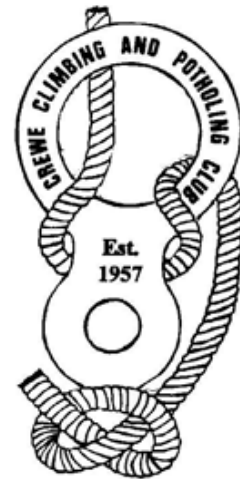




C.C.P.C. Newsletter 149. October - November 2023

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

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

Mon. 2 nd Oct.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
Sat. 7 th 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.
Sun. 22 nd Oct.	Titan to Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbys. <i>Alt. Rowter Hole extensions, Derbys.</i> CANCELLED due to exceptionally bad weather.	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>
	Clearwell Caves, Forest of Dean.	CHANGED: Alderley Edge Copper Mines, Cheshire.
	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
	Waterways Swallet, near Ilam, Staffs.	Annual car park clear-up, followed by a descent, for anyone interested. No SRT. Multi-pitch (climbable) complex.
	Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbyshire. <i>Alt. Ireby Fell Cavern, Yorks.</i>	An absolute delight ! Many routes, including no SRT. <i>Classic multi-pitch SRT. Can be wet.</i>
	Ogof Dydd Byraf (mine), Minera, North Wales.	
	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
<p>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.</p>		



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>



Derbyshire Explorers Forum - 30th September 2023

This was an afternoon and evening of talks by many of the diggers and divers active in the Peak District, covering their explorations of the last few years. From long term epic digs, like Pooles Cavern, to major discoveries, like Cussey Pot. Organisation changed at the last minute to the Eldon Pothole Club, and they pulled out all the stops in getting it arranged. Despite the lateness of decisions on date, venue and so on, it all went perfectly as far as this participant could see. Crewe hasn't had much involvement in digging in recent years, though we are probably the top club for doing sport caving trips in the region. It was good to see the other side of caving. Myself, Grace Chu and Pete Dell were there from our club.

The Forum was held at the Mechanics institute in Eyam, a very well-appointed old building, with a large hall downstairs, with adjacent catering and a bar upstairs. Just the place for lots of hungry and thirsty cavers. I travelled over from Sheffield by push bike and arrived a little early. The hall soon filled to near capacity with the great and the good, or just haven't been found out yet, of Derbyshire caving. A full spread of ages, ranging from students to a pair of Eldon founder members. The average talk length was around 15 minutes, and the compere kept the speakers on track for time. I can't find a list of all the talks, so am going by my inadequate memory, but they included:

- Cussey and the Stoney Middleton Master Cave.
- Pooles Cavern and the caves of Stanley Moor.
- Caves and mines on the Crich inlier.
- History of diving in the Ilam risings.
- DCRO – who we are and what we do.
- Diving in Peak Cavern.
- Various digs in Peak Cavern.
- The science of water tracing from Professor John Gunn.
- Exploring various scary falling to bits mines in the Bradwell area.
- Longcliffe and Son of Longcliffe.
- Bagshawe Cavern and many more.

Colin Boothroyd gave a hilarious account of his infamous rescue from P5 on Ingleborough on the night of the CRO's 50th anniversary dinner in 1985. He'd spent years attacking a low crawl with plugs and feathers - no battery electric drills back then. He finally decided to squeeze through, wearing only an Inglesport plastic sack and a pair of underpants. It worked, but returning proved to be trickier and Colin missed his supper, despite having a ticket. If you've read Jim Eyre's Race Against Time, you'll know the one. We didn't miss our supper; pie and peas produced in quantity by the Eldon, which fuelled my bike ride home later in the evening. A raffle and collection tins produced £381.38, plus 10.03 Euros !, which went to DCRO. Thanks to the speakers and the Eldon for a great event.

Jenny Drake



Bonnie Prince Charlie's Cave - 24th September 2023

The sight of 'Cave' on an O.S. map, in a non-caving area (and even better if the location is apparently linked to a historical event or individual), and I am hooked !

