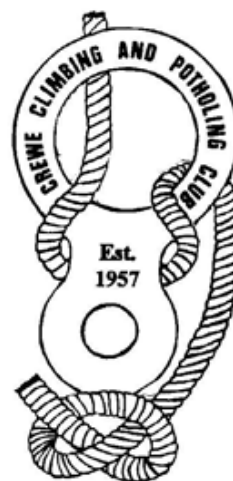




C.C.P.C. Newsletter 132. April 2022

Log on to
www.ccpc.org.uk

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Editorial: Another busy month has slipped by, and CCPC Members have continued to get 'out and under' as often as possible. There has been a particularly useful, and well supported, indoor SRT training session, held on 19th March, at Whitehall Outdoor Centre, near Buxton, which was financially subsidised from the Rob Farmer Fund (established from a legacy from a former Member) and was organised by Mark Krause (Training Officer) and Steve Pearson-Adams – our thanks to them. There are some excellent trips on the calendar for April and May; please try to support Club trips when you can. **Steve Knox 1st April 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 March 2022 to June 2022:



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club:

12 th Mar. 2022	Link Pot - Serendipity, Easegill, Yorks. Alt.: Mistral Hole, Easegill, Yorks.	Changed to Hardrawkin pot & Sunset Hole. (2 Members attended.)
19 th Mar. 2022	Indoor SRT Training.	Whitehall Outdoor Centre, Buxton. (9)
27 th Mar. 2022	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire. Alternative: Giants Hole, Derbyshire.	Fee payable. Various routes. (5) Alt. £3 fee payable.
	The April Meeting.	8.30 pm. at 'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, and hopefully also by 'Zoom'.
	CCPC King Pot, East Kingsdale, Yorkshire. Alternative: Illusion Pot	Multi-pitch SRT trip, not for the inexperienced. Lower section flood prone.
	CCPC Alderley Edge Copper Mines.	Gated: - extensive complex of passages and chambers - no SRT needed.
	CCPC Dow Cave, Yorkshire. Alt. ; Dow – Providence through trip.	Large resurgence cave, can be wet – no SRT. Alt. serious, contorted, strenuous !!
	The May Meeting.	8.30 pm. at 'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, and hopefully also by 'Zoom'.
	Cwmorthin Slate Mine, North Wales. Alt. Croesor to Rhosydd through trip.	Massive slate mine complex. Alt.: Two slate mines linked by traverse wires and fragile bridges.
	CCPC Alum Pot / Lower Long Churn, Yorkshire. Alt. Diccan Pot, Yorkshire.	Impressive open shaft SRT pitches, and some easy stream passages.
	The June Meeting.	8.30 pm. at 'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, and hopefully also by 'Zoom'.
Limited, privately organised activities take place as, and when, permissible, complying with any current government restrictions. Some members may still 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. Training continues.

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

	DCRO Training: Hypothermia, etc..	7.30 pm. Buxton Base.
	DCRO Training: Underground Comms..	
	DCRO Full PPE & equipment check.	7.30 pm. Buxton Base.
	DCRO Training: Multipod	
	DCRO AGM	Online: 7.00 pm.
	DCRO Open Day	7.30 pm. Buxton Base
	DCRO Training – Full day exercise.	



After Gaz's item about Owl Hole in Newsletter No. 131:

- Reminiscing over Owl Hole and Dowel Dale Side Pot.

1. On Friday, 11th February 2022, Alan Brentnall wrote:

Morning Gaz,

Great write up, as usual, and lovely photos. The selfie from the bottom of the doline while climbing it must have taken quite a bit of setting up!! How did you do that?

If you don't mind, I've forwarded this to the fitters in DCA (access team), so that the bolt can be replaced, and maybe somebody can come up with an idea for something which can't be dropped on the floor!!

