

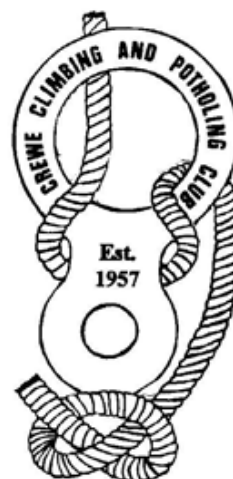


# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 154. May - July 2024

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Editor: Steve Knox

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## Planned Club Meets, etc., from May to July 2024

Mon. 13 <sup>th</sup> May	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
Sat. 18 <sup>th</sup> May	Slaughter Stream Cave, Forest of Dean.	Over 14 km of passages – some SRT.
Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Merlin Mine, Stoney Middleton, Derbyshire. <i>Alt. Nicker Grove Mine / Carlswark.</i>	Many alternatives possible here, including easy SRT / no SRT.
Sat. 15 <sup>th</sup> June	Top Sink to Lancaster Hole, Easegill, Yorkshire.  <i>Alt. Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit, Easegill.</i>	One of many routes in this world-class system, and incorporating the first section of 'The Greater Easegill Traverse' (perhaps the greatest traverse in British Caving). Snug and contorted in early sections. SRT. <i>Classic through trip, long and impressive, with easy SRT.</i>
Sat. 29 <sup>th</sup> June	Deep Ecton, Manifold Valley, Staffs.	A guided trip. £10 each.
<b>Sat. 29<sup>th</sup> June</b> <b>Now: 13<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Little Neath River Cave, Brecon Beacons, South Wales.	A sporting, active river cave – you will get very wet ! Wet suit recommended.
<b>Sun. 30<sup>th</sup> June</b> <b>Now: 14<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Porth yr Ogof, South Wales.	Another impressive river cave. Wet suit recommended. Treat resurgence pool exit (not essential) with extreme care.
Mon. 1 <sup>st</sup> July	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..

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**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. There have been **three** call-outs so far, in 2024, with successful outcomes on each occasion.  
<https://www.facebook.com/DerbyshireCaveRescue>



## Slaughter Stream Cave, Forest of Dean.

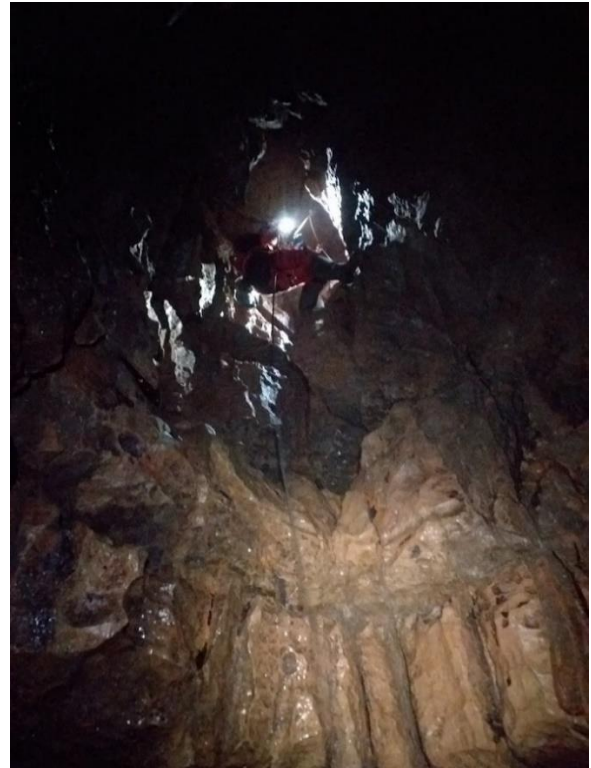
**Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Club members once again travelled to the Forest of Dean to experience the delights of Slaughter Stream Cave last Saturday. Most opted to travel down late Friday afternoon, preferring to camp overnight. We planned to meet up with Rob on Bicknor Street (lane) the next morning. Neil and I arrived around 6pm at Greenacre's camp site on the outskirts of Coleford; Paul and family would arrive later. Unfortunately Dan and Rosie couldn't get in at Greenacre's but did manage to get in at the Forest of Dean site down the road.

