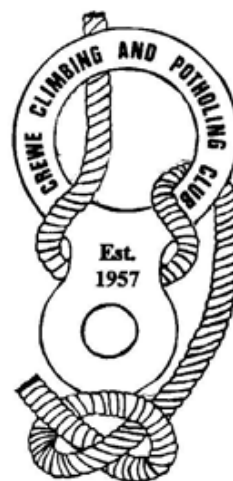




# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 131. March 2022

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

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## Editorial:

This time I'm not going to say anything about Covid !

It is really good to see how active CCPC members are – not just on 'designated' Club Meets on alternative weekends, but on many other occasions too – often with just a couple of friends, and frequently mid-week because of work commitments. We even have some particularly confident members who are happy to cave solo – a slightly different ball game, as you really do need to be independent in every way. I remember completing a solo Giants Hole trip some years ago - in via Crabwalk and back out through the Upper Series – I don't think I really relaxed until I was back at the car and could 'phone home ! – Annie was always my safety back-up. These day I enjoy the company, and the social side of caving with others (really I just like to have someone nearby to keep an eye on me, and stop me getting lost !) Incidentally, it is really good to see a few new faces joining us on recent Club meets.

Steve Knox 1<sup>st</sup> March 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 February 2022 to April 2022:**



### ***Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club:***

12 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2022	Brightgate Cave, Matlock, Derbyshire. Alt.: Cumberland Cavern, Derbyshire..	No attendance, due to members involved in other trips on the following day.
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2002	Giant's Hole, Castleton, Derbyshire.	Two members explored the Boss Aven area and the upstream series.
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2022	A Welsh excursion.	
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2022	Ashford Black Marble Mine, & Holme Bank Chert Mine, Bakewell, Derbyshire.	Two easy mines with extensive pillar & stall work, some inscriptions, some formations, and various artifacts.
7 <sup>th</sup> Mar. 2022	The March Meeting.	'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, near Kildsgrove, is still closed so the Meeting is 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. Alternative: Giants Hole, Derbyshire.	Fee payable. Various routes. Alt. £3 fee payable.
4 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	The April Meeting.	If 'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, is still closed then the Meeting will be by 'Zoom'.
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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**9<sup>th</sup> February 2022: Owl Hole, Upper Dove, Derbyshire. SK 0710 6830.**

**Gaz Mcshee – solo.**

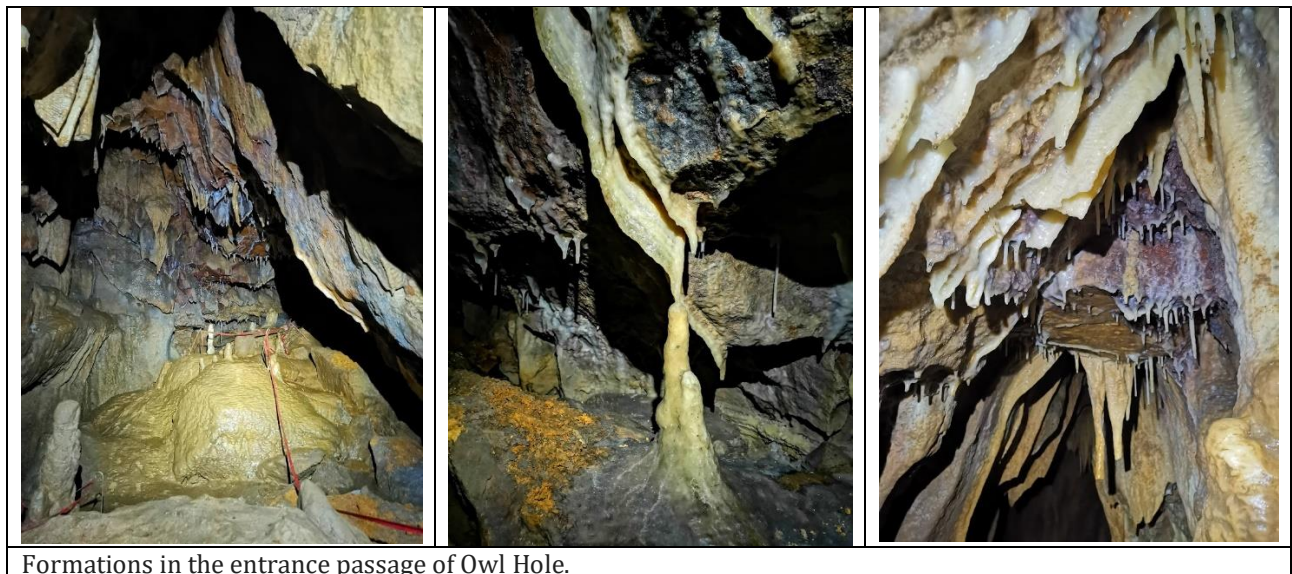
Continuing the search for Peak esoterica, I hauled myself out of bed this morning, in the dark to go and visit Owl Hole, an unusual cave in that it is perched twenty or so feet above the floor of a large sink hole. I went and checked it out a week ago to formulate a plan and gleaned some very useful info from the caving encyclopaedia that is Alan Brentnall (thank you), which made preparation much easier.

