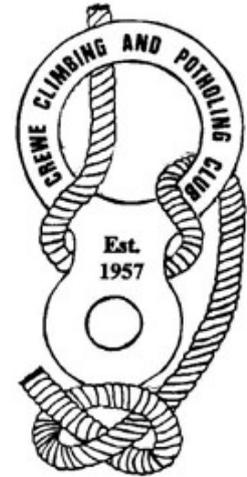


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 148. August - September 2023

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

Editor: Steve Knox
colinknox@btinternet.com



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

Sat. 12 th Aug.	Smeltmill Beck, Brough, Cumbria. <i>Alt. P8/Jackpot, Derbyshire.</i>	Wet/cold entrance series but well worth persevering (I'm told). Wet suit recom.
Sun. 27 th Aug.	Old Ash Mine, Matlock, Derbyshire. (also Lords & Ladies Mine close by.) <i>Alt. Slaley Sough, Matlock, Derbyshire.</i>	Interesting cave/mine system, with optional 46 metre shaft entrance. <i>Interesting mine complex (not a sough !) about 700 metres long. No SRT.</i>
Mon. 4 th Sept.	CCPC Monthly Meeting (also on-line via Zoom)	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Nr. Kidsgrove 8.30 pm.
Sat. 9 th Sept.	Lancaster Hole / Easegill, Yorkshire. <i>Alt. Mistral Hole, Easegill, Yorkshire.</i>	A vast complex of outstanding, interlinked cave systems, with some SRT. Many options, always a favourite.
*** ** Sept.	Alum Pot [Grade 3], and the Long Churn System [Grade 2], Yorkshire. <i>Alt. Diccan Pot, Yorkshire. [Grade 4]</i>	Classic system with option to 'go deep', or to enjoy the initial passages and SRT. Planned as a 'social' weekend, so hopefully more than just the caving !
*** ** Oct.	CCPC Monthly Meeting.	As above.
*** ** Oct.	Notts II, Leck Fell, Yorkshire. <i>Alt. Death's Head to Notts II.</i>	Another amazing cave system – accessed via a 'snug', scaffolded shaft to reach a complex of stream passages.
*** ** Oct.	Titan to Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbys. <i>Alt. Rowter Hole extensions, Derbys.</i>	THE MONSTER SHAFT dropping into the further reaches of Peak / Speedwell. <i>Impressive deep entrance SRT pitches into challenging passages and pitches, and further into mine workings.</i>
*** ** Nov.	Clearwell Caves, Forest of Dean.	

As always, my thanks to everyone who contributes to the CCPC Newsletter, and also to those who acknowledge receipt afterwards. All errors, changes, or corrections are mine – my apologies. Keep safe, keep caving, and continue to support your club. **Steve Knox, Editor.**



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.

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



Smelt Mill Beck, Brough, Cumbria.

12th August 2023

Steve Pearson-Adams

I thought it would be a good idea to drive up on the Friday in the campervan, to save the early start on the Saturday. So it was, that Neil Conde, Rob Nevitt and I headed off from Crewe at 3.00 pm, arriving in Brough, Cumbria, just after 6.00 pm. I had secured a pitch- up site at 'The Inn' at Brough, and once sorted, the three musketeers scouted out the village, searching for what food offers were available. With a One-Stop-Shop, a Chippy, and the Corner Café, the choice was far from extensive, but what else would you expect from a sleepy backwater?

On the drive up we had stopped at Lancaster Services, partaking of a Cornish pasty each from the outside catering unit, rather than battle with the hordes of holiday makers inside. So, not feeling that hungry, we dropped into the Golden Fleece village local. Mike, behind the bar greeted us with a smile and a warm welcome - we were his only customers ! I enquired, somewhat hopefully, if he had any food on (for later you understand).

"Sorry but I only have crisps, nuts, or pork scratchings."

Not a great start we thought, 'though Mike did say that if we got something from the chip shop we could bring it into the pub, or eat at the tables outside, so all was not lost. What to do now thought the three musketeers ? After a minute or two debating the options, and with Mike eager for a sale, we opted to forgo the food on offer.

"Three of your finest Mike, but make one a cider, and the other two bitters, and by the way, have you any darts ?"

