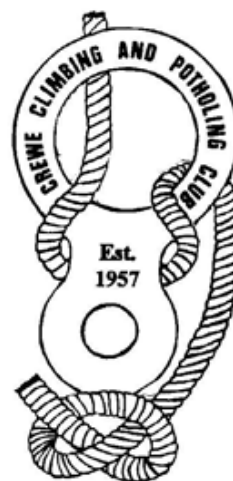




C.C.P.C. Newsletter 128. November 2021 to December 2021

Log on to
www.ccpc.org.uk

Editor: Steve Knox
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Editorial:

I might be being overly optimistic (in the light of recent infection rates abroad) but it does seem as if we are finally adapting to 'the new normal', and members are getting underground much more regularly than in past months. Our monthly CCPC meetings are back to face-to face sessions, at 'The Red Bull', in Butt Lane, and we are trying to continue with 'Zoom', on-line, for those unable to attend in person, although we are not experts at this, so please be patient if things don't work first time. I believe we have agreed that members 'attending' via Zoom can vote for (or against) proposals as if they were actually present – as long as they are visible on screen at the time. We'll have to see if this works. We will need to be clear about whether individuals are actually paid-up members, for this to work properly.

Meanwhile, please continue to remain careful everyone, and use social media, telephone, e-mail, or whatever, to keep in touch.

Steve Knox 12th December 2021.

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Many thanks to those who continue to share accounts of their adventures, and their amazing photographs, with the rest of the club membership. It is greatly appreciated.
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Planned Club Meets, etc., from November 2021 to December 2021: **(Partly affected by the Covid situation).**

Thanks to Neil Conde for his hard work in organising the meets list, and for trying to satisfy everyone. As before, the following list gives some idea of what was planned, and frequently completed. Changes have had to be made, often at short notice, in order to try to give members the opportunity to get underground.



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: November to December 2021

1 st Nov. 2021	November Meeting.	Held at 'The Red Bull', & using 'Zoom'.
6 th Nov. 2021	Notts 2, Yorkshire. Alternative: Short Drop Cave, Yorkshire	Members attended.
13 th Nov. 2021	Waterways Swallet, Derbyshire.	Surface work, plus underground trip.
21 st Nov. 2021	Water Icicle Close Cavern, Derbyshire. Alternative: Mandale Mine, Derbyshire.	Two separate trips were completed by members.
1 st Dec. 2021	Raven Mine, Derbyshire.	Three members took part.
4 th Dec. 2021	Pasture Gill Pot, Yorkshire. Alternative: Hagg Gill Pot, Yorkshire.	Changed to a trip into Minera Mine, North Wales (5th Dec.).
6 th Dec. 2021	December Meeting.	Held at 'The Red Bull', & using 'Zoom'.
18 th Dec. 2021	Peak Cavern	
19 th Dec. 2021	Eyam Dale House Cave, Derbyshire.	

	Alternative: Carlswark Cavern, Derbys.	
10 th Jan 2022	CCPC AGM, followed by January Meeting.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, Staffordshire, and also via 'Zoom'.
Limited privately organised activities have taken place as, and when, permissible, complying with any current government restrictions. Some members have continued to be self-isolating or 'shielding' during this period.		



Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation:

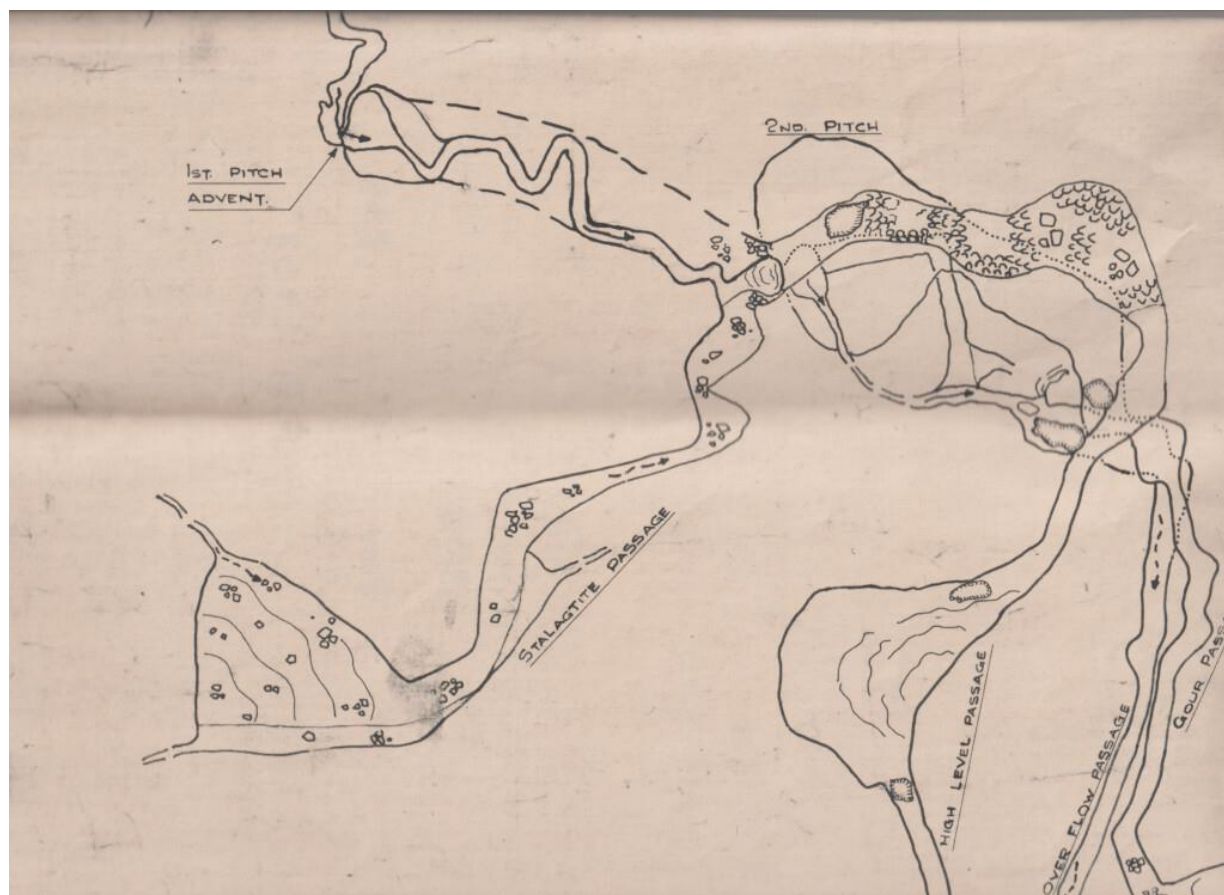
DCRO team members continue to be ready to assist whenever required, throughout the present period of the pandemic, and will use PPE, where appropriate.

