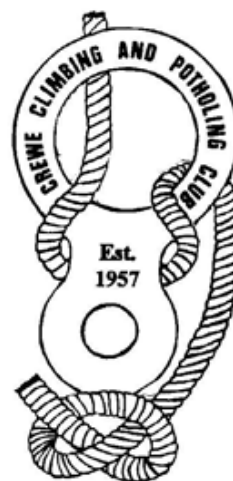




# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 129. January 2022 to March 2022

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[www.ccpc.org.uk](http://www.ccpc.org.uk)

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## Editorial:

I was definitely overly optimistic in the previous Newsletter concerning Covid. It seemed to be easing, but has come back as a new variant with a vengeance – Annie and I can vouch for that !! Even so, caving continues, and members are still enjoying trips out, both underground and on the hills

Monthly CCPC meetings are back at 'The Red Bull', in Butt Lane, and, for those who can't get there in person, we are trying to continue with 'Zoom', on-line. We have decided 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 still need to be clear about whether individuals are actually paid-up members, for many aspects of the club. At one time we maintained a 'Members List', available to all paid-up members, with names, addresses, and 'phone numbers, and these days we would normally include e-mail addresses, which made it much easier to keep in contact with each other. Is this possible in these times of data protection ?

Steve Knox January 2022.

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.

## Planned Club Meets, etc., from January 2022 to March 2022:



### *Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club:*

January 2022	Moorfurlong Mine, Bradwell, Derbys. Alternative: Carlswark Caverns	<b>10 Members attended Moorfurlong Mine.</b>
	A.G.M., followed by the January Meeting.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, near Kidsgrove. 8.30 pm., and also by 'Zoom'.
	New Goyden Pot, Nidderdale, Yorks. Alternative: Hagg Gill Pot	S.R.T. trip.
	Poacher's Cave, North Wales. Alternative: Maskhill Mine, Derbyshire.	Electron ladder, or rope for entrance. Alt.: Deep S.R.T. trip.
February 2022	The February Meeting.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, near Kidsgrove. 8.30 pm., and also by 'Zoom'.
	Brightgate Cave, Matlock, Derbyshire. Alt.: Cumberland Cavern, Derbyshire..	Interesting complex maze of joints and bedding cave passages.
	Ashford Black Marble Mines, Derbys.	Easy mine – extensive pillar & stall work.
March 2022	The March Meeting.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, near Kidsgrove. 8.30 pm., and also by 'Zoom'.
	Link Pot - Serendipity, Easegill, Yorks. Alt.: Mistral Hole, Easegill, Yorks.	Tight entrance. Serendipity pitches can become impassable after heavy rain.
	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.	Fee payable. Various routes.

	Alternative: Giants Hole, Derbyshire.	Alt. £3 fee payable.
Limited privately organised activities take place as, and when, permissible, complying with current government restrictions. Some members are still having to self-isolate or 'shield' 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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## Club History:

### Attempts to extend Giants Hole, Castleton, Derbyshire. 1957 - ..... ? - tales of dedication, determination, and er .... disappointment ?

Like cavers everywhere, members of CCPC, past and present, have always been keen to find new caves, or even just new bits of caves we already know well. Ideally we keep accurate and comprehensive notes to record our efforts [little hope of that !] so we can avoid repeating the efforts of others, but more importantly, to indicate unfinished projects that a new generation with more enthusiasm, determination, skills, knowledge, [O.K., enough !!!] might actually finish the job. There can be no doubt that there is still plenty to find – summed up by that universally amazing question, spouted by a tourist in the Speedwell Cave boat one day, “Exactly how many undiscovered caves are there ?” Err .....

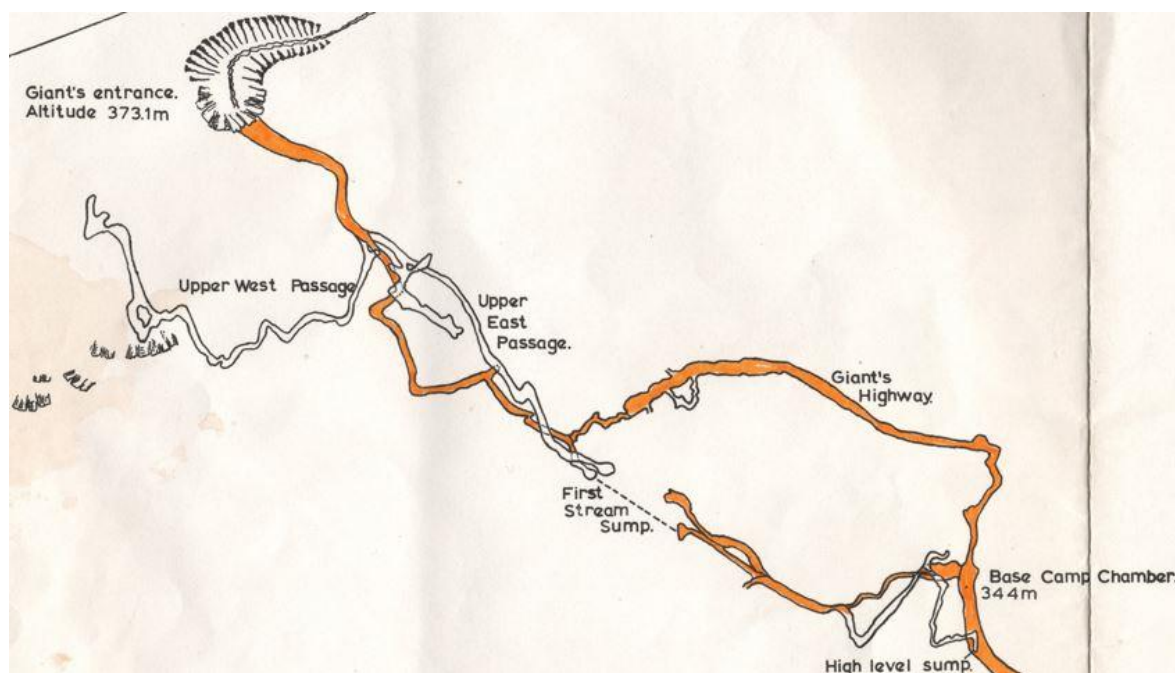
To get back to the point. CCPC has had a very long association with Giants Hole, and, over the years, we have pursued various projects to break through into new ground. Some of this activity has been recorded by those involved in our various Logbooks, Minutes, and Newsletters, and I have dipped into this material to produce the following article.

#### Part 1; Early Days in Giants – Ralph Johnson wrote (included in the June 1984 Newsletter):-

‘This particular ‘dig’ [despite no digging at all] began in about **1957**, when two intrepid teenagers, clad in layers of woolly pullies and armed with a couple of modified bicycle lamps and a home-made wood and hemp ladder, set off for their new find in Giant’s Hole. In those days you couldn’t get into it if the weather was bad; first there was a ‘duck’ about 50 metres in [‘The Curtain’], which threatened to drown anyone attempting to exit against the current, and secondly, the first sump had to be bailed. This took three men about two hours, since they had to move about 5000 gallons of water – I counted several times ! [Me too – Editor]. If the rain had been heavy the previous week, the water running in just about equalled the bailing rate. Even in dry weather you always had to bear in mind the possibility of heavy rain filling the sump before you returned, or the likelihood of someone letting the bungs out of the dams !