Later that evening we all met by the Clock Tower in the centre of Coleford and made our way to the nearest dog-friendly pub. Following introductions we settled down to an evening under the stars, imbibing fine ale and cider while enjoying each other's company. Paul made sure the group didn't go hungry as he kindly supplied the buffet... assorted flavoured crisps, nuts and the like. The evening came to an end far too soon as we said goodbyes to Dan and Rosie and walked back to our camp site, stopping on route to take in the constellations clearly visible in the night sky.

The next morning Dan made his way to our site and the four of us then made the 10-minute drive to meet Rob, who had driven down early that morning from Crewe.

We had been told that there would be a large group of cavers in the system that day taking part in the filming of the newly opened, and much longer, round-trip route. Luck was on our side as most of this large group were yet to enter so there was not much of a hold up as we made our way down the series of fixed entrance ladders, passing down Mouse Aven, before arriving at the head of Balcony Pitch (8 metres, pre-rigged) then onto Pen Pot Pitch 15 metres, and again pre-rigged.



Dan, Rob, Neil and Paul were following on behind, and soon we were all reunited at Cross Stream Junction, having negotiated the flat-out cobble-strewn crawl that makes the connection from the bottom of Pen Pot to CSJ. From there the standard round trip can be done by either going upstream and climbing Zurree Aven to enter the high-level passages, or go downstream, (clock- wise), eventually taking Coal Seam Passage on the right. We opted to go downstream.

On our way, we turned left at East Stream junction, to explore this section, as none of us had been up this passage on any previous trip. In fact, today would be Dan and Paul's first trip into Slaughter Stream. The stream was flowing steadily as we made our way up this mainly walking-sized passage, until we were forced to climb high into the canyon passage, in order to negotiate our way round a few blockages at floor level.



Dan was in his element, traversing the route ahead while the rest of us followed. After about 20 minutes we reached a point where water was entering from above (well, more like a trickle). I remember Neil saying, quite disappointedly, "Is that it ?" Soon we discovered that this wasn't the cascade. After a wet crawl we entered the base of a large aven and the sound of cascading water. Climbing up the slope behind us, we could see an impressive curtain of water falling out of a shaft on the far wall. Rob thought it looked like water falling out of a chimney. We took a few minutes to admire the area and for Neil to take a few photos before making our way back through the wet crawl, reversing the traverse and gaining the floor of East Stream Passage, making for the main-stream again to continue on the round trip. The main-stream was fairly easy going as it twisted and turned, carving its way through the limestone. At the point where the roof rises, we were met with a curtain of water gushing into the passage from the fault line above. It couldn't be avoided, so if you had managed to keep your top half dry up to this point, you would now be out of luck.



Further down- stream, the water diverted down through a narrow gap to the left, and it was here that we branched off to the right into Dryslade.

At this point I should make the reader aware that Slaughter Stream has had issues over the years with raw sewerage, discharged from a pumping station up the valley. Due to the amount of rain recently, Dryslade wasn't dry, and soon after entering the low crawl we found ourselves slithering through mud pools giving off a most unpleasant smell indeed. Our thought was to try not to splash about too much, and keep our mouths well and truly shut. I wasn't sure we were in the right place at this point, but Neil assured us we were and that we would soon find Coal Seam Passage. Indeed, the master of navigation was right. We reached the section where the passage is taped off. Bypassing this, we ignored Coal Seam Passage to the right, and instead we took the dog-leg around the taped off section, and continued along the dry, canyon-style passage for quite a while before taking a left turn at a junction which was taking water (we were well and truly off the survey by then).

We followed this passage through several deep pools, with Neil trying his utmost to keep his private parts dry, as he had

been doing throughout the trip. Eventually the roof lowered and the stream at this point resembled Kingsdale Master Cave, albeit on a smaller scale but definitely matching its profile before ending in a sumped passage. It was here that we met a small team who had attempted the newly opened route, but were forced to turn back due to water levels.

We had been underground for three hours and still needed to gain the dry, upper sections of this 14-kilometre system, so began making our way back, to connect with Coal Seam Passage. Once again the cave's character changed significantly, giving the caver the feeling of being in a completely different system. Coal Seam Passage looks a long way on the survey, but actually 15 - 20 minutes of steady caving brings you to the far end of it. After wriggling through the boulder breakdown, we found ourselves in 'The Chunnel', the main passage running east to west in the upper series. Neil guided us westward along 'The Chunnel', past the junction to the 'Desert', to our right, and then we continued through more breakdown passage, and a crawling section to gain more walking passage. Eventually we reached the point where "Norman" lies at rest, or what is left of him, and no, Norman is not human, but is the name given to the ancient remains of a dog's skeleton, which is now taped off.