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

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Following up the item in Newsletter No. 126: P8 (Jackpot), What's in a name ? (No apologies for the repetition here.)

If you saw the original article you will know that it concerned the 'correct' name for a particular passage in P8 – the passage in question turns sharply to the right at 'the bad step', when following the dry, upper passage between Pitch 1 (labelled as '**Advent Pitch**' on this early survey – the first time I've heard it called that) and Pitch 2 (the old **Iron Ladder**), instead of continuing in the main passage round to the left. The passage has been variously named: 'Stalactite Passage', 'Stalagmite Passage', and even 'Stalagtite Passage', depending on the text, or survey you are using.



A section of the early BSA survey of P8 (Jackpot).

The BSA entered P8 in 1964, so the answer would most likely exist in any early write-ups of their explorations (the original explorers, were the Manchester Group of the BSA, and they published in the BSA Newsletter no 72 in 1966), or by examining a copy of the earliest survey - probably the Eldon one, of about 1970/71.

Jenny contacted Clive Westlake, one of the individuals named on the 1972 EldonPC survey, to see if he knew what the correct spelling should be. Clive suggested that finding the earliest evidence for the passage name might need an enquiry with the British Caving Library, which holds a copy of the 1972 EldonPC survey along with the whole of the Eldon library.

Clive subsequently searched for the BSA Newsletter in the Northern Pothole Club library at Greenclose, without success, but then tracked a copy down in the Wessex library, on Mendip. In **BSA Bulletin no 62** (not 72 ?) in the Wessex library, the article describes, but does not name the passage in question! The Bulletin also advertises the P8 survey – price 3s 6d ! There was a copy of the survey in the library and Clive copied the relevant part (included here). On the survey, the relevant passage is named ‘**Stalagtite Passage**’.

The other passage mentioned in CCPC Newsletter No. 126 is ‘Steve’s Passage’, which is not shown at all on this section of the early P8 survey, so clearly it had not been discovered at that time – despite being wide open !!

Pete Knight and Alan Brentnall were able to add further information concerning the pitches in the initial section of streamway:-

Pete Knight: ‘Nigel Atkins bolted pitches in P8 and I asked him about the names a while ago. The one that lands from the high level at the base of Idiot's Leap is the Boney Pitch. The one that lands on the sharp corner further down the streamway after the climb over the boulder is the Far Flats Pitch. There are other pitches on Spits, with names, but I forget those.’

Alan Brentnall: ‘I'm not sure whether these names are absolutely correct, but I've always referred to the pitch immediately downstream from Idiot's Leap as the Boney Pitch, and the one around the corner, after the boulder you climb over, as the Gulley Pitch, although that is called the Flats Pitch in an earlier version of the Rigging Guide.

There is a high-level spit-traverse from the top of Boney to the top of Gulley, which Nigel Atkins calls the Electric Ferret.

Plus - if you descend half way down the Gulley Pitch, you can swing round into the passage at that level, and then traverse downstream to a solid floored section, which leads to the squeeze through to the top of the climb up to the traverse going to the high level alternatives to Pitch 1.

The useful place where there really should be a pitch is at the top of Steve's Passage (goes off Stalagmite Passage). You can look down to the top of Pitch1 - some bolts here would be very useful for getting out in flood conditions.’

Perhaps we don't all know P8 quite as well as we thought !

Steve Knox

The Dam Busters – Leviathan Style (2011) – Alan Brentnall.



Jenny's recent write-up about a trip into James Hall Over Engine Mine brought back a load of happy memories of work, people and adventures in the Peak Speedwell system which started, for me, well almost two decades ago. In the early days, these trips would begin when a phone call from Ralph Johnson started with, "What are you doing next Thursday?". This would usually lead to some fairly hard, but interesting work – often meeting new cavers, and often learning new skills.

Over the years these “odd jobs” became a way of life and, even though some of the tasks were in other caves around the Peak District, I gradually became involved in many aspects of the Peak Speedwell system.

And so it was that Ralph rang me up in late January 2011, “Are you free sometime next week? There’s a little job needs doing on the dams in Leviathan.” My first response was, “What dams?” and suddenly it dawned upon me that, yes there had to be dams in Leviathan to feed the two long suction pipes which reach down from the level of the Tea Rooms to the floor of the gigantic shaft.

If you want to read the full story of Dave (Moose) Nixon’s epic engineering efforts in Leviathan which ultimately gave us the JH access to Peak Speedwell, the dry way into the Far Sump Extensions (which had been a divers’ preserve for many years) and, eventually, Titan, there’s an excellent account on [the PDMHS Website](#).

Briefly, after he discovered Leviathan, Moose needed to re-direct the water that tumbled down the shaft and prevented him digging through to the Far Sump Extensions, and he did this by damming the water high up the shaft, and feeding it down two large pipes into the Speedwell Streamway. There were two dams (hence two pipes): one to collect the bulk of the water, and one to take the overflow, and this latter dam tended to fill with rubble and boulders. Ralph’s “little job” entailed moving said rubble and boulders thirty odd metres vertically down to the foot of the shaft.

And so, on Tuesday February 1st, I met up with Christine Wilson at Rowter Farm with a load of rope, a couple of buckets, a shovel, a pick ... and a picnic - with the intention of descending to the dam and doing the job. We were assured that nobody else was in the system – so we could “chuck with impunity”!! Well, gravity was indeed providing 95% of the effort for this job, but the remaining 5% was no easy task, and a couple of hours later, we’d cleared down to the mesh-covered pipe, but there was still quite a bit of rockery filling between a third and half of the dam. So a return match was organised.

On Thursday February 17th, I met up with Christine, Leon Zablocki, Steve Knox, and Ralph at the old café opposite Speedwell Cavern. The plan was for Ralph and Steve to take a leisurely trip in on the boat while Christine, Leon and I descended JH. I would bottom Leviathan and meet up with Steve and Ralph while Christine and Leon emptied the dam. Then we would all exit via Speedwell by boat. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, as soon as I got to the base of the shaft I scurried up the slope to the top of the “Plumtre Connection” and watched (or rather listened!!) as a serious quantity of stonework crashed down Leviathan. It was reminiscent of a [traverse of Mont Pelvoux](#) I did back in 1988, when we needed to bivouac at the side of the Clot de l’Homme glacier which we needed to cross (once it froze) and which kept disgorging boulders at regular intervals. These boulders were very noisy, but also sparked violently as they hit other rocks. My wait in Leviathan was just as noisy, but limestone, I noticed, doesn’t spark!

