

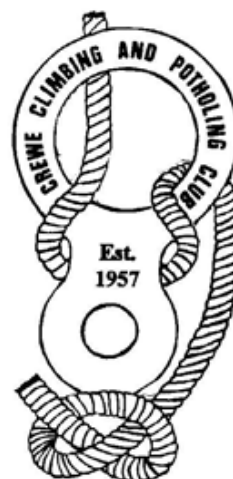


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 157. September - December 2024

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

Editor: Steve Knox

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Planned Club Meets, etc., from November to December 2024

Sun. 3 rd Nov.	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.	No-one attended due to other commitments.
Mon. 4 th Nov.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm..
Sat. 16 th Nov.	White Scar Cave, Ingleton, Yorkshire .	Unfortunately this trip had to be cancelled due to illness.
	Waterways Swallet, Blore, Staffordshire	Annual car park maintenance visit, and trip into swallet – no SRT.
Mon. 2 nd Dec.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs (?) at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
	Gautries Hole, Perryfoot, Derbyshire.	An under-rated cave system with muddy crawls and squeezes.
Sun. 29 th Dec.	Perhaps a good day for the Annual Christmas Walk ? Any suggestions ??	Dove & Manifold area ? - includes Ecton Mines.
Mon. 6 th Jan. 2025	CCPC Annual General Meeting, followed by the Monthly Meeting. (Available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
	Possibly there will be a Christmas meal arranged to follow the AGM.	

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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.

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

Latest Call-out: Friday/Saturday, 13th//14th September :-Search and recovery of two cavers in P8, following a fall by one. Both recovered safely. Brilliant work by the team !

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The Dark Side of Knotlow

18th August 2024

Gaz Mcshee

It's no lie, I have a great soft spot for Knotlow - it's tried to kill me, and has treated me to some of the best days underground that I've had, and it's only half an hour from home - what more could anyone want ?

I've been thinking for a very long time about the possibility of doing the coffin level round trip. I've tried before but the East level connection was lost, and the entrance was collapsed so it's remained a dream that I thought would never become a reality.

A couple of months ago I was sizing up 'The Bung' for a visit, (another bit of the Knotlow puzzle I've yet to man up for.) when it became clear that someone had dug out the East level entrance, and as I'm a nosey git in I went. It's a lovely level, much larger than any hand-picked level I've been in before, and very long, however towards the end it descends into a mucky crawl and a tight passage through a collapsing rift to the Crimbo Pipe Inlet and the passage down to the Crimbo Pipe. On that occasion the Pipe was very wet and having read the (very to the point) warnings, I chose to leave, back the way I came, and live to fight another day.

Fast forward a couple of months, and on Saturday morning, at 7am, I was dropping down the climbing shaft and into Pearl Chamber then heading for Chain Passage to drop into Waterfall Chamber, for a crack at the round trip.



The coffin level to Fourways is always long and always uncomfortable but it's a beautiful level and despite the restriction it doesn't take that long to get through. Following the water from Fourways downstream through more coffin levels and old man workings, you arrive at Rift Chamber, a dark and miserable place that marks the junction with the out flow of Crimbo Pipe, and the start of Crimbo Swallow.

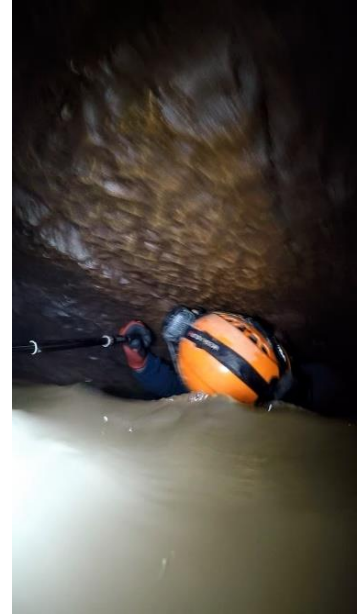
Now the round trip was my aim, and the pipe was dry - no water was flowing - and the way on lay before me, but there was a niggle, the Swallow had an air space ! I'm a nosey guy and there was a chance that I could kill two birds with one stone and take a look into the bit of Knotlow I'd never even contemplated visiting, - the bit that had taken a life, and the bit that is only possible when the water levels are well down.



