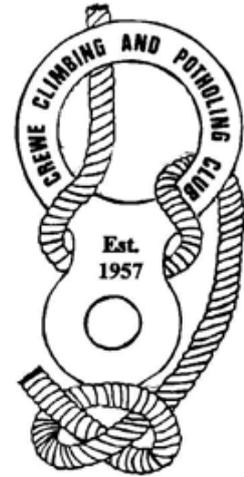


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 134. May / June 2022

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Editor: Steve Knox
colinknox@btinternet.com



Planned Club Meets, etc., from May 2022 to June 2022:



Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club:

7 th May 2022	CCPC Dow Cave, Yorkshire. Alt. ; Dow – Providence through trip.	Large resurgence cave, can be wet – no SRT. Alt. serious, contorted, strenuous ! (6)
9 th May 2022	The May Meeting (on the second Monday, as the first is a Bank Holiday).	8.30 pm. at 'The Red Bull', Butt Lane, and hopefully also by 'Zoom'. (8)
22 nd May 2022	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. (6)
4 th June 2022	CCPC Alum Pot / Lower Long Churn, Yorkshire. Alt. Diccan Pot, Yorkshire.	Impressive open shaft SRT pitches, and some easy stream passages. (7)
6 th June 2022	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>

4 th May 2022	DCRO Training: Multipod	Meet at Knotlow triangle.
15 th May 2022	DCRO Open Day	Full day at Buxton Base.
28 th May 2022	DCRO Training – Full day exercise.	T.B.A.
7 th June 2022	DCRO Training: steep ground.	T.B.A.
24 th – 26 th June	BCRC Rescue Conference.	Based at 'The Rotary Centre', Castleton.

There are some excellent trips on the calendar for May and June; please try to support Club trips when you can. **Steve Knox**

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.



Sunday, 1st May 2022: Nickergrove & Merlin Mines, Derbyshire.

Jack Lingwood

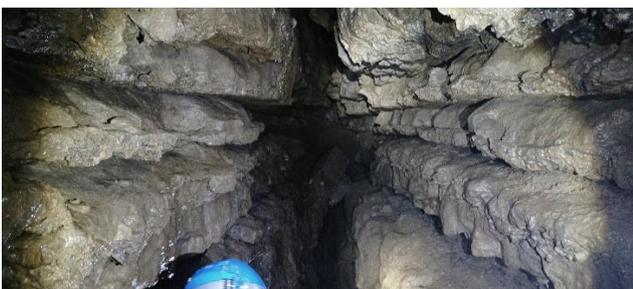


My write-up probably won't be written as well as Gaz's would be, but was a fun little weekend so I thought I'd share it with you all. *[Brilliant! – Ed.]* I planned on meeting a non-club friend, with my son, and going to Nickergrove lead mine in Stoney Middleton, arriving at 8.00 am for a nice early start. It was a lovely bright morning and with spring well in, lots of greenery in the woodland.

10 minutes after arriving we were at the entrance to Nickergrove, and we didn't waste any time and went straight in. Unfortunately there's no catastrophe's in today's trip !

[Glad to hear it ! – Ed.]

Following my friend's lead, as he had been in there before, we made our way through the passages to a shaft with a log over it. He explained that he wasn't keen on passing it, as he seen it before and never went any further. Luckily he had mentioned this in the planning, so I had brought what I needed for a handline to make everyone more comfortable when passing it. First, I quickly went down the shaft to have a look. The clay chamber dig seems quite impressive. I didn't go down their shaft, but they have been working hard. It was quite an impressive little cavern too.



The passages leading up to, and following on from the shaft, were quite small, but you don't have to crawl.

Shortly after the shaft there was quite an impressive chamber that goes down into continuing workings, which were the same, small passages. The natural chamber was well worth the effort though.



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Back out, and off to Merlin Mine:



After a fumble about on the hillside, looking at the wrong entrances, we soon found the tiny adit entrance, and again, we didn't waste any time and went straight in.