Having achieved our objective we steadily made our way eastwards towards Zurree Aven, our connection to the lower streamway, and our eventual exit. How grateful I was to Dan that he kindly offered to share his supply of Trojan bars with me when we had rested earlier, as, silly me had forgotten to pack any. Big!! thanks to you Dan ! After a quick reconnoitre of the survey we were off again, making our way through the taped off sections of 'Virgin's Delight' and 'Gnome Garden', before reaching the climb down into Zurree Aven.



The way on started as a low, narrow crawl, which widened and gained height after about 10 metres, and then opened into walking size passage, and back to 'Cross Stream Junction'. Going back through the crawl leading to the base of 'Pen Pot Pitch' we expected there might be a bit of a queue from the large group, but there were only a couple guys from the small group we had encountered earlier in the day, making their way out. Soon we were on the surface in the glorious May sunshine, after spending 6 hours in this impressive system. Once changed Rob headed straight back home, while the rest of us celebrated the day with a much-deserved drink at the nearby New Inn. A great trip, and as usual, great company. Thanks everyone.

**Steve Pearson-Adams.**



Photos courtesy of **Neil Conde.**

*Incidentally, the 'mummified' bat, was spotted in the dry, upper series, and has been identified by Jess Eades (bat expert), as a Horseshoe Bat, either Greater or Lesser – hard to tell with the mould and fungus ! My apologies if the photos are in the wrong places, but I wasn't there ! They do give an excellent impression of what the cave is like. **Ed.***



**Top Sink to Lancaster Hole, Easegill, Yorks. Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

Adverse weather conditions during the past weeks made this particular trip impossible, and consequently a number of Members decided to stay at home, however, a small group travelled north and enjoyed a trip into Marble Steps instead.





## Marble Steps Pot, Leck Fell, Yorkshire.

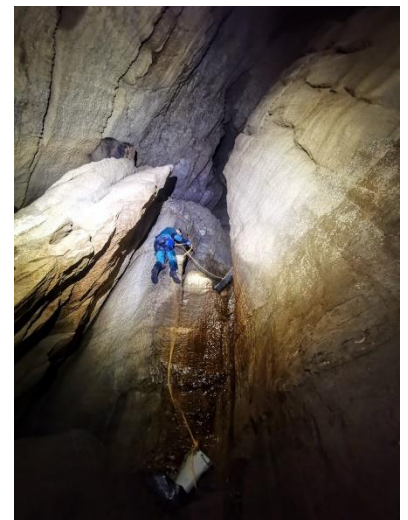
Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Over four 'Small 'Cavers' Breakfasts' at the Inglesport café, the few of us that headed up to the Dales formulated our plan for the day ahead. The original plan had been knocked on the head by the threat of rain and a general lack of knowledge of the route through the Easegill cave system, so the backup plan was made for Marble Steps which was also flood prone, but should be safe at least down to the main chamber.

After getting kitted up, we wandered off up the track and across the fields to the only coppice of trees on the entire fell, that marked the target for our subterranean adventure. Typically for the caves in the dales, the entrance was wide open for all to fall into on a foggy day, but at least for now it was clear, so our fall in was via the ropes carefully packed by Rob prior to the trip.



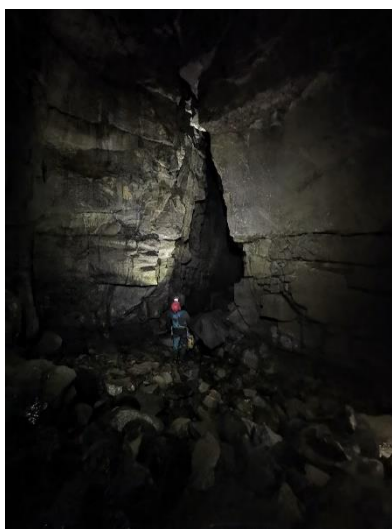
The handline down to the pitch head proper is pre rigged, but Steve chose to trust sense over valour and rigged it in its glorious entirety, as I followed closely behind with rope bag two.





