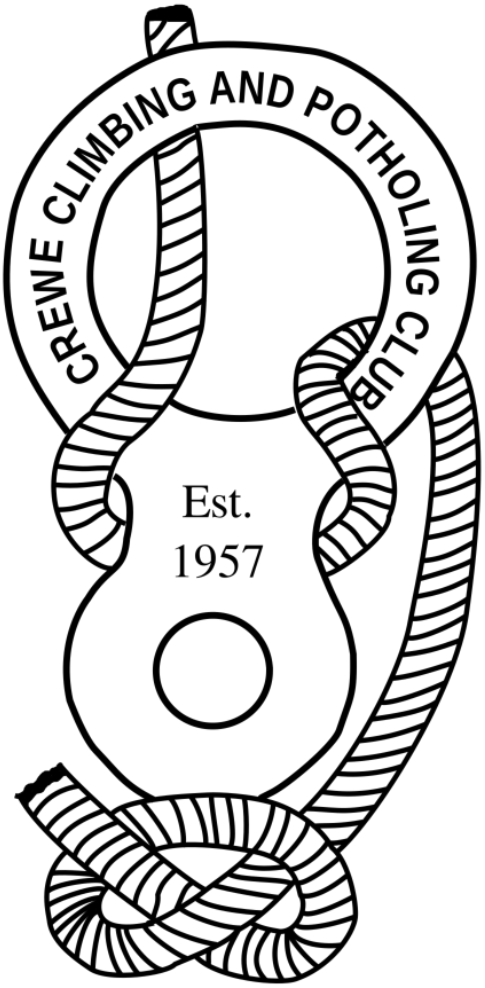
Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club
Newsletter 160

November 23, 2026



Colin (Steve) Knox July 12th 1949 to November 13th 2026

Steve Knox, by Alan Brentnall

Looking back at my twenty-odd-years-worth of caving with Crewe, Steve Knox was always a good friend, especially when you needed one! And, underground, he was likewise steady and reliable.

Of course, especially in the earlier days, I met him mostly on my exploits with Ralph Johnson; Ralph and Steve always seeming to come as a pair. Away from the weekend trips, we would do all sorts of odd jobs, sometimes with a wider bunch (AKA the Coffin Dodgers) and occasionally just the three of us. Much of it was repair work when some piece of fixed gear had been reported by a caver as malfunctioning – Ralph would get the call via DCA and we'd go and fix it.

Steve was quite a work horse, and often came up with some quite novel solutions. But you could always rely on him.

Steve was also very knowledgeable. I remember one of the times when he helped me with the annual East Cheshire scout caving trip, when we were sitting outside Holme Bank Chert Mine, and Steve gave chapter and verse to a group of fascinated scouts about the geology and uses of chert and the whole history of chert mining around Bradwell, including its importance to the Pottery industry nearer Steve's home.

He was also a "mine" of information about underground venues in the Peak, often pointing out things which the rest of us hadn't noticed – for instance the huge coral fossil in the Peak main streamway, or the sneaky route which by-passes both the old lower ladder pitch and the parallel SRT pitch in Hillocks, a route which I wrote up in an earlier CCPC newsletter as the"Knox-Nixon" by-pass.

One memorable example of Steve's tenacity which sticks in my mind was a time when Ralph had sent a small group of us (Christine Wilson, Leon Zablocki and me) up to Rowter Farm to descend James Hall Over Engine Mine in order to clear the stones from the lower of the two dams half way down the Leviathan pitch.

When we got to the dam we decided that one of us should go down and meet Steve and Ralph, who were coming in on the boat, to make sure that they didn't enter the chamber while there was a danger of falling rocks from our work. I got the short straw and duly descended the final section of Leviathan and the ladders through the Boulder Piles to find the stream was seriously in spate.

I fought my way down, past the whirlpool to the gate which was still closed. The amount of water was so bad that I decided that Steve and Ralph had abandoned their trip and that the gate was still locked, so I struggled back through the deluge and waited at the top of the ladders until Leon and Christine had finished chucking buckets of rocks down. Leon was the first to abseil and I shouted up to him, telling him about the situation. Getting the message, Leon did a change-over and went back up the pitch, and we all exited out through JH and drove down to Speedwell.