So it was, that, while seeking a low-level walk during an exceptionally wet and windy week in the West Highlands, I spotted '*Bonnie Prince Charlie's Cave*' indicated near Druimindarroch, on the O.S. map of Arisaig [about N.G.R. NM 692 845].

The History: There is considerable evidence that Charles Edward Stuart, the 'Young Pretender' to the Scottish throne, fled to the west, having escaped after the defeat of his Jacobite forces at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. He lived as a fugitive in the Highlands for many months, avoiding the searching troops, while waiting to be taken to safety in France. There are accounts of him spending nights hiding in various caves scattered across the region. Since that time it seems that any remote 'cave', has been claimed to have been one of those used by 'Charlie'. The caves more likely to have been actually used in this way are those clearly in, or near to, the documented route of his escape. On 19th September 1746, after he had spent several nights hiding in a cave close to Borrodale beach, near Arisaig, Charles Edward Stuart saw that two French ships had anchored in Loch nan Uamh, and he, and his few remaining supporters were taken aboard, and the ships set sail to France. Charles never returned to Scotland.

The cave marked on the map at Druimindarroch is almost certainly a genuine '*Bonnie Prince Charlie Cave*'.

Annie and I left the A830 and followed a narrow road down an old boat house, where we parked, close to the shore. The path directions, taken from the internet, were poor; taking us through waist high reeds, then soaking bracken as we skirted the edge of a shallow bay, before climbing up



through dripping woodland and over a low ridge. Ahead, we could see the pastures between Arisaig House and the sea.



We descended to where the woods ended by a large rocky outcrop, and then, a short scramble up over tumbled rocks towards an old oak tree growing close to the cliff, revealed the small triangular entrance to the cave.

An easy slither down over a rocky sill led immediately into an elongated space with a leaf-covered earthy floor, and ahead the passage led slightly downhill to the final space (not really a chamber, just a slightly wider part) where the

'cave' ended. Clearly, despite the numerous spiders, this would have provided a secure, dry refuge, well-hidden from pursuing soldiers, and within easy reach, and with a good view, of the nearby beach.



Geology: According to the internet, the bedrock here is metamorphic: the Lower Morar Psammite Formation, formed between 542 and 1000 million years ago, with some basalt and microgabbro igneous intrusions, part of the North Britain Palaeogene Dyke Suite.

[I don't really understand any of that, but it clearly wasn't limestone !!]



Later, Annie and I wandered down to the impressive shingle-bank beach (no ships, just rain) and thought about the fugitives leaving their homeland for ever. We made our way back to the car, passing close to Arisaig House, and then having to struggle up a bramble-choked slope to rejoin the modern A380 (left - uphill) back towards Druimdarroch.

Steve Knox



A bit about Pierre Saint-Martin (PSM)

Jenny Drake

Some CCPC Members are talking about a joint trip to the Pierre Saint-Martin area next year. Here is a little bit about the system and the area, both caving and on the surface for those who don't know it and are perhaps thinking of signing up. It was one of the first overseas caves I did, so is a special place for me. I can well recommend a visit. Pierre Saint-Martin translates as Rock of Saint Martin, a mountain in the west of the Pyrenees range, straddling the border between France and Spain. Basque is spoken widely on both sides. The valleys on the French side get more rain than the more barren

Spanish side. The nearest settlement is Sainte-Engrâce in the valley. Up the mountain is a ski resort, though by September the snow will be long gone.

The cave was first explored in the early 1950's via the Lépineux shaft, right on the border. This met a huge underground river that was followed downstream through great galleries. Eventually the roof disappeared entirely and the first team thought they had come out of a resurgence, until they checked the time; it should be daylight outside, so they were still underground! This is the 250m diameter La Verna chamber, one of the biggest in Europe. PSM was the deepest cave in the world for a while. For reading more about the early exploration, I'd recommend Norbert Casteret's *The Descent of Pierre Saint-Martin* in English translation. It includes a moving account of the death of Marcel Loubens, following a winch harness failure on the Lépineux shaft and the recovery of his body two years later.