It's amazing how dark it suddenly becomes as you start to descend a pothole; you start in broad daylight, but foot by foot, metre by metre, the daylight turns to twilight, and before long you think, 'Damn, I need to turn on my headlamp'. This happened for me, as usual, about halfway down the pitch proper, and as usual I had already mentioned to the others that I was a bugger for forgetting to turn it on. The rigging topo is not a true reflection of what we found in there, and Steve had to make do with what he found and asked each of us to check if we could see anything he had missed; we could not.

All down, we potted through to what we thought was the bypass to the next pitch, which I was a bit sad to miss as it would have been a nice addition to what turned out to be a short trip. After inspection by Rob and Steve the bypass turned out to be a 'Jaffa' ('Jaffa Cake' = mistake: **Ed.**?) and we had to backtrack a little to find the correct route on.



Now in the Main Chamber's lower section, and at the point where the water could flood to in bad weather, we were faced with finding a way down. There was a fixed rope which I spotted going beneath a capstone and over a gully between boulders, so I slid into the trench and squeezed through to a traverse line that led to a short rope down to the floor below. At this point I chose to step over to the other side of the chamber and free climb down to the floor, as it was quicker and easier than 'faffing' with the rope, and as the others made their way down I had a poke around, finding the hole through which the water floods in, from a now thankfully dry, water passage about five metres below.



With everyone down, we headed off into a water passage, all muttering about being in the flood plain, but to our surprise it turned out to be a relic passage with no sign of having water passing through in the recent past, if not longer. If this was a little confusing, then so was the lack of bolts at the top of Stop Pot. Not sure if we were in the right place, I had the idea of climbing up into the head of the passage, in good old P8 and Giants fashion, and met Steve, who had had the same idea from elsewhere in the 'crabwalky' thing. The bolts were located, but due to fear of flooding we had left the bag behind with the ropes for the lower pitches, so a peer down at a dry streamway was as far as we got. I did however follow the high-level passage until the thing closed down, to the point that wearing my gear made it impossible to continue, and as I didn't have the space to turn round, a twenty or so metre reverse was required to extricate myself.

Back out we went, and as with other Dales caves I spent my waiting on the rope time, thinking how almost all the pitches were so free climbable, planning a route as I waited, and thinking hard about just getting off the rope and passing the others on the way out. Ex-climbers spot a route anywhere; I even have them in my house, it's like herpes, it never goes away.



Back at the top, I waited for Rob to derig and get out before clipping in and surmounting the slippery, moss-covered boulder pile, to the sloping, grassy pothole-lip, and Steve and Paul who had exited earlier and foolishly stood in the now torrential downpour as they waited for our arrival.

Downhill made going so easy on the way back, and after getting changed we were off to the pub for a sneaky pint and crisps courtesy of Paul. A nice end to another trip in Crewe style. (See how I got all 'street' there.

I'd also chuck in an emoji, but that's perhaps too 'street' for most.)

The Link to the few pictures I took is here, mostly of rigging as it was a very short trip, but as frustrating as it was, a water cave has to be treated with the respect that it deserves. Gills take longer to acquire than drowning.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/k7e7SrRtRALNtq2H7>

Text and photographs: **Gaz Mcshee**



### **Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation:**

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

#### **Recent DCRO Activities:**

### **Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024 :-**

#### **The DCRO Dash – a tough fell race, first held in 2019, run under **Fell Runners Association Rules.****

This is a major fund-raising event for Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation, starting and finishing close to Speedwell Cavern car park. The course covers 8.5 km /5.3 miles, and involves 385 metres / 1263 feet of climbing.

Although I don't believe any CCPC Members competed (how about next year ?), there were several of us acting as marshals, first aiders, etc., as part of our role as DCRO team members. There were competitors from all over, with the fastest time, **37 mins. 36 secs**, being recorded by Ben Sharrock of the Ambleside A.C..

We all enjoyed a perfect, sunny evening, with superb visibility across the Peak, and vital funds were raised for DCRO.

### **Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 :-**

The presentation of **The King Charles III Coronation Medal** at Buxton DCRO Base.

This was awarded to Members of the Armed Forces, frontline emergency service workers, including volunteers, such as **Mountain Rescue and Cave Rescue**, and people actively contributing to The King's Coronation. To qualify, individuals had to be serving on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023, and to have completed five years service by that qualifying date. Once again, several Members of CCPC qualified, through their continuing commitment to DCRO, some receiving their second, third, or even fourth medal: (2002 – Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal; 2012 – Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal; 2022 – Queens Platinum Jubilee Medal; 2024 - King Charles III Coronation Medal).

