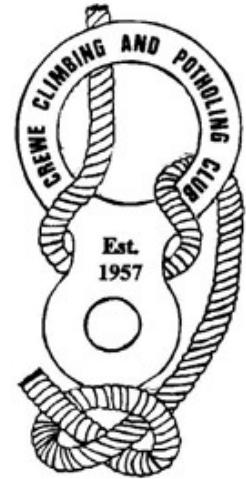




C.C.P.C. Newsletter 146. July 2023

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

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Planned Club Meets, etc., from June to August 2023:

Sun. 4 th June	Bog Mine, Llanferres, Denbighshire, North Wales. <i>Alt. Oxlow Caverns, Derbyshire.</i>	Lead mine with various fixed ladders. <i>Classic multi-pitch Lead Mine SRT trip.</i>
Mon. 5 th June	CCPC Monthly Meeting (also on-line via Zoom)	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Nr. Kidsgrove 8.30 pm.
Wk. End. 16 th – 18 th June	Ogof Draenen and social weekend around Crickhowell, South Wales. <i>Alt. Mandale Mine, Derbyshire.</i>	Largest cave system in Wales. Details to be arranged. <i>Impressive lead mine sough + workings</i>
Sun. 2 nd July	Hendre Spar Mine, near Mold, North Wales. <i>Alt. Ogof Cefn Gist, World's End.</i>	Impressive chambers on several levels with fixed ladders between levels. <i>Natural cave – rarely visited.</i>
Mon. 3 rd July	CCPC Monthly Meeting (also on-line via Zoom)	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Nr. Kidsgrove 8.30 pm.
** ** July	Croesor to Rhosydd through trip, Tanygrisiau, North Wales. <i>Alt. Out Sleets Beck Pot, Penyghent, Yorks.</i>	Classic route through two linked slate mines, including 'delicate' traverses. <i>Weather dependent ! Crawls and SRT pitches which can be awkward and wet.</i>
** ** July	Simpsons / Swinsto, Kingsdale, Yorks. <i>Alt. Heron Pot, Kingsdale, Yorks.</i>	Both are Classic SRT through trips, exiting through Valley Entrance. <i>Through trip if water levels permit.</i>
Mon. 7 th Aug.	CCPC Monthly Meeting (also on-line via Zoom)	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Nr. Kidsgrove 8.30 pm.
** ** Aug.	Smeltmill Beck, Brough, Yorkshire. <i>Alt. P8/Jackpot, Derbyshire.</i>	Wet/cold entrance series but well worth persevering (I'm told). Wet suit recom.

Plenty of other 'unofficial' trips continue to take place through the year, often organised at short notice, and sometimes mid-week, or evenings. If possible and practical, please let other Members know what you are planning, by using e-mail, and try to support Club trips whenever you can.

Steve Knox, Ed.



Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation: DCRO team members including a number from CCPC, continue to be ready to assist whenever required, and regular team training continues, either at the DCRO base in Buxton, or at cave locations in the Peak District – both underground and on the surface.

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



Oxlow Caverns

4th June 2023

Steve Pearson-Adams

The weather was far too good to be underground, but four of us couldn't resist a trip to the bottom of East Chamber today, while Rob, Neil and Darren ventured over to Wales to explore a slate mine. (More from them later all being well.)

I picked up Jenny from Castleton as she had got the bus into the village. After a short pit stop, so Jenny could grab a bite to eat, we were heading back up Winnats to find our parking spot. Steve C and Mark M arrived soon after. Despite the clear blue sky and being bathed in glorious sunshine there was a stiff south easterly which kept us from overheating and made the short walk to the entrance quite pleasant. I began rigging and all was going well, placing myself over the edge and rigging my stop as I lowered myself into the shaft. "Steve", I said to myself, "don't get caught up in the loop of rope or get the bag the wrong side". Funny how you have words with yourself, only for you to do exactly what you wanted to avoid happening in the first place. Once I had it sorted, I was heading down the shaft. Jenny followed with the second rig bag, closely followed by Steve and Mark. All safely down the second pitch, not counting the shored-up drop, I was soon rigging the third pitch, looking out into the expanse of East Chamber. Mark had made a new purchase following last week's trip, and was keen to play about on Pitch 2 with his 'Camp Turbo' chest-roll. The three of us dropped into the bottom of East Chamber and Jenny decided to investigate, what, if anything, was beyond the fixed iron ladder, gained by a short free climb down in a rift on the right wall. A few minutes later Jenny reappeared, telling us that a passage filled with varying sized rocks trended at right angles to the ladder and was showing promise. You never know, one day an excited band of diggers might start a project. I suspect it's been looked at before, but hasn't been thought worthwhile. A steady prusik out, with Steve C taking the lead in search of Mark, who had by then made his way back to the surface. Jenny and I followed with Jenny derigging and me taking the rope bag at the top of Pitch 3. Soon we were able to join Mark and Steve C on the surface as they basked in the early afternoon sun. A short (2 hour) trip, but one that we all enjoyed. As always a pleasure to be in great company. Until our next adventures, keep well and stay safe.