Later, a tunnel was cut by Electricity de France into La Verna to tap the underground river for a hydroelectric scheme. This EDF Tunnel was abandoned for many years, but gave cavers easy access to the big passages of the system and the unconnected Grotte Arphidia, allowing through trips from the top of the mountain. In 2006 the hydroelectric scheme was completed, and La Verna turned into a show cave, but caver access is still allowed. The late John Gillet of our club helped translate the showcave guide into English for them. John was one of several CCPC members, including Ralph Johnson who knew the area and local cavers well. It would be good to renew our connections. On the CCPC website you can see Ralph, John and Paul Holdcroft in a photo (© Steve Knox) from the 1990's, taken by Steve at the Marcel Loubens memorial (see November 1995 Newsletter). Also read the article by John Gillet in Newsletter 103 about climbing the Aranzadi Wall in La Verna chamber: <https://www.ccpc.org.uk/newsletters/CCPCNewsletter103.pdf>.

There are several other entrances on the high-level plateau that connect to the master cave and allow through trips. The most commonly used are Tête Sauvage and SC3. We will likely be rigging one of these. The total system is now 82 kilometres long and 1,410 metres deep, though a through trip is quite a bit less than that in length and depth. Tête Sauvage at 1875m altitude, drops 383m by SRT to Salle Cosins, then mostly following the river, till you come out of the EDF tunnel after descending around 800m. There are plenty of other caves in the area. There is also canyoning and lots of walking opportunities. To give you an idea of the scale involved and the size of the underground river, here are a couple of pictures of La Verna chamber.

By Camuspeleo - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39245679>

By Camuspeleo - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39245680>





Mistral Hole, Easegill, Yorkshire. – 7th October 2023

Gaz Mcshee

Six CCPC cavers were out today in Yorkshire: Neil & Darren Conde, Dan Baddeley, Steve Pearson-Adams, Paul Griffiths and Gaz Mcshee.

Over breakfast at Inglesport we discussed the chances of a successful outcome to the Notts 2 trip, and having seen the water levels in the river on the drive in, we decided to leave it and do Mistral Hole instead, as there were no active streamways to be concerned with, or so I was told. It brassed me off a bit because if there is a favourite bit of caving for me it is an active stream passage with pristine, clean, scalloped walls, and with water of every shade between



orange and yellow.

Anyhow at Bullpot Farm we got ready and set off for the long trudge over the moors to the entrance shaft, and then, one by one, we climbed down.

It's a pretty uncomfortable passage after the climb down, blasted all the way by dwarfs that had the flexibility of snakes, and many weird grunts echoed through the tightest bits, much to the amusement of those already through. Thankfully it soon opened up into a lovely big breakdown chamber, the sort I'm getting quite



used to in the Dales now, called Hobbit Chamber (so I wasn't too far off with 'Dwarfs').

The chamber terminated in a squeeze through into a lovely relict stream passage, which went on for quite a while, until we arrived at The Hall of



Ten - a dirty, muddy, slippery, steep, and a truly terrifying experience ! Think HVS mud climbing, over a boulder field

strategically placed to destroy every bone in your body, and turn you from a man to a jellyfish! More tight squeezes followed, and saw us reach the first of many pretties !

Now the thing that gets me about the stalactites in the Dales is that most of them seem out of place -



it's usual for stalactites to fill an area, joined by flowstone and 'cave bacon', but here they seem to be dotted about with lots of space between them, and no actual connection, as if each was fed by its own little water-fed bore hole, and each has its own little drainage tube so that the stalagmites grow huge on a mud floor - all very confusing and awe inspiring, rather than beautiful in the classic sense.