Under the lip I slid, feet first so that the flow of water would not flood over my face, and slowly slid into the most miserable bit of cave I've ever been into. The floor is made of rocks so you can't slide easily, and the roof is a phreatic tube, just above your face. Unlike most stream passages there is no noise from the passing water, it may as well be still. The very medium that can kill you makes no mention of its intentions, so you slide down further into the very dark and lonely depths of the Derbyshire countryside, still bathed

in sunshine a very long way above. At this point my daughter, the only person who knew I was here, did not yet know I was here, as it was a long time before she would get up and see my call out message. I made it to Heifer Rift eventually and looked in awe at the way on. The water here made a noise as the gradient increased, but the airspace decreased, and my gonads got washed away with what was left of the heat in my body. Nope, that was me done, so back up the phreatic I went, now with the water backing up ! Headfirst, push by push, making slow progress, and stupidly trying to film this miserable place. It would not take much more water to make this passage deadly, and after what felt like forever, but in reality was about twenty-five metres, I popped out at the lip of the swallow.

[Phew, Made It Out !!! - Ed.]



The rule here is definitely if you are sucking the roof on the way in, then make sure your next of kin are informed of your funeral arrangements. This is a place I have no wish to go back to.

I'm not going to lie, my detour had left me cold and shaken, but I'd come for the round trip so into the pipe I went. The pipe is tight ! - body sized, but every now and again opening up into a chamber that allows you to sit up. Rocks on the floor make for hard going, especially in the tight bits, and you have to move some just to progress. Bear in mind that normally this passage would have water flowing and as you fill the tight bits it will start to fill up in front of you! At a point where the passage ahead got very tight I gave up filming. Movement was way too restricted and cold, and tiredness, was setting in.



The long pipe led to the start of the climb up to the inlet. Again, if water is in the pipe then you will drown before you have managed to back out, and at the end of this tube there is the flip to stand up, whilst water is raining down on you from above, not a nice prospect. The rule here is very definitely, if there is water in the pipe, don't go in the pipe !



[This photograph intrigued me. I know of a few 'Miner's inscriptions', but this one is new to me. It is particularly interesting as it appears to include the capital I, with a cross-bar at half height, and generally believed to be significant. There is one in Wharf Mine Cartgate and I believe there is one in J.H. Mine ? – Ed.]

Once up the climb, the way on isn't much better, it's just not in water but is in wet mud, and as you crawl through, you release all the gas trapped within. Now for a change, the air in there was perfect, but in the absence of CO2

the methane from the mud took its place. The passage out towards the East level is another tight affair so as you release the gas you need to move quickly to avoid any effects it might bring. The crux in here is a huge hanging block trapped in the passage roof apparently held in by nothing and as you pass below as much as you try you cannot help but touch it - to be fair, just don't touch anything in this passage, it's for the best !



Fortunately once the gravestone is past, you reach the bend that marks the start of the East Level, although initially this is just as toxic as the passage you have just got out of, but this soon changes to one of the best coffin levels in the Peak, and the way out. Incidentally the level here shows signs of blasting but is also hand-picked, so is the perception of hand picking always true and were some of the levels blasted and dressed ? A historical conundrum for you all to contemplate over cookies and tea.

Out safe, I shivered my way back to Chain Passage to retrieve the rope, but first I had to go in unprotected to recover the rope with my gear attached to the end, so that I could gear up to de-rig the rope, as the anchor for the pitch is out in the shaft above the hole. Not a place you want to be without being clipped in ! Soon enough I was back out at the top of the climbing shaft, and into the warmth, whilst receiving celebrity treatment from a group of ramblers who were just walking past as I flung the lid open. A great trip that one, although it's probably the nastiest bits of cave I've ever done, and definitely, as the book says, 'Dangerous in Wet Weather'.