Well, it's safe to say that our dart throwing days had deserted us a long time ago, if our scoring was anything to go by. I should say at this point that with Mike's help, we had managed to cobble together three sets of darts from the jumble of odds and ends found in the plastic tray that Mike retrieved from behind the bar. Beggars can't be choosers ! We agreed on 301 with a double to finish. Slowly, and I mean slowly, we all brought our scores down, and then frustratingly hurled dart after dart, in search of a double to finish. Still, it passed the time and was great fun, made even more so when I suggested we end the session with a game throwing with our other hand. All this while slowly getting down the pints.

By now the locals were arriving in dribs and drabs; it was never enough to be really busy, but was enough to generate a good atmosphere. The three musketeers, four pints the worse for wear, moved over to the pool table, playing winner stays on. After several games we were joined by one of the locals, so played a few games of doubles. 'Annette' said that her partner Dave was a bit of a Pool-shark, and she didn't really play that much but fancied a go. I think she was the pool shark, as she played a good game !

Over the evening a few others joined in, and we all had a good crack, soaking up the local hospitality. A game of back handed pool, to end on, provided a level of amusement, more so than wrong handed darts. A few more pints and nattering with few locals that remained for Mike's lock-in. You can't beat a lock in!!! We left the pub just after 1.00am and sauntered back to the van, happy as Larry and feeling no pain, well, not yet anyway.

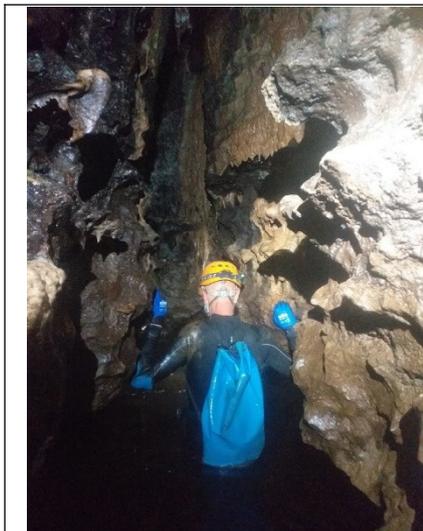
I got the best night's sleep I'd had in ages. One of the musketeers was up early

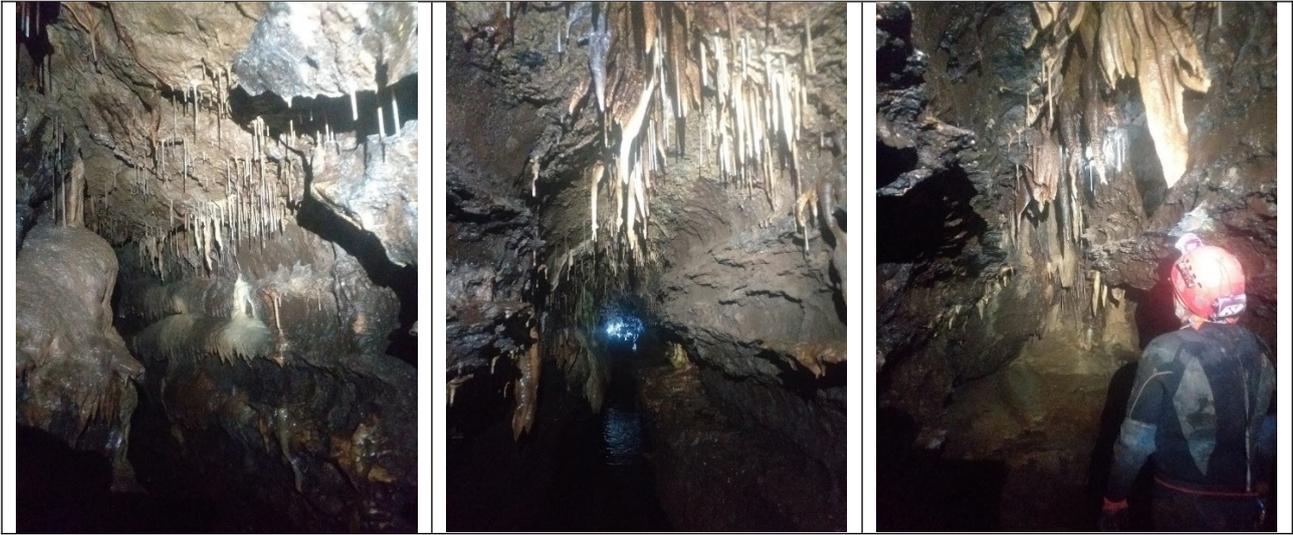
and went for a walk, in search of a nearby Geo Cache and to clear his head. I woke at 8.00, but could have gladly stayed in my pit for an hour or two longer. Neil was the last to stir. All of us suffering and feeling just a little hung over, but nothing a good fry-up wouldn't put right. This is where Alison's Cafe played its part - a small establishment next to the Chippy, offering all day breakfasts from 8.00 -3.00. Two eggs, two sausages, two rashers of bacon, toms, beans, black pudding, fried bread, and toast, all for £7.50. Finally we left Brough for the short drive to the farm, and then got charged into our wetsuits ready for the immersive experience of Smelt Mill Beck.