Regarding the Crystal Pallas pitch, I've usually used the large square boulder, cemented in the floor of the passage just down from the junction with the entrance passage - it's pretty 'bomber'. Also, I haven't bothered with rope protectors on the main rope as it's a short pitch with relatively small stretch and there aren't any sharp edges - plus it's a short rope, so it's not difficult to replace if it got badly furred.

This is another "unfinished symphony" by Orpheus CC (like the lovely Bottle Pot nearby - and WICC, come to that) and I think that it's probably high time that DCA took a good look at the place and put proper bolts in for the external climb and for the Pallas pitch. Maybe worth a letter from club secretary Nigel to Wayne Sheldon (I've already got at least one bolting request in Scott Bradley's in tray).

Any road, I'm glad you managed OK and had an interesting trip. But you did miss the best part of an Owl Hole trip, which is a pint and a pie in the Quiet Woman at Earl Sterndale afterwards! Cheers, **Alan**

Later, Alan added: *I passed your comments about Owl Hole to the gang at DCA and there's a work trip planned which will hopefully result in some better bolts etc. -See below – page 9.*

2. On 12th February 2022, Mark Lovatt wrote:

Sadly, since Ken Mellor's passing, the Quiet Woman is 'no more'.

Mark Lovatt

3. On Saturday, 12th February 2022, 14:19 Alan Brentnall added:

Mark says that the Quiet Woman is 'no more'. That's a pity - once it will have been the heart of the village.

My early introductions to the Quiet Woman were more to do with rock climbing at Alderley Cliff, a crag owned by the BMC down the road from Earl Sterndale. It was a traditional village

pub in every way, and, like the Bull i'Thorn, it was a cheap outlet for Stilton Cheese - a favourite being Red Buxton.

Probably my first ever visit to the pub coincided with my first ever visit to Owl Hole. It was the usual Tuesday night crowd (although I'm pretty sure that it was Wednesdays in those days) and the cave was suggested by Keith Joule who was (rightly) a mine of information when it came to local obscure caves we'd never heard of. We met and parked above the cattle grid (a practice now banned by the local farmer) and decided to drop down the face to the upper entrance, rather than climb the slippery limestone.

Belaying to a combination of fence posts and dodgy trees (I'm very wary of trees growing close to the edge of a cliff as their roots cannot always be very deep, and I remember one tree sliding across the top of Piggy's Crack at New Mills Tors) we abseiled down a steep gully filled with wet tree branches and swung around the corner onto the ledge in front of the upper entrance.

Inside the entrance we were met with a substantial gate - the same gate that you would meet nowadays, but back then there wasn't a Derbyshire Key bolt, just a hefty padlock. "Not to worry," cried Keith, producing his trusty adjustable spanner, and deftly removing all the bolts which secured the gate hinges. We were in.

Once inside the newcomers to the cave, including myself, looked around the Pig's Trotters chamber and marvelled at the colour and quality of the formations there. "You ain't seen nothing yet," said Keith, taking us back almost to the gate and then down a side passage. We laddered the short, awkward pitch into Crystal Pallas and once down we knew that Keith was right - this was the place ... and the reason for the gate. If you've never been to Owl Hole, add it to your TO-DO list, and don't forget your camera.

The rest of the trip was dedicated to the further levels below the chamber, and to the other two entrances out in the doline. We used the ladder to get down from the cave and retrieved our abseil rope and, after changing, headed over to the Quiet Woman for a pint and a pie. We'd no sooner settled when the outside door opened and in walked none other than Bob Dearman, Chairman (and scourge) of both the DCA and Eldon PC. Well, you could have cut the atmosphere with a knife. Keith went white. "Shit," he mentioned, "He'll know we've been caving, but he'll also know that Owl Hole's padlocked - what shall we say?"

Well, I couldn't think of any decent sized caves in the neighbourhood (I'd yet to descend Bottle Pot) and all I could think of was Frank'i'th'Rocks, which is a very short trip not far away.

