

C.C.P.C.

Newsletter.

July. '98

No. 58.



Forthcoming Meets.

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|---|-----------------------|
| 11th. July: D.C.R.O. Stomp at Bull i th' Thorn, with camping available. | |
| 18th. July: Otter Hole - limited to 5. | |
| 19th. July: Dan-yr-Ogof - leader Liam Keeley. | |
| 25 July- Lost Johns. Street collection. Buxton | |
| 1 Aug. White Scar. | |
| 15 Aug. Penygghent. | |
| 23 Aug. OFD | |
| 29/30 Aug GB-Aug-Longwood. Street collection Castleton | |
| 12 Sept Lancaster. | |
| 20 Sept. Little Neath. | |
| 26/27 Sept. Prov-Dow, Sell Gill. | 10 Oct. GG_Dis. |
| 8 Nov. Pant Mawr. | 21 Nov. Notts Pot. |
| 5 Nov. Tatham Wife. | 13 Nov. Darren Cilau. |

Have you got a bent one?

John Martin did haveand Sharon still has!! On a recent trip to Link Pot John Martins Croll became detached from the rope while climbing the tight entrance pitch. On examination the safety catch was seen to be bent. This probably occurred while descending the tight rift causing it to protrude enough to release allowing the cam to open as John struggled to ascend. What made matters worse is that he could not clip back onto the rope because of the restricted nature of the pitch. This was solved by passing a second rope down the pitch. Back on the surface John applied only moderate pressure to the catch and it snapped!! Our equipment expert (P.Ton.) contacted Lyon Equipment and Petzl who were most helpful stating that they were aware of this rare problem and new models of Croll (and jammers) now have a plastic safety catch.

What lessons can we learn? First of all go and check your Croll **NOW**. It is a good idea to give all your kit a good "going over" on a regular basis anyway ... "when in doubt chuck it out" is a good adage. Harnesses do wear out and Cow's tails should be replaced on a regular basis since they are most likely to suffer the greatest stresses of all (FF2) A few pound spent now is better than several weeks in hospital ... or worse.

As for John he sensibly binned the offending item (a pity really since Lyon asked for it back!) and wisely went on a crash diet!!!

Actually this was planned as a trip down Peak Cavern with my big brother from Australia who was staying with us for Christmas, but the heavy rain throughout the previous week forced us to change our plans. The trouble with Derbyshire is that there just aren't too many interesting holes for non-S.R.T., years out of practice cavers to play about in !

The party, comprising David Knox, John Preston, Paul Nixon and myself arrived at the large lay-by opposite the Lover's Leap Cafe in Stoney Middleton on the sort of morning when sane people are at home decorating or watching re-runs on the box. There had been rain during the night and the clouds suggested more to come, although it wasn't actually raining as we got changed. When planning the Peak trip we had warned David that he would get wet, but since the change of venue I'd told him that he was in for a nice dry trip, a bit on the dull side if anything, but the best we could manage at short notice in unsettled weather. He reminded me of that several times later in the day !

We walked up to the Eyam Dale Shaft Entrance and rigged it with a ladder and lifeline for use later, then wandered along to the Gin Entrance. I was doing the usual chat about the Resurgence Entrance, almost directly below us at the base of the cliff, and about how in very wet weather water can flow out of that entrance although I had never seen it. David and I walked to the edge of the cliff so I could point it out, and I was amazed to see a torrent of water rushing away down the slope towards the road ! We had been too busy gossiping to notice the flow as we walked up the road earlier, and I quickly played down the significance of the flood we were now witnessing, after all this was only Carlsark so it couldn't be too bad !

The Gin Entrance rift was easy, and after a couple of photos for David we gathered in Oyster Chamber to take more, before setting off along Eyam Passage. Paul and I had been this way a few weeks before and barely got damp knees, but this trip was different. In places there were pools of water stretching from one wall of the passage to the other, and plenty of trickles coming in through the roof to keep them topped up, and we had no option but to crawl straight through ! By the time we reached Noughts and Crosses Chamber we were losing interest in photography as we were all pretty well soaked, and no-one wanted to hang about in the draught. Taking the right-hand passage ('following a small stream', the guide book says) we slithered through into North West Passage, still wondering just how much wetter we could get on a 'dry' trip. We actually considered turning left to the Eyam Dale Shaft and going out, but David was still keen to get to the bottom despite the water so we turned right, following North West Passage down a particularly low, waterlogged, gravelly crawl, which could only be passed by squirming forward, flat-out in the water, until the passage enlarged to crawling size again. David didn't seem to enjoy the flat crawl, probably the smallest passage so far, which was unfortunate as the next obstacle was even smaller, and considerably tighter ! A sharp left turn leads immediately to a boulder which seems to almost block the passage completely, although space can be seen through a very narrow gap between the right side of the boulder and the wall. I went first and tried to explain exactly what I was doing to get past so David would be able to follow:

"The trick is to squirm forward, partly on your right side, until you can move up the face of the boulder to get your head and shoulders into a small cavity in the roof, then pass your right leg through the gap at the side and twist your body through 180 degrees as you swing your left leg into, and through the gap. Once you are draped over the top of the boulder you can allow a sort of controlled, backwards slide, while lying with your left side at the top of the gap, down into the passage beyond."