Some pictures are here, up till the point I gave up filming. The picture of East level (on the left) is from my earlier exploratory trip (22/04/2024).

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/ANr2b9L8caera9yc9>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/wwSzCViMypXwmZD58>

Gaz Mcshee

More about Knotlow – some long-lost history :

Steve Knox

John Preston added: 'I did the same trip in the early **1970s** with Jeff Fox, an ex CCPC member. Lying on my back with water backing up and running over my shoulders in Crimbo Pipe. Still have Nightmares!!! Good to see it's still open. I think Knotlow still has some new stuff to reveal. The Bung is well worth it.

Nigel Cooper asked:

Do I remember rightly that there used to be an open climbing shaft in the field above Heifer Rift ?

Steve Knox (adapted from an account in one of my old log-books – imperial measurements !)

Back in the dimly remembered past (when dinosaurs roamed across the Peak District), - actually **27th July 1974**, John Preston and I spent some time examining minor shafts and hollows in the Knotlow fields, around Four-ways Shaft. One particular small, fenced off shaft top caught our attention – the opening was covered by a couple of logs, and some rusty tin sheets, but underneath the collar of the shaft, and the ginging were in perfect condition.

After rigging a belay to a couple of the wobbly fence posts, we fed fifty feet of ladder into the shaft, and I started to descend, being careful not to disturb the ginging – built with protruding 'climbing stones'. About twelve feet down, the shaft was into solid rock, although it had enlarged and had the appearance of a natural rift with fluted walls. At about thirty feet down it was possible to get off the ladder onto a rubble covered floor with a couple of holes through it, and the remainder of our ladder – clearly too short, piled up there ! At the surface, John added our two remaining ladders, which I fed through the largest hole, and it was only after continuing my descent that I discovered that the 'floor', was actually a platform of wooden planks, topped and disguised by a thin layer of debris. I went on down the ladder, passing: a stack of 'deads' at one side, resting on decaying wooden stemples. At 44 feet down the rift ended, where it intersected a bedding plane, about 18 inches high, and about ten feet wide. At 55 feet down, the shaft, reduced from about 4' by 3', to 4' by 2' and appeared to have been hand-picked, upwards. There was a second bedding plane, but it was only a couple of inches high, and there were several pockets of impressive Dog-tooth Spar crystals.

Finally, I reached the bottom, where our excess ladder rested on a rubble surface where bones could be seen sticking out from between the rocks. After marking the ladder to show the depth, I made my way back up the shaft to the platform, and on to daylight, then John took his turn going down. It wasn't a place to hang around, and we were both glad when we were back on the surface. The 'used' length

of ladder revealed that the shaft was almost exactly one hundred feet ! John and I descended the shaft again and took accurate measurements in order to produce the survey.

The surface survey showed that this shaft was directly over the location of 'Heifer Rift', as marked on the Knotlow Mine survey (Eldon P.C.). It appeared that we had found the rest of the Heifer !

A short while later, supported by John Preston, I climbed up into Heifer Rift from Crimbo Swallow, to a vertical built-wall of deads. At the top there was a hand-picked shaft of about 25 feet, leading upwards to a short, horizontal cross-cut, ending at a blockage of rubble which had clearly come down a shaft – hidden by the debris. In amongst the rocks were pieces of bone – I assume these were the Heifer bones, - hence the name given to the rift.

In an attempt to work out the depth of rubble at the bottom of the shaft, Ralph Johnson and I carried out some basic surveying of fixed points in relation to the shaft collar, but I find it hard to make sense of our measurements and handwritten notes now !