Anyway, it turned out that Bob was more interested in nattering to one of his old climbing mates who'd by now joined him and we managed to finish our pies and pints and sneak away before our earlier piracy could be discovered.

Alan Brentnall

4. On Sunday, 13th February 2022, Mark Lovatt replied.

I first started using the Quiet Woman regularly in the mid 90's whilst digging with Pete 'PB' Smith in Dowel Dale. The dig was very promising and PB convinced me that it would lead to a dry fossil route above the proven (but inaccessible) system below the water table. Sadly PB died (after a fall of <6ft on a building site!) and the dig got forgotten about. It is still just about discernible on the RHS about a third of the way down the dale, but. Mr Etches of Dowel Hall Farm is very unlikely to grant permission to even visit - let alone resume digging. We used to retire to the QW where PB would actively avoid Bob Dearman if he was in (I think that he just didn't like him). It became one of my favourite pubs and I often spent the weekend there: Ken let us camp for free in the adjacent field. Ken was a heavy pipe smoker and a maverick - his reply to the smoking ban was to install a CCTV and electronic lock on the front door. If he didn't like the look of you, he didn't let you in! The smoking ban was ignored right up until Kens passing in August 2020. This unique pub, like PB's dig, is now abandoned, slowly deteriorating, and will probably never entertain another caver.

Mark Lovatt



Saturday, 5th March 2022: Knotlow Mine, Derbyshire.

- Ruth Rabinowitz, Claudia, Steve Pearson-Adams, Jenny Drake.

On 3rd March, Ruth Rabinowitz sent out an invitation on the CCPCgroups.io list to see if any club members wanting to go caving. A climber friend of hers, Claudia, was being tempted to the dark side of caving and SRT. Steve PA and I answered the call.

Two days later we met up in Monyash, then made our way to the Knotlow Triangle. The day was sunny, but a raw, cold, northerly wind was blowing over the open landscape of the Peaks. Steve soon had the climbing shaft of Knotlow rigged and he and I descended. Ruth supervised Claudia as she abseiled the entrance pitch. Steve then rigged the next drop into Pearl Chamber, and we explained and demonstrated the fine art of deviation passing. Once down, we made our way to the top of Waterfall Chamber and peered over the edge, where the rain during the preceding week was making the waterfall very loud.

Claudia then led the way back to the pitches. While Steve and Claudia practiced reverse prussiking, and mid rope changeovers between abseiling and prussiking, I had a poke in to a passage leading off from the chamber that I'd not explored before. This has some tiny calcite formations. Probably the finest in the system!

Once back on the surface, we quickly got changed and after extracting Steve's car from the mud, we set off for home. A short, but fun trip. Thank you all!

Jenny Drake



Saturday 19th March 2022: SRT Training at Whitehall Centre.

Well, today we swapped the underground for the overground, and nine of us spent a very pleasant and informative day at the Whitehall Centre, near Buxton, going up and down a series of ropes, some on very 'sus' anchors for a real cave feel. The great bit is that somehow the floor, although equally deadly, seems a lot less so when the sun is shining through the windows and there isn't a waterfall crashing down, filling your head with trepidation and doubt.

Anyway after discussing set ups, and making a few adjustments here and there, we set about warming up with a load of changeovers, before Mark started going around suggesting other scenarios to practice, such as passing knots, whilst offering useful advice as he went.

Next we covered knots and traverses. The knots were eye-opening for me, as I've always stuck to the bunny ears and alpine butterfly for my rigging, but now I can add the fusion knot to the kitty, and if I can find a flaming 'how to', the cavers' butterfly looks pretty useful too. The traverses bit was very useful, as I only had my own way of setting these up, with no prior knowledge and a very weary guardian angel cursing the day she was assigned to me.

At this point the day turned weird, very, very weird, and thankfully for the world, for once I left the camera at home.