Anyway – back to my story. On one of our aborted sessions on the way out we noticed a stream coming out of the left-hand wall, just before Pillar Crawl (Pillar Crawl disappeared years ago). An awkward climb landed us in a tight upward sloping passage with a tighter right-hand bend. After some difficulty we arrived in an aven from which the water appeared. With our paltry lights we could hardly see each other, let alone the top, through the torrent of water, so we went home. (Me on my bike.) A couple of weeks later, there we were, Mike Scott and myself, back in the aven, with the sum total of two bits of metal called pitons, one coal hammer, two ladders and a couple of krabs. After a few feet I decided that discretion was the better part of valour, so I handed Mike the hammer and the remaining peg, and he continued upwards by standing on one ladder fastened to a peg, before planting the second peg higher for the next ladder, transferring to the new ladder before removing the lower peg. Now this may sound stupid in this different age, but these pegs had cost us 2/9 each (that’s about 14p in ‘new’ money !), and being skint, its all we could afford, and also, we didn’t possess any lifelines !

Eventually Mike reached about 20 feet up, while I shivered below. Suddenly a ‘ping’ was followed by a brief cry as the top peg came out, sending Mike back in the direction he had come, leaving his fingernails behind as he clawed at the rock in an attempt to arrest his fall. Luckily for him (but not for me) his fall was broken by yours truly. Needless to say, we were somewhat discouraged, and never went back.’



Part of the 1966-1969 Eldon Survey.

Ralph's 'Dig' is located in the right-hand wall of Giant's Highway (when going in).

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**Part 2: 30<sup>th</sup> December 1972 – Rob Heath, Peter Heath, & Jeff Fox checked out Ralph's 'dig' – (recorded by Ralph in the 1972 Logbook).**

About fourteen years after the first attempt, Rob, Peter and Jeff had a look up the passage, but Ralph couldn't follow due to 'old age, lack of nerve, and a very baggy boiler suit' he claimed. They found the crawl tight, and with a right-angled bend to the right. All three agreed that the aven could be scaled, or even, possibly, free climbed. As they exited, Brian Mather arrived and was persuaded to have a look. He free climbed partway up the aven and decided that it could be done. No-one showed any inclination to return.

On a later trip, Rob Heath and Tony Reynolds had a quick look, but didn't get to the aven.

**Early January 1973:**

Kevin Mountford and Phil Tellwright were persuaded by Ralph to visit 'his aven', and decided that scaling poles would be the most likely way to reach the top.

Kev's write-up (edited): 'This is where the adventurous Phil and I stepped in. We decided not to use pitons, but to use scaling poles. One cold and frosty Saturday morning we went to Giants (in cars this time, not on bicycles) with 30 foot of scaling poles sticking out of the boot. We entered the cave with a rucksack each, and the scaling poles, and made our way to the small passage Ralph had described. Full of excitement I climbed up to the crawl, with the help of a push from Phil. I went 5 feet up the crawl and came back. Phil asked if I had reached the aven, and I answered, 'I'm not going up that crawl', and climbed back down again. Phil then tried but returned when his Petzl helmet wouldn't fit through the squeeze, so I gave him mine because mine is a lot smaller. Phil vanished back up the crawl and a few minutes later shouted back that he had reached the aven. I built up my courage again and started up the crawl, only to find that I had to take Phil's helmet off and push it in front of me. At a 45 degree bend I couldn't push the helmet

round, so Phil came back and took it off me. Once in the aven, Phil pointed out Ralph's piton, still there after 27 years [Kev's maths !! - it was actually about 16 years].

Phil chimney-ed up the aven to see where to put a bolt and returned, then I climbed up to the piton and fastened a rope to it and tied myself on. I knew the piton would still be safe after 27 (?) years, especially as Ralph had put it in. I dangled for about half an hour putting in the bolt, then attached the rope and ladder and abseiled down to a shivering Phil, who was blue with cold. Phil put the next bolt in, and we repeated this for about three hours, before retreating.

Next day, Phil and I returned with Paul Holdcroft. Ralph's original piton was removed, then Phil placed another bolt. With the ladder attached to the final bolt Phil was able to enter a passage similar to Crab Walk, but it closed down to a squeeze after four feet. By breathing out and pushing hard he was able to enter the chamber beyond. A small stream ran through the six-foot-high chamber, but the only way on was a three-inch square hole. Phil came down, and Paul went up and as far as the squeeze, but declared Phil to be b..... daft for going through it, and came back. I climbed up, took one look, agreed with Paul about the squeeze, then unclipped the ladder and abseiled back down.' **Job done ! Passage explored to a conclusion.**

19<sup>th</sup> January 1973: Ralph and Rob Heath decided to put the set of scaling poles out of the way, in 'Ralph's Aven', however Rob had to take the poles in on his own, as Ralph backed off, having forgotten how tight the entrance crawl was !

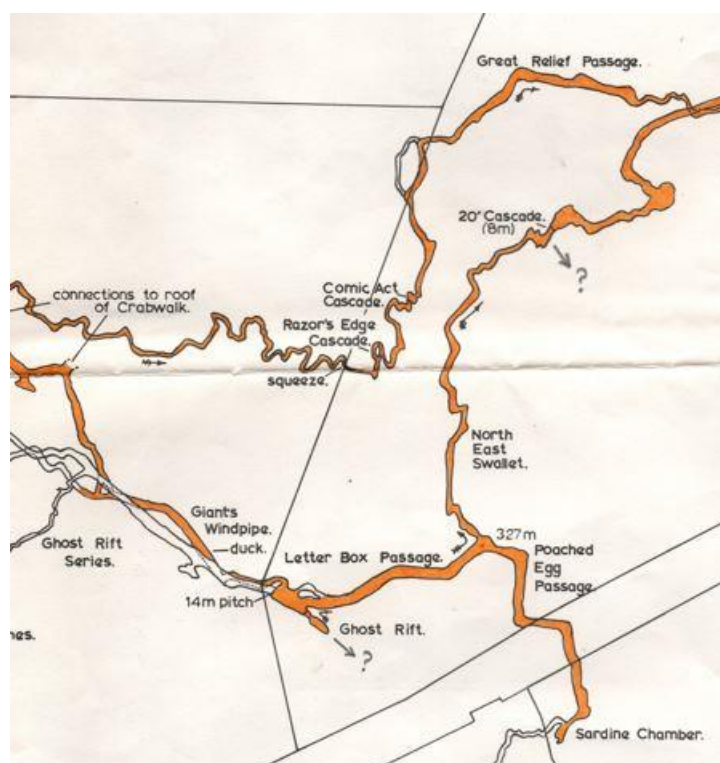
2<sup>nd</sup> February 1973: John Preston attempted to pass the crawl to the aven to recover the scaling poles, but found it too tight. Jeff Fox and Peter Heath tried to reach the scaling poles too, but failed.

13<sup>th</sup> April 1974: Rob Heath recovered the scaling poles from the aven while Ralph waited at the start of the crawl. The scaling poles were for use at '**Pres's Passage**' – see below.

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**Part 3: 'Pres's Passage' (AKA 'Rob's Dig'), (AKA 'Cascade Passage'), now, apparently, called 'Jubilee Passage', Giant's Hole ( Page 95: Caves of the Peak District).**

While clearing out a pile of old notebooks I came across several pages relating to one of CCPC's digs from many years ago (a proper dig this time !).

I've combined my notes with an article Rob Heath (I think) produced in late 1984:



Back in 1978, Ralph wrote: “ ‘The Dig’ is situated immediately above the cascade (climb down) midway between the ‘Giant’s Windpipe’ and the ‘Eating House’. Full details of the early work are entered in the Club Log (1975). Further entries on progress are in Logs from 1978 onwards. (There was a 2 ½ year gap in keeping Logs.” [ NOTE: The 1975 Club Log is missing.]

‘The Dig’ location is marked with an arrow and a question mark, next to the 20’ Cascade (8 metres).

The location of ‘Death Aven’ is marked with an arrow and a question mark, next to Ghost Rift.

Part of the 1966-1969 Eldon Survey.