There was a short silence, followed by a number of comments which are unrepeatable here, but which indicated exactly what David thought about my directions. To be fair it did look a bit awkward, but after a little persuasion and a partial return so I could demonstrate how easy it was to get back, David allowed himself to be talked through. Re-united in the passage beyond, which here was quite spacious, being about three metres wide and nearly a metre high, we waited for Paul and John to come through the squeeze. We were at a low junction and quickly moved off to the left, downstream, trying to generate some warmth, as we crawled along in a shallow trickle of water. It wasn't far to the next junction, a drop of about half a metre into a larger passage crossing at right angles, which has always been dry on my previous visits. This time things were very different, the passage was carrying a rushing torrent of knee-deep brown water, which roared off along the passage we were intending to follow. At least initially the passage was high enough for us to stand up, but then we were forced back onto our knees as the water entered a section of shored-up passage, with timbers supporting the roof and walls. The constricted passage squeezed the flow of the water, making it deeper and much faster, but we knew this section was short and led to larger passage beyond. The air-space was only a few centimetres, but we could see it continued all the way through, so after a quick discussion John launched himself into the entrance, and was immediately washed away down the passage with the water foaming over him as he temporarily blocked the flow with his body as he tried to control his speed. He shouted back that he was through safely, and then Paul followed. Although it was very intimidating David assumed that we knew what we were doing, and followed

without hesitation as soon as Paul shouted, so I had little choice but to follow, partially hampered by the camera box. Looking back up the passage it was clear that we would not be able to get out that way against the flow, without serious risk of drowning, but John and I had already discussed that before he entered the passage, and we had decided on a different exit route to avoid the water.

The passage we had now joined, Dynamite Passage, was a little larger than the ones before, and we were able to make quick progress in a kind of stooping walk as we splashed along in the stream to join another, even larger passage at a junction. We turned left down Stalactite Passage, leaving Cockle Passage to the right for our drier, safer exit route, and hurried onward with the rushing water, excited and drawn by the distant roaring sound which reverberated from the darkness ahead. In places the water we waded through was thigh deep as we passed boulder piles which acted as natural dams, while ahead our lamp beams were filled with millions of sparkling water droplets as we approached the source of the thunderous noise. The normal end to Carlsark is a still pool of muddy water at the bottom of a slippery rift which cuts across the end of Stalactite Passage, but on this trip the end bore no resemblance to normality. The torrent poured over the lip to fall like a mini-Niagara into the foam-filled rift below, while the passage above was filled with swirling currents of moisture laden air. It was hard to hear what anyone said near the cascade, and within minutes we were streaming with water and becoming very cold, so we quickly moved away, back up the passage, on our way out at last.

It was a relief to leave the main flow of water and enter the drier Cockle Passage, so we had a break there, and re-fuelled with chocolate bars. David seemed glad to be on the way out, and was relieved that we could avoid the shored-up passage completely, in fact we all were. Cockle Passage was easy but awkward, with a flat-out section and a squeeze to negotiate, and then suddenly we were back on our original route in, with the boulder squeeze just ahead of us, round the corner to the left. I didn't give David time to think about it, and went through quickly, and on his second attempt he got the sequence of moves right and dropped through. A quick wriggle through the gravel and we were back in North West Passage, waiting for Paul and John to join us. I hadn't realised how much David had been thinking about the boulder squeeze while we were further into the system, but clearly he was very relieved to have successfully got back to the entrance side of it.

Being out of caving for many years was beginning to take its toll and David was showing signs of being very tired, but at this point we were only about fifteen minutes from being out on the surface, and that knowledge seemed to give him a real lift. As soon as the others joined us I led the way into the jumble of

boulders that blocks the end of North West Passage, and squirmed upwards, past a jammed log covered in dry leaves, into a low chamber with daylight streaming down a narrow shaft in the roof above the log. The ends of the ladder and the safety rope were snagged just above us, but it was easy to pull them down and get ready to climb out. Having attached David to the safety rope, I climbed out with the camera box, followed by John, leaving Paul to look after David below. The idea was to have two of us at the top of the pitch so that we could pull David out if he was struggling on the wire ladder, but he came up without difficulty while John lifelined and I took photographs. Paul quickly followed up the ladder, and John and I removed the gear from the shaft. Meanwhile David was sitting on a rock at the side, obviously glad to be out, but seemingly more than pleased with his 'easy', 'dry' trip down Carlsark.