Hacking our way through the undergrowth, and traversing the steep-sided slope along the Beck, we arrived at the entrance. From memory, the level, and the amount of water coming out, was similar to the last time we had visited. The air space was good, and nowhere in the entrance series did we have to get our mouths or noses in the peat-stained murk. Soon we reached the section of the cave that breaks into walking sized passage, which then zig-zags back and forth for a distance of a kilometre. One forgets just how much Smelt Mill Beck has to offer, formation-wise. There are some well decorated sections of passage which are well preserved, probably due to the cave's remoteness and lack of caver traffic. In places we had to squat

under, or traverse over, the narrower parts of the passage. There were only two short sections, further in the system, where a flat-out crawl, at floor level in the stream, is required. One section is very dark, narrow, and lined with sharp edges, ready to rip at your wetsuit if you're not careful.





On our inward journey we had stopped quite regularly so that Neil could take photos, while Rob and I used our lights to help illuminate the variety of the formations.

[Neil later posted them on the website. - **thanks Neil.**]



We got as far as the T- junction before calling it a day and making our exit, conscious of the weather outside, and not wanting to become a statistic. We stopped only to give our old friend Des a final ride in the stream.

We exited to a grey sky, with a couple of light rain fronts working across the moor. We had spent about three hours on this trip, before heading off for home.

Steve Pearson-Adams

All text: Steve P-A, and all photos : Neil Conde.



Emergency Services Day, Pavilion Gardens, Buxton.

12th August 2023



While the 'Three Musketeers' were enjoying themselves with full body immersion through the entrance series of Smelt Mill Beck, a few stalwart DCRO team members were putting up with an occasional downpour in the Pavilion Gardens, in Buxton. We were there to join the dozen, or more, other emergency response organisations (even the R.N.L.I. were there with a boat !), to educate and inform, and put on a show for the public.

We had our trusty D.C.R.O. response vehicle, fully loaded with kit, 'just in case', and a series of display boards with lots of dramatic photos of caving trips, and training exercises, in local caves and mines, plus a collection of newspaper headlines concerning actual rescues. We set up our 'Multipod' [- paid for with a bequest from the estate of Rob Farmer - CCPC Member] with a simple hauling system to allow youngsters to 'rescue' a weighted rope bag from our mock shaft, and then to drop it again with a thump (the best part). There were lots of positive responses from the public.

Unlike the Cumbria trio, we had to put up with easy access to ice cream, bacon butties, hot drinks, and toilets - still, someone had to do it !

Ed.

Steve Knox



Gaping Gill Winch Meet

18th August 2023

Jenny Drake

Not an official club trip, and only half the team were CCPC, so only a 'half-trip' report. Grace (CCPC and TSG), her son Andrew, Craig (TSG) and Jenny (CCPC) drove up to the Dales on the last day of this year's Craven Pothole Club Winch Meet.

The walk up was the usual long trek, but eventually we arrived at the control tent beside where Fell Beck usually falls down the Gaping Gill shaft. The diversion dam was in place, the winch was running, and a crowd of punters patiently waited for their turn for the trip down to the chamber.

We arranged with the friendly folk in the tent to do a Bar Pot to Stream Passage traverse on pre-rigged pitches, with them acting as our call out. After collecting our wrist bands, we set off for the depression where Bar Pot starts. We found folk exiting there, so decided to divert to Small Mammal Pot to save time. I'd only done Small Mammal once, and that was coming out, but found the route finding into Bar easy enough to remember in reverse. After a short diversion down a wrong route, we were soon at the top of the big pitch in Bar Pot. We collected together at the bottom and set off for Main Chamber. Andrew was given the job of guiding us, armed with a survey at far too small a scale to show all the passages, but with the instruction, "if in doubt, follow the draught".