**This next 30 year story starts at the end of the Death Aven project (see later):**

- 18 November 1973: After a successful bolting session to reach the top of '**Death Aven**' [turn left across the flowstone ledge at the Ghost Rift junction, into the base of the aven], four of us (very cold and wet by then) visited John Preston's newly spotted passage above the cascade, but didn't attempt to get in.
- 19 January 1974: Rob Heath and Ralph Johnson looked at John Preston's passage, and decided that, *'the scaling pole will make this a safe cert.'*
- 2 February 1974: John Preston led a group through 'The Windpipe' as far as the new passage above the cascade. The scaling pole was still in 'Ralph's Aven', see above.
- 13 April 1974: Ralph, Tony Reynolds and Rob Heath collected the scaling pole which had been in Ralph's Aven (now called '**Ralph's Bit**' in Caves of the Peak District, page 94), and took it through 'The Windpipe' to the top of the 20' (20 feet) cascade. The scaling pole was only 17' long, and proved to be 15' too short. Eventually the pole was lifted higher and was jammed across to the target opening from a ledge on the opposite wall, secured by one 'manky' peg. Rob Heath climbed the suspended electron ladder, and disappeared into the new passage. Ralph and Tony followed. The passage was estimated to be about 100' long with a short right-hand branch after 70', which led to a narrow aven. The left branch ended in a small chamber with a muddy pool which could possibly be dug. Ralph did not think the passage would 'go', but they left the pole and ladder in place for a future trip.
- 18 April 1974: Rob Heath and Pete Heath used a 2 lb. lump hammer and a star drill to make a hole for an expansion bolt which they used to hang a 'rusty old 8 metre iron ladder' from. The redundant Maypole was recovered to the surface.
- 21 April 1974: Alan Walker and Rob Heath attempted to survey the new passage, but were hampered by the mud and grit.
- 28 May 1974: Rob Heath and Pete Heath, plus three others spent a couple of hours digging mud out of the silted sump at end of the new passage. They could see *'the passage heightening after a flat-out crawl for five or six feet, and bearing left'*, and felt the passage looked *'quite promising'*.
- 6 July 1974: Tony Reynolds and Rob Heath spent a couple of hours digging through the mud blockage, and got through into about 10 yards of flat-out crawl which ended when the mud met the roof again.  
[Later, the full party of five, including Tony and Rob, were trapped for eight hours beyond the Filthy-Five pitches.]
- 5 January 1975: A digging team of eight arrived to find the 8-metre ladder had been removed.
- February 1975: Newsletter:- *'Fixed ladders should be on 'Rob's Dig' by 10<sup>th</sup> February'*.
- 7 February 1975: Four sections of steel signal ladder were taken in and assembled at 'The Dig' by eight pupils from Maryhill School. It was slightly short and could not be fixed safely.
- 31 March 1975: A party of eight re-sited the ladder and fixed it securely, then Neil Lawton and Rob Heath went to the end of the passage, by then about 30 feet beyond

the sump, and continued removing semi-solid mud which constricted a horizontal section of the 18-inch-high passage.

- April 1975: Newsletter:- *'The dig is progressing well. 100' + now. We need volunteers (small ones) and a name – something meaningful. "Cascade Passage" is the current suggestion'.*
- 26 June 1975: Alan Scragg, Rob Heath, Alan Walker and Phil Needham continued to remove mud from the tight passage.
- January 1976: Newsletter:- *'Rob's Dig (we still need a name). The passage now extends over 100' (more than half excavated) in a S.E. direction i.e. at right angles to the main Upper Series, and parallel to The Connection. Rob could hear water in the distance.*  
*NB. The stream entering and leaving The Connection reappears in Oxlow more than twice its original volume in The Connection. 'Our passage is directly in line with its proposed route. The dispute still rages as to whether or not it should be pushed, or the floor removed first. Any help would be much appreciated. A team of two or three can push the passage about 5' in a session. The spade should be collected from Ralph, but the rest of the equipment is left in place'.*
- 5 January 1976: Ralph, Tony, Alan and Rob found the horizontal section seemed to heighten after they had dug out the mud fill, gaining about 6 feet.
- March 1976: Newsletter:- *'The usual request for help on the dig'.*
- June 1976: Newsletter:- *'The dig has been held up by lambing, but access to the face was improved in May, so if you fancy a go, don't hesitate.*
- 20 June 1976: Alan and Rob found that digging, and then shifting the mud along the horizontal section proved to be almost impossible, as there was not enough room for the spoil-tray and the digger. They gained about 5 feet of progress and reached a corner from where the passage dipped slightly and went to the left. Another system for moving spoil back along the horizontal section needed to be devised.
- November 1976: Newsletter:- *'Rumour has it that there is to be a major breakthrough in Giant's in the New Year.'*
- 2 January 1977: Despite the winter conditions, six diggers attempted to push the passage further, but ended up enlarging the dug-out section instead.
- 11 April 1977: Ralph, Rob, Jeff Fox, and Steve Knox used a strip of belt to aid moving the filled drag trays along, and progress was made to just round the left-hand bend. Voices could be heard ahead.
- 19 June 1977: Ralph and Rob Heath were at 'The Dig' for the final push (we all hoped). The passage could be seen to be enlarging about 5 feet ahead, as the floor began to drop away. After the corner the 'fill' had changed from mud to a mud and shale mixture which was easier to dig. Six trays of this material were dragged back and stacked, then Rob went into the passage feet first, and pushed the remaining debris through with his boots. It was tight, but the spoil fell away down a slope beyond the constriction.

Rob wrote: *'The passage opened out into a clean washed, uneven, sharp-floored passage, approximately three feet high, and the same width, trending downwards and veering slightly to the left. On the right was a 3-4 feet wide low passage, leading steeply up to more constricted (low) passage which veered to the left (unexplored). The main passage extended about 160 feet and involved flat-out, strenuous crawling, in an attempt to protect wet suits, small, white straw formations, and very thin and fragile mud formations on the passage floor. It ended in an unprotected slope (down) into Giant's Upper Series. This was later proved by voice connection (but no light was seen) to join above the clean-washed, smooth and slippery 4-5 feet high cascade.'*

- July 1977: Newsletter:- ***'Well, it goes !! Ralph and Rob broke through the dig on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> June. The remaining mud was stacked into the sides of the approach. Rob squeezed through, followed by Ralph, who got stuck. The passage has now been enlarged. It swings to the left to re-join the Upper Series, but a tight bedding plane leads off right to ..... Oxlow ? They were too shattered to force this. A selection of pegs, and a 60' ladder are required to complete the connection (back into the Upper Series, downstream of the cascade). The roof of the left-hand passage has a few stals, so be careful.'***
- 31 July 1977: Ralph, Rob, and Dave Riley returned to the far end of 'The Dig' passage. They belayed about 50-60 feet of ladder to a peg in the floor of the side passage at the end, and found that the first 5-6 feet of ladder led onto a large ledge, then the pitch dropped directly down into the Upper Series streamway at the small cascade. After derigging the pitch they attempted the bedding plane passage, but found it very vertically constricted. The floor could be seen to drop away about 2-3 feet beyond the constriction, and then the passage turned sharply right, concealing the continuation.
- 13 August 1977: Ralph, Rob, and Simon Leech, took a plumbers' propane gas cylinder and 20 feet of tubing into the bedding plane in an attempt to shatter the rock in the constriction. The blowtorch kept going out for no obvious reason, the tube was slightly too short, and they ran out of matches so had to abandon the attempt. Later Tony Reynolds and Dave Riley tried to work there with a hammer and chisel, but there was insufficient room to work.
- Sept./Oct. 1977: Newsletter:- *'The Dig: Despite convincing arguments put forward, hammers do not work unless the operator is about 8 inches tall'.*
- 27 December 1977: A group of seven managed to transport an air cylinder and a very heavy 'dynamic' pneumatic hammer through the Upper Series and through the dug passage to the bedding plane constriction. Despite working well on the surface, it proved to be ineffectual in the confines of the work site. A few flakes of rock were chipped off, but it was impossible to use the hammer effectively when holding it at arm's length. There were problems when the chisel tip flew out of the hammer and landed beyond the constriction – fortunately just within reach – and when the pressurised tube exploded off the hammer.

