedged so you couldn't progress. Curse those tiny T'Owd men!



After the beasting up the Bitch Pitch to crush the spirits, the return along the low, 'hanging death' and 'drowning pool' filled Cart Gate only added to the energy drain for the 'mahoosive' hauling shaft to come.

After what seemed like a lifetime, we emerged from the top to a beautiful autumn day, looking over the amazing peak district scenery. This was an amazing day, with five hardcore, over 50's, battling way over their odds and surviving to fight another day. I managed a few pictures, but this was definitely an all work and no play mine, so there are not many and they aren't so good, but those that were there will remember forever.

Steve PA crosses one of the deep flooded stipes in the Cart Gate.

Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club Members were very active underground during the weekend of 5th & 6th December 2020:

Neil, Mark, Steve PA and myself, along with Emerald decided to go to **Oxlow** today as Crisp Delph Mine had been cancelled earlier in the week. A fairly short trip but enough to get the blood pumping and get a bit of exercise.

Looks like it was a good day for caving as club members were out with Ade in **Knotlow**, Gareth in **Bull Pot 'O the Witches**, Gaz in **Jugholes** and ourselves in **Oxlow**.



**Oxlow Caverns,
Derbyshire.**



**Text and Photos
by Des Kelly**

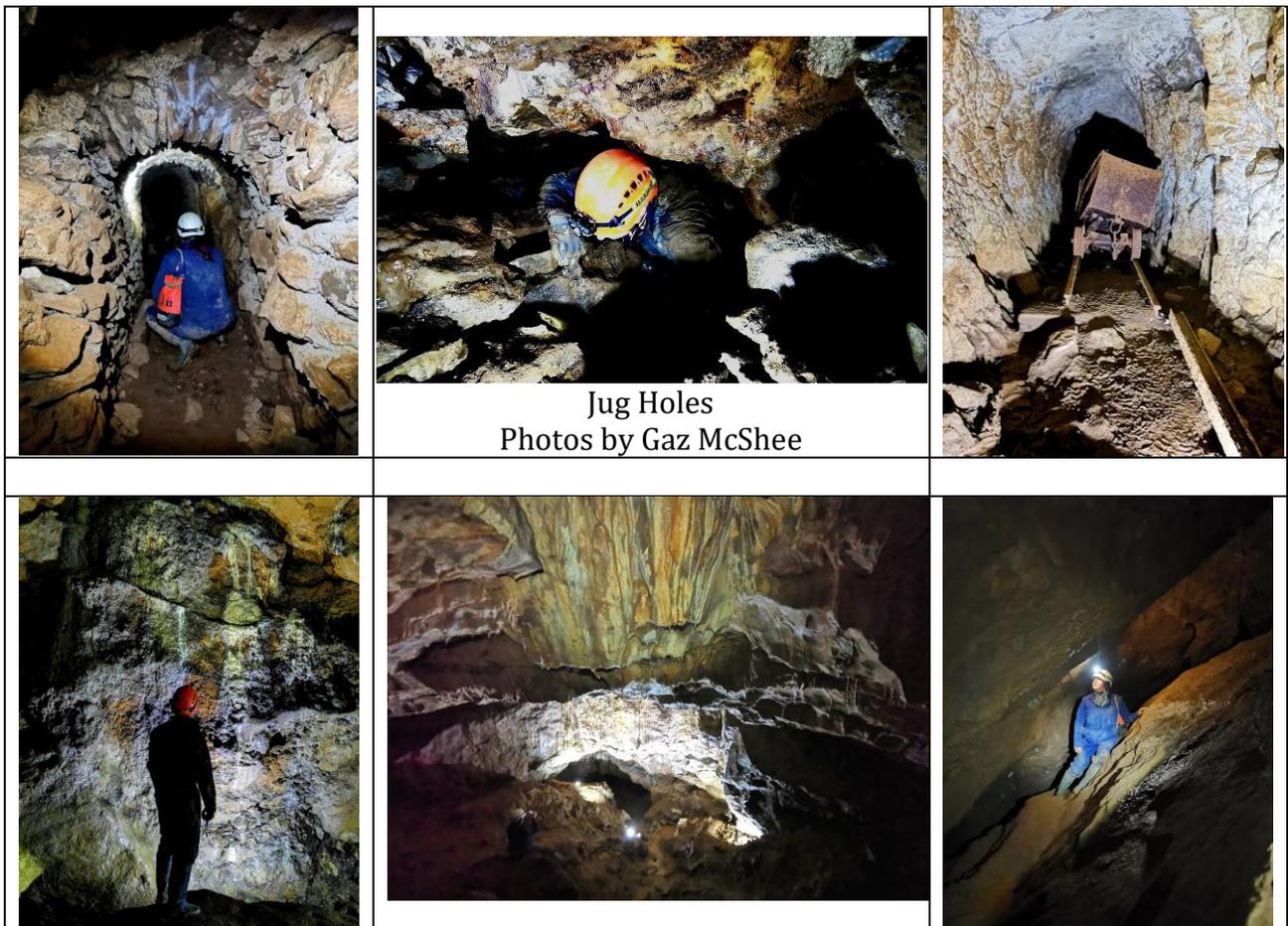


Jug Holes, Matlock, Derbyshire – Saturday, 5th December 2020.

Following the trip to Crisp Delph falling through, due to issues with access, my daughter and I had to make other arrangements in order to get our fix. I'd intended going into Sallet Hole Mine and pushing into the further parts of the mine that few people go to but in a moment of pure laziness I stayed in bed and missed the early start I'd planned. Not one to miss an opportunity, with full permission from the wife to cave as she was going shopping with her friend, **the only stipulation was that we must be back by 2pm!** So, we rescheduled our trip for the lower series of Jugholes which is a nice easy hour or two. We opted to miss out the mine workings and do those another time and just Potter about in the Water Chambers which are amazingly beautiful and surprisingly large. We chose to leave the ropes at home and crawled in through the adit further down the hill. As we walked over the field from the Salters Lane parking area a flurry of snow drifted in from over the woods much to my daughter's delight.