- a) Height of 'Four Ways Shaft top (Crimbo Hollow Engine Shaft) at surface: 923' (feet) – Eldon Survey 1968-1979.
- b) Height of Heifer Rift Shaft top at surface - by use of 'dumpy level' from a): about 911' (feet).
- c) Depth of Heifer Rift shaft from surface (b) down to rubble blockage: 100' (feet).
- d) Height of top of rubble blockage: approximately 811' (feet).
- e) Approximate height of Heifer Rift underground cross-cut at the rubble blockage: 804' (feet) – based on Eldon Survey 1968-1979.
- f) **Estimated rubble blockage depth: (7' feet).**

Four Ways shaft top to Heifer Rift shaft top: 114 metres @53.5 degrees.

Vertical difference – Four ways Shaft top to Heifer Rift Cross-cut - approximately: 119' (feet).

It wouldn't have taken a great deal of effort to open the Heifer Rift shaft, and to 'cap' the shaft top, but for some reason we were distracted, and the next time I visited the site, on **30th January 1997**, the fence had gone, and the shaft had been covered, or filled in (!) by the farmer, and only a patch of disturbed ground showed the location.

Steve Knox

Incidentally, while Ralph and I were carrying out our Heifer Rift surface survey in **1974**, we got into conversation with an elderly farmer (from Knotlow Farm) who wandered across to see what we were up to – all very friendly, and quite interested in the shafts! He said that, at one time (in the past) his farm used to draw water up the **Fourways Shaft (Crimbo Hollow)**, 175' (feet) deep, 53 metres - using a chain and buckets arrangement, until it became too shallow – presumably due to rubble falling down the shaft. Instead, they started drawing water up the nearby **Knotlow Farm Engine Shaft**, just at the edge of the nearby copse of mature trees – this is easy to see as the ground is built up with rubble at one side (east) to support the shaft collar, and the whole top is covered with concrete – the farmer believed this was done in about 1917. [More about this shaft cap, below.]

'Caves of The Peak District' – Barker & Beck – 2010, page236, records 'a tub, rag-and-chain pump was recovered' from the **Chapel Dale Engine Shaft** in Knotlow Mine – commonly referred to as 'the 210', being 210' (feet) deep, 64 metres.

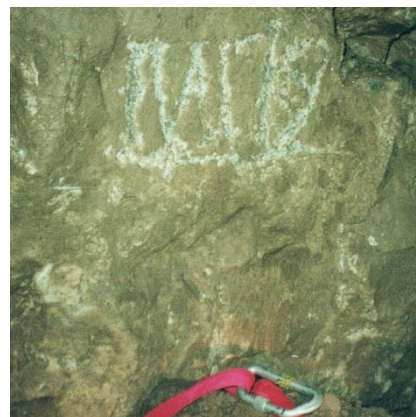
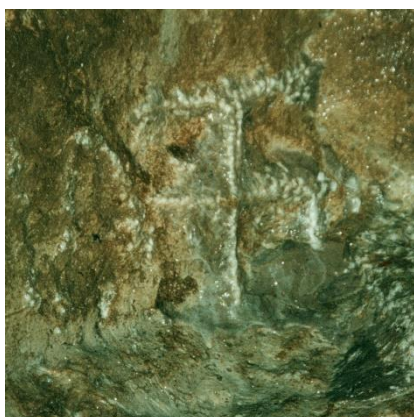
Just to the west, in the same copse, is another, much smaller shaft top, probably a climbing shaft, which the farmer claimed used to be about 40' (feet) deep, but has been used for the disposal of farm refuse. My own incomplete notes record this as being 66' (feet) to a blockage of domestic rubbish. **Ed.**