The passages in Merlin are a bit bigger than those in Nickergrove, and the mine in general is a little bigger. There are a few small natural caves inside, some with some quite nice formations, and there is quite a significant shaft, right at the back, with no bolts and no hope of climbing down. There are also two holes in the floor, down another passage of the mine; one looks climbable and the other had an in-situ rope, that looked to be tied together half -way down. I believe that way leads into Carlswark Cavern. Being the only climber, and having my son with me, I didn't tempt fate.



After exploring some of the natural areas, we headed for the exit.
It was an all-round good day, and was some education for my son - and we all went home safe.

I always go a bit mad with photo's because I feel that the more I take, the more chance I have of some good ones. Here are links to the albums:

Nickergrove Mine: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Jnyg327cUeope7tu6>

Merlin Mine: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/t3AXFfb49j9XuUr8A>

Photos and text: Jack Lingwood



DCRO Exercise. Snelslow Swallet. 26th March 2022

After much behind the scenes negotiation, access to Snelslow Swallet was restored by the DCA in the year before COVID hit. There are two routes in the cave. The first to be rebolted by DCA leads via a couple of short pitches to a window into the main shaft. From the chamber at the foot, a further shaft leads to a narrowing and blockage.

This has so far not been passed, despite heroic efforts by diggers back in the 1980's. The diggers opened up the top of the main shaft to form a route in from the surface, through a lid, surrounded by a dry-stone wall. At the time of writing, after a long pandemic delay, DCA are finalising the rigging and a new lid for the surface shaft.

Snelslow has become a very popular trip in the short time it has been available again to cavers. It is close by Giant's Hole and uses the same car park and trespass fee access system. It takes a couple of hours, yet offers excellent SRT rigging and training experience, with a variety of features, including rebelays, deviations and Y hangs in a short and relatively benign cave environment. Once the surface shaft route is finalised, then a round trip will be possible.

DCRO decided to carry out an exercise using the top shaft entrance. It gave us an opportunity to train on the Multipod and to find any difficulties that the surrounding dry-stone wall would give in setting up the Multipod. It is believed that Snelslow will likely be the site of a shout. Lots of relative novices using the cave to build their skills and experience mean that someone may run in to trouble. The shaft should be the easiest route for retrieving a broken caver.

Our clubs Steve PA volunteered to organise the days training. The weather turned out to be fine and dry. Ideal for a day when everyone would be on the surface. We met up at the usual Giant's car park and collected the Multipod from the DCRO vehicle, along with plenty of ground stakes, sledgehammers, rope, rigging and hauling ironmongery and walked over to the shaft entrance to Snelslow.

The Multipod is a collection of precision engineered aluminium poles and connectors that allow a variety of tripods, bipods, and monopods to be built up. It lets us more easily extract an injured caver from a shaft top by allowing us to lift a vertically hung stretcher entirely above the top of the shaft.

It replaced an earlier and less versatile quadpod and was purchased in 2006 by DCRO using a legacy left by late CreweCPC and DCRO member Rob Farmer. See: CCPC Newsletter 89.

Those who had not used the Multipod before learnt how to construct the most common tripod configuration from the bags of bits, then carried it over to the shaft. Meanwhile, others were hammering stakes into the ground to make anchors for a pair of Z hauling rigs. Safety lines were set up around the 45m shaft top, with a strict requirement that anyone within the shaft boundary wall was to be clipped in.

The current shaft top is made up of heavy steel chequer plate sheets that are hard to lift away and very easy to drop down the shaft. DCA are building a new top, with a smaller aluminium lid. We found it tricky getting the legs of the Multipod in the right position to ensure that the central haul point was positioned optimally over the drop. Two of the three legs ended hard up against the base of the wall. It did let us take photos and make recommendations for DCA on the best places to position the lid and some ring bolts to help in securing the Multipod during hauling.

Once set up, we used one of the heavy steel chequer plates as a mock injured caver and practiced lowering and hauling it in the shaft, using the twin Z rig hauling systems. One person controlling the process from the shaft top and the hauling teams following their instructions.

It was a pleasant and interesting day and should hopefully make us more prepared if there is a call out from Snelslow.