- December 1977: Newsletter:- *'No connection to Oxlow, yet, but the pneumatic hammer is very effective' – on the surface !*
- 7 January 1978: Tony Reynolds and Dave Gill inspected the squeeze in 'The Dig' passage but decided it needed 'bang' to pass it.
- 26 March 1978: Ralph and Rob Heath visited 'The Dig' with an expansion drill. They baled the 'sump' in the passage then pushed on to the end. Rob attempted to use the drill at the tight part of the bedding plane, while Ralph used a hammer and star drill at the other end of the passage to resite the bolt. The trip was not a success as the muddy conditions caused the expansion drill to jam, and then two vanes broke off the star drill, so they had to stop work and leave.
- March (?) 1978: Newsletter:- *'The Dig' goes somewhere ! Rob and Ralph, on a mammoth duo-digging trip, definitely heard voices ahead, and the digging is getting easier, and the passage looks to be opening up.'*
- 2 April 1978: Tony Gamble finished off the bolt hole which Ralph had started, so it was ready for a  $\frac{3}{4}$  " rawl-bolt. Eric Rogers worked with the expansion drill, and gained about 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches in three quarters of an hour, before the drill jammed.
- 23 July 1978: Tony Gamble and Eric Rogers used 'the new drill' and completed three holes.
- 30 July 1978; Eric Rogers and Malcolm Jump deepened two holes, and started a fourth before they were forced to stop when the drill-bit failed. Conditions in 'The Dig' meant that it was not a pleasant place to remain for very long, and it was frustrating when the drills kept breaking. They estimated that four more drilling trips would be needed before the site was ready for blasting.
- 13 August 1978: Malcolm Jump and Tony Reynolds checked the ladder bolts, then worked to complete two holes, but left with the drill bit stuck in one of them.
- 20 August 1978: Ralph, Denise and Helen visited 'The Dig', and recovered the drill bit.
- 3 September 1978: The drill was recovered, having been abandoned during the previous week.
- 28 October 1978: The drill was taken into the dig, and left there, but no work was done.
- 7 October 1978: Tony Gamble, Malcolm Jump and Dave Howard drilled for two hours, resulting in four holes.
- October 1978: Newsletter:- *'The Dig – we now have 3 x 3" holes and 1 x 4" hole. The three need deepening to 4". A couple of hours work is required for these holes to be banged – it might then be possible to get through, but we may need three more'.*
- 4 February 1979: Finally, everything was ready to 'bang' the restriction. Tony Reynolds, Tony Gamble and Bob Panton assisted Clive Westlake – *'the bang was cut into bits and stuffed into the four holes (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb of 'jelly') since the sticks were 1  $\frac{1}{8}$ " diameter, and the holes were only 1". The whole lot was buried under a mountain of mud, and (they) all retreated. BANG ! the earth (rock) shook and (they) set off to the bottom to let the fumes clear. On returning to examine the damage, fully expecting a massive cavity leading into a waking*



*size passage into Oxlow or Peak or .... Somewhere. No chance. The rock was barely scratched – but the mud had gone !’.*

- June 1979: Newsletter:- *‘Dare I mention ‘The Dig’ ?’.*
- 8 November 1981: The first visit to ‘The Dig’ for many months. One hole was drilled, and a new rope was put onto the ladder.
- May - October 1982: There were casual visits to ‘The Dig’, in passing, and some drilling was done by Phil, Kevin, Ralph and Geoff.
- 20 November 1982: *‘BANG ! Courtesy of Nigel Dibden and others. It certainly made a lot of smoke and noise.’*
- 5 December 1982: While caving with others, Ralph visited ‘The Dig’, intending to retrieve a ladder left there by Paul, but was adversely affected by residual ‘bang’ fumes while baling the sump, so retreated.
- 12 December 1982: Paul, Stan, Kev and Phil removed the spare ladder, and examined the ‘bang’ site. The explosive had worked, but not enough, apparently.
- December 1982: Newsletter:- *‘The Dig was recently subjected to about a pound of Dr. Nobel’s magic mixture’.*
- Summer 1984: Newsletter:- Ralph and Geoff Millington carried out further drilling in ‘The Dig’.
- 26 October 1984: **‘Bang !’**
- January 1987: Minutes:- Ralph, Paul, Ross and Alistair restarted ‘The Dig’ in Giants.
- February 1987: The diggers were trying to borrow a battery powered electric drill.
- January 1989: At ‘The Dig’, the drill is working better with the new battery pack. The worn rope on the cascade is to be removed.
- May 1992: Bang used in ‘The Dig’ in Giants.
- 13 January 2000: Matt Ryan squeezed through the terminal constriction, then was able to turn round and return.
- Spring 2002: Newsletter 73:- The iron ladder at the entrance to ‘The Dig’ has been removed, and will (most likely) be reused in ‘The Bung’ in Speedwell.
- 13 February 2017 Matt Ryan added a comment to a UKCaving thread (online): ‘I passed the constriction in the side passage by virtue of being very thin and swearing a lot. If I remember correctly, then the "pitch" you can hear is an easy climb down of a metre or so but the passage beyond only continues another couple of metres before ending at a mud fill.

It is amazing how many individuals were involved. No further references have been located, and I doubt if anyone has visited the passage since the ladder was removed twenty years ago.

**I still don’t know how the passage came to be re-named ‘Jubilee Passage’ -** ( Page 95: Caves of the Peak District). [The Queen’s Silver Jubilee was in 1977, the breakthrough was in June 1977.]

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**Part 4: 'Death Aven' (AKA 'Steve's Aven'), now, apparently, called 'Knox Aven', Giant's Hole ( Page 95: Caves of the Peak District).**

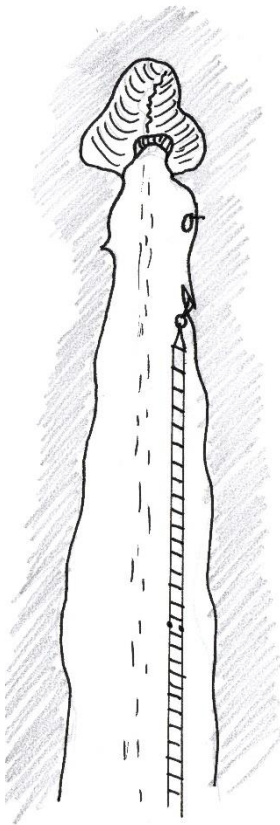
Having purchased the latest survey of Giants Hole & Oxlow Caverns, I was intrigued by the number of apparent 'dead ends' where passages just stopped (or started !) One of these was the southeast end of Ghost Rift – the survey even had an arrow showing a stream entering at that point, but nothing beyond. During my next Giants trip I made a point of investigating further. On approaching from the direction of Poached Egg Passage, in other words, heading 'upstream', the high void of Ghost Rift is met almost at right-angles, with the North-East Swallet stream splashing in down a flowstone covered wall on the left. The floor-level hole down into 'The Windpipe' is immediately to the right. Attempting to climb up left, where the stream cascaded in was difficult, but a short climb, above 'The Windpipe' entrance followed by an easy traverse left, across the flowstone covered wall, allowed access to a short, ascending, canyon-type passage with a couple of small steps upwards. The passage ended at the base of a beautiful, water-washed aven, soaring (well, going up, anyway) into the darkness above. Having seen it, I was keen to revisit the aven with some gear and a band of trusty helpers.