For some reason David decided that he was entitled to celebrate that night, which is probably why he slept so well, and didn't feel like doing much the next day, but, after all, it must have been more than twenty years since his previous trip underground, so we thought he did well. The odd thing is, he didn't have time for another caving trip on this particular visit. Never mind, there's always next time !

Colin 'Steve' Knox

Vespers.

A select little band of hardy individuals tackled this inhospitable hole (one for the 4th ... yes **fourth** time ... yes he probably is a couple of bars short of a rack!!) The entrance was obscured with a thick network of spiders web (a really popular trip this one!) which had to be removed with surgical precision and the entire shake hole swept clean before Sharon would even venture near the place! Trouble began at the entrance which is best described as "snug" Certain members needed considerable persuasion to follow Sharon and Ralph and one member opted out there and then! The site of the bolt placements on the final big pitch discouraged our intrepid band from further progress who beat a hasty retreat, however the cave had a sting in its tail as one of the bolts "popped" on Sharon as she struggled up the tight first pitch. Needless to say the remaining members were glad it hadn't happened to them but at a subsequent meeting in a local hostelry have agreed to sponsor Sharon on a course at "Weight Watchers.")

John Preston and I visited Cascade Cavern to allow John to see what changes had occurred since his previous visit way back in the seventies, and to do a little digging. The entrance-shaft top now has a water tank jammed in it with access to the shaft through a re-cycled 'Knotlow 210' lid, into the tank, then out through a hole cut through the bottom ! The pitch is about 10m., and requires a rope protector about 3m. below the tank. We used a 1m. length of re-inforced garden hose, cut spirally from end to end to allow it to be wound onto the rope, which we suspended from a spare jammer. This worked surprisingly well, being easy to remove and replace by the next person.

On his last visit John photographed a miners' 'stowes' (a wooden windlass over a shaft for raising ore) mounted on two massive, timber beams set horizontally between the opposing walls of the main chamber, and about 3m. above the rubble strewn slope below. The beams were still in place, with a couple of timber planks joining them, but there was no trace of the 'stowes', so either it has been removed for conservation (P.D.M.H.S. ?) or it is buried in the rubble below. Obviously the 'stowes' was put in that position for a reason, but if there was a shaft below, it is now completely hidden under the rubble. Interestingly, water falling from an immature passage on the bedding in the wall above, disappears into the rubble where it lies against the face of the rock, so this area would probably repay serious investigation.

On a previous visit, on 22nd. November 1997, Paul Nixon and I had seen what appeared to be the top of a horizontal cross-cut, just visible at the level of the rubble surface at the base of the mined shaft in the floor near the far end (north-west) of the main chamber. The shaft is about 1m. square and is about 4m. deep to the rubble, and there is an old ladder (wooden sides and metal rungs) in place. John and I had gone prepared with a hauling rope and a large plastic tub, and we were soon at work hauling out loads of small stones mixed with wet tailings. We took turns, with one person hauling the material up and stacking it, while the other worked at the bottom. The 'top job' was clearly favourite, as the digger had to work directly under a dribble of water falling from an overhang on the wall above which made conditions unpleasant. Unfortunately, as we dug deeper, the curving top of the cross-cut turned out to be only a shallow alcove in the wall. After removing about 1.5m. of material we found that the shaft pinched in just below the alcove and became a narrow slot about 0.20m. wide, still choked with mud and small rocks, but apparently natural. A thin vein visible in the wall at the top of the shaft is probably the feature that the miners had followed downwards, but clearly they had stopped work at the slot we had exposed. The small trickle of water falling down the shaft disappeared into the fill in the slot without backing up, but further downward progress will require thinner diggers and some more dramatic persuasion to make the slot

man-sized ! It would be interesting to know if other cavers have emptied the shaft to this level during previous digging activity, as there has obviously been considerable interest in finding a lower level by someone. Most recent digging seems to have been concentrated in the steeply descending phreatic passage, originally choked with mud, close to the lowest point of the main chamber.

On our way out we went beyond the foot of the entrance pitch (eastwards), into an area of old workings. After the initial short passage, walled with stacked 'deads', a step down to the right led into a larger space, about 2.5m. wide, with a rubble covered floor leading to the lip of a 3m. pitch. We used the tail of the entrance pitch rope, with a loop tied round a pillar of 'bedrock' as a belay, for John to descend into the passage below. As soon as he cleared the lip of the pitch, John could see that the whole area of rubble 'floor', including the pillar being used for the belay, was in fact a thin layer of debris resting on totally rotten timbers ! I retreated through to the relative safety of the main chamber, while John quickly looked at the lower passage, finding it blocked in both directions, then carefully prussiked out. The mined area is very unstable, and will only become more dangerous as time passes.