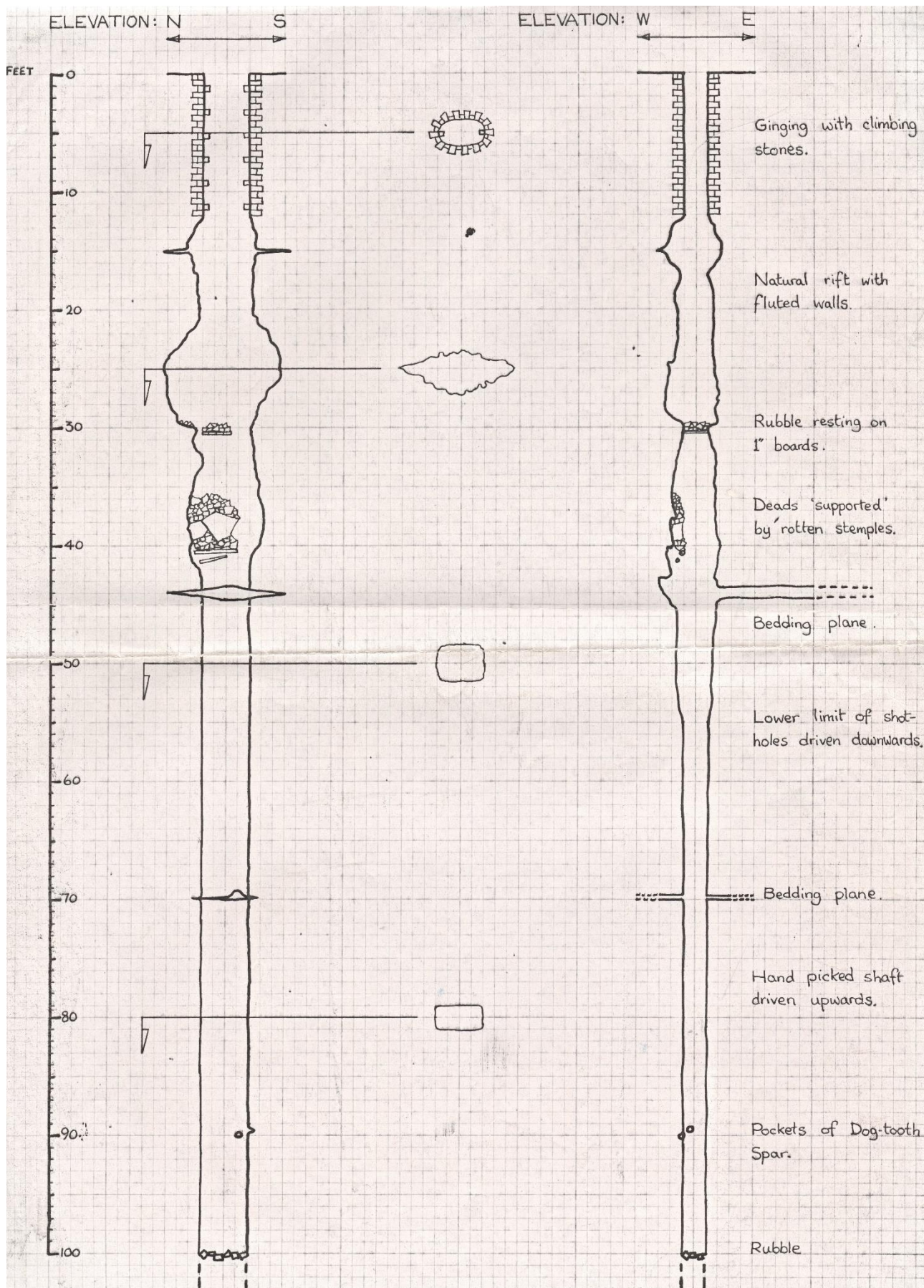
More Miners' Inscriptions:

These two examples can be found (with difficulty) near each other, and quite high up on the wall at the west end of the Wharf Mine Cartgate, close to the start of the 'bottomless' hand-picked coffin level in the roof. I haven't seen them recorded elsewhere, but will be glad to hear further information from anyone.

Photos: 4th March 2000

Ed.