This stood him in good stead and after the usual stooping and crawling through the awkward height phreatic passages, we reached Main Chamber.

The extra lighting the Craven Pothole Club had set up, showed the space off, and we watched

the visitors fly up and down in the chair/cage, as well as a CPC member coming down Dihedral on SRT. However, we were told that a team had already set off to de-rig Stream Passage Pot, so our original plan wasn't going to happen.

Instead we went out via Small Mammal Pot again, to receive profuse apologies from the people in the control tent for the cock up.

They were very glad to see we had got out fine, and by this time, the last of the visitors were out, and the CPC were removing their equipment from Main Chamber. On the walk back down, and in Clapham village, we met several more CPC members heading up to help with the de-rig, and also, we suspect, to have a bit of a party in the evening.

It was a fine day out, despite the change of plan, and despite leaving my feet sore from all the walking in steel toe-capped wellies.

Thanks to Grace for driving and for preparing lots of very welcome food for the trip.

Jenny Drake

.....
.....

More G.G. route suggestions - from A.B.:

Another variation on the route from Bar Pot to the Main Chamber, which we always used to enjoy (back in the day), was at the end of South Passage: instead of ducking through the Portcullis, we would keep straight on to Pool Chamber, where there is a long, narrow lake. On the right hand side of this lake, it is possible to climb up to Pool Traverse which leads airily to a climb down into West Chamber, from where you can easily get through to a ledge high up at the West end of Main Chamber, with excellent views across the vast place.

The climb down from here is an easy scramble and you can then return to Bar (or Wades / Flood Entrance) via the usual route at the East end of the chamber.

Or, if you really want the full tour, you can scramble up the short ladder into Old East, take the rope traverse around Mud Hall and then turn right into Mud Hensler's which will take you through to Hensler's Master Cave - the bottom of Disappointment Pot and Marylin, and the bottom of the iron ladder leading to Echo Rift and the Far Country.

Turn left for Disappointment, Marylin and Echo Rift or turn right for New Hensler's which will pop you out at the foot of the Bar Pot big pitch.

Although Pool Traverse is "airy", we never found it difficult - but I did recently notice some ropes in use on this on photographs taken by a CPC friend of mine last week, so it may have been bolted, and may even be equipped if there's a winch meet on.

Alan Brentnall

[On 19th August, Adrian Pedley added that he and Nicola Wellings had completed the Pool Traverse route recently, and it was not bolted at that time.]



Cussey – ‘Another Shot at Doom’.

19th August 2023
Gaz Mcshee

Last day off, and having been really busy over the previous three days grace from work, I'd planned to end it with a bang, and return for another shot at the longest exploration I've ever carried out.

It's no lie that my inability to find the parts of Doom that I know are there, and have seen many pictures of, but which have been visited by so few this century, has become a bit of an obsession ! So much so, that I once again headed into another epic exploration beneath Eyam, into the dirtiest hole that any man has ever been through, all in the name of self-gratification.

I won't bore you with descriptions of the way in and out, other than to say it's nasty, and when it dries out, it's more nasty. Check out the videos I've linked in to ‘Loperamide Lust’, and you will understand !

I'd read up everything I could find in ‘Descent’ (many thanks to Nigel for kindly parting company with his collection, which has been a godsend for this endeavour) and also having inside information, I felt sure I was onto a winner. So, about thirty minutes after leaving the sunshine behind, I was stepping off the wonky iron ladder to finish my quest. Not!

You see it's not like I don't know this place now, but the bits I've seen and the bits I've read about and had explained to me, don't relate, even though, when I think back they bloody well should. So, forty-five minutes after leaving the sunshine behind, I was stepping back onto the wonky iron ladder with my tail between my legs, heading for plan B.



‘Ladywash Mine’, also known as ‘Glebe Mine’, is easily accessed from the parts of Doom I've already explored, so I went to have a good look in the levels that I hadn't had time to check out during my last visit, and there are many !