After a half an hour or so of this, with no sign of Ralph and Steve, I went in search of them. Once through the Boulder Piles, I was amazed at the amount of water coming from the Main Rising passage on the other side of the Pile. Following the Speedwell Stream down past Whirlpool to the Pit Props junction entailed quite a battering, and I wasn’t surprised to find the gate through to the

Far Canal still locked shut. The water was obviously too high, and they'd decided to call it off. No boat rides today!

Back at Leviathan, Christine and Leon had finished their rock chucking session, and I could just make out Leon's light as he descended the last pitch. Looking at my watch, I realised that we didn't have too much time before Speedwell closed for the day, and we needed to get back up to the car at Rowter and down to the show cave to let Ralph and Steve know that we'd finished and got out OK.

So I yelled up to Leon and explained the situation, whereupon he switched to prussick and juggled back to let Christine know what was going on. Getting out of JH was a bit of a rush, to say the least, but we made it back to Speedwell before 4pm – only to find that Ralph and Steve had actually got to the gate (presumably after I'd checked it out) and left the gate unlocked, with the key still “in”!!

Needless to say, this was not the end of the matter because a month or so after this event the water from the pipes eventually “unstuck” several of the boulders which give the Boulder Piles their name, rendering the “Plumtre Connection” very dangerous, and, with the help of many others (including Ade Pedley with his R2D2 water manifold) we had to redirect Moose's waters yet again to maintain caver access through to Leviathan, the Far Sump Extensions and Titan – but that's another story.

But the dams are still there, and the secondary dam is probably now filled with rubble and boulders, just waiting for the next generation of cavers to come and do a bit of rock chucking!

Alan Brentnall



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 31st July 2021.

Jenny & Gaz in Carnival Aven, Giants Hole – see full account in the previous Newsletter.

Aim: to visit Carnival Aven, above Geology Pot to check the state of bolts and any fixed rope, as part of the ongoing Rigging Guide revision.

Jenny wrote: *'Backtracking from Geology Pot we found a point where we could climb in to the roof and then traversed in to a short passage that broke out over the rift above the Geology pitch. The anchors that we could see still look good. The stainless expansion bolts with stainless plate hangers seem fine. The stainless bolts with home-made angle aluminium plate hangers show no obvious sign of corrosion to the very thick gauge aluminium. There are two fixed ropes of unknown vintage, and at least one of those is likely to have been there for 20 years. I tried rigging with our rope and krabs and made it along the traverse till I reached the first upward section. Climbing this would have meant relying on the existing ropes and anchors above, which I couldn't see and with the full height of Geology Pot underneath. I decided that, if discretion is the better part of valour, then cowardice is the better part of discretion! Gaz also took a look and reached the same conclusion. If I were to climb it I'd want to be belayed on a proper climbing rope.'*

This visit led to further correspondence and discussion, and a useful contribution from Alan:

In-situ Ropes

Alan Brentnall. 1st August 2021

On the subject of in-situ ropes, here's a few of my thoughts.

Traditionally, DCA has never installed any fixed rope, restricting its fixed aids policy to "rated" metalwork and advising cavers to be cautious whenever any in-situ equipment is used. However, things are starting to change, following the recent re-equipping of Odin which necessitated the inclusion of a DCA-installed rope on the "up" pitch just inside the mine proper, and just after the traverse past the latest collapse hole.

Consequently, DCA's fixed rigging documentation is currently undergoing change too, and a draft document was discussed at the June DCA meeting. The whole document is worth a read, but the section on fixed ropes is probably the significant change.

The 1998 policy is still being shown on the DCA website, so I don't know whether this is the final version - and, indeed, it may not be - but this makes interesting reading and probably represents most of the content of the final policy.

On the same subject, Peak Cavern keyholders can, and do, install and maintain fixed ropes, and have done for a long time - there's a hell of a lot of "up" pitches in Peak-Speedwell and quite a few are far too big or too complex to be catered for by an Eldon/Miller's-style "pull-through" set-up. Peak also has a good deal of non-BCA bolting and fixed laddering. Before Ann Soulsby and I retired from key-holding, we started a regime of systematic inspection and maintenance, driven by Ann's spreadsheet and manned by us and many of the cavers who use Peak for sporting trips and projects, and I'm pleased to say that this process is being continued by Charley Cooley, who replaced me as the key-holder co-ordinator.

So there are ways and means. It is possible to equip caves and mines without having either a rigid "one bolt to rule them all" policies or cowboy "bolt rash" outbreaks. And I think that this message is, eventually, getting through!

Cheers, Alan

.....
Jenny is continuing to revise and update the **CCPC Peak Rigging Guide**:-

In line with how the rest of the guide is done, for things like cave location and access, Jenny intends to link directly to the DCA information about anchors, checking and so on, rather than duplicate it, with the risk of it becoming out of date, and becoming contradictory. What she has at the moment is:

'Safety

Derbyshire Caving Association and its member clubs undertook a programme to replace the old 8mm "spits" with stainless steel resin fixed hangers. These anchors are inspected on a regular basis and are safe at the time of inspection. However no anchor can be considered totally safe and it would be unwise to trust your life to a single anchor. Adequate back-ups are available. Details of the DCA anchor scheme, the type of anchors that DCA install, how to check any anchor prior to use and how to report a defective anchor can be found

at <https://www.thedca.org.uk/equipment/resin-set-anchors>.

Other anchors are not installed, or checked by DCA and should be treated with the same amount of caution. Fixed ropes should be treated with the greatest of caution. Especially those heading upwards, where the upper anchor and rope condition cannot be checked before trusting your life to them. A few have been installed by DCA and have a regular inspection and replacement schedule. Some have been adopted by caving clubs, but many receive no care after installation.'

.....



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 26th September 2021.

Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbyshire.

Des Kelly

Des Kelly, John Gillett, Neil Conde and Neil's guest had a brilliant trip round the principal Peak Cavern passages, and Des subsequently posted photographs on the CCPC Facebook page. *A few of Des' photos are reproduced here.*



The astonishing size of the passages which characterize so much of the mis-named 'tourist trip' never fail to amaze and delight, no matter how many times you experience them.



Des' photos perfectly capture the scale of the Upper Gallery, and the Surprise View ladder down into the Main Streamway, plus the clean-washed nature of the rock around the Squaw Junction inlet. Check out the CCPC Facebook page for many more striking images from this trip.



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 15th November 2021.