Steve Pearson-

Adams.

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North Wales Mine Trip

4th June 2023

Neil Conde

While the rest of the caving club were enjoying themselves swinging about in Oxlow, three brave members, Darren Conde, Rob Nevitt and Neil Conde travelled to foreign lands with passports in hand. The destination was a mine in sunny old North Wales. With passports stamped, we were allowed on our way. The car journey went well, and we only had one

little slip-up when the sat. nav. told Darren to turn next left and he pulled onto a co-op carpark, so me and Rob ducked down while Darren had a couple of laps round the carpark, then pulled off to turn down the right road.

Eventually we parked up, and I asked Darren if he had given Zoe a call-out time, and he said midnight !

I thought, 'Heck, what trip has he got in mind ?'

We all disguised ourselves as ramblers and headed up the hill. It was a half-hour walk up a steep road in the burning sun, to bring you to the out-buildings of the mine. These still had the old machinery in them, which was used to cut and shape the slate - very interesting place to look round.

We then found the tunnel that leads through the side of the hill to get you to the top of the incline of the mine. We all got changed into our overalls, and Darren brought out a pair for me. Now I have spent the last 50 years trying not to dress the same as Darren, as our mum used to dress us up like twins when we were little. At this point Darren pulled out an identical pair of overalls for himself. I thought, 'You've got to be joking !', so I tried to make the most of it and had a photo taken (oh the memories).

We started down the tunnel, and I found the exit that led us to the incline. I had been told the incline was very slippery, so decided to find the route down that the miners had taken. It was very interesting, with slate steps placed on metal pegs in the downward passage. This led us out under the incline a long way down. The passage led us to the top of the biggest chamber I have ever seen in a slate mine. We followed the path which zig-zagged down the chamber. I think this path was called the Victorian stairway, as they used to take visitors down that way in Victorian times. It brought us to a section where there were compressor tanks, which had supplied the mine with air, and a large winch at the top of another incline. Behind the winch there were three large white buckets with metal plates in them. Apparently these were filled with brine (salt-water) and electricity was passed through the plates, and depending on how far they were dipped in the brine, it altered the resistance going to the motors to slow the winch down (or something like that - Darren was explaining it to me).

We carried on down various passages, some with paved floors, then we came to the water level, with various lakes. One had an old wire ladder going down into it, and another had steps disappearing into the blueness of the water. A lot of the mine rail-tracks are in place, with the odd cart here and there. We came across one chamber with the biggest drystone wall I have ever seen. It must have been about 60 ft high, and it went the full width of the chamber.

After about four hours we decided to head back out, and made our way back up the miners steps and inclines and through the chambers. I think we have only touched a small part of this mine and will definitely be back.

Neil Conde



Extra Cussey Pot Information :1st June 2023

Gaz

Macshee

I spoke to one of the diggers from 'Team 4wesome', and they had made it through last night (1st June) to the other side of the sump in Loperamide Lust. He says that the passage goes up-hill just after the sump, and you can feel the

airspace if you push your hand through first. The draughting, he says, is from the fans in Milldam Mine, so only run from Monday to Friday. Once the fans are switched off, the pressure behind the sump drops and the gap under the roof fills in, hence, on our previous trip, we couldn't see a way through. The point is, that there must be a connection all the way up to the mines on Hucklow Edge, and also to Glebe Mine, which is essentially a ventilation mine for Milldam Mine these days. This place is looking to be the biggest underground system in the peak if it carries on growing.

See next article - the return of Gaz to Cussey Pot & Doom !

(Hey Gaz, there are definitely, easier, bigger, drier, less-frightening trips around !!! Thank goodness there are still a number of 'super-cavers' still active in the club. Keep safe - **Ed.**)

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Cussey Pot, Doom and Glebe Mine, Stoney Middleton 13th June 2023

Gaz Mcshee

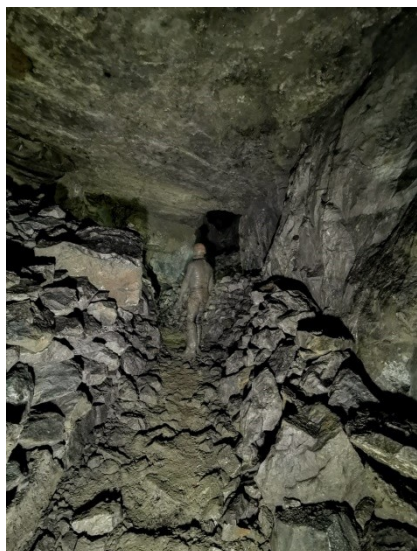
Early this morning I set off for another go at passing the duck in Cussey Pot's Loperamide Lust passage.

It takes about twenty-five minutes to get to the bottom of Inglorious Pitch, and by 8 am I was setting off along the flat-out for the 'stopper' that had held me back twice before.