Given that the farmer is apparently a tyrant, opposed to all that set foot on his land, I parked by High Edge Raceway and hoofed it the twenty-minute walk over to the site. It was 0 degrees C, and the wind was howling, so it was probably nearer minus four as I hit the tarmac, and by the time I reached the sink hole my pinkies were in a state of crogenesis. Great start that, as I had to spend the next half hour warming them up by touching myself on any part of my body that had a spare bit of heat to share.

Finally I got to work rigging the pitch. I followed Alan's advice on how to get up, but chose to leave my rucksack below, ascend, clip the top, and abseil off, derigging as I went. Then I reclimbed the pitch and set up a pull-through for my retreat later on, hauling my sack up before I entered the cave.

The guidebook says you need two spanners for the entrance gate, but it was tied with a bit of wire today (a heads up in case anyone thinks it needs re-bolting.)

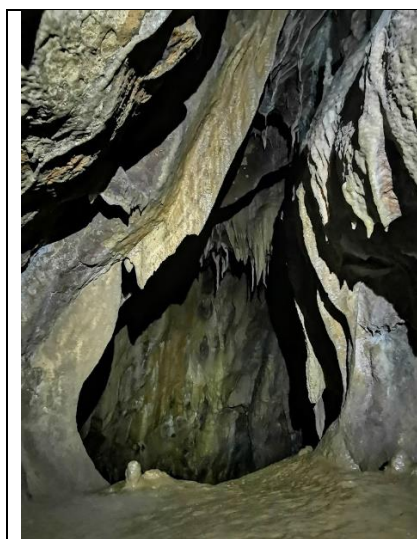
The daylight had barely been extinguished when the first clumsy-git-tape (conservation) appeared, in a passage filled with wonderful decorations. Don't get me wrong, this is a small cave, and the ornaments are not huge, but there are so many, and they are so varied in both style and colour, it is an amazing sight to behold (and I'd only just walked through the door).



Formations in the entrance passage of Owl Hole.

I dragged myself away from 'the sweet shop' and dropped down into the passage leading to Crystal Pallas, and straight away there was a problem - there were no bolts. I'd never rigged naturals in a cave before and I had no slings to throw round the rockery. Fortunately, I had learned a trick or two in my climbing days, and natural belays underground are not so

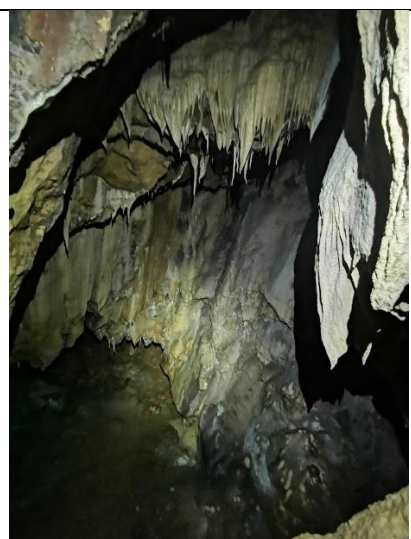
different to natural belays overground. That said, one of the threads was pretty sharp, and I had to use something to protect it.



The 5 metre pitch-head.



Spot the 'essential Woolly hat' !



Dropping into Crystal Pallas.

I had listened to Alan when he said that the pitch was hard on the rope, and had packed two rope protectors. I needed at least one on the pitch-head, so I could use one for one leg of the Y-hang, but had nothing for the other leg. On searching my bag I had a dilemma. All I could use was a Woolly hat, made with love by my dearest. She would kill me if she knew, but hey, this was an emergency. Woolly hat installed, I set off to the pitch head.