GRID. REF SK 14406759

SURVEY: C. KNOX. J. PRESTON. 27.7.74.

DRAWN BY: C. KNOX.

More Knotlow Background:

Later research revealed that John Robey had opened and descended this shaft in an attempt to locate Crimbo Sough and the Crimbo Hollow Swallow, and had written about it in 1963, in the Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Volume 2, No. 1, Page 56: 'The Mines North-West of Monyash, Part 3. Also, on 21st June 1970, Clive Westlake and Steve Hoyle (Eldon P.C.), on a trip round the lower levels of Knotlow, discovered a crawl off to the left near Crimbo Swallow, which led into a rift. They climbed the rift and found a 29' hand-picked shaft leading upwards to a 4' high coffin level which ended in a choke of rocks and bones. Bones removed on a later surveying trip were identified as belonging to a heifer, hence the name Heifer Rift, and survey data placed the blockage directly below John Robey's shaft. (See: Eldon Pothole Club Journal, Volume 7, No. 3, 1970, Pages 50 – 52).

Steve Knox – Editor.

Looking through my records I found an article, undated, from **Keyhole Caving Club**. Apparently their Members started a dig in the area of Heifer Rift (underground), just opposite the climb up the stacked 'deads' wall, which leads to the 29' shaft (up). Their dig was a natural tube in the roof, blocked by mud and boulders. They gave their dig the rather peculiar name of '*Rocko Wa Jenga O Shemars*', but I have no idea what that is all about. I have no information about the outcome of their dig, and cannot locate Keyhole Caving Club on the internet – does the club still exist ?

Steve Knox – Editor.

Mark Lovatt :

A couple of thoughts/memories which might stimulate some discussion:-

1) Charles Henry Millington (the last independent lead miner in Monyash) claimed that it was possible to walk underground from Hillocks Mine to Cascade Cavern. I know several people who have seriously searched both ends of this alleged route to no avail; there is, however, a line of shafts (including one in a private garden facing Horse Lane), which seem to indicate that such a route may exist.

[If it's the house I'm thinking of, there are two shaft mounds in that garden, and the owner's driveway has to make an 'S' shape to go round them – I doubt they would be willing to for a dig there. Ed.]

2) I remember there being at least two open shafts in Crimbo Hollow (same field as Four Ways Shaft). These suddenly 'disappeared' around 1980, making me suspect that they were blocked off and ploughed over (rather than filled). No doubt they will re-appear one day. I have a memory of Steve Knox descending and surveying them.

3) One Xmas, late '80s I went down the Chapel Dale shaft, but had to return up the rope as the chamber was almost completely full of water (almost up to Meccano Passage!) I have never seen this happen before or since.

Gaz Mcshee:

There has to be more to the place, the surface remains far outweigh the scale of the underground workings. There are a few places I want to have a look at myself but due to the risk of collapse I haven't given them a go yet, but I've poked my head into all the side passages I've found in the upper series.

Alan Brentnall:

Brilliant trip report - well written and well-illustrated. I'd like to say that you "brought it all back" for me, but I never made it as far as anything beginning with **Crimbo**, and I'm pretty sure that I never will. Knotlow Cavern was my first ever Derbyshire trip, back in the 80s when I still lived and caved exclusively in Yorkshire, and I've seen it in many different guises since. I remember once descending Wharf Climbing Shaft to be confronted by a huge lake directly below the Wharf Engine shaft. Never ever saw that again, but friends in Orpheus (about the same time) reported finding the Waterfall Pitch flooded right to the top.

As John says, there's more to find at Knotlow, and I know that some of the old records report connections between Knotlow and Cascade Cavern at the head of Lathkilldale. Certainly makes you think!

[See Mark Lovatt's comment, above. Ed.]