The going is hard, as the floor is made of deep, sticky mud, and where it's clear you have to fight against flowing water, but it's impressive how hollow Eyam is below the surface. What soon becomes apparent is



that the mine levels don't really have ‘stopes’ that seem worth putting all the obvious effort in for, and for many, many metres the side branches don't amount to much either, and the passages go on for ages, but then, the truth dawns on you. The space is beneath your feet !!

You see, the source of the water against which you battle to make progress, is spouting from the deep, dark recesses cut far below the tramways, and without the pumps to clear them, they empty down the long, silent passages.

The further you go, the more under-workings you find, and as a breath of fresh air there is a rotting old ore chute, where the ore was dropped to the level where several under-workings also broke through to that surface.



What is probably a diver's paradise, the flooded underworld, finally surfaced at a ringed shaft, complete with a headstock, built into a chamber cut into the bedrock, just for it to remain with all the ancillary equipment housed below. It was complete with workshops and stores; quite a unique find in any exploration



underground.

Time was running short, and the journey back is considerably more difficult than the journey in, as gravity is not your friend! Back I went, feeling happy that plan B had worked out quite well, and that there is lots more to see, if I can only work out just how long I need to be down there.

I got to the junction of the stream passage and the passage heading to the ore chute, and sat down for an energy bar to fuel the long slog head, and as I sat there I caught sight of a slender 'piece of string', maybe 8mm in diameter, lying on the boulder pile I was sitting on. Then I noticed the sheath pattern -

this was climbing rope! I looked up, and above me there was a hole in the roof, and visible above was a stemped, mined cleft, stretched off into the distance. I've now checked the survey I have, and it is in fact 'Doom', however I had no time to left to enter - especially without some company ! (- It's OK, I wouldn't put you through that.) So, Doom's Retreat again, it was, but in my next four days off, I'll be back for the prize ! The journey out was Horrid!



A link to the pictures is here. The two videos are the best of the four taken from 'Inglorious Bastards' to the 'Ladders of Impending Doom'. They are worth watching just to get a feeling for the place. Going in is mostly downhill, and coming out, tired, it is up hill through the same passages. I love this place just because it's so vile!

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/E9jTrcoy7JaW7aZk8>
Gaz Mcshee

All text and photographs courtesy of Gaz - thanks. Ed. _____

Lancaster – Easegill through trip.

**9th September 2023
 Gaz Mcshee**

Neil Conde, Rob Nevitt, and I, headed straight for Bull Pot Farm, with the aim of getting an early start without the hassle of filling our faces first at Inglesport. A severe weather warning was in place for thunderstorms, so getting in and then clear of the streamway was at the top of the "to do" list. We kitted up, while the Red Rose members toiled away on maintenance of the club hut, one of the most tranquil and isolated I've ever seen.

We trekked over to the Lancaster Hole lid, and Rob dived in headfirst to rig it, and in doing so, he passed on all his midges to me ! Cheers Rob ! In the meantime, two girls from Exeter University C.C. wandered in from somewhere, with the intention of just having a potter around. They asked if they could descend our ropes and then exit again, derig, and leave the kit at the hut, thus saving us the bother of extending our walk out to retrieve them at the end of the day.



By then it was my turn to descend, and Neil's turn to get the midges, so after telling them to 'Go Away', I left the heatwave and lowered myself into the dark coolness of Lancaster Pot. Tight at first, it soon opened up into a lovely open pitch into a large open chamber, where I rejoined Rob and waited for the arrival of Neil.

(Photo - right: The recently repaired and improved entrance.)

Now this was my third time in the Dales, and my first trip in Ease Gill, so don't shoot me if some of the information hereafter is wrong, I was lost all day ! We climbed out into the impressively large Bridge Hall and took a detour into Colonnade Passage, a very slippery, unprotected, near-death experience, to reach the entrance high above the floor of Bridge Chamber. From there the choice of name for the chamber became all too apparent, and the need to be very careful going down was even more so.



The Columns in there were a sight to behold, and the thought of how long they took to form was mind bending, almost as impossible to comprehend as the thought of someone trying to climb one of them.

(Yep, that level of stupid does exist in the caving world apparently).

[More about this, at the end of this write-up. Ed.]

Anyway, safely back in Bridge Hall, we squeezed through Kath's Way into the huge vastness of Taylor's Cavern. From here I'm lost; its big, then you go down, and its big again, and then you keep going down, past frogs that apparently can see in the dark, until you arrive at the master cave. In-between were some cave bits with names I could not tell you. So there, we've made the master cave, and it's a pretty epic master cave.