I hadn't even got to the edge when the beauty of the chamber became apparent, well, at least the roof of it. There was some big, old flowstone hanging out into the void. I positioned the rope protector as best I could and dropped over the lip into the unknown.



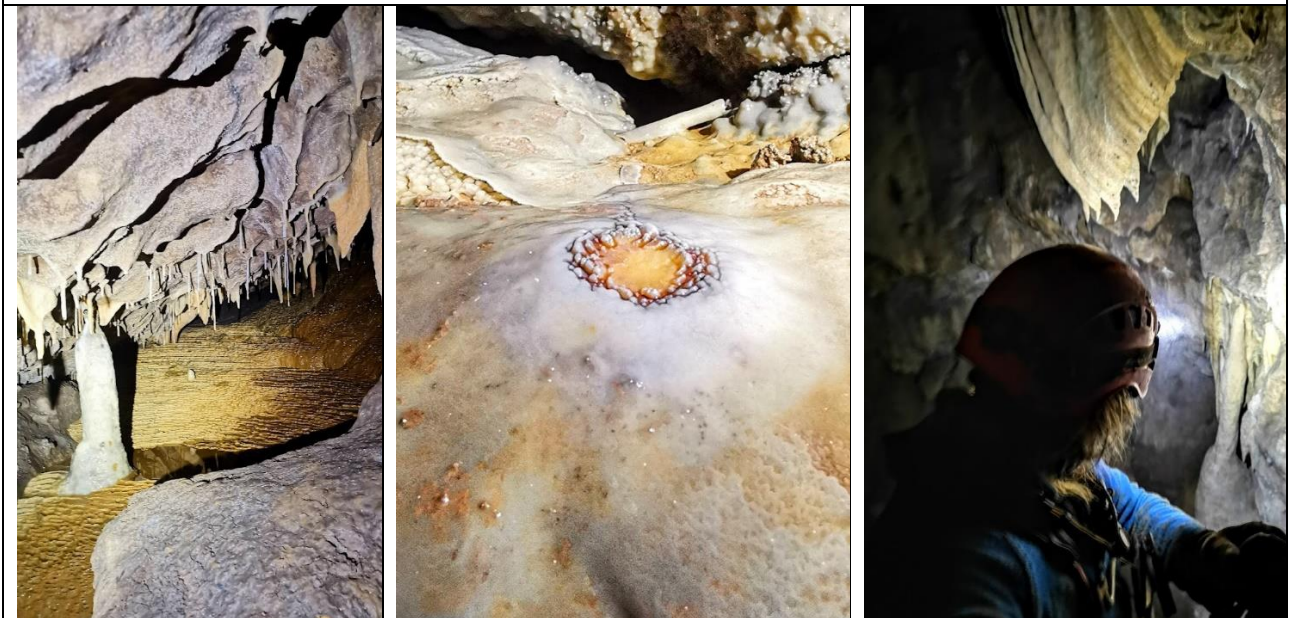
Wow, there is some beauty down there ! Flows, pure white Stals, Gours, it has it all. So I had left the sweet shop and went straight into the one next door - the bigger one, the one mummy wouldn't take me into because it was too expensive. I spent way, way too long in there, then I dropped into the dig. I saw the Gour Chamber, then dropped into the most horrific mud bath dead end, only to have to climb back out, minus friction, but it was all worth it to see such a beauty. I climbed back up the pitch, taking in the wonderments for the last time, and then came to a halt. Oh no I'm at the pitch head and the rope is under

tension with a protector on it and I can't jug past it! Stupid - you thought you were so clever taking rope protectors didn't you ? Oh well, after a short deliberation I started to prise open the protector and force the jammer over it. Inch by inch, I made enough progress to grab a stubby little stal and pulled myself to safety.

Back from the brink I headed up to Hoggmorton Aven and began the crawl into Pigs Trotters, but soon realised that I would do it too much damage if I went on, so I retreated, leaving it as I found it. It was the least I could do for a place that had given me so much pleasure.



Formations in Crystal Pallas chamber, and in Hoggmorton Aven and Pigs Trotters, Owl Hole.





Back at the entrance I dropped to the sink hole floor in the most beautiful sunshine, and faced the prospect of a twenty-minute walk through an amazing part of the world, before once again becoming part of the rat race.

Left: Looking out of the entrance.

Right: The 'interesting' climb to the entrance.