**11<sup>th</sup> November 1973:** I returned with John Preston, Jeff Fox, Rob Heath, and my brother, David, plus a bag of pitons, bolts, and a hammer, rope, and an electron ladder. David dutifully dragged the heaviest bag through 'The Windpipe', which was as wet as I've ever seen it, while we struggled with the remaining lighter gear. Fortunately battery powered electric drills hadn't been invented (at least, we didn't know about them, or own one) otherwise David's bag would have been even heavier. The weather had been wet for days, and in the aven we found the falling stream was not inconsiderable, and was unavoidable in the restricted space. I managed to climb up about 10 feet in the narrowest part then put a peg in and clipped etriers to it. Reaching up I was able to place a bolt at arms-length above (these were the sort of fittings which involved laboriously hammering and rotating a self-driving shield, to maximum depth, then using a separate bolt and a hanger). Once fixed, the electron ladder was clipped to the hanger, and the etriers were recovered. From the highest point possible, using the ladder, the next bolt was installed, then the other end of the ladder was pulled up and attached to the new hanger. This leap-frog progress continued, using natural belays wherever possible to speed up progress. Eventually, with about 30 feet of height gained, everyone was too cold to continue, so the task was left with only about 4 feet remaining to the top. We left the ladder hanging from a convenient natural flake, at our high point. We had been underground for about six hours, and emerged to complete darkness.

**18<sup>th</sup> November 1973:** A week later we returned (minus Jeff Fox this time), and with less gear to carry. Nothing had changed in the aven, and I was quickly up the ladder to flake that it was hanging from, then continued to work on the higher bolt which John had been installing when we had stopped. The bolt would only go in part way, so I used the etriers on it and left the ladder on the natural belay below, which seemed really sound. The etriers gave me enough extra height to enable me to struggle through the narrow, horizontal slot into the passage above.

The newly gained passage was barely more than hands and knees crawling size, leading off ahead, while behind me it meandered, bottom-less across the top of the aven, and into a totally silted up continuing tube, which headed back in the direction of Ghost Rift chamber. It was the sight of that meandering roof tube above, which had encouraged us to climb the aven in the first place.

The new passage was not going to be easy. In cross-section it was vaguely egg-timer shaped, with the miniscule stream running across the silt and gravel which partially filled the lower part of the egg-timer. I wriggled along for about fifteen feet to where the passage curved to the right. It was continuing at the same size. I retreated, unable to turn round, and regained the top of the aven. I pulled up a very short length of ladder and belayed it to a small rock calcited into the passage floor,



and used this to regain our main ladder, then descended so John could investigate the passage. He was able to install a bolt in the floor of the new passage, and with much cursing and general acrobatics we moved the ladder, and lifeline (single bolt for both !!!) across to it.

David and Rob had a quick look, but with no immediate hopes of breaking through into further passages, we decided to recover our ladder and rope and leave this for another day.

Our last act was to leave an inscription on the wall: 'C.C.P.C. 1973'.

*[I clearly remember (though it isn't in my write-up), reaching a point where the water was entering the new passage from above, through a mass of calcited pebbles and small rocks, and there was a very strong draught which was blasting the water drops through the gaps. That image has stayed with me, but I really need someone to tell me if it was wishful thinking !!]*

Drawing (left) shows the top part of the aven.

**27 October 1985:** On the way back from a bottoming trip Derek Brookes and I revisited 'Death Aven' – we had called it that because our trusty supporters during the original climb had been practically frozen to death ! We had taken a rope, and Derek climbed the aven using the in-situ bolts and hangers, then investigated the passage at the top. He used the passage-floor bolt, and a doubled rope to descend, and felt that the passage was definitely worth digging.

**January 1987:** Club Minutes -Tony Reynolds and Liam Kealy decided to investigate the site. They excavated a little further along the passage at the top of **Death Aven**, but gave up after reaching a corner and seeing the nature of the passage ahead. *[Had someone else been trying to force this route, but no record has been kept ?]* It seems there were easier options available elsewhere.

**12<sup>th</sup> February 1994:** Brian Edmonds later contributed an item to the Newsletter (August 1994), describing yet another visit to this tantalising location.

**Brian wrote:** 'Several of us, having heard of this promised land, and believing a few hours work with hammer and chisel, or a little 'bang', would lead us to a continuation into an upper gallery, long abandoned, (a bit like Giants Upper Series above The Crabwalk), went to have a look. The final team that turned up were Darren and Neil Conde, Nigel Cooper, Ross Evans and myself, together with Paul's drill and batteries, hammers and chisels, 6 mm bolts for the aven, and two delicate ammo-tins, requiring gentle handling. Ross and I took the longer route via The Eating House and Maggin's Rift, to keep the drill dry, while the rest went via the Upper Series and The Windpipe.

Once we were all at the base of the aven, after climbing and traversing in, we gave Ross a rope-end and sent him up the aven. There was no need to worry about the 6 mm spits being rusted up, as there were already bolts and hangers rusted into the spits, and looking badly corroded. After much jabbering and whinging, Ross finally entered the low crawl at the top of the aven, emptying a pool over us as he did so. We fixed an old (25 years plus) SRT rope to a corroded in-situ hanger in the floor of the passage and both Darren and Neil went up to have a look. Their combined reports deterred Nigel and me from trying the integrity of the belay. It appears that the passage is a flat-out crawl that gets too low very quickly. The floor is of calcite over about 2 or 3 inches of loose fill, and this portion would be relatively easy to dig, opening the passage up to a flat-out crawl. The passage could be seen continuing as low, or lower, for about 20 feet, before going round a gentle corner. A draught and a small amount of water indicate some potential, but generally it was felt not worth the effort, while other, easier of access, and more promising digs exist.

A fixed rope was left on the aven, but it is older (just) than the corroded bolt it is hanging from, which, being a single belay in the floor of the passage, leaves an interesting climb with major rub points. The inscription now reads: C.C.P.C. 73 Don't bother 94 '

.....  
**Part 5: ???** The passage entered at the top of Death Aven, now '**Knox Aven**' (fame at last), is still waiting for someone to make a really serious attempt to open it up. As described above, the horizontal passage is crawling size and is heading out into a blank area on the survey, between Giants and Oxlow. In 1973 we had no rechargeable drills or easy access to explosives, and just left the site for later. A 'later' which never came for us.

I suppose, if it was easy, we would have pushed through into 'caverns measureless to man' back in 1973, but it wasn't, and we didn't. Perhaps this is the year ? – **any takers ?**

**Steve Knox**

.....



### ***Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Peak Cavern.***

Members were required to meet at the Chapel in Castleton, reasonably early, as everyone needed to be underground by 10am and out of the cave by 4pm, due to the Christmas concert being held there in the evening. Some members were hoping to visit Moss Chamber. Gaz sent in a trip report:

'It was a pretty big turnout for the Peak Cavern trip on Saturday, not surprising really as its Peak Cavern and it is worth the effort for just that reason. Initially only four of us arrived at the Chapel so the Moss Chamber trip ended up getting changed to the Tourist Trip so that the two new guys could get a feeling for the place, but as the time to leave approached, more and more appeared, until there were ten of us, all chomping at the bit for some subterranean action.