Only to find that Steve and Ralph had managed to get to the gate, but the water in the stream was too much – and, if I'd only tried the gate, I'd have found that they'd left it unlocked for us. I should have known better!!

Farewell Steve – you'll certainly be missed, and you've left some happy memories.

My Reminiscences, by Jenny Drake

A few of my memories of Steve. He joined the club in the 1960s, but I only knew him from when I joined in 2002.

In the Alps in 2007, when I was feeling rather poorly one day, Steve walked with me down the length of the Otemma glacier, through the moraine and down into the valley. Keeping me company and encouraging me to keep going.

In 2022, Steve was with us on a trip in Giant's Hole. His fascinating explanation of how the entrance series used to look, before the failed attempted conversion to a show cave, engrossed us so much we forgot we were getting close to our call out time. We arrived back at the parking area just as several of the group's DCRO SARCALL call out texts arrived on our 'phones. Including Steve's! A quick 'phone call to the DCRO duty controller canceled what would have been an embarrassing call out! Speaking of DCRO, Steve was an active member for many years. Always ready to come out for training and for shouts. When advancing age precluded being at the sharp end underground, Steve switched to surface support roles, handling radio comms, or logging kit in and out.

My last meetings with Steve were a couple of days in the Spring of 2026, which we spent on my narrowboat, going through the Harecastle Tunnel, near where Steve grew up and along the Caldon Canal, to the east of Stoke. Steve managed to fall into the canal while setting up a lock and was soaked from the waist down, till Annie arrived by car to collect him. As usual with Steve, he took it all in good humour and his only concern was that he had dropped the windlass!

Farewell Steve. A true gentleman and always wonderful company. You will be missed.

From Heather Simpson

Steve's dedication to the club was obvious for all to see and he was willing to fight the hardest to ensure that it continued.

Living so far away, the regular newsletters that he produced kept me in the loop. During the periods that I have been unable to come caving, it would have been easy to drift away without that regular reminder of my underground friends.

In my early days with Crewe, and with my friend Theo, Steve was the calm voice of encouragement, supportive and managing to share his love of caving without actually saying a lot. At that time, he was the one that quietly hung back to keep an eye on the newbies. Until we heard how ill he was, I was still hoping that he would be on some of the gentler trips.

The Club's 70th Anniversary

Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club was started in 1957 by a group of friends at school in the town. We are still going, still potholing and occasionally climbing and 2027 is our Platinum Jubilee! To celebrate, we have some things planned.

Anniversary Weekend

We are planning a weekend event for members, present and past, plus their families, to meet up for reminiscing, walking, caving and whatever takes our fancy. We are planning to book the Rotary Centre in Castleton, which has bunkhouse accommodation, camping and meeting rooms. The date has not been decided yet, but several open options are being considered.

70th Polo Shirt

We held a competition to design a 70th anniversary polo shirt for the club. The winning design will be available to order and has a small CCPC logo on the front, plus a larger one and the significance of 2027 on the back. The next step will be to get the design to the manufacturer and see what their recommendations are and await their quote.