**Gaz. Mcshee**

*All photographs courtesy of Gaz.  
The full set can be seen at:*

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/ZiWCsHb5NULled7B9>



## ***Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Giants Hole, Castleton, Derbyshire.***

***Gaz Mcshee, Jack ....***

Two of us managed to get out this weekend after the Brightgate trip did not come off. I met the new guy, Jack, at Hope Station. Jenny due to unforeseen circumstances had been forced to cancel so the two of us set off for Giants. Jack had never been there before, so we got ready and headed off to the impressive entrance, in what can only be described as horrible weather. The stream running past the carpark was 'gushing', so a very wet streamway was guaranteed.



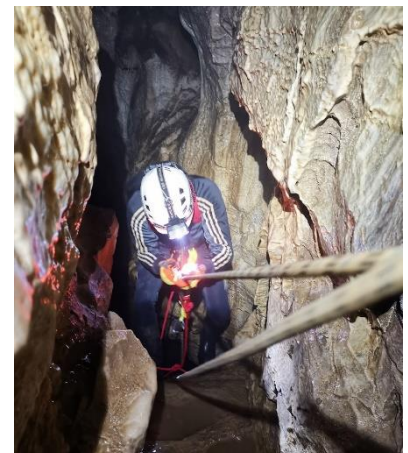
Jack had previously informed me that he was 'catastrophe prone', so when he dropped his car keys into the very swollen stream, even before we had entered the cave, the alarm bells started to ring. Fortunately after teaching me a dictionary full of new words he managed to find them, more by luck than judgement.

Off into the system we headed, getting a good push in places from the rate of flow; no dry section today, just water all the way to the blasted passage. We headed down to Garlands so that Jack could see the famous stopper to the upper cave, and we spent a while taking pictures before heading back to Boss Aven for a trip into the unknown, for us both.

Above: Garlands Pot, looking impressively wet !

Right: The first pitch (climb) out of the Main Streamway.

I free-climbed the first pitch to fix a rope so that Jack could follow, and at the top we were both amazed at the massive flowstone boss guarding the second pitch. I had no clue how long the rope had been in situ, so I VERY cautiously 'jugged' up into the unknown, passing some very impressive formations on the way. Jack followed me up, and fortunately we both landed safely at the top, where an amazing flowstone cascade and gour pool greeted us for our efforts.





Left: Looking up the 'in situ' rope on the main pitch.

Then on, up the next pitch (the Calcite Crawl), over more impressive flowstone, with a lovely squeeze bit near the top which forced me to unclip and battle my way on into the amazing Boss Chamber.

Right: Jack at the pinch point on the Calcite Crawl pitch.



After Owl Hole, earlier in the week, I was astounded that Giants was blowing my mind in a similar way, with white stals like carrots, hanging on tendrils from the ceiling above. Jack caught up and we explored up and up, and at each level my stupidly big top half prevented me from seeing where the side passages go (any spoilers will be gratefully accepted, because I got 'shot down' on them all). At one point Jack even asked if I needed a pull ! 'Erm NO!' I'm way too proud to give up on a good struggle.



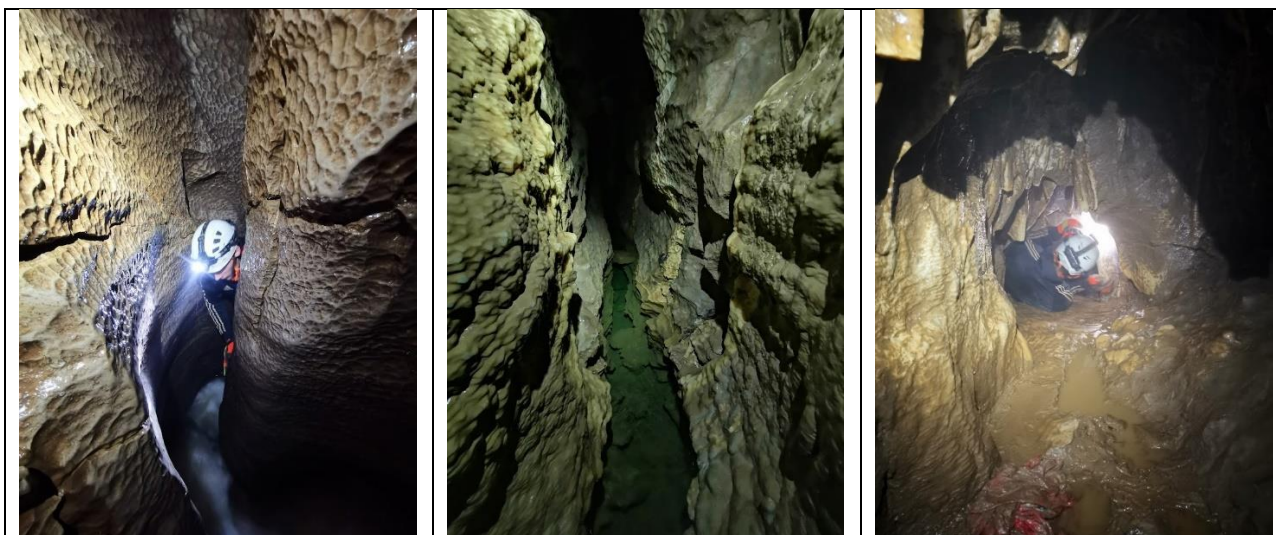
Exploring Aven Chamber, with its outstanding formations.