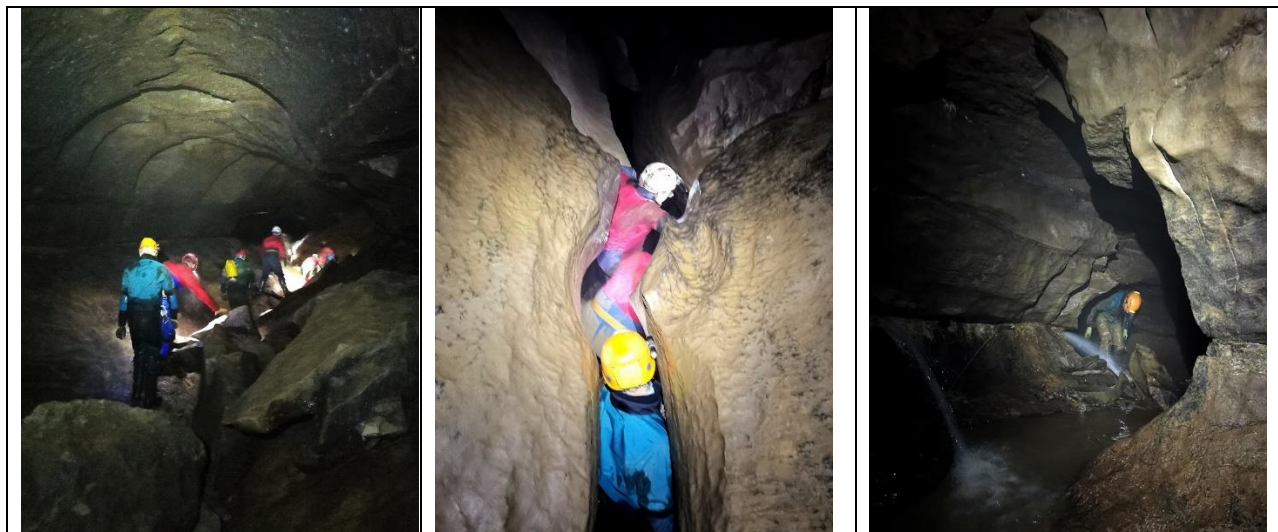
The 'Devils Arse' looked more like Santa's grotto, with its Xmas trees and fairy lights to cheer up the Carol singers who were due to land at four pm, and eat into our adventure time. A few stoic explorers queued to pay their sixteen quid and gave us the usual looks, that become the norm when a load of cavers turn up, fortunately for them we hadn't got dirty yet. Off into the darkness we went, all missing out the worst slide in Derbyshire, and choosing to risk all on the best slide in Derbyshire; The Mudbank. The Mucky Ducks were soon passed and into the wild cave we went. We passed Pickering Passage, much to my dismay but the dismay was only temporary as the scale and beauty of the passages and streamways more than made up for the repressed explorer inside and dying to get out at any cost. Almost sensing the disappointment, Steve PA pointed us into a couple of delightful tight, muddy passageways, that although quite short, more than rivalled Colostomy Crawl and the Trenches for their squalor, and even allowed one of the potential new guys to practice his French, especially in the squeeze bit, whilst flat out in a passage half full of slurry. After seeing most of the main bits we headed out, so as not to frighten the carol singers into thinking they had raised the dead with their wailing. Back at the Chapel we quickly got into dry clothes to fend off the onset of pneumonia, and prepared for a well-earned pint round the log burner in 'The George'. Steve P.A. left me once again in soaking wet clothes, when he underestimated the power of the Chapel's water supply and let the hose unleash its best impression of a water python. Worse still I had to stand in the pub looking like I'd peed myself, thanks Steve!

I took far too many pictures yesterday, and in good 'wet cave' fashion, with lots of people filling the air with moisture, many were very soft focus. Add to that I wore a wetsuit which guaranteed that I carried my own smoke machine around with me everywhere after the Mucky Ducks. I've edited the best and hopefully they give a good impression of an amazing day. Thanks all for your company yesterday and hopefully we will cave again soon, covid regulations willing.

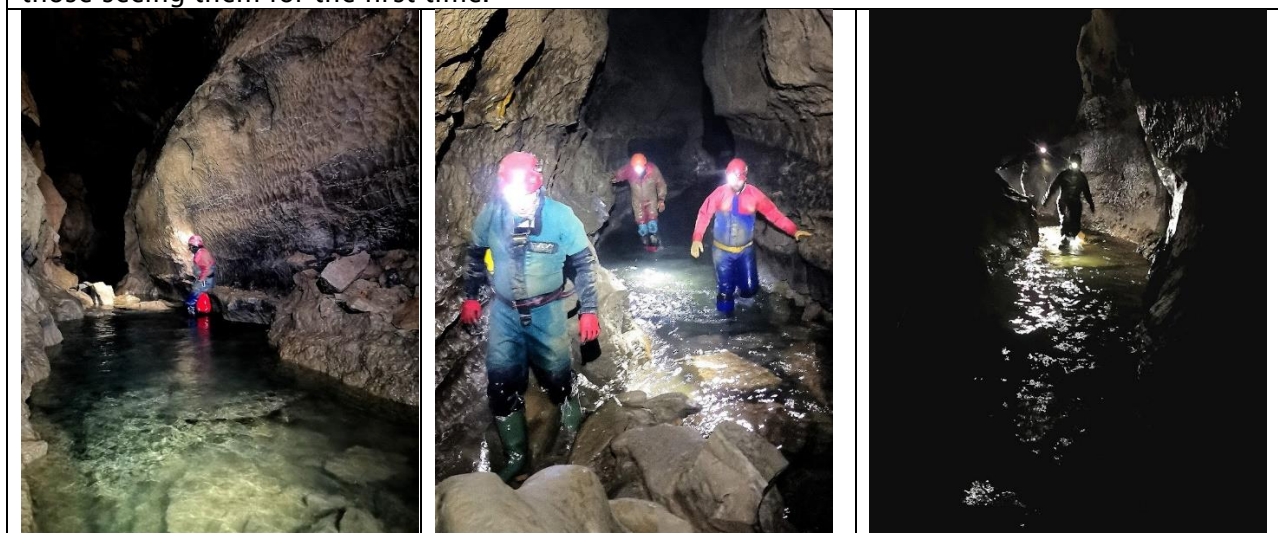
Gaz Mcshee



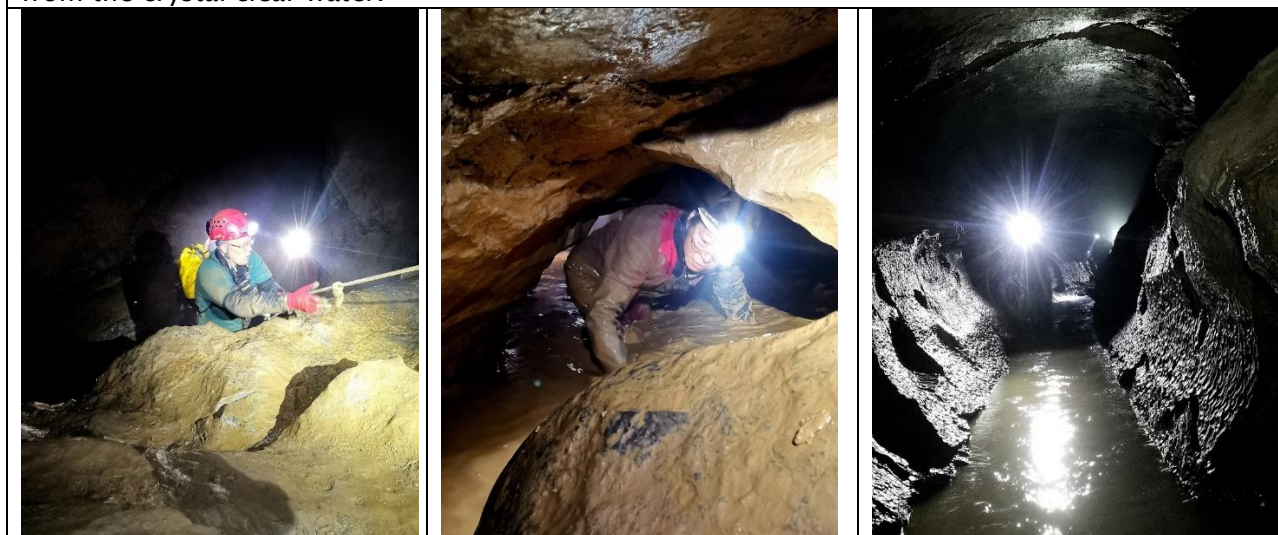
*Some of Gaz's' Peak Cavern photos are reproduced here with his permission.*



These passages, on the mis-named 'tourist trip', are always a delight, and a real eye-opener for those seeing them for the first time.