There is no photo from the day, but here is a picture of the Multipod in use on a training exercise at Wharf Engine Shaft, showing how it can lift a vertical stretcher completely clear of the shaft.
(Photo 2015, © Steve Knox).

Jenny Drake



More information re.: Water Icicle Close Cavern.

In the previous Newsletter (No. 133) I commented on the broken formations which are found throughout the Water Icicle new extensions: *'...it was not unknown for miners to break off formations to sell as garden ornaments, and to decorate 'grottos' in the grounds of large houses. Is there a geological reason for the damage in W.I.C.C., or could the damage indicate that the original miners did access the passages of the 'new' extensions ?'*

Alan Brentnall has provided another, suggested reason (much more scientific): *'Snapped stal, originally thought to be 't'Owd Mon', changed when Orpheus broke into the new stuff which had never had 't'Owd Mon'. Next theory was that it was due to earth movements, but there are no similar breaks in nearby venues such as Lathkillhead Cave. I believe that Profs John Gunn & Gina*

*Mosely now think that the same freeze which created the **Cryogenic Cave Carbonates** could have been responsible.'*

In the field, CCCs occur as **distinct patches of millimetre- to centimetre-sized loose crystals and crystal aggregates on the floor of cave chambers**, lacking a framework to validate ages by stratigraphic order. *CCCs have been identified in Water Icicle Close Cavern, hence the reference, above.*

I wonder why the same freezing process wasn't happening in the adjacent Lathkillhead chambers, and resulting in broken stal and CCCs ? - Ed.



Saturday, 7th May 2022: Providence Pot to Dow Cave, Yorkshire.

Jenny Drake, Des Kelly, Nicola Wellings, Adrian Pedley, plus two friends of Ade.

Disclaimer !

Whilst the trip was only yesterday, much of the cave has blended in to one! So apologies if I have missed any passage names/key points of yesterday. There is the possibility that during tough times, the mind blocks out the bad bits.... There are also no accompanying photos from yesterday, for the majority of the day it was either steamy or wall to wall rock. If there's any errors in report, please let me know and I shall adjust accordingly!

The much-anticipated Provi-Dow was upon us once again with 6 cavers meeting at the carpark in Kettlewell. Donning wetsuits and a couple of laminated guides (not for the fainthearted, Northern Guides 2) we headed up past the campsite to Providence Pot. Entering the cave at 11.15am we dropped down the shaft, closing the lid and shutting out the sunshine. We were straight into a flat-out crawl, that was lined with muddy water.

Once at the wallows 2 cavers decided that they weren't feeling the cave anymore and decided to head on out, leaving the remaining 4 to continue.

Powering on, we negotiated a number of terrifying traverses, tight passages and clambering up and down boulders. Navigation was fair, and not for the faint hearted provided a reasonable amount of detail to get us through. A memorable section of cave being where a welly was lost. It was in a passage of tapered rock, in order to pass thorough you had to near enough lie down on your side and thrutch your way through. At some point one of us had got stuck in the rocks, with the only way out being to leave the welly. The second caver tried to fish the welly out, but due to the tapering couldn't get low enough in the rock to pull it out. Being a little smaller, I then came along and did some digging and shaking until eventually the welly pinged out. Relief was all around, as we still had lots of cave left to get through.

For the main part of the trip we mostly followed the stream, until we either couldn't fit through the gap, or an obstacle blocked the way, causing us to go up and over. We negotiated '800 yards Chamber' and the esoteric squeeze.

Shortly afterwards we up-climbed 2 fixed ropes, heading into what we believed was Brew Chamber. The climb was horrendous - even with the rope. It was a box like tube with barely any foot placements, where you could see a little sticking out rock for your foot, there was not enough room to physically pick your knee up and stand on. Inch by inch and using a vertical thrutch-like motion, we made it through. Following a quick bite to eat we looked for the next section of our route. Unfortunately for us the 2.5m awkward down-climb turned out to be more of a 10m drop into a dark void. Never mind, there was nowhere else to go so down the drop we went. Upon reflection, whilst we were following the Labyrinth Rift, we had climbed up too high and away from the stream level.