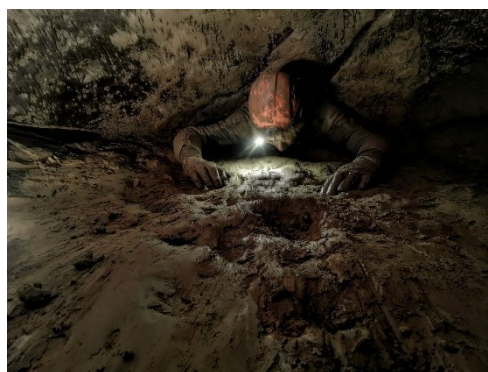
I had spoken to one of the diggers who had been in a week previously, so I knew it was open. It was all down to whether or not I could commit to the free dive, even knowing how short it was.

To my elation there was a four-inch gap between the water and the roof; a huge difference to the sump we had found last time we were in, so I flipped over onto my back and carefully, I slid through.

I was in ! I took a moment to let that sink in, then off I went. However, it's not quite that easy - you see, you are wet from the sump and



have to climb a mud slope, which is no mean feat in itself, but at the top, the passage on is another very tight flat-out crawl. This, however, is quite short, and once through, the iron ladder comes into view.



I chose to ignore this for the time being and headed on to find 'Doom'. This meant another flat-out, uphill, but on sand, so much easier to get traction. At the top of the hill a window through the rock pops you out into the world of 'the Owd Man' - a mined-out chamber, with 'deads' stacked across it. A hole in the corner of the chamber, over 'deads', led to another chamber with huge dead piles of 'deads', which once climbed, opened up into the main cart-gate of 'Doom'.

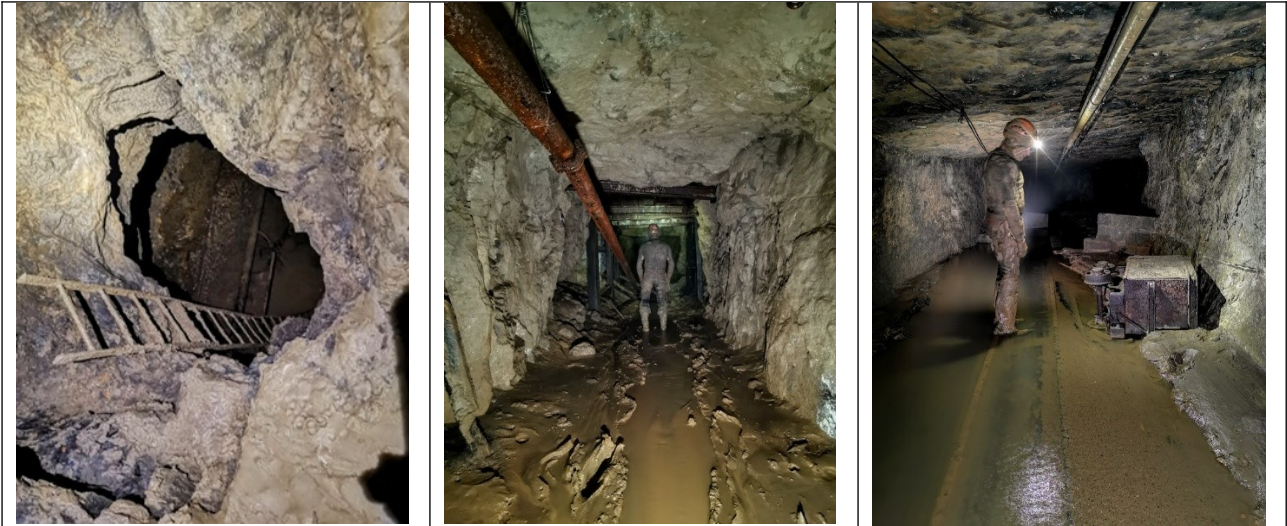


The passage led off in both directions, and it's scale was quite impressive. The workings were on different levels, not unlike parts of Masson Mine, and at the bottom of the dip, a hole in the floor led to the main part of the mine. The Eldon cavers free-climb it, but there was no way I was attempting that, it looked horrific, and a fall would be lethal ! To be honest, I wouldn't like to have to lug a rope into here, so it is firmly on the 'to do' list.



Up dip, the workings open out on multiple levels, and in the floor can be seen the remains of a railway, long since rotted away. At one point a decayed wheelbarrow lies collapsed on the floor and other bits of tat are scattered throughout the level. Back at the iron ladder I dropped down, passing the entrance to 'Vulgarious' on the way. At the bottom more 'Owd Man' workings stretched off into the distance, so off, after them, I went, following the Eldon club's siphon pipe. After admiring the workings, the only way on seemed to be a very muddy hole in the floor with a hand line in place. This led via a filthy slope to more 'Owd Man' workings and some broken wooden ladders, but following the chambers through I came across another iron ladder, and upon looking down I could see a Streamway and iron pipework.

At the bottom of the ladders, things took a while to sink in. This was a modern mine ! No 'Owd Man' workings here, so the only place this could be, was Glebe mine.