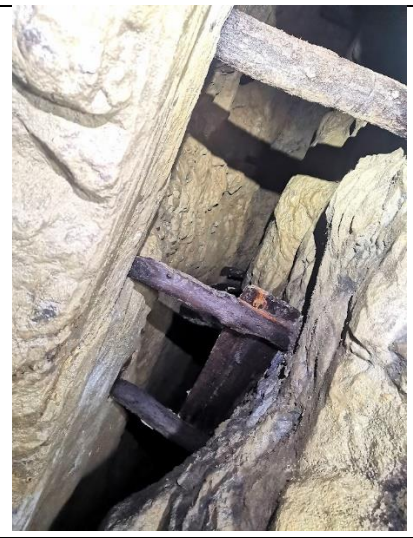
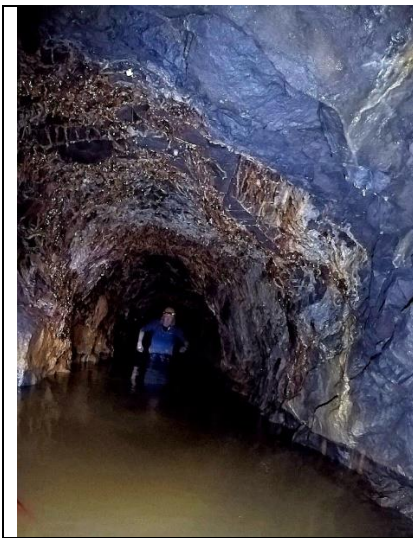
Mines around Hassop, Derbyshire.

Gaz Mcshee

After loads of research and an unusual break from work I found myself trawling through the undergrowth on the hillsides around Hassop. I'd already had a couple of visits to Newburgh Level over the summer but was interested to see what else was lurking beneath the hillside nearby.

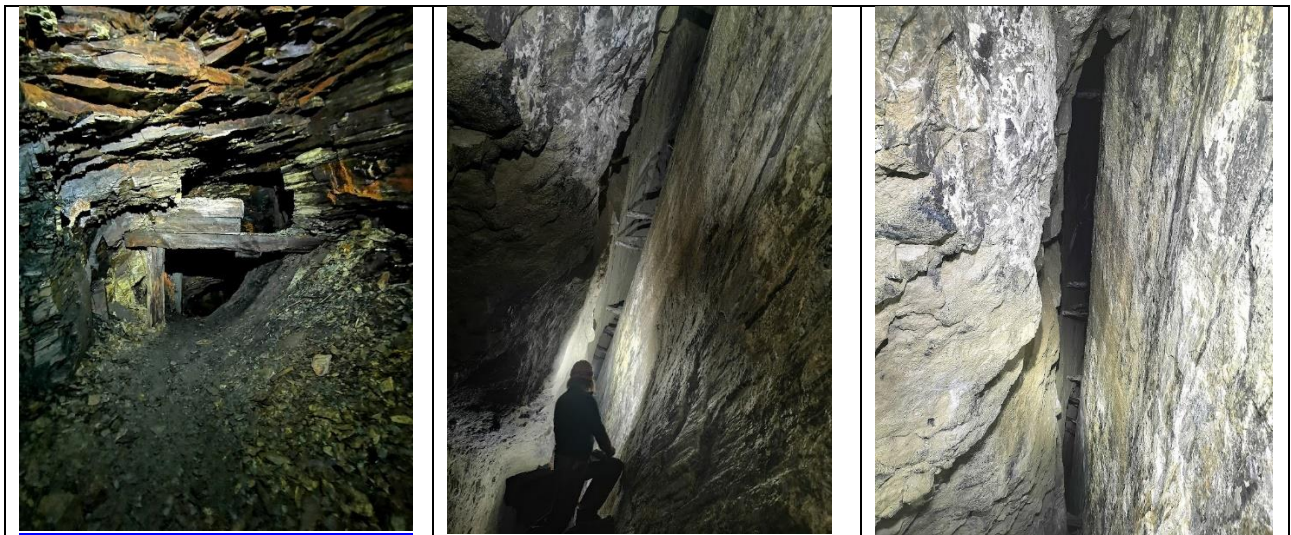


First up was Northcliff Sough on the same level as Newburgh but further up the dale. The gate was Derbyshire keyed and once open dropped in through a plastic pipe to a (typical for the area) low – ‘for God’s sake, don’t touch the roof or you will die’ - shale chamber. Carefully I headed into the mine until I reached a section “supported” by ancient wooden trusses. At this point the passage was filled with water, and after lifting my rucksack clear I headed through. At its deepest it was just below waist level, just deep enough to encourage my family jewels to join my tonsils under my chin.



The level soon became drier, and it was apparent that this had been a cartway in the past. Rotting sleepers littered the floor until, at a collapse, the passage split into three. One way led to a roped climb which I was not equipped for, but which led off to other workings higher up. Another led to a junction, where in one direction the passage sank into what looked like a collapse into a flooded stope but was traversible with care. The other way led to a flooded passage, which may go, but not without my Baby Shark rubber rings and a wetsuit to assist. The third passage led off into ‘T’owd Mon’s world’. A beautiful stemped stope vanished into the darkness above, and there was even a plank, rotting away between two decaying stemples, which would have once acted as a working platform (something I’ve never seen before in the Peak). I continued through the stope until suddenly a hole appeared in the floor, and beyond, the stope dropped away into the darkness and it became all too apparent that this was a false floor, supported on God knows what, above the void. After beating a hasty retreat I dropped into the lower level and was treated to some beautiful timber-supported

'deads', filling the space once occupied by the precious lead ore. In places this had collapsed, and 'deads' and shattered timbers covered the floor.



The passage ended at a roped descent into a shaft, which again I wasn't equipped for today, so another visit is now on the cards. Once out, I wandered back up the road to Hassop Common to see what remains of Brightside and Harrybecca Mines.



The arched adit by the old 'coe' had collapsed about ten metres in, so I headed over to the adit between the two mines, which is now partially hidden beneath a pretty hefty tree. This led into a low level which suddenly opened up into a chamber with a huge engine shaft at its centre, and a traverse line over to the passage on the far side - yet another to come back to when properly equipped. There were hangers in place for a Y-hang, but I couldn't see the bottom when I looked over. All in all it turned out to be a very interesting day out in a beautifully esoteric location, and it's also left me with a damn good reason to return for a better equipped adventure into the further parts of the mines.

Added later: I mistook Harrybecca for New Engine Mine the other day and having discovered my mistake I now know the internal shaft is 47m deep. The books I used while researching were 'The Mines Of The Peak District', by Byron Machin, and 'The Lead Legacy', by John Barnatt and Rebecca Penny. I also used the old Victorian 1" series maps available online and more detailed than anything around today. I also spend quite a bit of time wading through the undergrowth searching for potential in certain mining areas. It's quite satisfying finding things that aren't in any guidebooks.