Once back in the stream we headed on for the Rock Window, negotiating a charming passage called The Narrows. Unsurprisingly it was a little tight, with one team member finding it a bit squeezier than they would have perhaps liked. Once in the passage there wasn't much opportunity to move your head from side to side, meaning you were stuck looking only one way whilst wading through scummy and very cold water.

After Rock Window we continued heading towards Hardy's Horror. The nature of the passage meant the gap was only a few inches wide... narrower than a helmet ! It was also water filled, coming up to near my chin/above my shoulders. The water could however be avoided by doing a traverse above, this way was also marginally wider. Unfortunately getting onto the traverse was another nightmare, the rock was super smooth. After scrambling and making several attempts, I decided I had had enough and would brave the cold. I removed my helmet and dragged it through the water behind me, leaving me to follow the light of the caver in front. Not having my headtorch forward-facing was very disorientating, but short lived. Another caver followed in the same manner as I, until all 4 of us had made it through.

We continued looking for The Duck, whilst hoping that the water level was low enough to mean we could avoid it. At some point we climbed up some boulders and did manage to avoid it. At this point we were all feeling pretty cold, and decided to power on. We passed a large flowstone formation, the biggest I have seen, and continued through the widening passage. Reaching the T-junction, we hooked a left and did some easy caving through the wide and vast Dow Passage. Eventually sunlight beamed in, and we heard the calls of the two cavers who had previously turned back. We popped out around 4.15pm into some beautiful sunshine. Whilst all were happy to be out, one caver was super happy to be out, and said he wouldn't be doing the cave ever again. For him, the squeezes were just a little too squeezey !

Overall, it was a super-satisfying and physically/mentally demanding trip; the cave really was the cave that just kept giving.

Nicola Wellings

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Alan Brentnall added:

'It does sound as though you may have made both of the same mistakes that Keith, Jenny and I made on our trip twenty years ago: (a) climbing too high over the boulder choke, instead of finding the way through, at a lower level, to Brew Chamber; and (b) not spotting the climb up to the easier traverses later on. One of my fell running friends, Ken Robinson, who lives in Grassington and is a long-time member of Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association told me to watch out for a 90-degree bend in the fissure, where the water gets much colder and there is often a rope hanging to assist with the climb up into the traverse.

However, congratulations! It's a significant achievement managing to find your way through this.

What I think is a bit of a pity is the way Dowbergill's reputation puts people off even trying. Like my old friend Ken, there are people who know the best ways through the passage, and it can be done in a reasonable fashion, and (in a type-2 way) even enjoyably. Other groups, like Pete Dell's old club, have organised trips where somebody with a good knowledge of the system has led them through, showing them the easiest options. Perhaps something like this could be organised in the future for CCPC?

In 1976, Sid Peru made a film which is worth watching:

'<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqKMmMHxoXo> It isn't very informative, because of the quality of the pictures, but you do get an idea of the main sections.'

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Tuesday 3rd May 2022: Great Masson Mine, Matlock, Derbyshire.

Gaz McShee

Steve Pearson-Adams, Neil Conde, Darren Conde, Gaz McShee

Following the Alderley Edge trip we arranged to do a trip to Great Masson to have a sneaky peep at the show cave on the Heights of Abraham through the lake at the far end of the mine.

After a chaotic day at work, I managed to get away a little early as I hadn't had a break all day, and eating my dinner for my tea as I drove, I headed up to the parking on Salter's Lane.

I arrived first closely followed by Steve, Neil and Darren, and after changing, we marched off over the hill into the Masson Lee's quarry in which holds the entrance to the complex under the huge roof in the collapsed back wall.

Now I've seen into here many times, and several times my granddaughter has been with me, and it's a pretty straight-forward entrance, so imagine our surprise when out of the blue Steve started rigging the pitch. There was me thinking those eco-anchors were put in to facilitate a hauling setup for the 'crystal bandits', to bring their tons of vandalism up from the depths after a heavy session of rock atrocities. Neil's take on it was that as he's in the DCRO, he needed to practice his health and safety techniques.