To think that in flood something this big can be full of water to a height of thirty-three metres, flooding many passages above, is truly terrifying, especially given the severe weather warning on the surface.



After committing Des's ashes to the cave, we headed off into the



upper series of passages safe now from the risk of being flooded in.

Montagu Cavern (I think.), was astounding both in size and in pure beauty, with barren vastness and fields of straws and stals everywhere, culminating in the most amazing black and white 'cave bacon' I've ever seen and the stunning Painters Palette.



(Photo left: 'The Painter's Palette'.)
Now I'm still lost, but I think we are at Fall Pot, (very aptly named !)

[Actually, well past Fall Pot here ! - Ed.]

We have to traverse around the slippiest, most awful path, above a drop into a pit so deep that your light cannot make out the floor and even clipped into the traverse line doesn't fill you with confidence, especially as it ends

long before the death potential is past. This is 'Event Horizon' death potential we are talking about here! The walk round to the other side is easy and safe enough but then it all kicks off again when the traverse line is met on the other side although it's much easier and a lot less "I am going to die!" Mainly due to the fact that the rope finishes clear of the drop zone !

[The two huge, deep holes are 'Scylla and Charybdis' - Ed.]

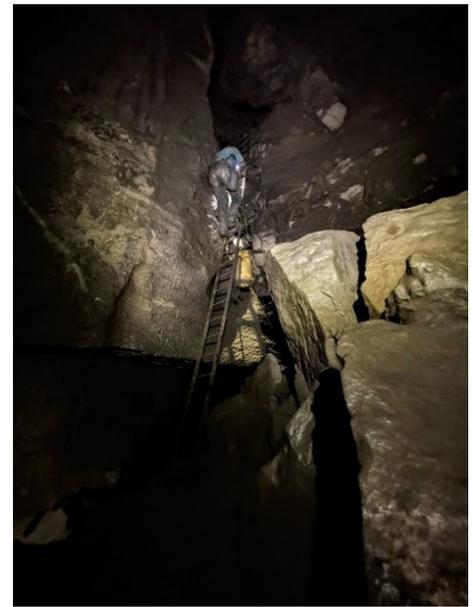
Now, from here on things get messy. We had a break for food at about the halfway point and after setting off into the hugeness again, Neil, the main route finder had a brain fart. He couldn't remember the way on. Now this wouldn't normally be a problem as we could just make our way back and climb out using our ropes, but do you remember the Exeter University girls? - Yep, the ropes had gone.



Now, remember I'm lost, I can't help here at all. I'm the only one that hasn't been here before, and this is like the Moon ! So I sat down on a boulder and prepared for a visit from CRO at some point in the distant future, then, by some



miracle, Neil remembered the way, and we were off again - soon crawling out into the very beautiful Minarets. (photo left) More huge open spaces and fields of straws and stalls followed until finally we got to Stop Pot and the fixed ladder down to Main Drain and Eureka Junction,



(photo right)

shortly followed by the start of Wretched Rabbit passage.

Off we went up the really tight crabwalk, often at floor level as our middle age sag kind of got in the way. Eventually we got to a rope climb which we all grunted up (it was hard !), but after a few more tricky climbs it was apparent that we were lost, again. I say 'we' but I'd been lost all day, so it was nice to share the feeling with the others now and again. Back we went, and once again Neil remembered the way on, and after a couple of spicy hand-line climbs, the warm air could be felt invading the exit passage from above.

Well done Neil, you finally remembered something, and CRO missed out on a caving trip into one of the most amazing caves in the country.

Thanks, guys, for the company and an amazing trip.

A link to the photos is here; there are a few soft ones, though the scale of this place was staggering and hard to fill so they needed a lot of post editing.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HpVzvr5DcSgCH4mH9>

All text and photographs courtesy of Gaz - **thanks again** for your frequent contributions. **Ed.**



.....
.....
The Lancaster Hole Colonnade Repair (briefly):

Notes from: **Cave Research Group Newsletter No. 95 - Derek Brandon - 16th March 1965.**

In January 1965, members of the British Aircraft Corporation Pot-Hole Club reported to the Council of Northern Caving Clubs that the longest Colonnade

(15') in Lancaster Hole's Colonnade Chamber, had been found to be broken, leaving a stump 3' 6" high, and seven fragments scattered on the floor. There was no obvious 'natural' cause, and no way of determining what had happened, or if some person, unidentified, had been responsible.