All photos by Gaz Mcshee. A complete set is available at:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/SGR3oTsaH2jFHSaVA>



[There is a good article (fully downloadable) with surface plan, survey plan, and profile plan in the PDMHS Bulletin 17-3. Ed.]



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 8th /December 2021.

More exploration of the Mines around Hassop, Derbyshire.

Gaz Mcshee

Northcliff Sough: I had another day around the Hassop area today. This mine is pretty big and not like any others I've seen around the Peak. There are however a few places left that I'm not prepared to go alone, I'm happy to climb the old ropes but would like a backup if anyone would care to join me. I'll put one of my own ropes in, if the anchors are OK, for anyone willing to assist, and I'm quite happy to explore the stuff I've already seen for anyone else. It's a bit of a wetsuit mine for a comfy trip, but mostly the water is only chest deep, and one passage with deeper water in it is run in, so not worth doing unless you like a cold swim. Anyone up for it ?

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Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 13th November 2021.

Waterways Swallet: Annual Car Park work session.

Steve Pearson-Adams



Steve Pearson-Adams, and Mark Krause, along with 2 potential new CCPC members, C.J. and Jack, were out on Saturday clearing the parking area at Waterways Swallet. Weeds were cut back; over-growing branches were cleared and the soak-away was emptied of debris. The ground at the back of the area is, and always will be, soft and not really suitable for parking. We managed to get 4 vehicles parked without any issues. The gate posts are solid, and while the gate latch and catch aren't in direct alignment we had no problem with it. All should be OK until next autumn.

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..... and then there was the caving :

Steve Pearson-Adams

We had arranged a 10 o'clock start but when I arrived at 9:30 CJ and Jack were already hard at it as they had landed at 9:00 and certainly saved us a fair chunk of time, oh to be young and full of energy. By 11-ish the job was done, all ready for another year, then we got ready for dropping into Waterways. Debris was pushed up against the fence surrounding the Swallet and the lid was also hidden from view. Short work was made of clearing around the lid and soon all four were heading in. When we got to the Main chamber several minutes were spent in a photo session for the lads, as it is festooned with crinoids and other sea molluscs. Then through the scaffolded dig, onto Floodgate Pot, marked by the fixed ladder, and into Blore Street, before negotiating the climb down (fixed handline) into the bottom of Toad Hall. From here it was a short scramble to the sump, having popped through the squeeze at the base of the climb down. It's interesting to note the geological action that has occurred here over the ages. Mark pointed out the anticline (beds that have been forced up, then down, then up again, forming a wave action) as pressure was released due to glacial erosion of overlying strata. All in all a decent trip of about 2 ½ hours and one which CJ and Jack really enjoyed.

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Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 21st November 2021.

Water Icicle Close Cavern, Monyash, Derbyshire.

Neil sorted out a slight problem in organising a guide for the gated new extensions (a condition of access) and Doug. gave up his time to take the nominated maximum four members. Others explored the rest of the system as a separate trip.

Alan Brentnall had acted as guide here for a good while, and provided some useful information about access:

Alan: *'When I was guiding in WICC, I never took my car up Derby Lane, despite the fact that I had a permanent permit to do so. The reason was that the top half of Derby Lane is so rutted that it is more or less undriveable in anything but a very robust 4x4, so you usually have to park two thirds of the way along the lane. I either walked (which CCPC have done at least once in the past) or rode my mountain bike. It takes around 30 minutes to walk - measure it on the map; it's a mile and a half from the Monyash car park to the end of the lane, and it's quite a pleasant walk too! (Think of it as training for caving in the Dales!!!)'*

Jenny: *'I'll second what Alan says. In the summer, when the ground was dry, it used to be possible to get a 2wd vehicle to the end of Derby Lane. I wouldn't try it now. You also need a permit to drive to the end, which needs to be applied for. This was put in place because of the number of off-roaders going up there that trashed it. The walk from Monyash is level and we've done it before on club trips. Hopefully I'm going to be there with Grace. I've been to NW passage several times, so will leave it to people who've not seen it before.'*

Gaz Mcshee was in the guided party, and provided the following report:

'So on the coldest day of the year to date, I dragged myself to Monyash for a date with the cave of mystery, hiding high on a hill overlooking the beautiful Lathkill Dale. I had set off early so that I could get a full English in the cafe before venturing up the track to the entrance. The only table left was already taken by someone, so I nervously and awkwardly sat opposite and ordered my food. Once done I returned to my car wondering if I was actually in the right place as I was only familiar with the celebrity mines round there, that were just a couple of fields away. As I contemplated driving, to see how close I could park to the entrance, I bumped into Neil, so I turned round and bumped into Jenny and Grace on the car park, so I was in the right place after all. We all got together and blow me, the guy from the cafe turned out to be Steve (another member I've finally put a face to). Next to arrive was Doug, our guide for the gated Northwest Passage, and finally Dave. A couple of brave souls had permits so we did a car share (to save the environment obviously) and headed up the lane. Changing was typical of caving in the Peak at this time of year, - freezing, and by the time we arrived at the shaft lid I had no sensation in my fingers. The prospect of controlling a rope safely seemed a little dubious, but hey, dropping into a hole when you don't have to is also a little dubious, so as the locals say, "You'll be o'reit". Once my turn came the ride was seamless and the beautifully hand-picked shaft was as astounding as the best coffin levels in the Peak, but for once



there was no discomfort associated with it. Finally we were all in. Mark had made his own way in, and was already at the shaft bottom as he was suffering post-pestilence-booster-blues, and expected to be leaving early.

We organised the parties, and David, Steve, Mark and I joined Doug for a tour of the gated extensions, while Jenny, Grace and Neil went off to have a mooch about in the free-view parts of the system.

What immediately becomes apparent is the scale of the passage, it's much too big to be so close to the top of a hill. I mean you need flow, but this close to the top there is no way you could get so much, the catchment area is just too small. Then there is the total destruction that is all around; at this point you are looking at the cracked and demolished flowstone and formations and thinking, damn those old miners were clumsy; but then you reach the ladder to the other world, the bit the miners never got to, and the destruction takes on another level, both in scale and pure mind-blowing beauty.



For the whole length of the extension the formations were peeling from the walls and laying shattered on the ground, and sections of the roof and wall were strewn around with no explanation as to how they had got there. We wondered at the tiny Helictites and the powdery cryogenic cave calcite (ccc's) that decorated the smashed and fractured flowstone like someone had used a sugar shaker to beautify a dying world.