Almost simultaneously, Neil and I noticed a depression in the floor, full of boulders, that looked to lead to a way on. Before I could get in, Neil was down first, and spotted a scaffolded shaft, not unlike the one in Waterways Swallet, and by the time I got to it he was already well down. Dan heard the mention of a way on, and like a tracker dog with a scent, he was biting at my heels to join the action.

Once down, it became apparent that we were in a streamway. We have no idea which one, and I can't find anything about it online, other than 'the lower streamway'. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it may be the streamway heard below the boulder choke in the Hall of Ten.



We followed the stream passage to a junction, where a waterfall entered from the left and filled the cave with a roar that would make a pride of lions run off. I climbed down and followed the passage on, and soon came to an eight metre pre-rigged pitch. Sadly this was the end for us as we had no gear - one for another day.

Neil and Dan went back up the waterfall while I took a few pictures, and Dan decided to look at a possible continuation passage, high up in the rift. Neil stood in the crabwalk below,

and I climbed up to stand above Neil on the opposite side to Dan. There are moments in life when you really believe in guardian angels, and this was to be one of those moments: Dan climbed back down, and to steady himself, he rested his hand on a half-tonne or so boulder, directly above Neil's head. The boulder slowly started to move, and at the exact same time, oblivious to what was happening, Neil also started to move. I shouted ! Dan shouted ! Neil turned round in time to see his potential headstone crash into the crabwalk below, with the loudest bang I've ever heard, that was not the result of chemistry !!

Photo right: Dan standing on that boulder, after the fall !!

That was a really sobering moment, and it took a while to get over the reality of the situation, and get back to the job in hand.



Back at the top of the scaffolded shaft, we reunited Darren with his brother (Neil now only has eight lives left), and plodded on to see more of the cave that was now turning into a very memorable experience.

More hilarious and inappropriate little gasps through the tight bits, led eventually, after many strange moonscapes to Gour Hall.



Gour hall is 'next level' beautiful, and with its copper pot ringing with each drip from the roof above, your light uncovers the most amazing show cave - never to ever be a show cave ! After spending time enjoying the spectacular beauty we found a small passage with a hand line dropping into a tight rift, it had to be done even though the scaffolding tubes were loose, and the handline was a little threadbare.

I'm not going to lie, it was tight, and the scaffolding tubes did not feel like they would hold, but after much thrutching I reached the

bottom, and soon found out that it was a dig, which ended only twenty, or so, feet further on. I now had to get out with laughter from Neil and Dan, comfortably sitting above, hoping that the passage wouldn't 'go', so that they didn't have to follow me down.

We stopped in a chamber for a break on the way back, and Neil and Dan noticed a rising passage that was obviously a dig, and by the time I got there, Neil was already in. From below all we could hear was strained grunting. Dan and I quietly followed, only to find that this dig also went nowhere, so out again we came. Although tight, getting out was much easier with gravity on our side.

Once more as a group, we headed into the Hall of the Mountain Kings - that is some seriously muddy mud ! We trudged in, hoping we didn't lose a wellie passing some weird and disturbing mud sculptures (!!)

to reach the base of the chamber. Neil had been mentioning all day about Cussey Pot (Derbyshire), and each time I tried to explain it to him he said, "You aren't selling it to me", so now, finally, I could sell it to him.

"Neil, what you need to do is lie face down in the mud and pretend the roof is two inches above your head. -Now you're in Cussey." He still wasn't buying it, then right at the bottom of the chamber I found what can only be described as a real 'sh..... hole', with the sound of water from below. "Ha ha, Neil, now you have to get down and dirty, Cussey style !"



At this point I slipped on the rocks as I dropped into the streamway, and my camera fell into the water. From here on, the ability to take pictures became harder and harder, until the camera stopped working altogether, just as the best bit of caving I've ever experienced was about to commence.

Cigalere Falls ! The water was roaring down, and it was so impressive that you just wanted to have a go - so when Steve said, "Right, who's first ?" I was in.