A plan was formulated by members of the Royal C.A.T. C.P.C. - Salford (*I have no idea what/who this organisation was*) and members of The Happy Wanderers C.P.C., to repair the broken colonnade, and they set about this task on 27th February 1965.

Following considerable research, they had settled on Araldite GY252, a low viscosity liquid epoxy resin, with hardener X83/144, as the most appropriate adhesive. After comprehensive cleaning and preparation of the broken ends, the adhesive was applied, and the colonnade was reassembled - the whole job taking over nine hours.

Thousands of cavers will have visited Colonnade Chamber in the fifty-eight years since the repair was carried out, and I suspect that few will know the story, and even fewer will have noticed the joins in the repaired colonnade.

Outstanding work by those involved. **Ed.**

Follow up to 'Cleaning Tip for Down Jackets, Sleeping Bags, etc.':

"Just a note on washing down garments after reading the previous Newsletter (no.147):

I frequently wash all my down gear including my -45 Degree sleeping bag, duvets, etc.. I just wash on a wool cycle, normal powder, normal spin, and for sure when you take it out your first reaction is 'Oh sh...!', but hanging it up and fluffing and shaking 4/5 times a day after a week of slow drying, and it's fine. Don't waste money on anything fancy."

**Adrian
Pedley**

Ed.: I still like the tip about adding half a dozen clean tennis balls to the tumble-drier drum when drying the garment. It really did a fantastic job for us, with the down all totally fluffed up and evenly distributed, and with no thin spots !! Annie is going to stick with using 'Ni.....' as the cleaning agent, especially as I bought two bottles !



From the Past: 19th & 20th September 1970: Lancaster to Easegill

This article is based on the original item contributed to the '**Jan. '70 to June '71 CCPC Logbook'** by **Ralph Johnson**, with more additions (*2013 - in italics*) added by **Steve Knox**.

Previously included in CCPC Newsletter No. 108 – March 2013.

A number of CCPC Club Members arrived in Yorkshire on Saturday 19th September 1970. Brian and John Mather, and Dave Wooliscroft descended Lancaster Hole during the afternoon, spent until 10.00 pm. caving, then slept in the region of Bridge Hall. They explored a large number of passages, including the high-level route towards Stop Pot, as far as Stake Pot with its phallic sculpture !!

In those far off days cavers were tough; oversuits and 'furries' hadn't been invented, and there was no such thing as S.R.T.. Rigging Lancaster Hole meant using five 25-foot-long electron ladders,

joined with 'C' links, and with a lifeline rigged over a pulley at the top to protect the last man down – ideally using a single 250 foot rope, but more often with two 120 foot ropes and a knot !

Other Members arrived on Sunday 20th, and set about their various programmes. Only Pete Johnson and Ralph Johnson fancied 'the through trip' so they set off as soon as Brian, John and Dave had surfaced. On reaching the stream at the bottom of Fall pot they leapt in – and disappeared ! A short discussion ruled out backstroke, crawl, etc., so they took the high-level route to Stop Pot, where they sat down to wait for the mob coming in through County Pot.

For those not familiar with the system, there were two routes from Lancaster Hole to the Easegill Caverns end of the system [more in modern times]; either at stream level, pushing upstream through deep pools and canyons from beneath Fall Pot to the bottom of Stop Pot (impossible in high water conditions), or high-level, climbing out of Fall Pot and then following a series of huge, dry fossil passages and chambers to emerge at the very top of the Stop Pot chamber. Ralph and Pete opted for the high, dry way, then abseiled down a blank wall to land on the boulders at the top of Stop Pot, pulling their rope down after them.

Meanwhile Steve and Dave Knox (plenty of family groups involved that day !), Dave Mason and Pete Steadman who had done a 'sporting trip' through County Pot as far as Stop Pot, decided not to leave a note, and pushed off to Easter Grotto, Nagasaki, etc..

In our defence, we were soaking wet, and wearing wet-suits (the 'normal' kit of the day), and when we arrived at Stop Pot and found Ralph and Pete hadn't arrived we were too cold to hang around waiting for them to appear (there must have been some confusion over leaving a note !), and in any case they might have turned back to Lancaster Hole. We needed to keep warm, so we headed upstream to Easter Grotto, then pushed on to Nagasaki Chamber, before turning back to see if the others had reached Stop Pot.