Associazione Culturale Speleologica Speleo Foto Contest

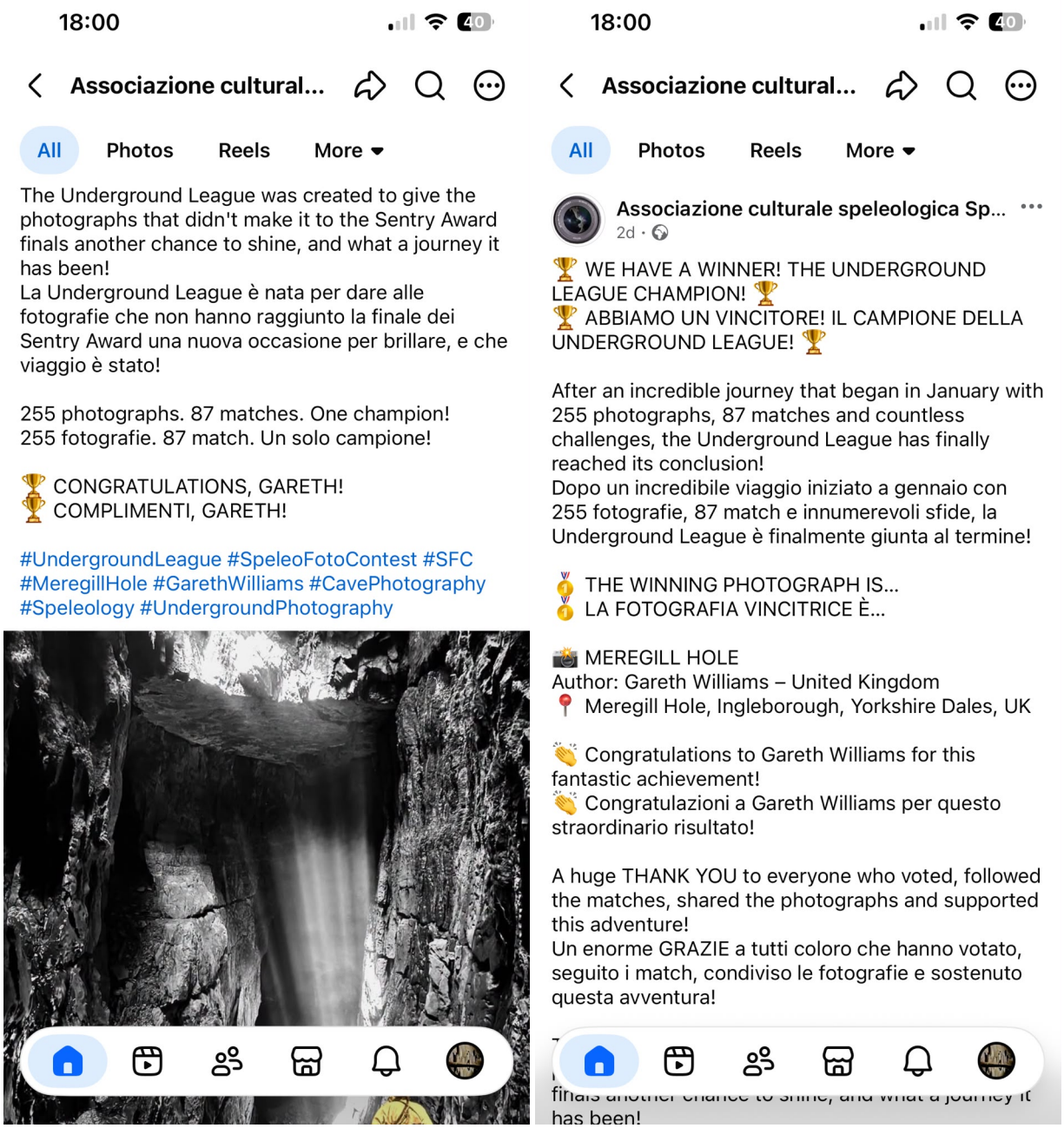
Congratulations to Gareth Williams for winning the Underground League competition. You can see Gareth's winning photo on the back page. (ed)

Back in January 2026, I entered the worldwide cave photography competition competing alongside 255 other photographers and their amazing work from around the globe. After an incredible 86 voting matches, I'm absolutely blown away to say that my photograph reached the finals and has now WON the worldwide competition!

The photograph was taken in 2023 at the base of the first pitch (The Mere) in Meregill Hole, Ingleborough. More details at

https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1K44iUwEgj/.

Gareth Williams



Merlin's Mine

The drought conditions in the summer of 2026, aside from turning the Peak District above ground from green to yellow, allowed non diving cavers access to some places more usually inaccessible to them.

Gaz McShee and Rob Nevitt reached sump eight in Merlin's Mine in July. This is the other end of Shag's Sump in Carlswark Cavern.



Rob Nevitt, in one of the (mostly) dried out sumps in Merlin's Mine. The dive line can be seen to the right. Photo by Gaz McShee.



Gaz, roof sniffing as he approaches Shag's Sump in Merlin's Mine. Photo by Gaz McShee

Caving on Skye. High Pasture Cave, by Alan Brentnall

See Newsletter 158 for Alan's first trip too, but not down this cave.