I walked for a very long time, passing a collapse under the railway into which all the water was flowing. A little further on, a hole, next to a bricked-up opening, gave access to a natural cave passage with all the water running along it, out of sight below. Again, I chose not to try and climb it today. Further on I got to the old shaft entrance, but here I turned round, even though the passages were shooting off everywhere. My intention turned to finding 'the Boil-up', which was obviously the other way, up-stream.



I walked and walked, past all sorts of mining equipment, and never got to find the 'Boil-up'. My time was up, and I had to concede defeat and head back. Now the clock was running, and getting out is very, very tiring, but eventually I flipped the lid open to a lovely sunny and warm day. This is a trip where fitness is very important. There is no easy way out if you can't do it under your own steam, but the potential is still being exploited down there and the adventures are worth the effort,

especially as the current discoveries open up mine passageways as far as Eyam and Hucklow Edges, although there would be no warm welcome if you popped up in the current working mine ! Total time underground today was 7 hours.

The link to some pictures is here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/8xuCVX2eSxh9ZsQm8>

Gaz

Mcshee



South Wales Week-end

16th - 18th June 2023

Steve Pearson-Adams

'Bernie', the camper, was loaded, and with all passengers safely on board, we set off in search of dragons, mountains and, more importantly, caves measureless to man. That's right, you guessed it, the trusty trio were heading off to South Wales for another visit to Ogof Draenen. The Riverside Caravan and Camping site in Crickhowell was to be our base for the weekend and what a lovely site it would prove to be. Our drive down on Friday was uneventful as the traffic was fairly light, aided by the fact we got away by 1 pm.

On reaching Crickhowell we called in at Dan's house (another Dan, not ours) to collect the key. A few minutes later we were on the camp-site pitch and getting ourselves sorted. Mark had arrived earlier in the day and had gone off to do a system popular for groups, as part of working towards gaining his CIC., with another planned for Sunday. Mark had tried booking into our site, but they couldn't accommodate him, so he was staying at another site about 15 mins away. We found out later that evening that Nicola, Phil, and their little one, were on the same site. Heather would be sharing our pitch, arriving the following day between 5 and 6 pm.

At camp, a plan was hatched for our assault on Draenen the following day, thanks to Neil who had printed off Tarquin's route descriptions for the 'Crystal Maze' and 'Lucky Thirteen'. We all had a good night's sleep and after fuelling up on a caver's English breakfast, cooked by none other than yours truly, we headed off.



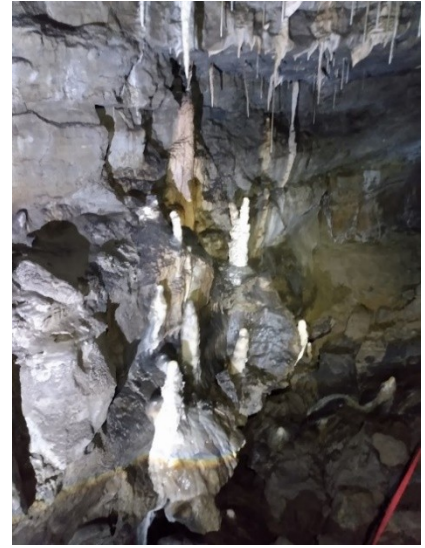
The entrance is a little on the small side and in several places requires thought about one's positioning to avoid getting stuck. Once you reach Cairn Chamber, where you sign in, the system takes on a completely different character, with quite roomy passages and crawls, intersecting with high canyon passages and huge fault chambers strewn with boulders of varying sizes stacked randomly upon each other. Some of these blocks can be as big as a 2-bed bungalow.

We had entered the system around 11:30 am and soon found our way to 'Indiana Highway' - a

trench, which for some of its length is equipped with a traverse line. Care is needed throughout, as a fall here could easily result in getting well and truly wedged, or else falling to the floor below, making any rescue very difficult. Once on the far side we were back into more fault-formed passages and chambers. Much attention must be given to looking directly at your feet on this terrain, rather than looking up, to avoid wrecking your ankles or taking a fall. A few stops along the way were needed to check the route description against what we were seeing, and then re-route where needed. We



followed a passage which was fairly easy going underfoot, until we came to an impressive calcite flow on the right, meeting some fine gour pools and calcite rafts at its base with a trickle of water running back in the direction from which we came. Neil thought it would make a nice spot in which to leave a bit of Des, and all agreed.



A few mis-directions

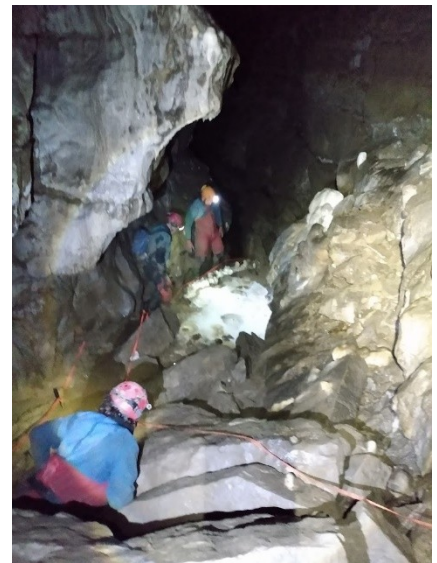
ensued as we travelled on from here, which resulted in us not coming across the 'Crystal Maze', but we did manage to find 'Lucky Thirteen', and what we believe to be the Snowball, thanks to Neil and Dan.