Recipients:

**Peter Dell, Jenny Drake, Steve Knox, Steve Pearson-Adams, Michael Potts, John Preston.**

My apologies to any CCPC Member who received the medal but is not mentioned here.

**Ed.**





## Deep Ecton Mine, Manifold Valley, Staffordshire. Sat., 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The Ecton trip attracted six of us to look around the Ecton Deep workings, and the Salts level, via the partly original, and partly restored (but in keeping with the original) ladderway, which followed the main raise closely, up through the underbelly of the hillside.

Our guide, Richard, and our partner in crime Nigel, kept us entertained throughout with tales of both mining history and caving past, and we all had a great time discovering a small part of a much bigger mine. Although it lies mainly under water now, in its heyday it funded many fantastic Victorian buildings, and made, and lost, fortunes for those who were prepared to raise the stakes and make a nation great. Here is a link to the pictures I took. Hope to see you all again soon.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/NVhjdRwHvkZfedLz9>

**Gaz Mcshee.**

A small selection of Gaz's excellent photographs follows, showing the incredible remains of the miners' workings, beginning with the Deep Ecton Adit entrance, adjacent to the bank of the River Manifold, and ending at the exit to Salt's Level, higher up the hillside, behind the 1930's Folly. **Ed.**







## **Little Neath River Cave & Porth yr Ogof, South Wales. 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

Barnie aka...."the camper van" was called into action again as 4 club members were transported to the Brecon Beacons caravan and camping site adjacent to the Ancient Briton in Pen y Cae South Wales. This would be our base for the weekend. It was four o'clock on Friday when we left Crewe, passengers and kit safely stowed. The traffic around Shrewsbury was, on this occasion, relatively light and we were soon making good progress to Leominster for our one and only pit stop. We arrived around 19:50 where we met our hostess and site owner Janine, who got us booked in and directed us to our pitch. Rob, Neil and Dan busied themselves with putting up the drive away awning while I got on with getting dinner on the go. Knowing we would be arriving late I had cooked a beef stew the night before. All was going well, then the guys asked where the ground sheet was. Oh s..t it was sitting on the shelf in the shed back in Crewe. What to do I thought..... a quick search and hey presto I found a ground sheet protector from our new awning( not yet in service) disaster averted!!! and much to Dan and Robs relief. The stew was a real winner with everyone having seconds. It wasn't long after, having discussed the next day's business over a beer, that we got our heads down.

Saturday morning - we awoke to a mix of blue sky, cumulus and broken sunshine, Little Neath was on. We headed off around 9:30 am, but not before collecting Nichola who had driven down that morning with partner Phil and little B. Neil expertly navigated us to the parking area, some 25-minute drive from the camp site. Prior to kitting up we crossed the river and headed up stream, about a 3 min walk, to check out the entrance which lies at the base of a limestone outcrop on the opposite side. Here some of the river's volume flows into the low entrance which itself lies at riverbed level. Not a place you want to be in flood!!!! Neil commented that the level of water entering was the most he had ever seen it .....oh what joy, I thought to myself. Would we have another opportunity ? Probably not. The forecast was for the odd shower later in the day, and if we didn't do it now, then we might not get a chance again. Much moaning and groaning, mainly coming from Neil as he fought his way into his wetsuit. We got kitted up and made our way back to the entrance.

I guess my head was in the right place today, as I didn't hesitate, and taking the lead, I made my way through the low entrance crawl with the river's contents lapping around me. The rest of the team followed on behind.

The entrance passage snakes its way through the limestone, and the floor drops away in two places before arriving at a tight left bend, which leads you into a very narrow short section. It requires you to remove your helmet and get submerged in the water up to your neck, while being flat-out and fitting your torso into the undercut sides. This would be quite a challenge to a larger caver. All safely through this obstacle, we regrouped in a larger space and Neil took the lead as he had visited the cave on several occasions, whereas this would be the first ever trip in this system for the rest of us.

I must say at this point that having a survey is most helpful if you're not familiar with any system, indeed I had printed one off for our trip, but had left it in the van.....oops. Note to myself..... don't forget next time.....you muppet.