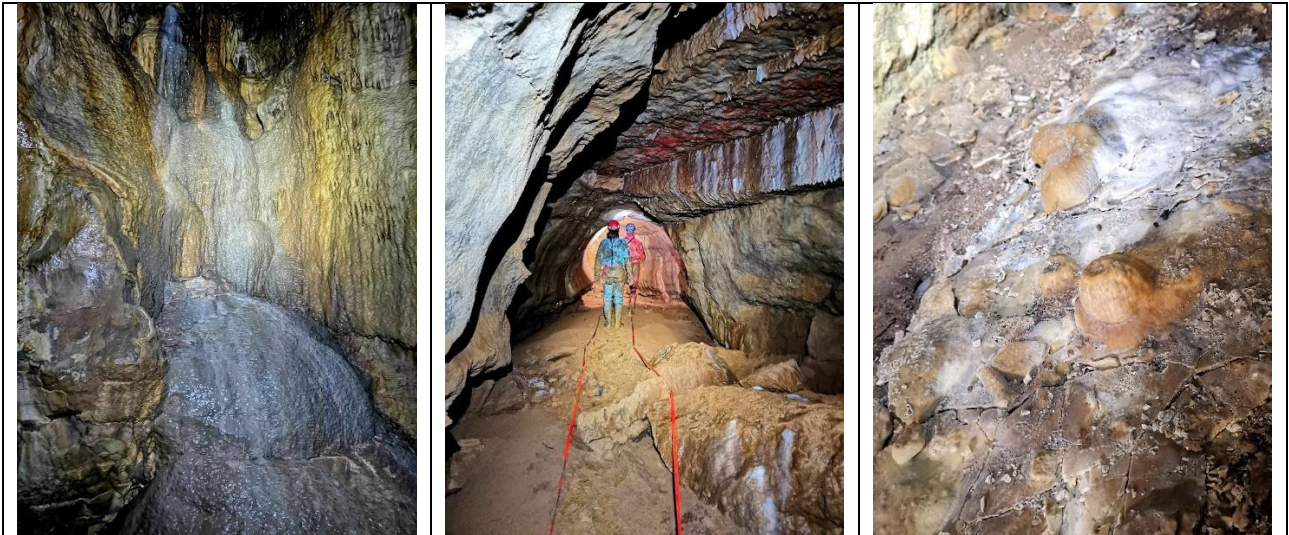
All photos by Gaz Mcshee.



When we reached Cherty Two Passage, Mark and Steve stayed back for a chat while David and I joined Doug on a trip out to the dig face. As with the rest of the cave it did not disappoint; broken stals and flowstone are everywhere, and the walls seem to melt behind the flowstone, leaving a veneer hanging almost magically in thin air. It is certainly something that is against everything you are used to, in just about every cave system you will ever go in. We made our way out finding even more amazing things that we had totally missed on our way in, and almost lost track of time. At one point myself and Doug had a total 'Bro Mo' and completely lost the others, while huddled in a heap on the floor sharing a



moment taking pictures of tiny *Helictites* on a broken stall pile, it really was that kind of place, because of its uniqueness.



Mark had made a remarkable recovery, and to be honest, it's proof that had caving been allowed during lock down the Covid figures would have fallen dramatically (I have no medical training so don't bite me if this is not a cure for Covid, but it has more substance than drinking bleach, and it certainly had a miraculous effect on Mark) so with his renewed vigour he started up one of the ropes while David and Steve jumped on the other two and off into the sunset they went. 'Bro-Mo' two, you all ask? OK, so the shaft was a little full, and Doug said, "Why don't we go and have a look at the dig I was on for two years ? I've not seen it for a while. It will only take five minutes." Awww, go on then, why not ? And that was that; off into a different sunset we went.



I cannot tell you the excitement one man can get from being reunited with his spade after two years. It was a beauty to behold, although I did think I may have to look away for a brief moment.

Then, just the formality of the shaft to surface remained, and I told Doug that he should go first as he would be much quicker than me, so after admiring each other's rope walking set-ups, off he went on his nice Orpheus 11mm utility rope. I waited until he hit the shaft proper, and then set off after him. My pencil thin rope was a pain; hand/foot up, pull down the slack while holding tension on the other hand; repeat over and over until I got into the shaft, then the rope slid. I entered the shaft, put on my 'pantin', and the same thing happened again. Eventually off we went, and after a ballet in a brickworks I was within sight of the top. 'Bro-Mo' 3 you ask? OK, a face appeared over the entrance,

"Shall I throw this yellow rope down?", said Doug.

"No", said I, "I don't fancy free climbing this with broken legs, although it's probably warmer down here than up there".

"Only joking", he said, and after I topped out he said, "Hey, you weren't so slow".

All in all an amazing day, and Doug, you have a friend for life, even if you are a member of the 'Awfulness'.

Meanwhile, on the Water Icicle 'Freeview' Trip:

Neil, Grace and Jenny had all seen the gated North-West extensions before, and as there was a limit to the numbers who could visit for conservation reasons, we went elsewhere. We poked our noses into almost all of the rest of the known system, up to the point that the cave became either too tight, wet, or squalid. Shows why we don't discover any new stuff with that attitude! The only passage we didn't get to see was the 'Olympic Stroll', where we thought the start couldn't possibly lead anywhere. Neil climbed up into the Great Rift, and Grace splashed her way along Batty Farber passage. The climb back to daylight resulted in me either going slowly, frogging up the pitch, or where it was narrow, trying to go fast, rope walking, then getting out of breath and having to stop to get my breath back again. Back on the surface, it was still a sunny day, but with a strong cold wind. We headed back to the cars to get changed, and then waited for the others, on the NW Passage trip, to surface.

Jenny Drake

Alan Brentnall: re Gaz's comments on passage sizes.

Most of the large passages you see in WICC were created by phreatic action, i.e. formed by water under pressure which filled the whole passage, and, because of this mechanism, these passages do not always form a downhill route. They also were created a long, long time ago, well before the formation of the cryogenic calcites you saw, and the surface geology was almost certainly very different to what it is today.

Another interesting mine nearby, Raven Mine, also has natural, large phreatic passages relatively close to the surface - also part-filled with glacial mud.

But there are certainly more questions than answers!!

Alan Brentnall



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 1st December 2021.

Raven Mine, Lathkill Dale, Derbyshire.

Gaz Mcshee

So let's Cover the safety aspects first shall we !

'Warning - at present the eye hole leads directly onto the 55ft pitch - Be Roped Up !'

From the base of the 55ft pitch a natural passage is followed through a dangerous choke.

A lot of the entrance shaft is on old wooden ladders, useful when re ascending but for safety stick to SRT.