In this area of the system conservation tape guides the caver past fine clusters of gypsum crystals clinging to the passage walls, and in places blanketing the floor.

All of this wonder is found after following the crawl known as 'Perseverance 2', which lies close to the 'Nunnery'. Time was pressing as we had been in the system for 6.75 hrs, and to save a late exit we chose an alternative way out. Surfacing some 45 minutes later we made our way up the steep valley and onto the track which would take us back to the cars some 3/4 of a mile away. We got back to camp around 7pm, where Heather met us.

The following day the trusty trio, and Heather, headed into Draenen again, but this time took a route in the opposite direction. We followed a fairly straight line through breakdown chambers and canyon passages, until reaching a low crawl at the foot of a climb. The low crawl ended soon afterwards. The climb was somewhat exposed, but an easier climb a short way back in the passage avoided this. We headed up to a further awkward climb, but I elected not to do this, and waited while Neil and Dan had a look. They popped into a chamber at the head of the climb, but it didn't offer a way on. We turned back



to rejoin Heather, who had decided to rest up and conserve energy for the return. We had enjoyed a 4-hour trip, to finish off what was a great weekend of caving with great company.



Members: Neil Conde, Dan Baddeley, Nicola Wellings, Mark Krause, and Heather Simpson.

Steve Pearson-Adams.



A Constitution, Life Members, & Communication Issue.

This is something which has been bouncing around for some time, and basically concerns how we maintain contact (or don't) with individuals who have been granted '**Life Membership**' of C.C.P.C. at some point in the past.

According to our current Club Constitution:

Existing **Life Members**, who, through age, infirmity, distance, or simply inclination, choose not to pay either the annual BCA Caving Insurance, or the annual BCA Non-caving Insurance, and therefore take no part in club activities, either caving or non-caving, are technically termed '**Friends**' of the club. Such individuals, as **Life Members / Friends**, remain entitled to receive information and communications from the Club, and may benefit from such social contact. Such contact might also encourage them to renew their more active involvement with the Club, at which time they would need to purchase the relevant BCA Insurance.

An issue has been identified with GDPR, and the keeping of up-to-date information about such individuals, but the proposed solution, with an annual form being sent out - as happens with all other Members - would appear to resolve this, and would ensure that we are handling data in line with the existing data law.

Life Members / Friends returning the forms, with basic contact details provided, would have access to the e-mail list, and the CCPC Newsletter, as do all other Members.

This will involve no changes to membership categories.

[Ed. : Steve Knox - Life Member - and, despite age and infirmity, I do pay my BCA Caving Insurance !]

..... This matter was discussed in detail during the May Meeting, and was raised again at the June Meeting, but not discussed, as that part of the Meeting was not quorate.

Unless there are huge objections, the following practice will be adopted:

*'For those Life members, who are not paying the minimal BCA insurance and can therefore take no part in club activities (**Friends of the Club**, according to the constitution), but still want to be in contact with the club:- Steve PA will send out the usual membership forms to them to ensure we are keeping their data in line with GDPR. If the forms are returned, then they will have access to the groups.io email list, like any other member. We are making no change here to membership categories, just clarifying how it works in practice and ensuring we are handling data in line with the law.'*

Thanks to **Jenny**

Drake, Hon. Sec. for bringing this to a conclusion.

..... 07/06/2023 - **Alan Brentnall** added: Just on the GDPR issue, my other club, Grampian Speleological Group, has an email list to which all members have access so that they can amend or even remove their own details. Seems like a good way of running a mass mailer, and it saves having an annual update and the subsequent work as it's all down to the individual.

.....07/06/2023 - **Jenny** responded :- We already have this. At the bottom of every CCPC email there is a Your Subscription link and an Unsubscribe link. The former can be used to set up a daily digest, or temporarily go no-email, for example, if you are off on holiday. The later removes you from getting CCPC email completely. A mailing list moderator is only needed to send invitations, or approve requests to join, though we do have the power to do all the other things. The club still needs to hold minimal details though so the moderators know who should be on the list. Name, address, phone, email, next of kin and some of that applies to inactive life members AKA Friends.



Victoria Cave, Attermire, Yorkshire

11th June 2023

Steve Knox



Annie and I were enjoying a few days in the Yorkshire Dales, so inevitably this included visiting various caves !

On a baking-hot day, we walked up to Victoria Cave from Settle (about two and a half miles), to see one of the most famous caves in the country (at least, it was, once).

In my copy of Norman Thornber's 'Pennine Underground' (1947) the cave's entrance is described as

being 100 feet wide, and 32 feet high, and the length as being 150 yards. It was first explored in 1870.

Victoria Cave, Attermire.

My 1959 edition of 'Pennine Underground' confirms those dimensions, but states that the cave was 'excavated' in 1870, with an extension made in 1963 by Giggleswick School Pothole Club.