The first few hundred metres of streamway is fairly easy going, but one needs to be careful as the bed of the stream way is extremely slippery in places. Once through Tributary Passage the system changes, most noticeable by the huge banks of clastic fill reminding you of the effect glacial activity has had on systems. This system is a combination of vadose down trenching, phreatic tubes, bedding separation and breakaway, as evidenced at Junction Chamber, The Canal, and Canal Bypass. On our way through the system we ignored Canal Bypass on our left, and continued making our way towards the Canal. Sand Chamber stands at the head of The Canal, and it is here that we found the emergency dump and instructions on what to do if the entrance was flooded. Hopefully we wouldn't be needing to make use of it today. Dan forged on into The Canal, which was wide and low, stopping only when the water met the roof ! We had no option but to retreat back upstream. Entering the bypass we regained the Main Streamway.

There are several inlets and gour pool filled passages looping in and out of the Bypass and main streamway, and in one of these gour sections Neil decided to scatter some of Des's ashes. I could see by the amazing variety of formations, just why Little Neath was one of Des's favourites. Job done, we pushed on towards Junction Chamber, which in its character resembled the larger sections of Manchester Hole. We explored Genisis Gallery and the Old-World Series before making our return and heading out of this remarkable system.

We had spent four hours underground before exiting, and then dropping into Bridge Cave which connects to Little Neath via a long sump. The entrance is in a doline a few metres from the parking area and looks to be a muddy hole, but soon opens into cleaner passage beyond the scaffolded breakdown section. There were a few pretty formations but nothing very memorable, still two systems in one day.... Result !

Things had livened up from that morning back at the campsite, as it was now full. Probably because of the rock band performing in the pub beer garden. Heather had driven down during the day as had Paul and Finley. The evening was spent having a few drinks, playing ball games and generally having a pleasant time in good company. The next day the six of us explored part of Porth yr Ogof, while others went for a walk. The entrance, at 17 metres wide and 5 metres tall is impressive, and contains a massive log jam to the left, further in. The Maze is gained by taking a passage on the right side, beyond the entrance. This section is very popular with leader-led groups, and is a series of bedding planes interconnected with tubes and sluices. We worked our way around the log jam, regaining the river, which cuts its way between the beds before breaking out into a mini gorge after several hundred metres. On exiting we got changed out of our wet gear and went to have a look at the resurgence, before ending our weekend and making our way home. Another great caving weekend shared with great company.

**Steve Pearson Adams.**

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**A few thoughts concerning the CCPC 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 Meeting.**

**(In case you missed the email !)**

Perhaps there was further enlightened discussion after my early departure from the July Meeting (family leaving to return to U.S.A.), however, I was left puzzled by the support shown for an item in 'Any Other Business', concerning the frequency of Meetings.

It seems that some Members feel that a reduction to Meetings every other month would somehow increase the number of Members attending Meetings. I don't understand the logic; after all, if an individual chooses not to attend any of the twelve monthly Meetings, then why is it likely that they would make the effort to attend any of the proposed six alternate-monthly meetings.

Obviously, I am not meaning those Members who are unable to attend Meetings due to distance, or other factors, and several of those Members use the 'Zoom' option to enable them to keep in touch and make their own, very welcome, contributions.

In the recent past there was criticism of the time spent on 'business', rather than just socialising at Meetings. Initially we managed to get that down to about thirty minutes, and last night I got through everything on the Agenda in twenty minutes, leaving plenty of time for those present to be social. If you choose to attend no Meetings in the year (or hardly any), not even by using Zoom, then you are contributing nothing to the Club, but take advantage of the caving meets arranged by others. If you take that approach to membership, leaving only a few individuals to carry out the necessary roles, then you will quickly find there is no club left.

There was a further suggestion in 'Any Other Business', concerning any other suitable, alternative venues, for Club Meetings, and 'The Bleeding Wolf' was mentioned, however it seems that, although a room could be available, it cannot be booked, and availability will only be known on the actual day of each Meeting.

For both issues considered above, it also needs remembering that we advertise our Club Meetings, and their location in every issue of 'Descent', in the hope that we might attract potential new Members for the Club.

If you have read this far, you will have gathered that I am convinced that the current arrangement for Meetings is the most effective and viable, and hopefully other Members might be willing to attend more regularly and bring back some of the life and vitality that we have enjoyed over the past years.

**Steve Knox**

**CCPC Chairman / CCPC Newsletter Editor.**

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