Steve Knox:

The mentions (above) of floods in Knotlow / Hillocks, reminded me of a simple trip down the oil-drum route in Hillocks. At the bottom of the second pitch, where you just duck under a rock arch then walk along the cart-gate to the main chamber, there was a lake which almost closed off the arch. Lowering yourself into the water and peering ahead through the arch, just revealed an unbroken water surface stretching away in the darkness. – Incidentally, there had been little rain in the preceding week, so where did all the water come from, and where did it go ?

Extra News:

DOW CAVE 27th Oct. 2024, **Alan Brentnall wrote:**

'I recently bought the 2nd edition of John Cordingley and David Haigh's excellent book "Adventures Underground", and, before shelling out all the money, I was reading other people's thoughts on how much extra had been added to the book since the original. And the general opinion was that it certainly is worth getting, even if you already have the 1st edition - and I can vouch for that, having now spent the brass and started to read the book!

But in amongst all the comments and reviews, a wee throwaway statement from John Cordingley, the man himself, caught my eye. Apparently, at some point in the not-too-distant past, a book about a single Wharfedale cave, written by Steve and Patrick Warren, had been published. A whole book about a cave which for (maybe) a decade of my youth became my favourite underground venue! I couldn't believe it! For those who have never visited Dow Cave, I would recommend a trip at your earliest convenience. It's, basically, a river cave; the fact that the river in question, Caseker Gill, is but a small tributary of the mighty Wharfe, doesn't matter because the distance travelled underground by the stream covers almost every feature and obstacle you would expect in any major system. Everything from amazing formations to waterfalls, to complex boulder chokes and meandering river passages - even a bit of t'Owd Man - and, to cap it all, one of its not-very-imposing-looking side passages has the audacity to cut right through a mile or so of the mountain which overlooks Kettlewell, Great Whernside, to form a caveable link with Providence Pot: Dowbergill Passage, a major "tick" in any self-respecting caver's checklist.

Alas, checking the link, I found that Inglesport has sold out of all the Dow Cave books. I've registered with Inglesport to get a notification if it ever gets back on their shelves, but I'm not holding out much hope. While searching the web for a possible alternative supplier, I came across [MudInMyHair](#) which must contain much of what is in the Dow book, and a whole lot more, including loads of fascinating stuff about Wharfedale, and details of the epic but inconsequential Malham Tarn dig, in search of the master cave at the back of the cove.

I've attached an extract from the website which contains most of the topos and surveys from the Dow book, and a more detailed diagram of Dowbergill Passage than I've ever seen previously - in fact there's an amazingly large amount of cave (and mine) which I never managed to see in all my youthful exploration of the place. I can't wait to get back there. Cheers, Alan'

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To anybody having difficulties opening the attachment:

'Sorry about that - I tried to open the attachment on my copy of the email (in my "sent" folder) and it worked fine, but the attachment is a print of a page from the website and, largely because of the photos and surveys, it's over 10Mb in size, which may well be the problem, depending on your PC set-up, and the size of your memory and cache etc. But, not to worry, because all you need to do is click on the link to [MudInMyHair](#) and scroll down to "Book of Dow: surveys" on the home page (left column) - that's the page the attachment was printed from. For those keen on finding their way through from Provi to Dow, slightly lower on the list is another internal link to "Dowber Gill Guide" which has some very useful words to go with the topos for the Dowbergill Passage route.

And there's loads more - it's a really useful site. I'm still reading bits of it. Cheers, Alan'

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13th Nov. 2024, Alan Brentnall wrote:

As I said in my original email on this topic, when I found that the book had sold out, I was able to register for a notification - in case more copies were sourced - and, last week, I received word that Inglesport have the book in stock once again. Mine arrived yesterday and, although I believe that the [MudInMyHair](#) website contains just about all the necessary information, the book is really well put together, with plenty to read, and stacks of photographs and surveys. Cheers, Alan

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Derbyshire Explorers Forum 2025 - Jenny Drake wrote:

This is being run again by the Eldon, after the successful one last year, but as an all-day event, rather than just an evening. Same location, the Eyam Mechanics Institute. £5, pre-booked, which includes food. Any profit to DCRO. Details and how to book here.