Somehow, in the years since those accounts were published, the entrance seems to have shrunk a little - 'Northern Caves, Volume 2, The Three Peaks', has the entrance 9 metres high (about 30 feet), and 12 metres wide (39.5 feet), which seems much more accurate.

Victoria Cave was once famous as being at the very centre of British archaeological activity. A local man, Michael Horner, discovered the cave in

1837, the year of Queen Victoria's Accession – hence the name. Horner's dog had, apparently, disappeared into a crevice in the slope of scree at the foot of the limestone scar, and he wriggled in, and found himself in a large cavity with a clay floor. It seems there were bones, and some metal objects visible. Horner reported his discovery to his employer, Joseph Jackson, the landowner, and the following year, on 28th June, Jackson began to excavate the cave sediments, finding many items from the Romano-British period.

Jackson's excavations continued for over thirty years, penetrating many lower layers of deposition, and finding, at depth, bones (now known to be 130,000 years old) including those of hippo, rhinoceros, elephant and hyena. One layer, now dated to the period after the end of the last ice age, included bones from brown bears, wild horses, reindeer, and a lance point – the earliest evidence of human hunters reaching the north of England after the ice melted.

Eventually the excavations were taken over by the 'Settle Cave Exploration Committee' in 1869, with major excavations beginning the following year and continuing through the 1870s. One of the main targets of the excavations was to find bones of 'the missing link', which would support Darwin's theory of evolution - Charles Darwin was a member of the Committee, with other prominent scientists of the time. Unfortunately, after some time, two of the main experts, Boyd and Dawkins, disagreed about the evidence and this led to a bitter argument and excavation eventually came to a stop.

It was not until the 1930s that interest in the site was rekindled, mainly due to the work of Tot Lord, a keen amateur archaeologist, and cave explorer, who gathered together as many records and artefacts from the earlier excavations as he could, and preserved them as an internationally important collection. This collection is still in existence, and is still in the care of Tot's family. It has recently been digitally recorded (amazing work) and made available for viewing on the internet (DigVentures).

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Our own visit to the cave was limited to me exploring the huge entrance chamber, and crawling about round the easily accessible alcoves and passages with a head-torch, while trying to remain moderately clean. There are limited areas of badly degraded flowstone, and enormous blocks of rock which appear to have fallen from the roof of the chamber, trapping historically important sediment layers beneath. Some areas have been 'protected' with



'Do Not Cross' signs on horizontal metal beams, but they seem to have been ignored.

Outside the essentially man-made entrance (what was it originally like, in the distant past ?), a large spoil heap is evidence of the earlier excavations. There is doubtless more to be found by future archaeologists if sufficient cause is found to make removing the huge breakdown blocks justifiable.

The guidebook entry for Victoria Cave in 'Northern Caves, Volume 2, The Three Peaks' (1991, Reprinted 1996), gives a total length of 183 metres, and describes several side passages, including one with a crawl over a 2.4 metre drop to reach a tube and a tight 9 metre pitch to a pool. I left all that for another time.

Other notable archaeological caves nearby, include Attermire Cave, 183 metres long, and slightly more 'sporting', and Jubilee Cave, 91 metres long. There are about twenty caves in the



limestone scars here - certainly enough to keep you entertained for a day or so.

Bibliography / Further reading :

'Yorkshire Caves and Potholes; 1. North Ribblesdale' – Albert Mitchell, F.R.G.S.
– 1937.

Steve

Knox



Gaping Gill, Ingleborough, Yorkshire

14th June 2023

Steve Knox



Despite the excessive heat and glaring sun, Annie and I set off for a gentle stroll up to Gaping Gill from Clapham. The first time I went this way the charge to walk up the valley was 6d, and as I grappled with the current £2.50 per person charge, I tried to explain to the girl issuing tickets that 6d would be equivalent to 2.5 pence in 'new' money. She probably thought I was talking about ancient history (it was ... to her). After an ice-cream stop at

Ingleborough Cave entrance, where a school party, grabbing helmets for their guided tour, were the only people we had seen since Clapham, we walked on towards the start of Trow Gill, where a geography group were sitting in the shade. Beyond that point we never saw anyone at all – quite different from a day when the Gaping Gill winch is running !



As we ambled across the moor towards the shaft I pointed out to Annie the various entrances to Gaping Gill which I've previously descended, but there were plenty of holes which I couldn't identify. Reaching the fence above the shaft it was no surprise to see the streambed completely dry – a perfect day for dropping the main shaft ! Back up the Fell Beck streamway there was a tiny dribble of water which disappeared into a

narrow cleft and doubtless soon found its way into the main shaft.

There is an interesting little story which (in a way) links the exploration of Gaping Gill with the work carried out at Victoria Cave:

In about 1842 John Birkbeck, of Settle, attempted the first descent of the Gaping Gill main shaft. The stream was diverted into 'Birkbeck's Trench', and Birkbeck was lowered down the shaft, reaching a depth of 100 feet on his first attempt. On his second attempt he reached a ledge 190 feet down, which was later named after him : 'Birkbeck Ledge' (now measured at 58 metres down).