Back at the entrance pitch we spent some time taking photographs and messing about with multiple flashes (quite successfully it turned out later from the results). We also found a couple of lost 'cavers' and rescued them! The first was a frog that had clearly been on an enforced diet, and the other was a large, fat toad. They were treated to a ride out in a digging tub, and were liberated in the marshy ground near the water pumping station, which put them back at a similar level to the point they were found at, which may well mean that they have their own way in !

Colin 'Steve' Knox

20th. April 1998

Designer Tee-shirt Offer.

The latest batch of designer tee-shirts have arrived in the latest stunning colours. Buy now to avoid disappointment. Special introductory offer £6.00.

DCA Meeting. 4 April '98

C.C.P.C. was represented at the meeting by Steve Knox, John Preston and Paul Nixon.

The following notes were taken and subsequently read to the Club meeting by Steve Knox:

- (a) D.C.A. may purchase entrance to Ashford Marble Mine if the insurance issue can be sorted out.
- (b) Danger notice in Winnats Head Cave has not been put in yet (by Eldon).
- (c) C.C.P.C. was thanked for prompt attention to the 'air shaft' at Hillocks Mine.
- (d) Discussion about if there is any deterioration in White River Series, and whether conservation measures need to be taken. Cave conservation plan is being prepared which will be implemented by T.S.G., and which will include 'record' photos for comparison later.
- (e) Letter of thanks from Trevor Ford after election as hon. Life Member.
- (f) Insurance is being sorted for D.C.A. equipment, e.g. Cement Mixer and Compressed Air Drill.
- (g) S.U.S.S. + Individual, elected as members.
- (h) Treasurer's report highlighted chance of getting funding from Peak Park or English Nature if they are approached before a project is started. A quote of about £1200 has been prepared for English Nature for the replacement of the Nettle Pot lid and cap.
- (i) Travel expenses raised from 10p. to 15p. per mile.
- (j) Conservation and Access report:
 - Lathkill Head access is waiting for confirmation from Chatsworth estates. Garden Gate entrance lock has been changed and English Nature are angry at being denied access, as they paid out over £800 to Ben towards the work. Upper Entrance is padlocked but Ben has finally provided a key to Tony Gibbs. D.C.A. intend to purchase new locks for both entrances and deny Ben access.
 - Knotlow/Fourways Shaft - bolt on lid is seized and needs attention.
 - Ricklow - gate is ineffective and needs whole closure system to be revised.

Manifold Valley - active badgers have thrown out human remains from a silted up cave.

Darfar Ridge - N.T. are funding a cave conservation plan.

Old Tor, Winnats - attempts are being made to improve access.

Cumberland Cavern - totally sealed, but bat group want to work with D.C.A. and this may be a way to get the system reopened as it is a known bat roost.

Hillocks / Wharf Mine - English Nature are happy about the actions taken. They recognise the need to make information about location of S.S.S.I.s more easily available.

R.I.G.S. - Work continues to identify and publicise sites.

Mandale Mine - Scheduled as an ancient monument on March 31st., but no details yet.

- (k) D.C.A. Handbook: new edition in preparation, A5 loose leaf, like Northern Caving Assoc..
- (l) Training officer's report: Revision of training and assessment is underway and new version is like canoeing 'Star' awards. There are 21 modules, costing a minimum of £60/day, so the complete range will cost a minimum of £1260 !!!

- (m) Equipment Officer: The fitting of 6 'P' bolts in the new Wharf Mine Climbing Shaft route was approved. The bolts are in stock and resin will be purchased straight away.

- (n) Cave Discovery Fund will pay 50% of the costs of the Wharf shaft.

- (o) Working party days: 9th May - Nettle Pot lid. (- Oxlow, date to be arranged.)

- (p) Nettle Pot: Pull through has not been fitted yet.

- (q) Slitherstones Mine: some holes have opened and need attention.

- (r) Mountbatten Pot: needs work on a loose slope.

- (s) Eldon Hole: A winch will be in place on the 13th./14th. June for work to stabilise the route through to the second chamber.

- (t) N.C.A./A.G.M. : quiet meeting. Discussed making levy paid to N.C.A. compulsory for all regions, as it is already in D.C.A..

- (u) Next Meeting: 18th. July 1998.

- (v) A.O.B. - The Barclaycard VIP award recently won by the D.C.A. included a number of medals for presentation by the D.C.A. to individuals in recognition of outstanding volunteer contributions to the sport, in this case 'caving'. Being present, Steve Knox accepted the first medal on behalf of the Wharf Mine Project team, and C.C.P.C. in general, for their contribution to Derbyshire caving. Five other clubs also received medals. Several medals were awarded to officers of D.C.A., then Steve Knox proposed Ralph Johnson in recognition of his major personal contribution to the Derbyshire bolting programme. This proposal was unanimously supported by all present, and Steve Knox agreed to present the medal at the next C.C.P.C. meeting. Several other individuals were also named to receive medals.