We got out of the freezing conditions into the mine and the nice easy hour or two became four and we crawled back out at 1pm to find the ground white over and giant flakes falling from the heavens, not a good omen for a 2pm stay in the good books home return. After taking a few good snowballs from the adult child who had reverted to a toddler again we made our retreat for home only to get trapped on the Leek, Buxton road by ditched articulated lorries which forced a turn round and detour around Longnor. The forty-minute journey home turned into three hours and a jolly good rollocking ensued, especially as my call for rescue message never got through! Anyhow we had a really good time regardless.

Text & Jug Holes photos: Gaz Mcshee



Snelslow Swallet, Castleton, Derbyshire – Sunday, 13th December 2020

[Also see: Alan Brentnall's article in Newsletter No. 121, pages 5, 6, 7.]

Party members: Grace Bechmanis, Mark McAuley, Gaz McShee.

Never been into Snelslow but almost 12 months to the day since DCA declared it open Grace, Mark and I dropped in for a visit. To be honest I wasn't sure why the first bit needed rigging but then there was a pitch, a beautiful darkness, with no discernible bottom. Mark had already dropped in when I free climbed down to Grace who was already gearing up. I followed soon afterwards, and even tied off mid-abseil to take a picture of a lonely Mark, as Grace had shot off down a rabbit hole, leaving him alone in the dark. It's such a shame that the cave/mine ends here, as there is a meaty-looking shaft dropping down from a mined chamber at the bottom, but with no noticeable provision for rigging it (anyone been down?) [*- dug during the 1980s . Ed.]* Mark and Grace disappeared into the distance, as I took pictures of them both and contemplated the fact that I was next up, with no one to catch me.

After de-rigging and joining the others, we headed out, and went to look at the top shaft entrance (which will make a lovely addition if it eventually gets rigged) only to find that grace had left her new Gortex jacket on the bank outside the cave - very forgetful Grace! Something that would come back and haunt me later.



Snelslow Swallet,
Photos by Gaz McShee.