Left: Climbing into a roof pocket in Aven Chamber.

We were soon back in the streamway, after Captain Catastrophe sat on his water bottle at the top of the second Pitch, sending me diving for cover, thinking he had dropped something and then showering me with its contents. We headed on to Basecamp Chamber and turned right, into the Upper Streamway, for a bit of 'Crabwalking' unpleasantness, and some bridging over a void to test Jack's nerve. The guy did well, and we had a blast fighting the flow of the stream, and getting water forced

into places it's only supposed to come out of. I had never seen the 'Top Sump' until today, and although it was pretty unimpressive after swimming in the East Canal earlier in the year, it was beautifully clear, and ticked another Giants box for me.



The tortuous Upper Streamway to the outlet of the First Stream Sump, and the high level Old Upper Passage.

The walk back to the car was typical of Giants Hole, with the wind blasting down the valley, reducing the temperature to the unthinkable. It turned two wet, grown men into gibbering wrecks, who then had to strip, get dried, and re-clothed, whilst suffering early onset hypothermia. At least I got to use some of the new words I had learnt before we had even started our expedition.

A link to the best pictures I managed to get, in a very soft focus, wet world today, is below:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/viRDFUTzaMCADSV16>

*Text, and all included photographs are courtesy of Gaz.*

**Gaz Mcshee**

## Helmets and Lights: Steve Knox – searching for advice.

Having decided that the time had come to dig deep and spend a few pennies on a new lamp and helmet (without going too mad !) I asked for comments / advice about what other members have found to be comfortable / efficient / robust / etc.. I know that there is no 'one size fits all' with anything, and often choices are very personal (not to mention affected by budget size), but there is clearly a lot of experience-based knowledge out there !

**C.J.** provided a comprehensive and very useful response:

"As you know, I won that **Scurion 900**... however I also own a **Rude Nora 4**, both of which are generally highly regarded, and carry a hefty price tag. I've not publicly drawn comparisons between the two as it would look unappreciative to UK Caving and Scurion who donated the Scurion prize, however I think it's valuable information.

I really like the Rude Nora 4. It's much, smaller than the Scurion and I was more than happy with it when I purchased it. I think it's better value for money than the Scurion, and easier to program. I like the battery case design and the spare parts are very cheap. I scratched the window of my Nora at Moorfurlong and wanted to cry, however, I looked online when I got home, and the replacement is £4.

If money is no object, and you're ok with a bigger, bulkier lamp, then the Scurion is amazing. The flood is brilliant on it, and it's very enjoyable to cave with. It has such wide and powerful coverage that I always feel very aware of my surroundings. It just lights up everything and I don't find myself turning my neck much.

I dig with Alex Reid from TSG. He owns an upgraded **Scurion 700** and has used it for 7 years. I've chatted to him about lights, and he said that he will be getting a Rude Nora if his Scurion ever packs up. This was down to the 'value for money' and suits the trips he does. There is

inevitably a 'horses for courses' aspect to this and you may prefer a torch with a warmer colour for photography, or one that doesn't need to be mounted to a helmet etc., or one that is better for squeezes. I've bashed the battery packs of my Nora and Scurion many times and nearly got my head stuck in a squeeze !

My backup light is an Armytek Wizard-Pro which produces a warm light and has many output options. I like it a lot, and it's waterproof and great for photos, however it ran low on me during a digging session, and the ascent wasn't fun. I did an 8-hour digging session a few weeks ago and had zero issues with my Scurion battery. My Nora hasn't been trialled to such lengths, but it can take a battering and I like the lower profile for digging.