No further progress was made, until the French caver, E.A. Martel was lowered a further 170 feet and reached the floor of the Main Chamber in 1895.

Birkbeck was an active cave explorer, and became involved in the Victoria Cave excavations. At the time when the diggers began to search for evidence of human occupation below the layer of deposited glacial mud, Birkbeck secretly hid one of his own teeth, recently extracted, for the other diggers to find. It caused huge excitement until he finally admitted the hoax - no carbon dating methods in those days !

I crept around the brink of Gaping Gill main shaft, very carefully, taking extreme care on the smooth water-worn rocks at the brink. The mouth of the shaft, as always, was impressive, made more so by the wisps of vapour rising from below, where water could be faintly heard splashing away, down into the darkness, and by the lack of other visitors.

Eventually we had to leave, and took the (much easier) grassy alternative route down, avoiding the ankle-breaking path which keeps to the base of Trow Gill, to reach the flat roadway back past Ingleborough Cave to the empty car park at Clapham.

Note: The dates of Birkbeck's descents [1840s /1848] , and even Martel's successful complete descent [1895 / 1896] vary, depending on the source you use, and similarly, the depth of the main shaft varies in the same way, probably depending on your start and finish points - generally taken as the waterfall lip to the chamber floor: 98 metres (322 feet).

Steve Knox



Doomed to Failure in Cussey Pot, Stoney Middleton

29th June 2023

Gaz Mcshee

Back again today into the tight muddy entrance that leads to some real gems in the Peak District's crown. Twenty minutes in, and at the flat-out, heading towards Loperamide Lust, which now has a good six-inch space between the roof and the slurry. Even so, care is required as I found out last time, because, as you push through, the wave you create has nowhere to go, so bounces back over your face. Not nice !



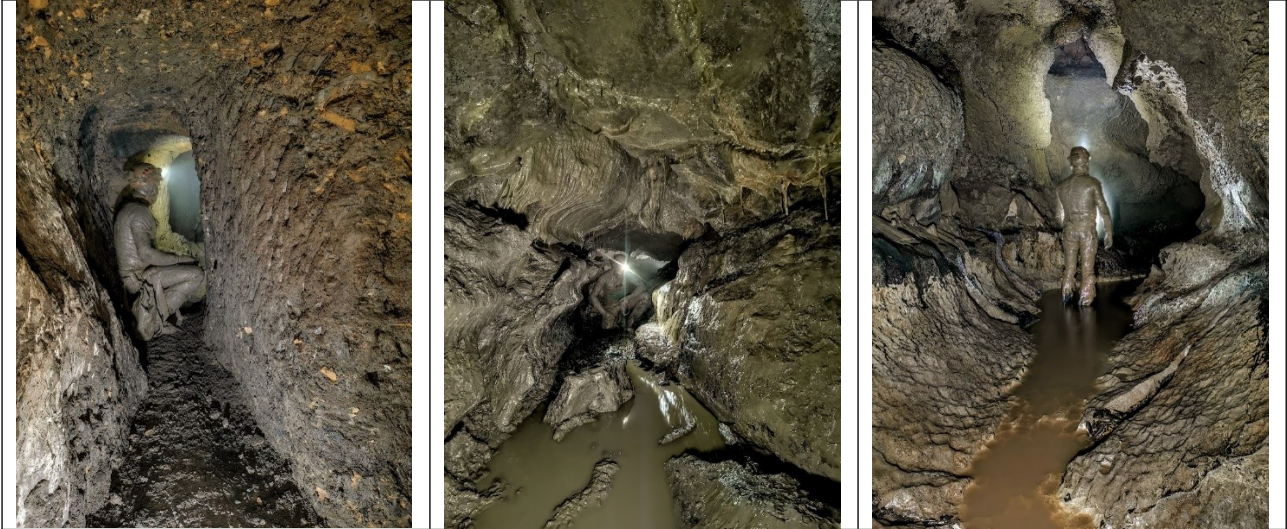
Down the iron ladder and into the side passage; full of excitement, thinking that this time would see me into the main Doom workings, armed with a bit more information than before. A bit more of the workings I did see, but as with previous trips, Doom is very cagey with its secrets.



Left: 'Doom' upper level.

Right: Stempled climbing shaft in 'Doom' middle layer.

The great thing is that as it's so hard to get here, the workings are pristine, and the mining style is different to most Peak mines. In a few places the finger marks of long dead miners are still visible in the muddy walls, and in another place a fully stempled climbing shaft has to be traversed, using the same rotting stemples that the Owd Man used all those years before. Even so, I still didn't find the mine cart or the workshops that I know exist here, or the long crawl of Static Passage. There is so much still to see, curse this place !