At 3.00 pm. they (Steve's group) arrived at Stop Pot to join Ralph and Pete who were bloody frozen after a 2 ½ hour wait.

Meanwhile John Shenton and Jean, with Brian and John Mather, had attempted to enter via County Pot, but had been forced back by flood water in Lower Pierces Passage.

At 3.15 pm. the six of us set off from Stop Pot, up Lower Pierces Passage, to find the water HIGH, STRONG, and RISING. We reached a pitch, presumed to be Poetic Justice (actually White Line Chamber) which had 'N',000 gallons of water per second (approx.) pouring over it !

I clearly remember our struggle up the high, narrow canyon of Lower Pierces Passage, some of the time trying to traverse above the water to get some relief from the force of the torrent. At one point David lost his footing and was swept back downstream to be ably fielded by someone further back. It was frightening. We eventually reached a small, spray-filled chamber where the falling water made communication all but impossible. Although the electron ladder we had rigged earlier was invisible under the waterfall, at least we could see the lifeline and I struggled across to get hold of it. After several attempts I realised that it was not a rope, but was a thin line of white quartz (?) running down the wall – it sounds crazy, but there was more water than air in that place at that time. We abandoned our attempt to get out and headed back downstream, knowing that we could be trapped in the low area around Eureka Junction. Checking the survey later I could see that we had missed the right turn to Poetic Junction pitch (it was probably concealed by the floodwater) and had reached the twin chamber of White Line Chamber.

[Note: The higher-level exit route from Stop Pot into Wretched Rabbit Passage was unknown at this time, and Wretched Rabbit had not been connected to the surface.]

We decided to avoid being trapped in Pierces by flooding at Eureka Junction, and hurriedly retreated to Stop Pot. The water at Eureka Junction was disturbing to say the least.

At 5.15 pm. the party were settled at the top of the boulder slope at Stop Pot, far above the highest possible water level. Initially we tried to overcome the barrier of the vertical wall above us, which would have allowed us to retrace Ralph and Pete's route through from Lancaster. After a couple of failed attempts to climb the pitch I gave up, and instead we fashioned a bulky knot at the end of the rope, and tried throwing it up in the hope that it would jam. It didn't.

All six of us huddled together, backs against the wall, soaking wet and very, very cold. Our 'emergency kit' was less than minimal (I learned my lesson from this occasion), being a small tobacco tin containing a candle, wax-covered matches and striker, and a bar of chocolate, which I had stuffed inside my wet-suit jacket. We discovered that it is possible to make a tepid drink of chocolate-flavoured water, by melting a piece of chocolate in a tin over a candle flame ! Apart from any nutritional benefit, the activity of actually making the drinks was a great distraction from our circumstances.

The party sat, talked, cursed etc., at the bottom of the missing rope, waiting for help to come, presumably from Lancaster Hole.

At 10.10 pm. three Red Rose Caving Club Members arrived, through County Pot ! (*Unknown to us our surface party at Bull Pot Farm had contacted Yorkshire Cave Rescue at 8.15 pm., and the Red Rose party had set off for County Pot at the same time.*)

We started out together and found that the water level had fallen considerably – 3 to 4 inches in the main stream at Eureka Junction, and even more in Pierces Passage. Needless to say we didn't admit our error when we recognised Poetic Junction Pitch (even if we had realised the error at the time, we couldn't have hung about 'exploring' with conditions as they were). We surfaced at approximately midnight, to meet a large number of YCRO Members, but we weren't too unpopular. Unfortunately, by de-laddering County Pot on our way out, we left a YCRO party stuck underground as they had decided to do the 'through trip' while searching. A relief party was dispatched to rescue them.

Red Rose Caving Club vowed they would fix a permanent rope or ladder on Stop Pot.

I'm pretty sure the Stop Pot fixed ladder appeared very soon after this event, and must have prevented dozens of other possible 'strandings' over the years.

Steve Knox 17th March 2013

Looking back, it all seems a very long time ago (53 years !!), and somewhat softened by time, but there is no doubt it was a serious situation and not an experience that I would want to go through again. Even so, they were good times, with good companions, several now gone, but not forgotten.

Steve Knox - Editor.

.....