I won't comment on lights I don't own and haven't used but I feel amiss without mentioning Roy Fellows and his creations. I had initially planned to buy one of his last year, but he didn't have the one I wanted in stock.

Little Monkey (Rude Nora) also make a budget option which has good reviews, but I cannot vouch for it.

One more thing... I forgot to mention helmets. I've got a **Petzl Vertex Vent** and **Petzl Boreo**... both are hybrids with the foam. I like the safety element of a hybrid and the price tag, but they have their downsides and won't last as long as ABS. It depends on what you want to do with the helmet I suppose, but I don't think I'd get years out of a hybrid compared to a hard-shell helmet. The foam has a shelf-life, and the thin plastic outer-layer can get gashed on rocks.

The Vertex is comically large, and I dislike it a lot, despite it being comfortable. It's got a big profile, as it's meeting construction standards. It was a bad purchase. The Boreo on the other hand is a little less comfortable, but a great shape and size. It doesn't wiggle/wobble on my head either. Both are a pain if you want to drill holes and mount lights. There is no substitute for trying a couple on, and I wish I'd done that when forking out £75 for the Vertex that I dislike."

**John Preston** had just chosen to buy a Petzl Vertex Vent.

**Adrian Pedley** wrote: 'Fenix lights are good quality, @ £74, and give a spread of light, and decent battery life.'

**Jenny Drake** commented: 'Helmet fit is very head-shape related, and what works for one, won't for another. It's one of those things where you want to try before you buy. A visit to Inglesport, or to Tony Seddon ('Starless River') the next time he is local, would be the thing.'

**Alan Brentnall** also contributed: 'I agree with Ade there. My last two caving lamps have been **Fenix**, and the light's excellent, and good enough for photography (as long as it's not Titan or GG Main Chamber!). I currently use the **HL55**, which I think they no longer produce - but there will be something similar I'm sure - **HL60R** looks very similar.

The HL55 uses the 18650 Lithium battery which gives loads of life, and is slowly becoming a very popular size for lots of other electrical items.

I don't tend to use the strap-on mode for caving, and I tried the Fenix headlamp-holder, which came with a sticky pad. The pads eventually seem to fail, and Nigel Atkins recommended I pop-riveted the holder onto the helmet - which I did and it's still going strong.

My helmet is a **Petzl Vertex Best** these days, which is OK but, for me, not as good a fit as the old Ecrin.'

**Steve Pearson-Adams** added: 'I'm in the same boat, having to replace my Ecrin, so I have just ordered the **Edelrid Ultralight III** from Bannanfingers, at £42.55.'

*From the various humorous comments added to e-mails, I'm glad to see the comedians amongst us are still alive and well - much appreciated !!*

*Once I've got over this financial sacrifice, I might even have to replace my much-loved, wooden shafted ice-axe, if we get any decent snow and ice. My hemp rope is probably out of guarantee by now, so that will have to go too.*

Seriously though, all comments and suggestions have been very welcome, and are reproduced here for the benefit of any other members looking to lighten their wallets – and their view of the cave passage ahead – which is not to say that my much loved Petzl Duo is past its best, just that it feels slightly inferior (despite its upgraded LED unit) in the face of the floodlights which dazzle me on every trip, and, I'm told, can act as lasers to cut through solid rock, if required. (In pre-covid days we would have had this discussion over a couple of pints.)

**Steve Knox**



***Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022. A Welsh Excursion !***

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***Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Ashford Black Marble Mine & Holme Bank Chert Mine, Bakewell.***

***John Butcher, Darren Conde, Neil Conde, Jenny Drake, John Gillett, Steve Knox, Gaz Mcshee, Meg Mcshee, Steve Pearson-Adams, John Preston, Heather Simpson.***

Ten, yes, ten of us [or even **eleven** !! – Ed.] turned up for a walk into the darkness, while throughout the Peak the general population bathed in the most beautiful early spring sunshine. It did seem a little odd but hey this was my first weekend off in forever so I couldn't let it slip and besides I'd promised my daughter and fellow underworld adventurer that I would take her along as both today's mines were walk-in's.

**Ashford Black Marble Mine** had been on my radar for a while but as I'm primarily a solo caver it has never been an option, but here we were, parked up in a very busy Ashford donning our gear for a shifty inside.