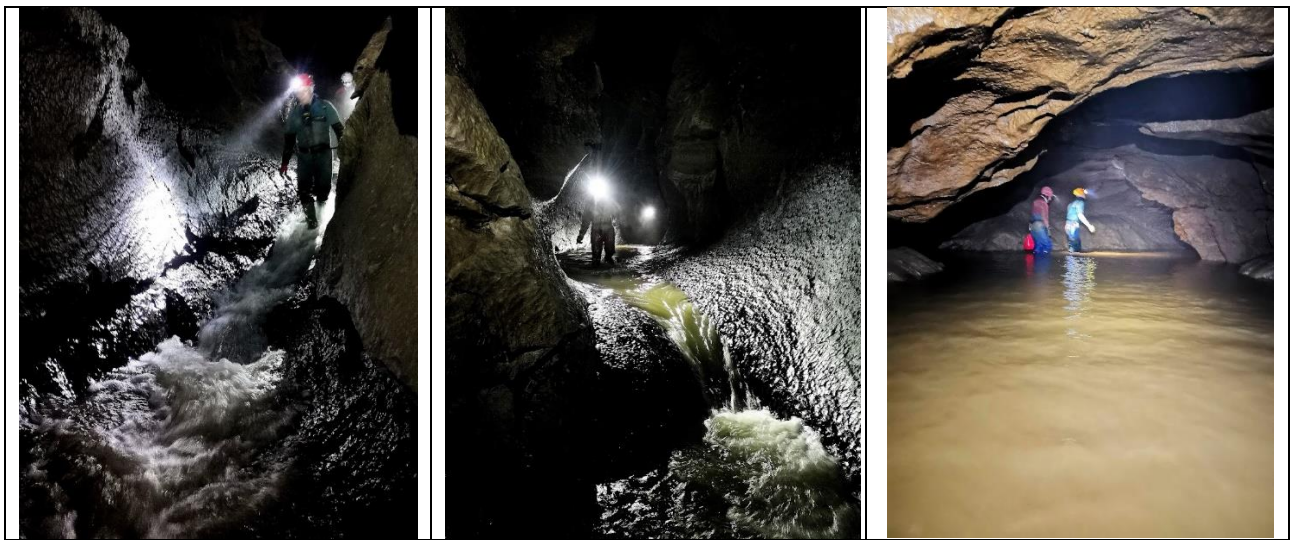


The Main Streamway is spectacular, not least because of the sculpted walls and the light reflecting from the crystal clear water.



There are plenty of minor challenges for the party members to overcome, without anyone being overly tested, and as there is no way to remain dry, it is easier to just accept the situation and to splash along – brilliant !





All too soon it was time to head back towards daylight, with a necessary stop to 'wash off' where the downstream end of the Buxton Water sump was reached.



Grace added:

'I thought we were doing Neil Moss Chamber until I arrived at the Chapel and saw so many other people had turned up (two other groups were there) so we decided to do the round trip. I enjoyed it very much and it was good company too.'

On the way back to 'The Chapel' in Castleton, Grace was able to get a passing tourist to snap the group. (Thanks Grace).



## Peak Cavern Notes after the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2021 trip:

Alan Brentnall commented: 'I see that the water was indeed "over-topping" the dam (at the 'wash-off' point). I'm sure that Charley will have explained, but in case he didn't, here is what he said on UKCaving (30/10/21)':-

*Please be aware that Glyn Roberts and I have recently placed, on behalf of John Gunn, bungs in the outlet pipes built into the Buxton Water dam.*

*These are for a flow measurement project so:-*

*1: please do not touch or remove them (if you do notice that one is missing, please advise me via the Peak Keyholder email address - [peakbookings@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:peakbookings@hotmail.co.uk) - thanks in advance)*

*2: please don't think that just because the water is over-topping the dam there is/was a flood event as even in low water it will now over-top so can no longer be considered a safe indicator - rely on the forecasts, stream depth marker post and the "magic" step amongst others.*

Jenny Drake added: 'The dam alteration is part of some continuing experiments that John Gunn is doing. I've been working on some water depth loggers for him, one of which was in place at this spot from 13th November 2021 to 13th December 2021. During that time, there were three floods where the water at the washing off point exceeded 8m! Two of them were a couple of days after storms Arwen and Barra. The depth logger is now at the Speedwell gate, by the Bung. Hopefully there will be a write up on the data loggers in the DCA Newsletter at some point.'

[Editor: **8 metres !!!** That is ... er ... startling ! You could lose your wellies in that without trying !]

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### **Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

#### **Eyam Dale House Cave, Stoney Middleton.**

This was cancelled for all kinds of Christmas, or Covid, related reasons.

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### **Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 27<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

#### **Christmas walk – Roaches and Back Forest, Staffordshire.**

Des sent out an e-mail invitation:

*'Hi Everyone,*

*A quick email to see if anyone is interested in a Christmas walk to stretch your legs and get a bit of exercise and a little socialising during the season of too much to eat.*

*I'm thinking of doing a walk we did a few years ago from the Roaches down to Danebridge stopping for a drink in the Ship Inn before returning to the start.*

*It was most enjoyable last time and I haven't been that way since our last walk.*

*I realise that some folk may have worries about Covid issues but also to bear in mind the fresh air and ample room for social distancing. All this of course would be subject to the usual weather conditions.*

*I'm looking at Mon 27th for this venture with a start of around 10am so if anyone is interested please let me know.'*

[It sounds brilliant; one of my favourite walking areas. I'm sorry that I couldn't make it. Ed.]

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## **Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022.**

### **Moorfurlong Mine & Caverns, Bradwell, Derbyshire.**

The first CCPC trip of the new year – despite Covid !!!

*Gaz contributed another write-up, and photographs – thank you, again !*

'Ten of us turned up again today for a descent into a muddy hell below a field in Bradwell. The fee reported in a trip account online was two quid, but thanks to Steve and Neil we got a reduced rate of one pound, which included parking for six cars. A winner we thought, but soon our excitement turned to horror when we discovered that the carpark was coated in a healthy layer of silage and cow muck.

After very carefully getting changed, so as not to mess up my already filthy and wet gear from a trip into Knotlow yesterday, I felt the need to relieve myself so as not to pollute the beautiful underworld we were about to enter. I hid myself away in a collapsing outbuilding connected to the farm, in which I could marvel at the outstanding collection of asbestos products that the farmer was hording, maybe in the hope that someday it would once again be the most useful fire retarding product available, and make a killing for his foresight. At this point it dawned on me that maybe this was why he'd had to lower his trespass fee, as we were in fact parked on a biohazard, but hey, we were going caving, Woooo.!

Off down the field we went to the shaft lid, with no nut and only one hinge, but with beautiful stainless anchors. We popped it open, and to our surprise the ladder actually looked better than we had been led to believe, with posh new stainless fixings as far as we could see. We rigged it anyway to be safe and slowly all ten of us made it down. The short second pitch is easily free climbable but on the way in, we rigged and abbed it, just to be safe.

The first impression was one of, 'OK it's a mine, it's old, it's in the Peak, so it's allowed to be grotty but hey we are caving, Woooo.' We dropped off the gear and headed off into a roomy, walking size, bedding plane chamber, where we found the Buddling pool. Neil and Jenny shot off into the crawl at the back of the chamber, while Steve, Rob and I waited for the others to catch up.



The bedding plane chamber.