Last Thursday (26th October) I drove across to Skye and stayed overnight at the bunkhouse in Torrin so that I could meet up with three other GSG members for a trip into High

Pasture Cave. This is a cave I've been wanting to do since I moved up here, but my only previous attempt was thwarted by high water in the burns all the time I was there. No such problems last Friday, and I was very impressed by the cave itself. It's not a big trip by any means but it is very well decorated (far better than I had expected) and quite sporting. If you're ever up on Skye and have half a day spare, I can really recommend this one. For a taste of what it's like, there's a short video of a trip into High Pasture made by the Freems at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAU9yNWaGX0 and a description at https://registry.gsg.org.uk/sr/sitedetails.php?id=267 - and, if you want a more accurate gridref just drop me a DM.

Planned Club Trips from August to December 2026

August

Saturday 29th. Lathkill Cave.

An extra trip, taking advantage of the drought to visit some of the normally flooded parts. The team went a long way, but are unsure exactly where they got too!

September

Saturday 5th. Boggarts Roaring Hole

No one was able to come on this trip, due to holiday and expedition commitments, so we hoped to do it later in the year.

Sunday 20th. Simpsons/Swinsto

We had no one able to come out to play for this trip.

October

Saturday 10th. Eldon Hole

Four of us descended by the South Gully route to the Main Chamber and explored the dig in the chamber floor. The pull up ascent into Miller's Chamber was unavailable, as the fixed rope anchors up Damocles Rift were being worked on by DCA volunteers.

Sunday 25th. Canceled

A planned trip to either Boggarts Roaring Holes, or North by North End Pot, in the Dales was canceled, due to back to back named storms Austen and Boelo.

November

Sunday 8th. Waterways Swallet

Near Blore, Staffordshire. We did our annual caver's car park maintenance session, including much appreciated help from the Griffiths family, then six of us descended the cave to the sumps.



Back on the surface, after descending Waterways Swallet. You can tell it is Staffordshire and not Derbyshire, by the lack of mud! Photo by Steve PA.

Saturday 21st. Peak Cavern

We had nine members and guests underground for this trip. Six went on a round trip, along with two cavers from Cambridge. Congratulations to those who did Lake Sump for their first time. Three went up the right hand route in Victoria Aven. We followed up our trips with variously, a visit to the Castleton Chippy, spending money with Tony Seddon of Starless River and drinks at The Castle, before making our various ways home.

December

Christmas Bring & Share

Where is to be decided. Cumberland/Wapping Mine has been suggested.

Post Christmas Walk

Walk off the mince pies and sherry!

2027 Meets List

Our Meets Secretary is putting together the list for next year. If you have any suggestions, or trips you desperately want on, then get in touch with Nic.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The club's AGM is on Monday 4th January at 8:30pm. Please attend, either in person, or on line, if you possibly can. It is where we elect club officers, decide on subs and other important stuff to keep the club going. Let the secretary know as soon as possible of anything you want on the agenda.

Contact

Our club web site is www.ccpc.org.uk. The club in general and the newsletter editor in particular, can be contacted on CreweCPC@protonmail.com. We are on Facebook at `https://www.facebook.com/groups/1155698451793939`.

Editor's Bit

Steve Knox was editor for Newsletters 115, in September 2018 to number 159, published a few months before his death, in August 2026. He kept the Newsletter going with regular editions. As is seemingly usual with all volunteer publications, his big problem was persuading people to write stuff. It would be nice to keep producing the Newsletter. If you have anything you'd like in the next, or subsequent editions, no matter how short, don't be shy. Get in touch. If you think it isn't big, or important enough, I can assure you that it is. A trip report from Devonshire Cavern has just as much significance for the Newsletter as an epic dig breakthrough, or an expedition to foreign climes. If writing isn't your thing, you can work with the editor to put something together between you. If you'd like to take over as editor for future editions, again, get in touch.

This is a great club and it is nice to be able to share what we do with others. The newsletter acts as a more permanent record, when ephemeral emails and WhatsApp messages have disappeared into the electronic æther. We have an archive going back decades, to the 1970s, which is available to all on the club web site. They are a great resource for us and the wider caving community on all sorts of obscure and not so obscure sites around the Peaks and beyond. It would be nice to carry on adding to this store of information.

Jenny Drake

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This newsletter was produced in LyX, as an experiment.

Meregill Hole. Gareth Williams. 2023



Gareth's winning entry in the Associazione Culturale Speleologica Speleo Foto Underground League Contest 2026.