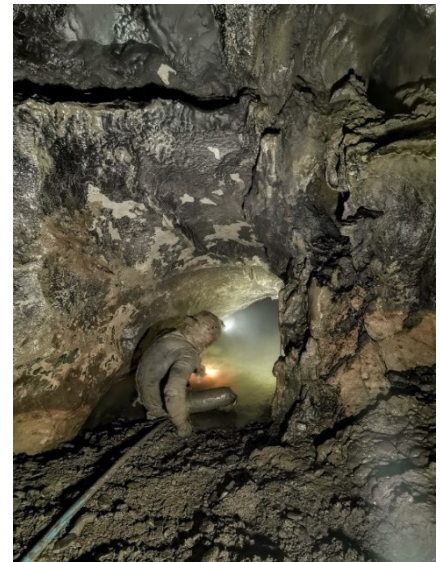


Left to right: 'Doom' lower level. Entrance to 'Wet West', at Vulgarious Bastard junction. 'Race Against Time'.

Anyway, my attention then turned to the natural parts of the mine. First, up the Wet West; I'm not sure whether I saw all of this, but the way on at the end of the flat-out sloping rift looked ridiculously tight. It didn't seem to have been entered before, so I quit while I was ahead. Then I had a difficult, gently sloping, upwards climb in reverse, as there was no room to turn around. Next, up Vulgarious Bastard! I won't lie this has to be one of the most disgusting, and yet beautiful bits of caving I've ever done. It starts as a crawl in mud, then it is flat-out in mud, not unlike Colostomy Crawl but much lower. This eventually leads to a stempled climb down, to reach a low squeeze into a nose-snorkelling passage, after which you can flip over onto your front, and continue in a flat-out style along a passage in what can only be described as 'taking a swim in a sewage farm'.



Eventually the passage opens up and you can finally get your face out of the toilet for a while, until the crud ends, and you pop out into the most pristine water cave you can imagine - the passage is known as 'A Race Against Time' or RAT for short. As few people have been there the rock is perfect and not unlike the Merlin's



Streamway in character; an unbelievably beautiful sight after all the effort to get there.

Left: 'Race against Time' through

Right: 'Boil Up Sump 2' - free dive to Stoney Middleton Master Cave !

I made it to the 'Boil-up Sump' before heading back to look at the 'Boil-up Sump 2', which is currently a free dive into the Stoney Middleton Master Cave. As I wasn't gifted with gills as a child I chose to leave this, and as time was getting on I made my way back through the quagmire, which is pretty much all the way back to Inglorious Bastards chamber.

I can honestly say that to get out into the fresh air was the most amazing sensation you can imagine. This trip is desperate in reverse, and has you thinking about quitting and just sitting it out at almost every obstacle, especially 'Coconut Airways', which is heartbreaking, right at the end when you are at your tiredest. However, that was an amazing 'explore', even though Doom is still holding out on me !

As is 'the norm' with this place, photos are hard to get, but I managed a few. They really don't do the place justice, and the best bits are just too hard to film. The link to the best ones is here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/hCG5nGkTJFm7YfAG9>

Gaz

Mcshee

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Gaz's Photography note:

Keeping my gear working in Cussey is a real problem. I wasted a trip last time when I got the lens dirty, well, I say 'wasted', I mean I got no pictures, but I didn't waste the visit.

This system, as a whole, is huge and a real masterpiece by the Eldon Cavers. Cussey Pot has opened up pretty much the whole Karst of Stoney Middleton, and connected everything from Eyam back to the active workings on Hucklow Edge - what an explore that would be if those workings ever shut ! It is, however, very tiring. The bit of the crawl which I videoed is the last bit of Vulgarious, where you can finally get your face out of the muck. It sounds, and is, horrible, but it's some of the best caving I've done. It has the feel I can only imagine you would get from doing Giants as it used to be before the blasting took place, it's a brilliant adventure. Due to the difficulties of moving through the system, I couldn't film the best bits, so the final pictures are of mixed quality. The camera stayed in a box when not in use and the tripod had to be retracted and broken down after each picture. The lights were always dirty as my hands were always dirty, so constantly needed washing in anything that wasn't brown. It's hard caving in there, and I still haven't found it all.

The picture labels are an approximation in places, being where I thought I was in 'Doom', as I have no basis for identification, other than one of the diggers having told me it's over three levels.

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Planned DCRO Training:

- ** ** - Using the Larkin Frame.
- ** ** - Engineering.
- ** ** - Underground hauling.
- ** ** - Surface navigation.
- ** ** - Stretcher handling

NEARLY THERE ! ** ** – 1** **	Multi Club/ Multi Nationalities, Gouffre Berger Meet, Autrans, France. Pre-booking required for G.B.	GB is a HUGE, world-class system !!!! – there is also plenty of other caving in the area, plus walking, canyons, bike trails, etc..
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Several Club Members are involved – contact Steve Pearson-Adams or Mark Krause if you need more information.

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As always, my thanks to everyone who contributes to the CCPC Newsletter, and also to those who acknowledge receipt afterwards. We are always glad to receive **Alan’s contributions**, ‘our man north of the border’, and items from Members anywhere in the world. All errors, changes, or corrections are mine – my apologies. Keep safe, keep caving, and continue to support your club.
Steve Knox, Editor.
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