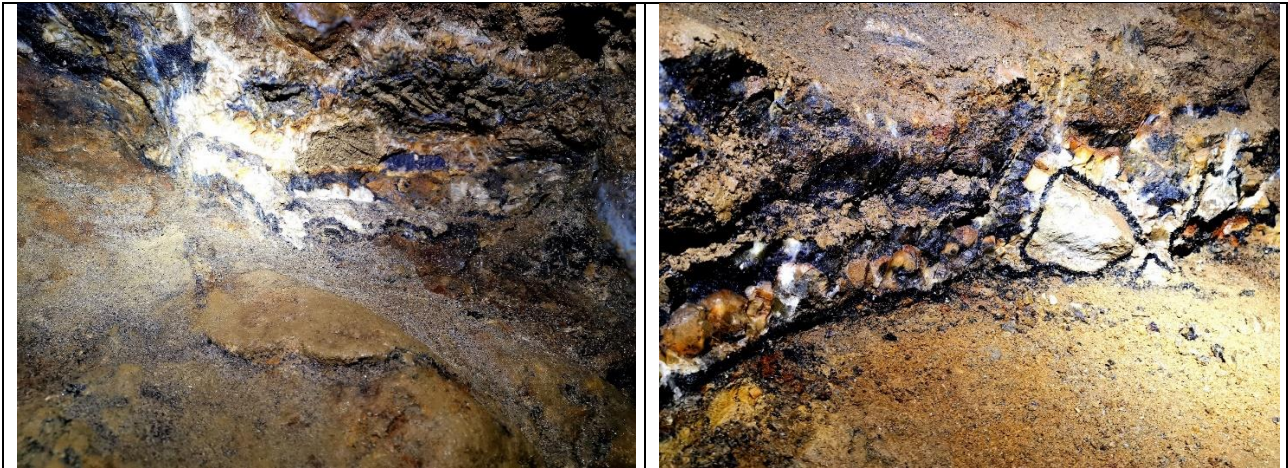


One of the many crawls.

Once we knew they were we all in we too headed into the crawl, to do battle with 'The Vice'! Fortunately the vice had been left open, and all three of us shot through. The shock soon turned to amusement as we realised the irony of the situation. 'The Vice' led to many, many more Vices; some wide open, but many not so wide open, and the mud, it was everywhere. In typical Peak fashion it made for some amazing fake tan, CJ even went for the full George Mitchell look, by fully immersing his face in it and then wearing it to the pub later on.



After fumbling and grunting through flat out crawl, followed by flat out crawl; trying to push past squeezes not made for fat old men, we finally found Neil and Jenny who were returning from the far end. After crawling all over each other we said our goodbyes and headed off. The Blue John down there was stunning, although very muddy in places, and quite surprising, given that Castleton heralds itself as the only place in the world that has blue Flourspar.



The vein of 'Blue John' – a rare form of blue fluorite, supposedly only found in Castleton.

After exploring the flat and pipe workings, we headed back, passing CJ and Jack who were just working their way in, so that we could head into the other part of the mine which we hadn't yet seen.



Not surprisingly it was muddy, very muddy, but not as low as the previous passages, so it was quite a relief, following the last hour or so of face down mud wrestling. There were many free-climbable shafts leading to lower workings, all totally unsafe and piled high with deads, held back by some of the most rotten timbers anywhere, but hey, you can't worry too much or else you miss all the best bits, and at the bottom of one shaft I found just such a thing: -whilst researching the place I had found an article in which someone mentioned finding on old clay pipe during a visit, but on their next trip it had gone, possibly pilfered, but after dropping down a very unstable shaft I can assure you that it's still very much there, glued forever to the rock in a bed of flowstone. This is the joy

of mine exploration, often missing from natural caverns; it's the human thing that gives so much dimension to the history of the place.



These images convey something of the nature, and size, of the mine passages.



Anyway, out we all went and had a great time trudging back up the field to the farm, suddenly realising how far it was, and how steep the hill actually was! I'd gone quite a way thinking I was unfit, until it dawned on me that I'd still got my chest ascender in compression, and I was actually trying to suffocate myself. I really need to stop doing that!

Getting changed was a much more primal affair; already being muddled up to the eyeballs meant the cow muck on the floor was no longer a problem, and before long we were heading down to Bradwell for a well-deserved pint.

Thanks to all that turned up for a lovely day in a very interesting muddy hole. I managed to get very few pictures this time, as the mine was not conducive with photography at all, but I'll link the best in for anyone who is interested.

Gaz Mcshee

All photos by Gaz Mcshee. A complete set is available at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/4FGmcUudeXMZipeG6>

.....  
CJ, one of our newer members, was part of the group in Moorfurlong Mine, and contributed a few comments, and photographs. – much appreciated !

*'That was a really enjoyable day out! I've attached a link to a couple of photos which turned out nicely - it wasn't always easy to get my phone out, and I've just about finished cleaning the mud from it. It was great fun watching everyone scatter about the place like school kids let loose in a museum, and everyone getting thoroughly muddled up.*

*Great to see so many new faces (for me) and I look forward to caving with you all again soon.'*



Looking across the mine location.



Not quite walking height for normal folk.



Blue John crystals.  
(Fluorite, or Fluor-spar – Calcium Fluoride).



Really good Crinoid fossils (Sea Lilies, with stems made of discs - like polo mints !)

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## **Fear of the Dark: from CJ.**

'For those not *'in the know'*, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 I was very fortunate to have been selected as the UKCaving prize winner for a new Scurion. A great start to 2022, along with Moorfurlong Mine on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The competition brief was simply "light and dark", for which I submitted a short cover of the Iron Maiden song "Fear of the Dark", along with a short video I hastily shot and threw together the night before driving to my family home for Xmas. My submission was subsequently shortlisted, and then the final hurdle was left to chance by the UKCaving judges (names out of a hat). I appreciate that many of you are not *au fait* with Iron Maiden and the "New wave of British heavy metal" genre, [Link to the original song provided on the e-mail]. My cover is only short, and everything was performed by myself (N.B - the drums were programmed by me since I didn't have access to my kit). I did all my own stunts too... which mainly involved driving to a cave late at night with an angle grinder, some rebar, and trying to film everything by myself in the dark... I still have all my fingers.'

CJ.

[Definitely worth listening to, and watching. A really good effort, and a worthy winner ! – Ed.]

.....  
Jenny Drake also entered the competition, and praised CJ's entry.

She commented: *'My entry, I knocked together in five minutes, and it didn't make the final cut of ten entries from which the winner was selected':*

## **Experiences of Light and Dark from 40 Years of Caving:**

*Borrowed lights on my first caving trips, which failed underground, every time.*

*Having to use the slivers of light from others to find my way.*

*Clues here and there to the shape of the rock.*

*Building a feel for how the cave is changing and how to move through it.*

*Daylight is blue. You only ever notice this when you see the entrance again.*

*Back at the entrance after dark. Which way was it to the cars ?*

*Knocking a stinky. Plunged into darkness.*

*A spark and a pop and the cave is back again.*

*Shaking a carbide generator and getting a huge flame to expand the warm sphere of yellow you inhabit.*

*Trying to get the electric back-up on a Petzl Laser, to actually switch on.*

*The dim beam probing into the dark of the pitch below.*

*Can you spot any spit sleeves in the rock ?*

*Narrow beam from an Oldham. Look exactly where you are stepping !*

*Yorkshire, light rock. South Wales, dark rock. Derbyshire, mud !*

*Shall I set the LED light to bright, very bright, super bright, or vaporise bulldozer ?*

*So many options.*

*Been down here loads of times, but never been able to see that before.*

*Don't point your light directly at my eyes !*

*My eyes, my eyes, I'm blind !*

*A dark spot following my gaze, every place I want to put a foot, or hand.*

*It'll fade away.*

*Jenny Drake*

[So many of these images are familiar to me ! Happy memories. Ed.]

.....  
Finally, keep safe everyone, keep caving, and look forward to a busy, and brilliant New Year.  
Steve Knox. 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
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