Rope rescue from below ! No one can prepare you for the first time you see and do this. All I can say is that it's a good job your patient is incapacitated, otherwise it wouldn't be the cave that killed them, it would be the shame!

Steve and Mark demonstrated, and showed us the way, with Steve being a great example of a true-to-life injured caver, and dropping his guts on Mark's leg, much to our amusement.

Once safely down, Steve started doing a little 'potty dance', as Mark, still on the rope, cleared his gear. Mark asked what the hell Steve was doing, to which Steve answered, "shaking it"

.What Mark must have thought, as he was being moved rhythmically up and down from below by a man openly admitting to shaking it, I'll leave to your imagination.

Anyway, then it was our turn. Heavy bondage sessions instantly spring to mind, as do those 'swing-things' that some people use for enjoyment, and are apparently easier on the knees and elbows than a bed or carpet. First I mounted, sorry, I mean rescued, Jack. After avoiding several awkward 'face-plants', and unwillingly staring at his 'camel-toe', I seamlessly got on top of him, only to get stuck on my ascender, and before going down, I required him to work from below to get me up again ! I hope you are following all this, because next, Heather had to get over me (and boy did she struggle) and then, once she was over she was much too weak to get me off, so I had to help her !

I wasn't kidding when I said it was a good thing I'd left the camera at home.

After recovering from all the excitement we then started cutting our partner's ropes for them, in the standard 'who ate all the pies' test. Fortunately all those that tried passed, and happily dangled on a single strand of rope without breaking it under their own weight.

And that was that - the end of a very good day. Thanks to Steve and Mark for setting this up, and for filling us up with useful tips, and for corrupting our innocent minds with things that we will never ever be able to un-see. See you next week in Peak, all being well. Stay safe.

Gaz McShee

Jenny Drake added: We learnt a lot yesterday - Caves should definitely have crash mats at the bottom of pitches ! Fortunately, I've drunk a glass of Brain Bleach(tm), which has wiped my memory of the later part of the afternoon.

Thanks everyone for a great day, and especially to Mark and Steve for organising.

SRT Foot Loop Optimised for One, or Two Feet.

Jenny Drake

One soon learns when starting SRT that having your rig precisely adjusted to suit you makes the whole experience much easier and less energy consuming. One item on my rig that has always had to be compromised is the foot loop. I use a foot loop with a single loop that can take either one, or two feet. Two feet allows both legs to be used when frog style ascending; good for long pitches, or if carrying loaded tackle bags. A single foot loop for both feet allows the rope to be more easily gripped between the feet to draw it through the Croll jammer when starting a climb. One foot can be used in the loop and the other with a Pantin for either an alternative way to frog climb, or to rope walk. One foot on its own might be used for short distances, or for awkward sections where the other foot can be used on the rock.

If a foot loop is optimised to work with two feet and only one foot is used, the top jammer ends up too far away from the chest jammer. If it is optimised for one foot and two feet are used, then the top jammer crashes into the chest jammer at full leg extension on each step. Some commercial foot loops have buckle adjustment, but you risk losing the correct length completely if fiddled with underground. The buckle is also a source of failure. I've had two Petzl footloops break the cord at the buckle. For a personal foot loop, a simple way of flipping between two pre-adjusted lengths is ideal.

A double loop knot, like a rabbit ears, or fusion knot for the foot loop to top jammer krab connection can be used to make two loops, with different sizes. The smaller loop is optimised for a single welly boot in the loop. The larger loop is sized to give the correct overall length for two wellingtons in the foot loop. To change from one to the other, you simply slip the smaller size loop in, or out of the krab, leaving the longer loop always in the krab.

[I knew I was getting something wrong !! – now I just need to learn how to tie those knots. Ed.]



The pictures show my current foot loop, with an unequal loop rabbit ears knot to the top jammer krab. It is made from 5mm diameter Dyneema cord. This is light, but very stiff and wear resistance. The stiffness means that more of each leg push is translated into upwards movement, rather than into stretch of the foot loops. The picture on the left shows it set for one foot. On the right, the small loop has been flipped out from the krab, lengthening the footloop to take a second foot beside the first.