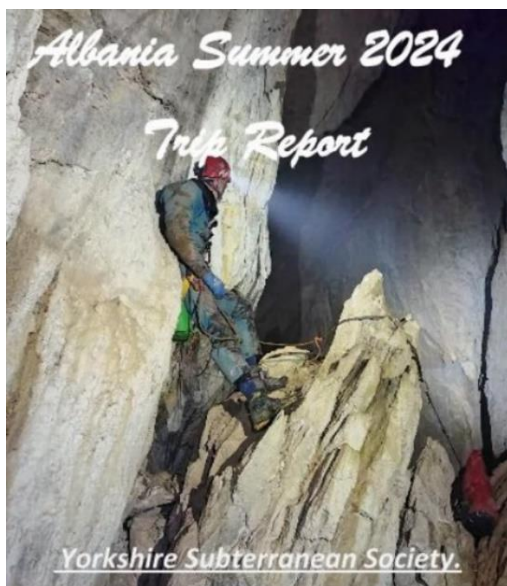
<<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?threads/def-derbyshire-explorers-forum-01-02-25.32559/>>

Saturday 1st February '25. Can we keep this day clear in the meets list? Pete Dell, Grace and I were there from Crewe last year. Well recommended. See my article in newsletter 149

<<https://www.ccpc.org.uk/newsletters/CCPCNewsletter149.pdf>> Jenny

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Ade Pedley kindly sent a complete copy of the following report as an email attachment:



Adrian Pedley: Albania Summer 2024-Trip Report.pdf
10.5 MB

"I've been meaning to send the trip report for this year's trip to Albania for additional reading, as it included three CCPC members in the team:-

Ade Pedley, Nicola Wellings, & Gareth Williams.

I am planning another trip out there next June for maybe 3 weeks if anyone is interested, you wouldn't need to sign up for the whole three weeks if that's too long, but the trip would be cave exploration and walking, and maybe drinking a few beers. Feel free to contact me if interested. **Ade"**

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Despite struggling, I have been unable to add the 31-page report to this Newsletter !! It is a fascinating, and impressive account of serious caving, much of it vertical, in a remote region of Albania (although, fortunately there seem to have been a couple of local bars within walking distance.) **Ed.**

Knotlow Farm Engine Shaft: This is the shaft (mentioned above on Page 5 – 'More about Knotlow') which is located just at the edge of the copse of mature trees a short distance west of Fourways Shaft top. As mentioned above, the ground is built up with rubble at one side (the east side, towards the Fourways cap)) to support the shaft collar, and the whole top is covered with concrete (from about 1917).

On 23rd December 1998, John Preston and I were out walking round the various Knotlow mine features, and noticed that part of the rubble wall, supporting the concrete cap, had collapsed, leaving an open hole.



Although too small to fully enter, we could easily see that the shaft top was just inside, and was clear of debris.

A few contortions later and I could get my head far enough inside to see down into the shaft, which was as large as the Chapel Dale Engine Shaft (the 210') further back up the hill, and was lined with superb masonry. There was an obvious wide ledge, or platform, about 5 or 6 feet down, with a layer of dirt and gravel on it, and from far below we could hear the sound of water pouring into the shaft. The shaft must be about the same depth as Fourways (175 feet), and can be approached from below, along the north-west passage from the base of Fourways, although the last section was deep water, and was clogged with tree branches the last time I tried to get close enough to look up. The water entering the shaft seems to be about halfway up/down, and could be coming from the climbing shaft, very close by. We took a few photographs, then carefully closed up the hole with stone from nearby, and left it safe.



In more recent years I have been told of a farm tanker parked on the track near the climbing shaft which 'appeared' to be discharging liquid. **Ed.**

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That's enough for this issue. I hope you found something of interest. Keep caving, and keep safe !

Best wishes.

The Editor.