At the bottom of the entrance shaft you're presented with a bedding plane crawl. It's probably best to sneak a peek through this head-first. It's good to know what lies ahead as it leads through to a deep shaft which is usually flooded (if it isn't it's generally found it to be still flooded with Co2), and finally, the mined passages include climbs (some quite awkward), so it's worth taking a short 20m rope and some slings.

Even the name, 'Raven Mine' fills you with trepidation. Anyone who had 'Resident Evil' on the original PlayStation will remember being picked apart by a flock of them, to the beautifully creepy Moonlight Sonata.

Grade 2 - what are we up against here? I was going to solo this trip before Jenny Drake, and then Steve Colley, decided that (on this lovely cold wet November morning) they would join me on an adventure into the unknown.

It started well enough. I got to Bakewell early to pick up Jenny and went in search of a sandwich shop. I'd already got my caving layers on so as to save time later, but as I left the butty shop the heavens opened, in a display fit for the book of Exodus, and before I had got near a hole in the ground I was drenched and cold !

Anyway, I collected Jenny and we headed up to the Lathkill layby where we met up with Steve, and after getting ready, we trudged off over the fields to the mine entrance.



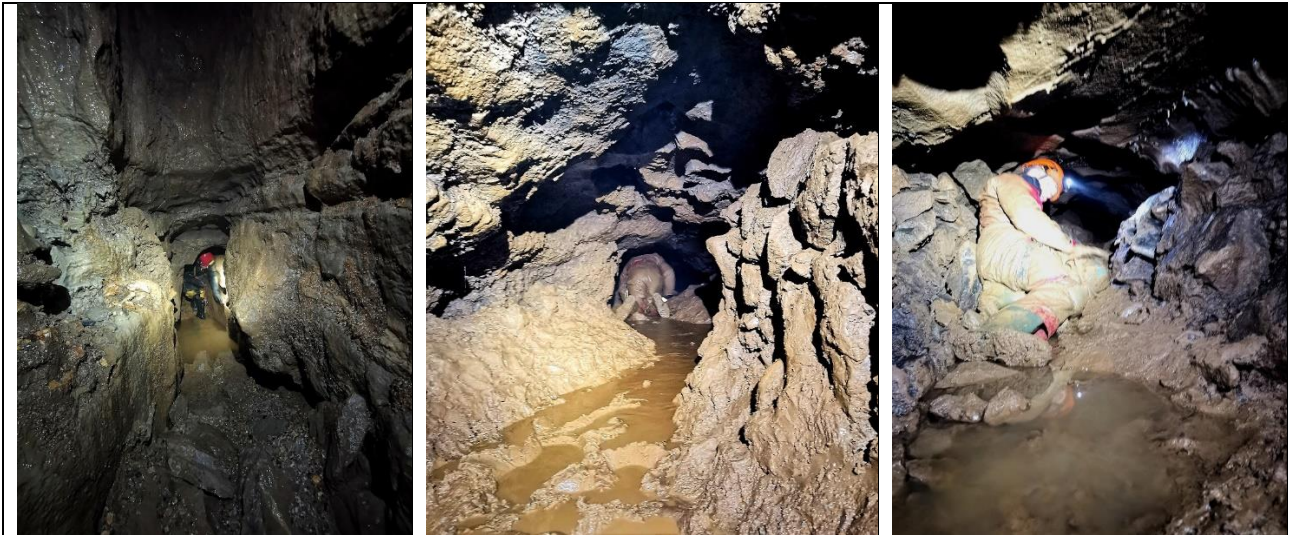
To say the entrance was a little overgrown would be an understatement, and we had to do a little digging to free the lid from its bindings. Once opened, the lid revealed the true esoteric nature of this place, it was a vegetarian's paradise, if only cows could abseil ! Jenny rigged, and dropped in first, and straight away gave us another health and safety update: "You'd better watch this ginging, erm, yes ..., watch this ginging !!!". Now I'm no expert, but from what I'd seen, the first thing I had decided was that I was definitely not touching the sides, so this confirmation was a welcome blessing. Steve

dropped next and I followed. The shaft was actually quite beautiful, and other than the fact that it's due to collapse at any time, it's well worth the effort. The shaft does a bit of bobbing and weaving as you get lower, and just as it gets to its tightest and most horrifically unstable section (due not to T'Owd man but to T'young man and his precariously balanced dig-waste) the solid ladders become squashy wooden things with many missing rungs, and the shaft becomes a mini 'Bitch Pitch'.



At the base the adrenalin kicks in at the source of all our fears - The Eye Hole. Do we go and have a look ? Jenny was already through and had abbed into the pitch, only to return as the shaft was too flooded to enter the lower workings. Steve and I both went in blind, and surprisingly the dragon turned out to be a butterfly. One fear out of the way, we quickly laid rest to another - the dangerous choke. We soon passed the farthest point of the 1993 survey. The later survey we had had turned to mush in Jenny's pocket as a result of the deluge pouring in through every tiny crack in the roof, so we had to just guess our way on. To be honest it was pretty straight forward. The weird thing was that the place was full of broken pottery ! It must have come from the surface, but we found no sign of a shaft down which it could have been dropped. Steve was very interested in the inscriptions on one particular piece. "I can't quite make it out", he said, so after a good clean with something other than Steve's dirty glove, the inscription turned out to say absolutely nothing, it was water staining under the glaze ! Ha ha, Steve, you should have gone to Specsavers!

After a short crawl back, another fear was dispelled as 'the awkward climb' turned out to be a very muddy grade 2 scramble! Thank goodness for that - as I've climbed E5, I'd have jumped down the 55ft pitch holding a boulder tied round my neck if I'd had to resort to a rope! Steve and I continued on up, but Jenny decided not to squeeze through the awkward, and precariously supported continuation, and as a result, probably missed the best bit of the system. There is a lot of potential for digging in every direction up there and also a lot of potential for drowning in mud!



Clearly the further reaches are not for those averse to an excess of mud !

If the entrance shaft had a mini 'Bitch Pitch', this passage was a mini 'Colostomy Crawl', but the passageway was all natural and very much a mini 'Water Icicle Close Cavern'. After pushing every direction to its conclusion we headed back to Jenny and started making our way back to the daylight. I derigged, so the others forged on ahead and left me to suffer the injustice of the mini 'Bitch Pitch' while battling against gravity, with a bag full of gear, and definitely no room to swing a cat! Oh, and now there is one more rung at the bottom of the shaft ! Erm..... , sorry about that diggers. I finally topped out to a lovely hailstorm, and found the others hiding behind the old wall, taking shelter from the barrage.

Once back at the car I discovered, to my horror, that I'd left my dry clothes and towel at home so in one final injustice I had to wear my wet gear home.