Left: John Preston at the Ashford Mine entrance. [C.K.]

After the short trudge up the hill, through the woods, past a fine display of snowdrops, we arrived at the gated entrance and slid in.

The second your eyes got used to the dark, the first thing that hit you was the scale and precision of the piles of 'deads'. This was more like a sheep enclosure than a mine, and the size of the rocks used to build the said walls was nothing short of mind boggling. Many a bad back must have been acquired by the poor souls that built them, but this

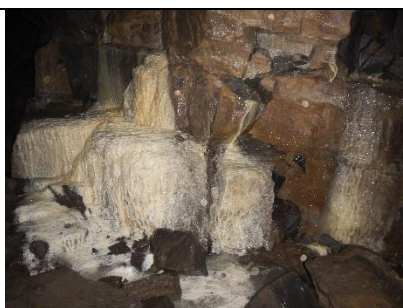
was the golden age, before the HSE went and spoilt all the fun in the workplace.

The walling ran throughout the mine, and it was hard to tell whether it was just for tidying up the waste, or for preventing a catastrophic collapse of the hillside above.

It wasn't long before we split up. It's quite funny how grown adults suddenly become kids again when they go underground, and all scarper off in different directions. Oh well, as long as we all end up back in the sunshine I guess it's OK.



John Preston at one of the working faces in Ashford Mine.



There were several places where flowstone deposits had formed.



A typical stretch of passage with pack-walls 'supporting' the roof.

*Photos: Colin Knox*

I tell you now, Ashford Mine is a lot bigger than it looks on the survey, so much so, that I commented at the end that I was surprised that a mine I had expected to take an hour had lasted for two. Steve PA told me it had taken an hour and fifteen. Well, it seemed big, OK.

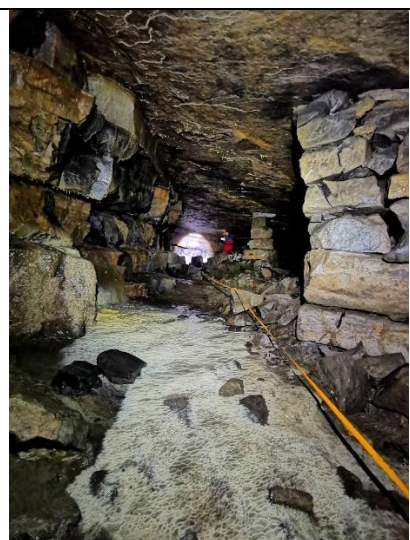
The marble itself is apparently a limestone impregnated with a hydrocarbon, so not a true marble, but I guess the owner couldn't give a hoot if the likes of Lord Devonshire was keen to fork out to purchase it for his Chatsworth fireplace.



Just to break up the monotony of the 'sheep pen' by night, every now and again there was a most exquisite gour pool, or an inscription on the wall, in the most beautiful copper plate writing, so an otherwise quite boring mine became a thing of beauty and interest.

Left: One of the more easily read (in part) inscriptions: 'Boys be men & fight for your .... Freedom .....' [C.K.]

(There were several more 'earthy' inscriptions, which are probably best left for you to discover for yourself !)



Some of Gaz's amazing photos showing pack-walls and flowstone formations. Orange tape had been used as a conservation measure, to warn visitors to avoid walking on the deposits.

*Photos: Gaz Mcshee.*

All too soon the entrance reappeared, and we all emerged into the sunshine, but for us the day was not over.

Steve Knox had arranged a trip into **Holme Bank Chert Mine**, so without even getting changed, we all headed off to Bakewell for round two.

Off through the carpet gate we went, down into yet another 'sheep pen by night', but this one was a whole different beast. This sheep pen epitomised the dark; you see the hill above was not very happy about having its guts ripped out and decided to do something about it.

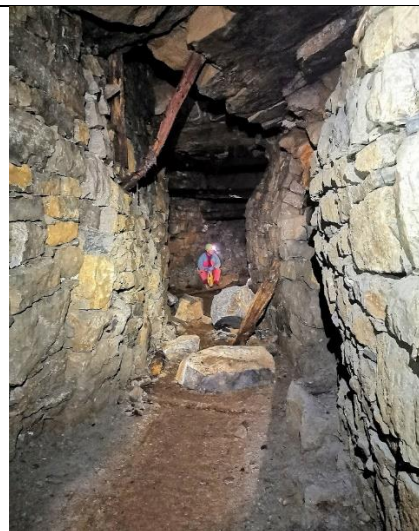
The walls were built to support the roof, but the roof didn't want to be supported so it started to fight back, and eventually everything in its wake has started to give. The walls are bowing out under the pressure and the wooden trusses are snapping like cotton under the weight of an angry hillside.