Convenience Cave, Castleton, Derbyshire – Sunday, 13th December 2020

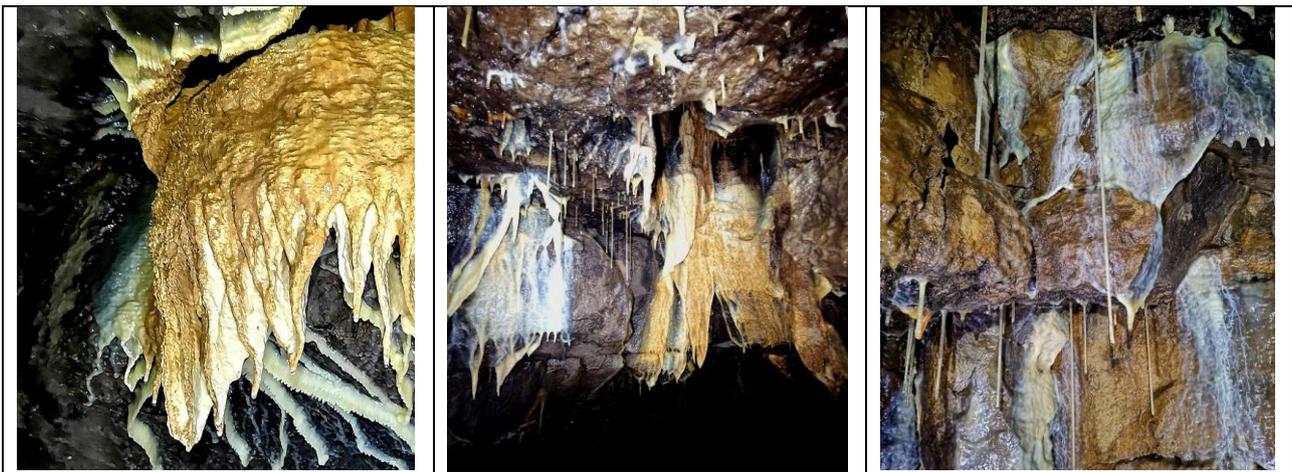
Party members: Grace Bechmanis, Mark McAuley, Gaz McShee.

The story continues: We were not done yet, so headed off to Eldon Quarry for a sniff around Convenience Cave, which Mark remarked was named after it's likeness to a public toilet, and not its proximity to the footpath! He wasn't wrong!

Mark chose not to come with us due to issues with floor to ceiling height, which didn't bode well for me, as I struggle with my boobs which many female friends have viewed with envy over the years. After a roll around in 'the toilet bowl', I found that the first squeeze was actually quite easy - a good job as Grace had vanished into the distance saying only that I should catch up.

When I finally did, oh my God, what a sight! Such a beautiful passage, decorated from floor to ceiling with pretties that were pristine in every way possible.

After taking photos, I followed Grace into the next squeeze, and I can tell you it was tight! It took a real effort to force my way in, but again, once in, the decoration was amazing.



Convenience Cave

Photos by Gaz McShee



More photos ensued, but then it was time to go before Mark had to call for help. We got to the squeeze and I watched Grace disappear into the distance like a racing snake, so I prepped up for my attempt. In I went, feet first, on my back, only to get stuck and have to retreat. Attempt two was headfirst, on my back – nope, not a chance, so a much harder retreat ensued. The bloody squeeze was a Chinese finger trap, and I was stuck! Grace had gone, and I was alone and trapped, thinking, damn, she forgot her new coat, what the hell chance have I got? The best thing about being a climber is the weird ability to forget your predicament and be in a

happy place, no matter how much danger you find yourself in, so in an out-of-body state of mind, I focused and went back in, face down, headfirst. The head went in, minus my helmet which I posted first, and then the shoulders, and my chest got stuck fast. My feet slipping on the mud were useless, and each attempt to pull with my arms met with a flaming chest expansion to multiply the wedge. After an age of wriggling and squirming and mid-chest compression relaxing, I finally felt the pressure easing, and with a sigh of relief I popped out like a new-born into the very well decorated first section. Sadly, it went by un-noticed on the way out.

Grace was waiting at the first squeeze and commented on how long I'd been, thinking I was still taking pictures – ha ha ! As I was fine, the racing snake was off again, leaving me to drag myself through the squeeze, back into the toilet bowl, and out into a beautiful evening. Mark who was waiting for us, and the sun was setting and casting a lovely pink glow over the darkening quarry, to end an amazing day out.

Thanks Grace and Mark can't wait to do it all again. Sidetrack has now dropped down on my to do list from a 'definitely', to a 'maybe', but that means I'll probably do it anyway - damn this stupid game!

Trip report and all photos by Gaz McShee.

Eldon Hill Quarry Caves:-

On **13th December 2020**, Alan Brentnall added further information in response to Gaz's account of his visit to Convenience Cave:

Apparently there should be a 'post box' containing a log book, for recording visits to the caves, but the box and book went missing from its original location after a film crew were using the quarry a few months ago. The box is still there, but is (reportedly) now on the main gate and is currently empty. Alan intends to replace the necessary items in the box, but at the time of writing he is accepting emails as notifications instead of log book entries.

Alan stated: 'In case you weren't aware (and most cavers probably aren't) the access to all the caves in Eldon Quarry is now OK, but the Chatsworth Estates people want DCA to monitor usage - hence the log book box (DCA already monitor access for Ashford Black Marble Mine, Garden Path and Lathkillhead Cave Upper Entrance, also on estate land). A copy of the agreement (which will need amending for the box's new site) is attached, together with a survey showing all caves and shafts within the quarry - which you may find useful.'