- (w) The meeting closed at 1.15 pm

Possible Digging Sites ?

During recent walks in the Peak District I have begun to take special note of potentially interesting sites for cavers. No doubt most of them have been investigated before, probably by every man and his dog, but checking in various editions of 'Caves of Derbyshire', or in the latest version, 'Caves of the Peak District' there is often no mention. There may be information already recorded in the Derbyshire Cave Registry, and eventually I'll get round to checking there, but in any case I'll pass on anything noted, in the hope that it will add to the overall body of knowledge and perhaps save wasted effort. If you actually intend to have a go at any of these locations please let me know, as there are a couple that I already have plans for.

Colin 'Steve' Knox

SK 13257520 [See: 'Caves of the Peak District', Page 244: **Monks Hole** - SK 134750]

On the east side of Monk's Dale, above the meadow where the dale reaches the minor road linking Tunstead and Hargatewall with Tideswell.

An obvious slope of boulders spills out from the trees, and leads to a shallow 'ravine' leading uphill for about 25m. to an open entrance at the foot of a small limestone cliff. The entrance is arched, about 1.5m. wide and 1.5m. high, and reveals a 5m. long stooping-height passage which slopes gently down, until at the limit of daylight the lip of a pitch is reached. A timber beam holds back rubble, etc. from a vertical drop of about 5m.(?), and there is a hanger in-situ on the wall up to the left over the pitch head. Without gear, and with a fading head torch, I didn't check any further, but it seems this must be Monks Hole (see above) despite the slight difference in grid refs.. There are large patches of barytes and calcite on the passage walls and at the entrance.

A further search of the hillside, uphill and about 30m. to the right (south), revealed a similar, but smaller arched opening, about 1m. wide and silted up to within 0.25m. of the roof. By squirming headfirst into the opening it was possible to see for about 1.5m. to a gentle curve to the left, still open, but well littered with dead twigs. The floor appears to be fine, dry soil, but there is no way to tell how big the passage is without actually digging.

There is plenty of evidence of badger activity on this hillside but they are not currently using either of the two cave entrances, although it is possible that the opening through the fill of the second entrance may have been created by badgers in the past.

C.S.K. 2-5-1998

SK 12007360 (**Flag Dale Rift**)

On the south side of Flag Dale, where the footpath linking Hassop Farm, Wormhill with Mosley Farm above Blackwell Halt crosses the dale.

Climbing the footpath up the slope, south-west from the dale bottom, a small terrace and vegetated buttress is visible on the right near the first left turn. Closer investigation reveals an obvious triangular opening 1.5m. high at the foot of the buttress, with a similar, but smaller opening to the left. The larger opening gives access to a rift about 1m. wide, rising inside to about 3m. high at the far end, where it is possible to climb up into a higher level floored by earth and rubble, lit by daylight streaming in through a hole 0.75m. by 0.5m. at the top of a narrow shaft, about 4m. high, directly above. The upper level narrows almost immediately but another, much smaller, hole to daylight is visible at the far end. The upper level is infested with enormous spiders, which scuttle around the walls as soon as the light is shone anywhere near them, and seem to use the added light to enable them to attack their neighbours ! The roof above is festooned with silk egg-globes almost the size of table tennis balls. Back in the entrance passage, a low slot under the left wall (going in) gives access to a small chamber about 2m. square, with a possible way on down a rift (?) at the far side. This slot needs a small quantity of soil and some rubble clearing from it to allow easy entry to the chamber, which was not entered.

The smaller entrance, only about 1m. high by 0.5m. wide, led into a blind passage only 2m. long and 1.5m. high by 1m. wide. The rubble floor may conceal the way on, and it is possible that this will link with the end of the small chamber if cleared.

C.S.K. 2-5-1998

SK 12507305 (**Chee Tor Sink**)

Both in the River Wye, and on the south bank, about 10m. upstream of the footbridge carrying the Monsal Trail footpath from the north bank to the south bank of the river (when travelling from west to east), upstream of the Chee Tor railway viaduct.

Note: There is a second footbridge almost below the viaduct, taking the path back to the north bank.

There are three apparently associated features at this point, all of which seem to indicate a substantial sink below river level.

(a) Close to the river bank, in an obvious 'bay' in the bank line, there were two whirlpools with open funnel centres. The water was being drawn into visible openings in the bed of the river, about 0.40m. deep at this point, and the surface of the river showed the effect of the suction for up to 2m. from the whirlpool centres.