So, Raven Mine is definitely a Grade Two for difficulty, but almost certainly a Grade Four for Chinese whispers. A lovely, although very muddy, wallow under the Peak, with great company which is an unusual and very welcome change for me. Thanks Jenny and Steve for a great trip into the unknown, which turned out to be a lot less worrying than it seemed on paper.

I didn't get many pictures as the place was so goddamn wet and muddy so after quite a short time I just couldn't keep the lens clear.

All photographs included in this article are courtesy of Gaz Mcshee.

The full set of Gaz's Raven Mine photos can be found at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/rtBuDxhutZqPvyPB7>

Alan Brentnall added: *One thing not mentioned (probably because it wasn't an issue owing to low surface temperatures during this visit) was CO2. Carbon dioxide is the common denominator for many of the caves and mines around Lathkill Dale. Think about it: Knotlow, etc., Cascade Cavern, Raven Mine, Lathkill Head Cave, Water Icicle - they all suffer, from time to time, from levels of carbon dioxide which are so bad that there is no need for a gas detector. There has got to be a geographical reason for it.*

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Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 5th December 2021.
Minera Mine, near Wrexham, North Wales.

Des Kelly



Darren Conde, Neil Conde and I had a good 4hr trip into Minera yesterday with an intention of looking for new routes to explore on future visits.

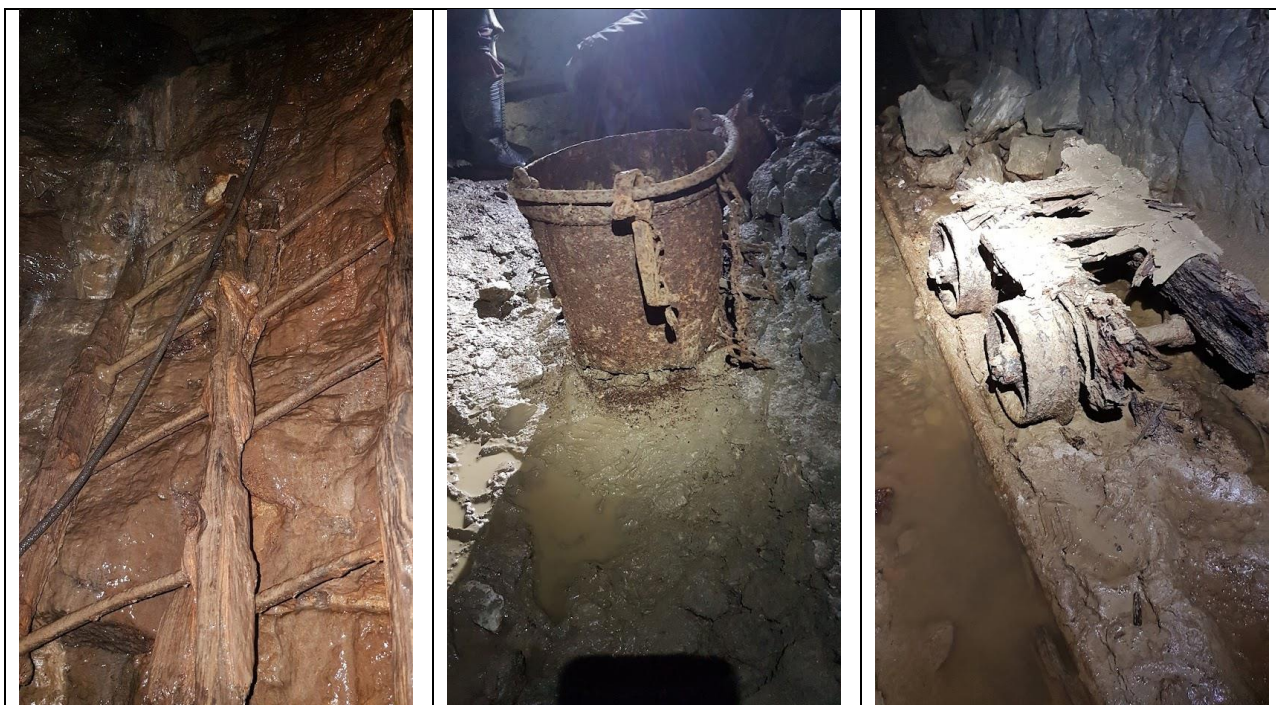
I'm not sure how successful this was for Darren and Neil as they looked like they had seen most of it before, but there were definitely some new areas for me.

I hadn't realised there were so many nice formations in here and there are some pics of them taken at the insistence of the Conde Bros.

All photos by Des Kelly. Above:- Neil. Right:- Darren.



Typical passages in Minera Mine – it's definitely worth remembering to take kneepads.



CONSERVATION: Various mining artefacts remain in-situ, throughout the accessible passages of Minera Mine, including the amazing 'double-ladder'. Conservation of such items, once they are removed from the relatively stable environment of the mine, is very difficult (even for experts), so they are best left undisturbed underground for others to enjoy, until eventually they crumble away.

Concerning Water Icicle Cavern & Raven Mine (Discussion at the 6th December Meeting):

A lively discussion resulted from recent trips to Raven Mine & Water Icicle. This centred around 2 points: The unpredictable air quality in the area, & past radio location work. The origin of the CO₂ which affects the areas caves/mines remains a mystery, but anecdotal evidence backed up by gas measurements (mostly by Alan Brentnall, but also earlier ones by Nigel Cooper) seem to suggest a possible "agricultural" origin. All conjectural of course, but interesting none the less. Discussion of Water Icicle & how the miners originally got in, bought back previous work we did on radio location. Some years ago Jenny Drake built an excellent VLF radio location system for the club, which we used on various projects. One of which was trying to find where the "rift" in Water Icicle almost reaches the surface. Alan B. & Darren Conde positioned the transmitter in the rift, while I (Nigel C.) wandered round with the receiver, to get a surface "fix". Somehow the confirmation of me getting a positive fix seems to have got muddled. This, I only discovered from Alan B. at tonight's meeting! Anyway, I was able to tell Alan of the positive fix in the plantation & one day I'll take a wander over to see if I can narrow it down. (The marker peg must be long rotted away!) As an aside to this, does anyone know what has happened to the Club's radio location system? It's an incredibly useful bit of kit, which seems to have become lost.

Nigel Cooper.

Thanks to those members who have contributed reports or photographs, as part of the ongoing process of recording our club activities. I make no apologies for omissions – if I don't get to hear about something, then I can't include it !

Any contributions are welcome from members for future newsletters.

As 'Editor' I occasionally have to make very minor changes to submitted text – usually in order to make it fit the space available – no criticism or censorship is intended !

Finally, keep safe everyone, keep caving, and have a very happy Christmas.

Steve Knox.

12th December 2021