ACCESS TO ELDON HILL QUARRY From the start of July 2013 access is restored to what it was – with a number of caveats. The Quarry is part of the Castleton SSSI and all digging needs to be logged. To this end DCA has installed a box over the wall next to the entrance gate. The box (a modified ornate letter box actually, clamped to a bar with the key on a chain tucked out of sight in one end of the bar) contains a logbook, pens, and a survey of the Quarry marking and naming all the known caves and dig sites. Cavers are asked to record their visits and name the site visited. New sites should be given a name and added to the survey. At the farmer's insistence all vehicles must be parked on the lane and under no circumstances driven into the Quarry or Quarry area. His gate must be kept fastened and entry left clear at all times. Visitors to understand they enter and explore the Quarry entirely at their own risk but should carry proof of valid Public Liability insurance cover. Dogs should be left at home. Please note that access is probationary for the time being and dependent on how closely we all stick to the rules. DCA is expected to ensure that all three parties – Chatsworth, the tenant farmer, and Natural England – are not inconvenienced or compromised by allowing cavers back into the Quarry. Both Chatsworth and Natural England need to know that due regard is being paid to the scientific interest of the site, hence the logbook.

10th December 2020:- 'Pepper Inn Sink' - a possible dig ? SK 1045.5645 (approx.)

Extract from : A Cave and Mine Conservation Audit for the Manifold and Hamps Valley Area.

Commissioned by the Derbyshire Caving Association.

Compiled by Martin Milner.

2nd Edition – August 2007. – freely available to read on-line.

Section 3.4 Descriptions and surveys of sites: **Wetton Mill area** - Page 39

'Opposite the point at which the (walking) track leaves the road on it's way (downstream) towards Thor's Cave, is a steep-sided valley which leads to the Back of Ecton. This valley only carries a stream for it's entire length in very wet weather, the stream quickly retreating back up the valley again. The only place the stream has been seen sinking in it's lower reaches is at the sharp bend at the foot of Darfar Ridge. For a long time it has sunk for most of the year among boulders about mid-way between the sharp bend and the end of the road at Back of Ecton. In January 2005 however, it was observed sinking about 15m south of the road. The stream bed downstream of this point had grassed over considerably showing that the stream must now rarely flow downstream of this 'new' swallet. The 'new' sink area is about 105m above the level of the Ilam Risings.'



Following a period of heavy rain, Annie and I walked down the valley from 'Pepper Inn', Back of Ecton (immediately south of 'Manor House' marked on the 1:25000 map), as we have done many times before. The usual trickle of surface water which normally disappears into a hollow in the valley floor, on the left, just beyond the five-bar gate below Pepper Inn, had become a substantial stream pouring into a large crater.

The stream, similar to a normal P8 wet weather stream, vanished into two obvious, cobble choked 'holes'. We followed the old, dry, stream gully down the valley, to where the path climbs out to the right, over Darfar Ridge, to Wetton Mill, but we saw no indication of the water reappearing anywhere.

The River Manifold was in full flow at Wetton Mill, and the sinks below Darfar Crag, and further downstream, were all completely submerged.

The report does not record any water-tracing from this location, but several other nearby sinks were investigated, and the water was traced to the Ilam Risings.



Colin Knox

Devonshire Cavern & Clatterway Levels, Derbyshire – Wednesday, 9th December 2020

Party members : Jenny Drake.

Purpose: to do some measuring and sketching of the various short pitches for the rigging guide.

Jenny wrote:

'Back safe and sound. I managed to not find the top entrance to **Devonshire**. I didn't think that was possible, but I managed it. Eventually realised I was far too far up the hill and didn't want to lose the hard won altitude. By contrast, I walked straight to Clatterway. Never been there before, a tiny entrance in thick woods, on a very steep hill side and approached from the opposite direction to the instructions. How does that work?'

Alan Brentnall responded:

'Getting to the top entrance from the Bonsall path never was straightforward - I think that there may be some understandable reluctance by DCA to create a more obvious approach. The last time we did it Pete Dell and I got there early to memorise the route. The sure-fire way of locating it is to go in through the oven door and go up-dip to the main chamber, exit through the gate and it's just to the right and uphill.'

Mark Krause added:

'Pass the broken wall on your right, going uphill - the entrance to Devonshire – and continue up the Bonsall path until you come to something that looks like a broken cast lamp post. Turn right here. The path will take you to the new gated entrance, it has a combination lock. A small path from here takes you above this entrance to the top entrance.'

Jenny plans a return visit and wondered if there is an official name for the new surface shaft by the top entrance.