(b) On the marshy bank, about 4m. from the river, there was an obvious shallow, funnel shaped depression, about 3m. across and 0.75m. deep lined with fine mud and 'swirled' vegetation, and with floating litter, e.g. polystyrene, settled in the mud.

(c) The bank area is backed by a limestone cliff with an undercut running along the face of the cliff close to the land surface. At the left hand side (east) the cliff is masked by a slope of rubble and debris from the hillside above, but the undercut feature continues into the slope as an open, although constricted, passage, with obvious signs of taking a considerable quantity of water when the river level is higher (probably less than 1m.).

C.S.K. 2-5-1998

SK 108818 P.8 / Jackpot

(a) Finding the main downstream sump [A / V] very low, with the diving line appearing from sand just below the water surface, Paul Nixon and I checked the upstream sumps:

Top Sump [B / III] was well down, with the water surface about 2 metres below the lip of the shaft, so obviously there was no flow in Main Stream Passage.

The Overflow Passage Sump [C / II] was dry, and the gravel crawl through to the passage downstream of the Second Pitch was open but constricted.

Sump [D / I], the left branch sump from Overflow Passage Sump, was open and passable at least as far as the tight descending rift. This sump passage leaves C / II as a horizontal tube in the left wall, about 1.5 metres above the level of the gravel crawl. The tube is small, but not tight, and leads after about 2 metres to a narrow cross-rift, which drops steeply down to the right for about 4 metres, turning slightly to the left where it enlarges before dropping again into a low stream passage. John Preston and I reached this point on a previous trip. On that occasion John went through into the stream passage and found that the stream

(b) Just as we were about to exit the cave I noticed a passage I had not seen before, to the right of the concrete supporting the entrance, as you look at the falling water from Cascade Chamber. Crawling forward into this passage leads after about 2 metres to the lip of a drop down of about 1.5 metres into a small bouldery chamber. Under the right wall is a low, gently sloping bedding plane, with a flowing stream visible about 3 metres away, and perhaps a metre lower. This stream seemed to be lower than the main stream leaving Cascade Chamber and flowing towards Idiot's Leap, but appeared to be flowing towards Cascade Chamber ! Paul crawled around in Cascade Chamber and in the passage below, but could not see the stream entering, but we found a voice connection through a small hole under the giant rectangular boulder that partly blocks the normal exit from Cascade Chamber (either up and through the cleft between the boulder and the wall, or down and past the boulder at stream level). I didn't squeeze down the bedding as we were already short of time, and this is too obvious not to have been fully investigated before, but it isn't shown on the survey, which puzzles me. Surely this isn't the way to the original entrance, as that is higher, not lower, than the present entrance ?

The description of the original entrance doesn't fit either:

"Old entrance leads to a muddy chamber with short crawls, a rift, and tight crawl to Cascade Chamber."

SK 10547186 Churn Holes, Marl Dale, off Deep Dale, Nr. Buxton.

(See page 49 : Caves Of The Peak District.)

This is described as:

"Two pothole entrances drop into a chamber, with 200ft (60m) of partly excavated low passage, passing a number of cross joints."

As you approach the head of Marl Dale along the footpath from Topley Pike, a cove of broken limestone cliffs seems to bar the way forward, but the path climbs easily up a sloping ramp through the tumbled boulders to reach the level top above the cliffs.

Over to the left in the cliff face is an obvious, large cave entrance, approx. 5 metres high and 5 metres wide. There is a step up of about 2 metres at the threshold, and the cave then narrows to 3 metres wide but the height inside increases to about 6 metres. The passage quickly reduces in size until about 10 metres from the entrance it becomes a 0.30 metre diameter hole at head height. Small holes in the roof are occupied by jackdaws. About 6 metres in from the entrance, the top of what could be a rubble filled cleft is visible at floor level. Two drilled holes were noted in the left wall at about waist height, but there was no evidence of blasting.

About 20 metres away, just below the ascending path, two openings were seen between the boulders which gave access to a large cavity, but this was not entered due to not having a lamp ! These openings must be **Churn Holes**, but the much larger cave is not mentioned in caves of The Peak District.

C.S.K. 27-5-98

SK 10657155 and SK 10687155 Upper Marl Dale, Nr. Deepdale, Buxton.

The public footpath due south from Churn Hole crosses an area of open pasture, with a dry-stone wall alongside the path on the left-hand side. After passing the end of a collapsed wall, at right angles to the sound wall, an obvious vein working comes into sight a short distance away in the field over the wall to the left. On closer examination this turned out to be about 2 metres wide and about 6 metres long, cutting into a shallow rock outcrop. It was no more than 1 metre deep, lined with rubble and with no sign of an opening. Directly in line with the first feature, and further up the slope of the field was another similar cutting into a more prominent outcrop of limestone rock. The second cutting was about 2 metres wide, and about 8 metres long, leading over a rubble floor to a pile of rocks which almost concealed an opening where the working continued into the base of the outcrop. The opening was an irregular arch, about 1 metre wide, and about 0.75 metre high, with a soil floor visible in a passage or chamber beyond. No attempt was made to enter.