It's like a series of the most amazing boulder problems, stacked on top of each other, with water trying to throw you



off each move, and then there are the drowning pools, hidden beneath the foam. One that I fell in reached chest level before I managed to lock out my arms - I didn't touch the bottom ! Dan was a legend, and was hot on my heels all the way, and I couldn't get a single picture of any of it !

Eventually we got to a narrow side passage, beneath a beautiful stalactite chandelier, from which the entire stream was emerging. The only way on was to quickly grow gills, as the water would have backed up as soon as we tried to enter



the passage. Given that evolution takes longer than drowning we took the joint decision to back off at that point, both agreeing that this was one of the best bits of caving either of us had done. Back down, we rejoined the others, returning from a much drier trip up the dry passage, ahead of where the falls entered from above.



Back on the surface we were once again subjected to unnecessary outbursts of ecstasy, as one by one we emerged into the warm wetness of the Yorkshire early evening.

Then it was back to Bullpot Farm to change, and off to Whoop Hall for a post cave beer (note: don't bother !) And a nice trouble-free drive home. Thanks all for a great trip, and awesome company. I'm looking forward now to another dales trip soon.

The link to my pictures is here. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/jh8m7dyG9HSwUr2X9>

Gaz Mcshee



Neil later added his own photos, including this group picture (- obviously with Neil missing !).

*Left to Right:
Gaz, Dan, Steve P-A, Darren, Paul.*

Thanks Neil ! **Ed.**

Here's a link to Neil's photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/4qC8FWHHqcs6FnHh7>

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Editor's note: Brilliant photos, again. My apologies if they are not correctly placed above.
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Easegill Flooding, Yorkshire. – 22nd February 1992

Reading Gaz's comment in his article (above): '..... we decided to leave it and do Mistral Hole instead, as there were no active streamways to be concerned with, or so I was told', reminded me of a trip, and some advice, back in 1992 :- Three of us, John and Pam Preston and I, had travelled to Yorkshire with the intention of completing a straight-forward Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit, Upper Series, through-trip, but on arrival at Bull Pot Farm it was clear that there had recently been plenty of rain. 'No worries', we thought, as there was a group of Red Rose cavers in the farmhouse kitchen, and they would be sure to have a clear idea of what conditions to expect underground. They confirmed that our intended route would be: **'absolutely fine, no problem at all, totally flood free and safe, nothing to be concerned about, and Wretched Rabbit is a 100% dry exit in any conditions !'**

Off we trudged over the sodden moor and dropped in through Lancaster Hole. It was wet – actually, it was very wet, with water spouting from every crack in the shaft, and giving us a thorough soaking, but **no worries, as our route would be absolutely fine**. Mostly, it was. Certainly there was plenty of water about, and the mainstream, far below, could be heard roaring through, but we were well above it, and **fine**.

We made steady progress and eventually completed the dry transition into the start of Wretched Rabbit passage, still well above whatever was going on below. There was some water, but not much, and **nothing to be concerned about** – everything was **absolutely fine**. Now, the very last section of the Wretched Rabbit route involved a relatively easy climb up a couple of dry, scrambly climbs, and then an uphill hands and knees crawl for a short distance to the exit. But, unexpectedly, there was water dribbling and splashing down the climbs ! No



worries, it would be **absolutely fine**, so up we went – our extra rope came in handy here. With daylight in sight ahead, we crawled up the final short passage, but it was not the dry crawl we expected – we were crawling against the flow, in a stream ! Scrabbling out into daylight, it was just a little worrying to find that Easegill was a raging torrent, and at least part of it was pouring into the Wretched Rabbit passage opening ! Actually, **it really wasn't absolutely fine**, and was getting considerably less fine as we watched !! At least we

got out before the passage became impassable. I suppose the moral of this tale, is don't believe everything you are told, especially if the person giving the advice isn't coming with you !!



Above: Water, water everywhere; and John and Pam at the Wretched Rabbit exit.

Steve Knox