Sunday 27th March 2022: Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.

- John Gillett, Neil Conde, Heather Simpson, Rob Nevitt, Gaz McShee.

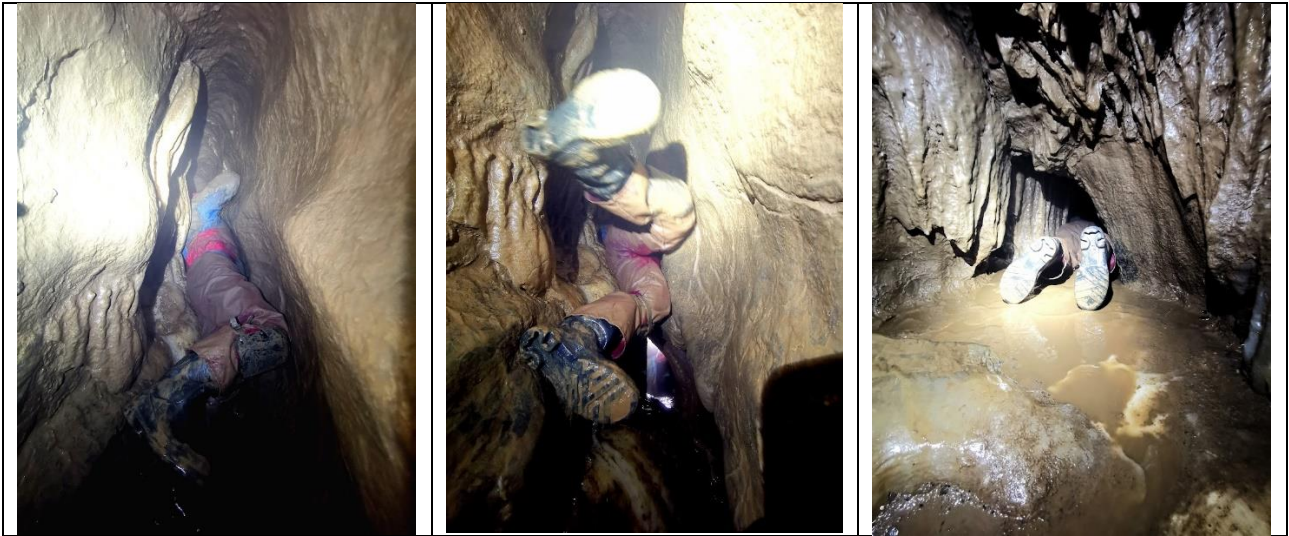
Five of us turned up for today's trip into the amazing 'Devils Arse'. Each time I sell my soul, I find myself more hooked and addicted for more of its darkest secrets, it's my Heroin. Today's trip was to Moss Chamber, formally known as Stalagmite Chamber until in 1959 *[date corrected - Ed.]* a twenty-year-old student sadly sold his soul for the very fix we all crave. Neil Moss's name is legend, and the chamber was renamed in his memory as Moss Chamber.



Well, we left John at the Mucky Ducks as he had other plans. He intended to head back and sketch in the main vestibule and, meanwhile, four of us got very cold, very quickly in the icy cold water so familiar to all who have become emasculated in it. We all missed the entrance to Pickering's passage for some reason, and reached Surprise View before realising our mistake and turning back, tails between our legs, hoping not to meet the other groups, and having to own up to being rubbish at route finding in a cave we do very often. Anyway, after putting our mistake behind