There is no public access to the field with the sites of interest. The footpath field contains ancient field boundaries and traces of an early settlement, but no sign of a spring or other surface water.

C.S.K. 27-5-98

SK 09957000 Bullhay Dale, Nr, Chelmorton, Derbyshire.

Leaving the A5270 (Brierlow Bar to Taddington by-pass link road) by the public footpath due north into Horseshoe Dale, the junction with Bullhay Dale is reached after only 200 metres. Turning east into Bullhay Dale, a massive rocky cutting comes into view on its southern flank, with two enormous openings one above the other, into the cliff at the end of it. The cutting is about 4 metres wide with rock walls (slickensided in places) which increase in height as it progresses into the hillside, until the end wall is reached, which is about 12 metres high. The lower entrance opens directly into a passage about 3 metres wide and 4 metres high, with a level floor, which ends after about 25 metres at a rubble slope leading upwards to an opening in the roof through to the upper level, which was not entered. There are other regular openings through the roof, between the threshold and the rubble slope, which also connect with the upper level. From outside the upper entrance appeared to be about 4 metres high and 3.5 metres wide, with a square-cut channel in the floor, which may have been the sole of an earlier 'coffin' level. A third, much smaller opening was visible in the cliff face, high up to the left, which would require a rope to gain access from outside.

C.S.K. 27-5-98

Whalf Shaft.

Only those who have been living on another planet will be unaware of the new entrance to Hillocks (correct name Whalf Mine) The new entrance (now capped) lies in the copse on the opposite side of the green lane to the usual entrance quite close to the permanently sealed engine shaft. It enters Hillocks, after 2 pitches (One of 140') and two climbs, close to the foot of the engine shaft. There appeared to be problems initially with English Nature (SSSI) and DCA but these were ironed out eventually after Steve, John P. and Paul N. attended a DCA meeting which is chronicled elsewhere. Lots of members were involved at various times the driving force(s) being Steve, John and Paul. Well done lads, the finished article is a credit to everyone concerned with its installation.

As a follow up (and after some wrangling!) the shaft was bolted by Brian and Ros but it now looks as though further bolts may be required as the "short" climbs at the foot of the pitch get longer as debris is removed.(No doubt further wrangling!!)

Several possible digs have come to light as a result of increases interest in this mine ... Watch this space!

Results of Rope tests.

Yes we finally got the rope test results back from Owen Clarke (NCA). You may recall some months ago Ralph tested some ropes at Whitehall (80kg FF!) One batch of rope gave some "unusual" results ... some samples passing the test and some failing. The ropes in question were put out of service, samples sent to NCA and Ralph returned to Whitehall for his lonely vigil on the outdoor test rig. The results were the same i.e. inconclusive ... some samples passing (Two FF! tests) some failing. The ropes were put out of service permanently. Meanwhile Ralph received some results back from NCA that did not relate in any way to those sent for testing!! But that's another story!!

Eventually Ralph received results back from NCA (Their test is two FF1s with 100kg mass followed by 1FF 1.25 then 1FF 1.55, 1FF 1.85) If a rope passes the two FF1 tests it is deemed safe. Further test give an indication of its expected life. **All ours passed the two FF1 test and some passed the FF1.25 as well!!!** However, not knowing that all these samples were off the same rope the recommendations were: "Rope suitable for continued use but should be retired as a matter of prudence." in the first case and "Rope suitable for continued use." In the second.

It would appear that we were correct in our decision to retire these ropes which incidentally were from the batch we queried with Edelrid shortly after it was purchased (unexplainable abrasion to sheath.)

A discussion took place at our June meeting and it was agreed we scrap this batch of rope in addition to all rope remaining from the '91 Berger trip. It was also felt that we should be retiring our ropes after five years as a matter of course.

If anyone wishes to see the actual test figures or wishes to read Owens comprehensive document give Ralph a ring.

Congratulations.

To Kev and Dan for getting accepted onto degree courses, Jane for passing hers and last of all Ralph for finally completing the last module of his CIC (19 years after he got his CL! is this a record we ask?)

Thanks must go to Tim who, despite all the barracking and hilarity, livened up one of our recent meetings with an impromptu slide show of the '97 Berger trip. All I can say is "it's no wonder they didn't get to the bottom!!"

For sale second hand Crolls and jammers. Nothing to do with the article elsewhere (i.e. "have you got a bent one?") Do you carry some means of "rescuing" yourself should one of your jammers fail to operate while you are actually on a pitch. Perhaps you should consider carrying a spare. If you are intertested, contact Ralph who has a small number of jammers for sale at £5, one careful owner with a "moderate" number of miles use. There are not recommended for regular use but would definitely get you out of a hole (no pun intended)

Interested in bondage? John Martin and Ralph may be able to supply your needs. Just let them know how many meters of 10mm rope you require. Hurry ... stocks may not last.