Anyway, with the newly installed trip hazard in place, we descended, trying to avoid getting mud on Steve's pristine white rope, or break our necks in the process. Once down a low arch led down to the dreaded hole in the floor, below the crawl into the mine proper. I had once had a battle trying to extricate myself from its clutches, when it repelled my efforts to gain access, and left me without any leg assistance and only a lot of upper body thrutching to escape. One day I will try again to see where it goes, but this trip was all about a cheeky 'freebie' into the world of the tourist.

After a few detours to check water levels in the flooded stopes, we crawled into the passage to Dale Shaft and after another check on water levels in the well, headed off to the passage I like to call 'Valley of the Dead'. If you've been in there, you will know why. Finally, we got to the point where there should have been a dry lakebed, and to our surprise, it was sumped ! We had had no rain as such in ages, and the lake water level was higher than I've ever seen it, even after long rainy periods. Steve tried to give it a little try, but unsure of what it would be like on the other side, he sensibly backed off. That was that ! After twenty minutes or so, our plan lay in tatters, and without a plan B we just messed around trying the many blind passages that we found and hadn't been in yet - surprisingly there were some.



By some miracle we managed to drag out a couple of hours, and after exiting without Steve's handline, which he whipped out as soon as he had left, probably making it easier to escape, we arrived at the huge overhanging roof as the last evening light was disappearing over the horizon. Surprisingly I didn't take any pics as such, I've got so many in here that I didn't bother. I'll tag the one of Steve checking out the duck. Thanks, guys, for a great evening doing something more exciting than TV and social media, maybe we can do it again sometime.

Gaz McShee



Sunday 11th May 2022: Sidetrack Cave, Eldon Quarry, Derbyshire.

Gaz McShee

I tried this a few weeks ago only to retreat with difficulty, catching my breath just before the Airbells - I tested positive for Covid that evening ! Not to be put off, I went back yesterday to regain my honour and enjoy (if you can call it that.) one of the best 'flat outs' in the Peak. Now before any of this can take place, there is the small matter of the abseil in. Its small enough, it has resin bolts and a loose bolt back-up, so how bad can it be ? Well, it's loose, very loose ! Foot-popping on crumbly rock is the law here, and then there are the edges, they are sharp - all four of them - and each one bends your rope in an ungodly fashion, and puts your adrenal glands on high alert.

I had two rope protectors. The first covered two rub points, and the second - I had to choose which of the other two I protected. I chose the lower one, although the upper one looked much more rope unfriendly, but at least I wouldn't have to look at it until I was halfway up on the way out.

After the sketchy abseil in, I potted across the rock step, past Alsop's cave to the entrance.

Ditching my SRT gear, I took a last look at the 7.00 am sunlight glancing off the distant quarry walls, making a true beauty out of a complete eyesore, and headed off into the world of the 'flat-earther' (although it's unlikely any have been here).



Not the easiest place for a 'selfie' !



Now you have probably all done this cave (and some may even have done it before the beer-belly- boys made it accessible to the normal sized humans, such as me) so you will appreciate the discomfort of doing the worm, over and over again, for about a hundred meters, in a tube filled almost to the ceiling with glorious Peak District mud.

Once the Airbells are reached, and a well-deserved rest is possible, the way on becomes much easier and the next hundred meters is over in around five minutes as opposed to the thirty-five it took to get there.

The Litton Stroll is pretty unexciting after all the effort expended getting there, but after a potter around, looking at, but not going into the digs today, I headed off into the darkness. Ahead, the passageway was suddenly filled with formations of all types, completely decorating the walls, floor and ceiling of the passages beyond. So taken was I that I used up all my time in the pretty part, and left myself with no time to really see the rest, but it was, without a doubt, a wonderful place that has a Yin-Yáng all of its own.

Fearing my 13.00 deadline would be passed, I was forced to leave, and as it happens, going

back out is a lot easier than going in; for one, the cooling breeze is in your face, and for another, you know what you have to do. After only twenty-five minutes I was getting my harness back on for the sketchy climb out, and then all that was left to do was to fill in the visitor's book at the gate. As I'd missed so much, I now have to go back to put the rest to bed, but as it was so much fun I'm quite looking forward to it, however, I promise not to burden you all with 'Sidetrack, part 2'.

Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/7pwd6JBanhwsfLFr7>

Gaz McShee

Comments following Gaz's Sidetrack report:

Alan Brentnall:

'The one thing I always remember about Sidetrack is how comfortable that long crawl is - sample Critchlow or Cales Dale if you don't believe me. On one of my first forays into Sidetrack, with Andy Morrison, Andy's mate got well and truly jammed on the way out, in the tight bit towards the entrance - it was half an hour before he finally got through, meanwhile I fell fast asleep!

- but if you really want to hear a Sidetrack horror story, talk to Jenny Drake about the time she and Ann Soulsby sherpa'd for Ralph Johnson when he was making his Sidetrack film - imagine an ammo box bursting into flames !'

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Gaz.:

'It is quite comfy, seeing as you can't really move your head properly. I lost the helmet as soon as I got past the gnarly first bit, and it wasn't really a problem to push it in front. The photos weren't as good as I expected, and I had to use too much editing to brighten them up. I found out afterwards that my headlamp was half covered in mud from the push along through the crawl.

I don't think either of your suggested caves are solo caves though, and by the looks of it, they require a long dry spell to access the extremities. I'll bear them in mind though, and perhaps have a cheeky poke about to assess over the summer.

I'm intrigued by the flaming ammo box though, hopefully it wasn't full of bang !'

[Aren't we all ! - Ed.]

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Jenny Drake:

'It was back in the nineties, when Ralph was doing a lot of filming. The digital cameras back then didn't have the sensitivity to low light that modern ones do and needed a lot of light thrown at the cave to get a decent image. They also had problems coping with the spectrum and colour balance from the LED lights that we had. The result was that Ralph made filming lights from 12V halogen bulbs, powered by batteries in ammo boxes - very heavy and awkward, and a short run time. The incident in Sidetrack was when one of the home-made battery packs developed a fault and the magic smoke started escaping. I reckon the short circuit burnt itself out as the smoke stopped after a bit. Kids today with their phones and LED lights. Don't know they're born. These lights and cameras were still a huge step up from cine film, which was all there was before, allowing much faster filming. Sid Perou spent months filming each project back in the '70's.'

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Gaz.:

'Heck Jen, it's a good job he didn't use Lithium Ion, you could have lost your legs ! Seriously though, I have so much admiration for the guys like Ralph and Sid who had to overcome all the same problems I do with really basic gear. What makes me laugh though is that I hate LED and would love to take halogen lights but can't drag the things in because of their bulk. The cast from LED is poor. I totally agree though that we have it pretty easy these days with the equipment available. The Freems seem to be the modern-day Sid's. I would love to see how they produce the films they make; the styles are so similar and yet so unique.'

.....
Jenny Drake:

'Grace and I had the pleasure of seeing the Freems in action a few times. They can film very fast, even in a cave that is new to them. A lot of that is down to planning before the trip and a thorough briefing of the team, so even new people know what they are doing. They also seem

to be very good at spotting good shots as they cave. They seem to get it right first time more often than not. Few second takes needed.

Equipment helps too. From what I can remember. Proper LED film lights that throw a very diffuse beam, giving even lighting. I can't remember the make, but they are about the size of a baked bean tin. Their main camera is a very expensive 4k one, protected in a dive housing and transported in a Pelicase. I can't remember exactly how many thousands it cost, but there was a strict instruction not to drop the Pelicase when carrying it! The 4k image size recording is also in 12 bit, rather than the 8 bit and lower resolution of the final film. The 4k images mean they can select a section of the total image in editing for better framing. 12 bit recording of light levels allows more options in adjusting contrast, level and colour balance. They can end up with terabytes of raw footage and monstrous computing power needed to render the final film in any reasonable time.

Their speed is similar to how Ralph used to gather footage. Very fast, almost on the move. We did the Speedwell to Peak trip, filming in Block Hall, White River, Ventilator and the Trenches in only around eight hours.