Alan Brentnall again:

'As far as I'm aware, it's known as the Upper Entrance - which may someday require some disambiguation as there is supposed to be another upper entrance beyond the iron ladder. I've never found it, although there is a shaft which is met just beyond the iron ladder which goes down into the big breakdown chamber, and up to a capped surface entrance - but that doesn't sound like the top entrance as described to me.'

Jenny completed her checks in **Clatterway**:

'The Clatterway Levels topo is now in the **rigging guide**. There are a couple of stainless through bolts on the first pitch, but to properly rig a traverse line, and not be over a hole depending on a single artificial anchor, you still need to use a rusty angle iron hanger that probably dates back to the Masson exploration in 1988. The unoccupied 8mm spit anchor is now unusable. Similarly, the second pitch/climb drop is off a nice natural thread, but any traverse line to it depends on a pair of rusty angle iron hangers. Three more stainless through bolts would give this popular route bomb proof rigging. It really hasn't changed much since Steve Knox did a sketch in [CCPC newsletter no. 73](#), in 2002. The entrance section has a spider population impressive in both their numbers and the size of each one. I tried not to squash any squeezing by, I don't think any hitched a lift home with me!' **Jenny Drake.**

[We will miss Alan's involvement & contributions, after his move to the wilds of Scotland. Ed.]



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club – Masson Mine, Matlock, Derbyshire - 19th December 2020:

A report on a socially distanced, end-of-year, Club trip to Masson Mine, Matlock; contributed by Sonia:

The geology is really interesting. (See below)

It was indeed a great trip, exploring the mine with its different passages and pockets, coffin tunnels, flooded sections, bits of old mining equipment and even bits of old newspapers. There were things for sale in the newspapers in pounds so that means the papers were pre-1971. That's 50 years! There was walking and some crawling and a bit of poky hole squishing through, but nothing too muddifying or strenuous. Water levels were higher than usual, with some sections normally dry and passable but instead too deep to walk really, so there were some bits we just looked along. There was one bit over water, where two parallel metal railway tracks had been placed. Some of the more intrepid crossed over it to see what lay beyond and returned the same way.

On the way back we had our underground pre-Christmas lunch. Steve really out did himself setting up our mini banquet on the mine's dressing table. Using his special new stove and flask he heated up the mulled wine which went down a treat. After our lunch it wasn't far to the exit where we encountered an interesting sight; men with ice axes in mountaineering boots and crampons climbing up the quarry walls. It was certainly a contrast to our activities ! Getting back to the car to change we didn't have to struggle with snow or rain or bitter cold, just a bit of wind; it was almost balmy for a winter caving trip. So, the last trip for 2020; here's looking forward to next year's trips and may there be more than this year. Merry Christmas Everyone!

Sonia Mackenzie

Now the first scientific bit from Mark:

Disclaimer : Please remember I'm not a Geologist or expert in any field whatsoever. Having left school with no qualifications, and I have no letters after my name except 'CUTE', with Honours ! I just like reading Geology books.

Considering the minerals we were looking at yesterday: the blue / purple ones (having looked at my mineral collection) were in fact Fluorite, the second most common mineral on the planet. I should have got that one straight away. I think my brain was on go slow. It comes in a variety of colours produced by impurities that are present when the crystals are formed during cooling. (I always like to be certain of any information I share !).

What are the odds of bumping into a group from Crewe in a mine ???

It was a great trip, led by Steve P-A, followed by a Festive Feast, with mulled wine, food and tablecloth provided by PA. Hope you all have a Safe and Peaceful Christmas. **Mark Krause**

Not to be outdone, Gaz added his own contribution, despite missing this particular outing:

Blue deposits in Masson

The **Flourite** comes in various colours in the Masson mines. It's mainly clear, or a yellowish or orange colour, but some of it is indeed blue. The first picture (below) however is a bit of an anomaly, as the blue is actually **Galena**, the Lead ore, so sought after by the miners. It reflects LED lighting giving off a lovely blue hue instead of its normal silvery grey. The second picture is **Flourite** from Masson Mine, showing various colours in the same vein – those on the trip probably saw it in the chamber by the flooded passage connecting to the show mine. The third

photograph was taken in a chamber in Masson's neighbour, King Mine. It is predominantly purple **fluorspar**, and is quite a sight when you find it.

Glad you all had a great trip, I'm sad I missed it, due to a shortage of manpower at work yesterday. Have a great Xmas everyone.

Gaz McShee



Galena, showing blue under LED lighting.



Flourite in Masson Mine, Matlock.



Fluorspar in King Mine, Matlock.

All mineral photographs by
Gaz McShee