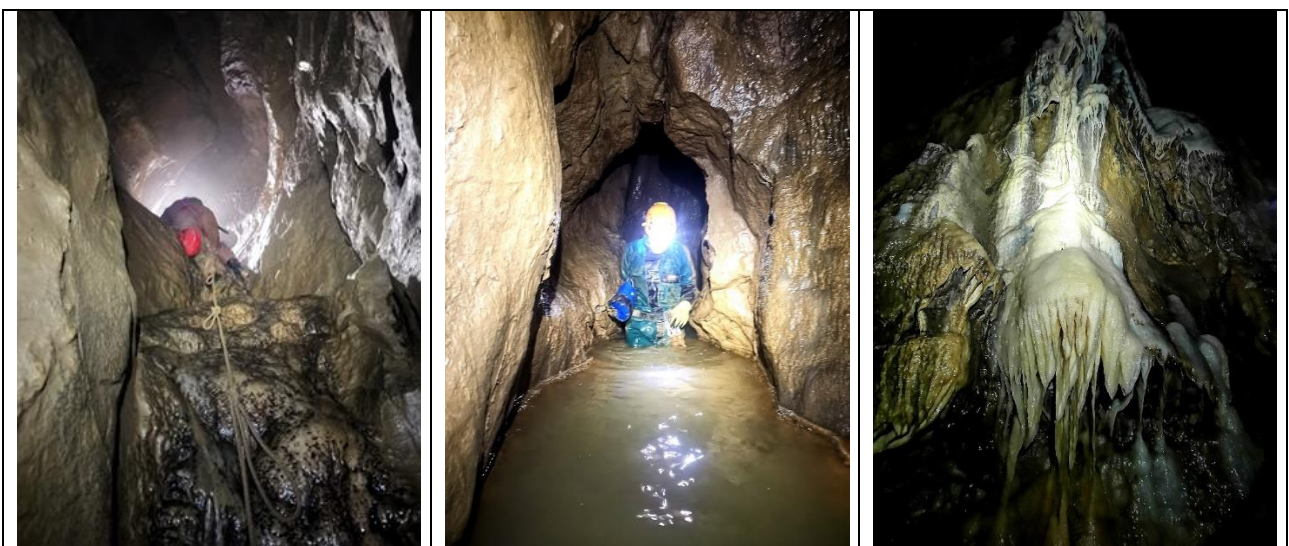
us, we left the upright world behind and got down on all fours and headed off into one of the most notorious passages in Peak Cavern.

Firstly, let me tell you, I hate squeezes, I just don't fit. It would be so much easier if I had no shoulders and back, so when we arrived at the block defending the way on, I had to put all my effort into passing it and we hadn't even arrived at my perceived Nemesis, "The Eye Hole" yet.



Just after the block we took the climb up into the upper passage towards our destination. From here on in my Nemesis gave me a break, and Heather took over the mantra. It was all up hill, and totally my world. Heather however struggled with the whole counter-pressure thing, and got totally out of her comfort zone. Respect where due, she totally cranked through it though, and finally we made it to the eye hole!

The eye hole was my benchmark for the trip, it was me against my weakness, and after Neil and Heather had cruised it, I had to step up for my date with destiny. The problem with the eye hole isn't the squeeze, it's the fact that it traps you at its base, making it really hard to move on. Surprisingly I found it pretty easy, and after Rob had nailed it, we carried on, to give Heather another nightmare, firstly down-climbing and then reascending up to the continuing passage.



Safely up, the passage suddenly became a crawl through gour pools, and the walls became decorated, in total contrast to the slippery mud passages that we had become used to.

After a final dip in the lovely icy cold Peak water, the most beautiful spectacle emerged before our headlamps. The giant boss in Moss Chamber is nothing short of breath-taking, not only in scale, but in its perfect beauty, dominating the whole chamber from roof to floor in the most amazing flowstone waterfall one could imagine. From the pool the chamber above soared away on an almost infinite cascade of beehive slopes, disappearing into the darkness, whilst the ceiling was adorned with stals of almost perfect white, and the walls with more flowstone. A more fitting tribute to a lost soul no-one could imagine.