The technology is on another level from what it was fifteen to twenty years ago, but it is their skill and experience that is the main thing in the end result.'

And finally – concerning helmets, and other things:-

Alan Brentnall:

'Very rarely take my helmet off ... certainly never needed to in Sidetrack. You don't have one of those "Viking" jobs do you?

One thing I've noticed on several occasions is the number of flies congregating near the south-west end of the Litton Stroll. The survey shows this as being around 60ft from the blocked end of the old Alsop's Cave - so, either the survey (at that point) isn't too accurate, or there's another connecting "hole" closer.

Also, Keith Joule, who was doing some work there at the time, told me that, when the quarry company were told to stop quarrying and "tidy the place up", Alsop's was actually on the floor of the quarry. So, when you come out of Sidetrack and look down over the edge, you can see the sheer amount of limestone which the company shifted as part of the "tidying up" process. Which is a shame, and it's also a shame that there was such a great quantity of H.E. used, which has deprived the Peak District climbers of what would have been a brilliant venue. I know that Bob Dearman has spent some time trying to "clean" the rock, but he reckons it's way too shattered.'

Gaz.:

'I wear a Petzl Vertex which I find very restrictive in head-down situations. Any suggestions for a less eye hugging helmet would be greatly appreciated for when I get a new one.

I went into the quarry just after it ceased operations with a view to putting up a few routes in there, but there wasn't an inch of the place that you could consider safe to climb on, and I covered pretty much the whole quarry. Back then I saw the caves but had no interest in going any further than the restrictions, I was ashamedly an 'up' kind of guy. Who would have thought that a back injury, through years of climbing, would have led me to caving, which I always wanted to pursue as a kid ?'

Editor's note :-

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.

10th June 2022



Sunday 18th May 2022: King's Mine, Masson-Lees Quarry, Derbyshire.

Gaz McShee, Jack Lingwood.

Gaz McShee

Jack and I had an evening in King's Mine in the Masson-Lees Quarry last night; it was once part of the Great Masson Mine, and after the quarry destroyed most of the workings it lay separated from its larger sister by little more than a flat-out crawl. The easiest way in is through a low



duck in the upper-right quarry face, and a walk-in, followed almost immediately by a steep, muddy climb into a low pipe, which after about twenty metres leads to a squeeze into the King's Mine complex. Jack made light work of it, but as usual, I had to force my way through the crawl and then look forward to the return journey, which for some reason feels harder. There was only time to do one side of the mine, so we opted for the larger part on the far side of the New Founder or King's

Shaft, which is filled with an amazing amount of 'death from above', all waiting to be released by some poor soul who pulls the wire haulage rope with a little too much fervour. Anyhow, once past this death-trap the mine opens up a little, but as it is very close to the quarry face the threat remains, as most of the ceiling has fragmented and separated from the clay wayboard above, and is hanging in huge slabs, waiting to rain down its wrath on anyone that passes on the wrong day. Today however was not that day, and we managed to traverse the whole mine without a hitch, but in there it's always a good idea to keep one eye on the roof, and to definitely avoid touching it!



Compared to the other side of the King's Shaft, the workings are pretty large, and there isn't much in the way of flat-out. All fours, or crouching is the way here. There are lots of stacked deads and backfilled passages,



and with a bit of shimmying around, there are also some bonus bits that 't'Owd Man' didn't seal up forever, quite as well as he could have. They don't go far but they add interest. There are also some lovely bits of white flowstone and lots of immature stalls, but also some great pearls in little pools along the pathway.

At one point you find a very fractured chamber, right next to the quarry wall, where someone has sprayed on the walls with a tin of Holts car paint - the same paint I used to hide the rust on my first car, a Mk3 Ford Cortina (it didn't work). We headed out and after forcing my body back down the exit crawl, we popped out into a lovely warm evening at around 9.30pm. By the time we got back to the cars the heavens had opened and I drove home soaked to the skin, through rivers, lakes and mini oceans, twice hitting water across the road at speed, which was great fun!

More of Gaz's photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/q2iz2CkFU4wf6dDp6>