A VISIT TO HOLME BANK CHERT MINE, BAKEWELL

Noticing of late the great piles of chert to be seen formerly in the yard at Bakewell Railway Station had grown beautifully less by degrees until they have nearly vanished, I resolved to find out the cause, and for this purpose paid a visit to the chert quarries at Holme Hall and Holme Bank, on Saturday last.

On presenting myself at the quarry belonging to Mr. Alsop, I found that gentleman coming out of the yard and learned from him that work had altogether ceased there for some time. This was at Holme Hall. The water, which had since the opening been a great preventative to the successful working of the mine, at length gained the mastery and, notwithstanding the employment of heavy and costly machinery, caused the men to retire from the place. The machine, engine, etc. are now partially idle.

Mr. Alsop has opened another quarry on the off side of the river Wye, and by running pipes across is able to operate a little with the engine still in the way of keeping the newly opened mine free from water—a less difficult task than at Holme Hall. He has also, I find, opened out three other similar quarries in Flintsshire and the chert, a sample of which he exhibits, appears to be of good quality.

I next presented myself at the extensive chert mine on Holme Bank belonging to Messrs. Smith, of Burton-on-Trent, and found to my regret that the manager, Mr. Page Brunt, had paid his men and left the place a few minutes prior to my arrival.

Mr. Brunt is a man who, it may be said, has risen from the ranks by hard work and perseverance to the responsible position which he now occupies, and as I wanted to get posted on the chert mining business a little, his presence would, I thought, have been invaluable. Things, however, went on very well without him.

The general appearance of the places connected with the mine at the outside pre-possessed me in its favour. Strict regard is evidently paid to order and regularity in all things, even the workshops where the tools are repaired and sharpened being neatly swept up, the tools to be operated upon being placed in rows, not thrown about carelessly, and the whole outside concern betokening attention.

The man in charge of this shop courteously provided me with a lighted candle and a workman as a guide, and thus furnished I entered the mine. The guide informed me that I would have to stoop very low at intervals, and I found this very salutary advice, otherwise my head might unawares have come into disagreeable contact with the limestone roof.

The chert runs in veins between the rocks of limestone, which is allowed to remain above, and thus the depth of the cutting depends upon the height of the chert to be removed. The distance from the entrance to the spot where the men were at work on Saturday is over a quarter of a mile. A line of rails is laid down throughout, and over this the chert

stones are conveyed on trucks drawn by small ponies. A horse 15 or 16 hands high would have no chance of passing through the crevices where, even bending as low as I could, my headgear got crushed. But generally speaking the roof is a fair height.

I found the whole place perfectly dry. The men, numbering about 40 hands, were at work in a rather open place, well lighted up with candles. I had a hearty reception all round, and was very cheerfully initiated into the mysteries of chert getting so far as my ability to grasp things would permit on so short a visit. The sounds of bar, sledge hammer etc were to be heard on all sides, mingled with laughter and conversation now and then.

A large block of the chert, which would weigh about 20 tons, was blown down shortly before my arrival. Men were engaged cutting it into smaller blocks prior to removal. I was informed that occasionally blocks of 100 tons are got down. Powder is the principal thing in use, and occasionally dynamite.

There are almost innumerable roads and turnings in this extensive mine. Many are not now in use, but the whole length, I gathered from what I saw and heard, would amount to several miles. The material, which is used in the manufacture of white ware, is now in great demand, and this explains the cause of the small show in the Bakewell Railway Station yard.

The supply is good, but the demand is better. The Chert mainly goes to Staffordshire, and not infrequently there are very large orders from Scotland.

Business at this mine, I find, has very much improved of late years, and I sincerely trust that it will go on improving, so that the owners will be able to have a fair profit, and allow their men who work very long hours underground a trifle more money than from 17s. to 18s. per week. What would a collier think of this? Wouldn't he strike hard and very often until it would be at least doubled?

The men at Messrs. Smith's Chert Mine on Holme Bank are a hard-working industrious body, nearly all having wives and families to support, and I hope that next time I visit the mine to find them one and all earning better wages. With the Chert business in the flourishing state it is now, I have no doubt that the owners will soon attend to this very important point.

I find on enquiry that some of the men have worked in this mine for the past 25 years, and during all that time they could only remember two slight accidents having occurred.

The whole concern, I noticed, is worked on very careful lines, and in the hands of a very practical man, Mr Brunt, in whom the men have every confidence, a like immunity from accident may reasonably be anticipated in future. I wish success both to the men and the mine generally.

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