We climbed to the top of the chamber and headed off through a very unstable passage to another restriction blocking the way on. Rob sailed through, but Neil got stuck, lost his head, and had to battle his way back through the twenty or so feet of tightness. Heather, being tiny, levitated it, seemingly not even touching the sides, and then it was on me!



Neil wasn't at all game for another go, and his failure had only added to my trepidation for the job ahead. I slid in headfirst, and started to slide into the tightness. As soon as I'd passed the point of no return, my helmet jammed. I couldn't see to manoeuvre into a less restrictive part of the passage, and my heart rate started to rise, but I needed to do this. Going back would have been very hard, so off to my happy place I went and managed to get going again, finally getting to the exit where the restriction was at its tightest. I pushed and pushed until there was no way back and again I was stuck fast, but this time there was no chance of going back, so off to the happy place I went again.

I really need to find another happy place, as my current one found me right here, stuck in a cave, so wasn't much use at all. However over the years I spent climbing, often without a rope, I learnt how to remove myself from situations and

that's exactly what I had to do now. After a moment that seemed like an hour, I relaxed, emptied the air from my lungs, and pushed, slowly inching forward until finally the effort gave way to relief, despite the prospect of having to do it all again on the way out.

We had a look down to the first chamber, but didn't go further due to the horrific risk of being buried alive should the 'Jenga' pile overhead decide to slab the floor, which by the looks of it had already been the case many times before.

The exit through the restriction was easy ! The shape of the passage was perfect to enter from that side, and we were all back with Neil before we knew it. We said our goodbyes to Peak

Cavern's only permanent resident, and left him to cave for infinity, once more in total darkness. All the tight bits were much easier going back, and it seemed much shorter on the return. Finally the upright world returned, and we were back in the main passage of Peak Cavern. As it had been a quick trip Neil and I had a poke around in a few digs before returning from the depths to scare the paying guests in the show cave. Their guide summed it up when he said, "Oh look more cavers, don't look them in the eyes!"
Thanks to all for another great trip and ace company. All stay safe till next time.

Full set of photos here for those interested. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/QC8njqzMoVg8Smgd9>
Text, and all included photographs are courtesy of Gaz.

Gaz McShee

More about Peak Cavern:

- Alan Brentnall responded to Gaz's write-up and photographs:

Hi Gaz, Excellent and entertaining write-up. I'm really enjoying reading all these tales of CCPC caving trips

It always brings it home to me, when I visit the place [Peak Cavern], that when the big Moss rescue took place (*in 1959, not 1949; I was 11 when I first visited Castleton, on a School trip, the year after the event*) the standard dress for most cavers was woolly rags under a cotton boiler suit. Premier "stinky" carbide lamps were "state of the art" and the Mucky Duck was a whole lot deeper than it is today. If you dig out the old photos ('Life & Death Underground', by Jimmy Lovelock is worth a look, or, better still, try to get hold of a copy of Dave Webb's film "Fight for Life" - there's a clip on his website) you'll see them carting huge car batteries and heavy oxygen cylinders through to the chamber. Iron men in wooden ships indeed!

Another excellent trip which also entails a hands & knees through Pickering's Passage (but no knees required in Cohesion Crawl) is a visit to Toadstool Aven - a very pretty sump above which an aven ascends (hand line climbs again) to a very pretty part of Peak Cavern.

Thanks for all the write-ups!!

Cheers,

Alan Brentnall



Owl Hole Update from Roy Rodgers: - 30th March:

'Hello Gaz, Just to let you know we finally fitted a captive bolt and nut to the Owl Hole gate yesterday. The picture shows what we did. It still needs 2 spanners. The bolt part is captive on the chain, but the nut can still be lost. We left 3 spares threaded onto that bit of wire and fastened it to the gate. Long term it needs the bracket on the wall removing temporarily and a captive nut welding to the back. The cave, including the entrance climb, is on the list to be P bolted.'

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 April 2022