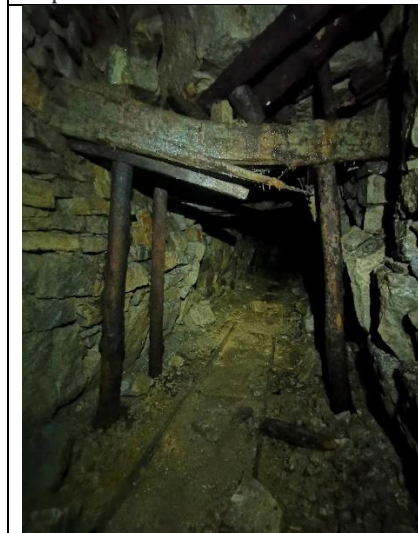
This was one of the less 'stressed' passages, near the entrance. The 'dip' of the beds was obvious here.



Rails, sleepers, and points were still in-situ in some places. There was even a working truck !



Fallen roof blocks, and bulging walls could be seen in almost every passage.



There were many places where you wouldn't want to hang about for too long !



Collapsed pack-walls, due to the pressure of the rock above, almost blocked some routes.



M1 Passage, along the abandoned working face – deeply undercut, and ready to drop.

*Photos: Gaz Mcshee.*



This then was the world we had entered, and in its own way it was beautiful and thought provoking. There were a lot of artifacts, which gave a very human feel to this hell. There was even a pair of nailed boots, a few hundred feet apart - strange to comprehend when it only took two feet to fill them !



The dip of the beds is downhill to the east, with all accessible levels eventually becoming flooded where they reach the water table. The crystal water makes this is a popular site for training cave divers. [C.K.]

*Photos: Gaz Mcshee.*

We visited the world of the cave divers and then strangely, as before, we all ran off in different directions, Heather, Neil, Meg and I followed the waterline up to Shatter chamber and then picked up the M1, having to do a bit of detective work to figure out where we were as this was all new to us. I headed down what we believed to be Chain Passage, and found a chain. That'll do ! - so back to the others I went, and we used it as a waymark for Cave Pearl Passage, but we found no cave pearls, only chains. Off down the next passage we went, only to find more chains, oh, and some very, very colourful flowstone, and then some cave pearls, but they were hardly worth the effort !

Back we went, as we could not get out from where we were in the mine, and we reckoned the others were probably already outside. Back we went to what I had thought was Chain Passage, and off down it we went. After a while of climbing over stacks of wall that had 'exploded' due to the pressure from above, we found the chain hanging from the ceiling, and looking very proud of itself for managing to stay up there, whilst most of the roof had long since fallen. Back we went to the passage leading to the surface and from behind us we heard the ramblings of the others, so once more we were one. They had explored the further reaches which I now intend to go back to see, for, as I mentioned to Heather when questioned about my reasons to wish to go back to such a 'samey' mine, "I haven't seen it all yet !"

Anyway, we headed out, and lo and behold, there was a small passage that resembled a drystone coffin level. The temptation was too great, and off down it I went. I heard my daughter say, "Of course he is", to someone saying, "Is he going in?" Neil, not wanting to miss out followed me, and we continued to a widening, and eventually a forefield. In that area the roof had almost totally collapsed, and the walls had burst, under the extreme stress from above, fortunately for us, leaving a relatively stable environment for us to enjoy with only an ounce of trepidation. Back we went to the surface, where after saying our goodbyes, Meg and I headed off to 'Insomnia', at Calver, for a cup of the best coffee in the Peak, before heading off into the sunset and looking forward to yet more adventures in the near future. Thanks for a great day again guys. Stay safe.

Link to some photos is here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/seg5TBZetdUVyg6g6>

*Main text, and all included photographs (unless otherwise credited) are courtesy of Gaz.*

**Gaz Mcshee**

Thanks to those who submitted material for this Newsletter - as always, I am keen to receive anything (cave related !) for the CCPC Newsletter – photos, write-ups, whatever !

Finally, keep safe and keep caving,

Steve Knox.

1st March 2022