

# C.C.P.C.

## Newsletter.

### Jan. '99 No.60



#### A Slow Way of doing Provy-Dow!!!

You have probably all heard by now that on Sat 26 September CCPC had to call out Upper Wharfedale CR to extract Max from Providence Dow. Max had decided to do the trip in his thick divers wet suit which caused him to overheat and suffer from fatigue. Being over dressed meant that he had to strip off to pass the squeeze close to brew chamber at which point he got stuck! Being only partly dressed he cooled off rapidly and by the time he extracted himself (with considerable effort!!) he was suffering from hypothermia. Leaving Max in a bivvy bag (very cosily with Andy) and Nicki the other side of the squeeze also in a bivvy bag Darren set off for help. It took around 4 hours for the rescue team to arrive. Reports state that they were incredibly efficient and having been fed and plied with hot coffee Max was able to reach the surface with only the minimum of assistance.

Donations of around £200 have been sent to UWCFRA. (As a result of this I believe they are banking on rescuing Crewe on a fairly regular basis in order to swell their funds!!) CRO have been called out to "Crewe" about 4 times (in 40 odd years) Lancaster Hole, Giants (A Crewe team completed the rescue) Giants (Youth service instruction) and Hammer. Statistically this should be the last one for a while but don't get complacent. Always carry your bivvy bag, first aid kit, spare food and other bits and bobs that experience has taught you are useful.

#### Training.

Things have been active on the training front since our last newsletter. There have been two sessions in the HLHS Tower with Dave Edwards, one on "Self Rescue" and one on "Rigging". Several members attended the DCA/NCA/(Nigel Atkins) "workshop" weekend at Pindale either as instructors or students, DCRO held training days at Alderley and Whitehall which members attended, unfortunately our own CR training session had to be postponed (see meets list) due to Xmas "festivities" (or "outside pressures!!) Please try to attend the next practice ... its a carry from the "Eating House" to where we started last time. If members want sessions ASK Sharon. There is no point her putting on courses no-one wants.

Have a look at the photographs of practices "yesteryear!!"

While we're on the subject of training Ralph has detail of First Aid course run by Nicola Pickering DCRO who can provide certificated courses at all levels.

#### New Members.

At present we are in the middle of a publicity campaign to attract new members. If you can think of any ways of publicising the club (other than getting rescued!!) let someone know. Thanks to all those who helped with our trip down Giants.(Intro.) All the youngsters want to go again, hopefully this will produce some new members some time in the future. Future trips will no doubt be required soon, please help whenever you can. We are in the process of applying for a "lottery grant" to facilitate this programme.

### NETTLE POT

by G.L.Travis

My first recollection of Nettle Pot is fortunately that of its discovery. A somewhat abortive Oxlow meet was held in 1930 but lack of energy and organisation found us on Sunday with only sufficient ladder to do the first shaft: possibly the meet was only held in order to do repairs for I recollect spending several hours down below, attempting to build a wall to catch a perilously perched block. Seville was there, and Matthy Birnby and I worked under his direction, while the brothers Sissons worked on the top shaft. As the day wore on we emerged bored and with unimpaired energy which must surely have led the older and wiser members with queesting noses onto the plateau above Oxlow. It was, I think, Matthy Birnby who first saw the incipient pot, overgrown with nettles and filled with debris. It was Charlie Baines who confidently announced it was water worn and would go. It was Walter Sissons, characteristically enough, who bent down to pull away the first stone and it was Seville, soon to go to his heroic end, who miraculously produced gelignite and laid the first shot. I recollect our excitement as we crouched behind a hummock, heard the first dull explosion and rushed madly forward cheering beneath a barrage of falling debris. We peered down through the smoke and sure enough, the hole, was deeper. Nettle Pot had started on its downward course to depths we little dreamed of.

My impressions of the following weekends are vague. Hardy pioneers dug away the first rocks and soon bucket and rope were in-use. John Hind, Douglas, Sissons, Snelgrove and Joe Wells were among the early stalwarts, and as far as I recollect, frequent shots were put in both by Seville and Snelgrove, culminating in a mighty effort by the latter which was reputed to have shaken the windows in Castleton.

In 1931 the hole was assuming such dimensions, that Snelgrove petitioned for a hut to cover the entrance and the noble edifice now existing was erected under his direction. Such reckless extravagance provoked a strong outburst among more conservative club circles for those were the days of caution, economy, gold standards and such like, and the treasurer could little foresee the hundreds of feet of rope ladder and miscellaneous tackle he would one day have to pay for.

I recollect making several visits after the hut was built. Streaming wet days with a biting wind cutting across the hills and inside the hut, muddled members laboriously hoisting buckets of stone and depositing them outside the hut in a convenient fold of the ground; Walter Sissons without collar, tugging at the filthy rope, Douglas looking even more disreputable than anyone could have dreamed possible, Billy Amies, even

At the Dec. meeting a decision was made to buy a "bilge pump" with a view to lowering water levels in "The Windpipe", "The Connection" and "Valentines Sump"

Sydney Turner doing his bit and John Hind emerging from the hole, looking like a bedraggled Skye Terrier. I made several descents that year and I recollect well how miserable they were: struggling on the confined floor with greasy boulders, using crowbar and hammer in a space about as big as the inside of a wardrobe and constantly being warned not to touch this or that, piled up in convenient corners, for fear it came down and flattened us all out. Those however were epic days and if the pioneers broke their finger nails and bumped their heads, at least they never despaired for the draught came ever upwards and the floor sank ever downwards.

A few amusing incidents remain of these days. Two ramblers arriving at the hut to enquire the way, just as a blasting operation arrived at zero hour. The hut rose gracefully on its foundations, and the hikers taking one hurried look at their chosen mentors, departed without delay. Once we attempted an electrically fired charge, though even now no one is clear whether the charge was fired. The next week, Douglas groping in the mud found what he believed to be the detonator complete with wire, and climbed to the surface with anxious care. However, his detonator turned out to be a lump of mud and those present breathed once more. I recollect excavating bones which John Hind sent to Manchester for examination: they were remains of red deer, reminders of a day when Peak Forest was a Royal Preserve and death the penalty for poaching.

1932, was not, I think, a very great year for progress, but it was notable because fresh blood was transmitted to the club. Chantry, Chatburn, Thrippleton and Maurer joined the D.P.C. and their fresh energy and enthusiasm were immediately diverted to Nettle Pot. Like lusty young giants they flung themselves into the battle and once more the hole pursued its downward course. Douglas had been first through the upper narrows and John Hind first through the narrows proper; the Alcove and Chamber were reached later in the year after considerable blasting and very strenuous work. The year of grace 1933, therefore opened with operations in the Chamber and it was at this moment that I renewed my acquaintance with the Pot. In Aug 1933 John Jenkins and his Birmingham braves came to the Bagshawe Meet and the following day, Sunday, the entire party was conducted to Nettle Pot where an attempt was made to render some assistance to Chantry, Chatburn and Thrippleton. In those days one descended Nettle Pot cautiously and with considerable timidity. One forced ones way downwards to the alcove privately wondering how a return journey would ever be effected and inwardly cursing one's foolishness in having come so far. Worse, far worse was to follow.

"An Evening with Dave Edwards" contained; SRT rigs, failure of jammers, prussiking with one jammer or "Stop", Italian Hitch, Ditto with lock, Prussik to abseil with these systems, contact rescues, rescue of casualty from rope, Mao system, (setting up/lifting/changing to abseil), rescue from pitch head, dead lift, pulley jammers, counter balance techniques, moving casualty along a traverse with/without counterbalance. If that's not worth fifteen quid I don't know what is!!

One listened at the Alcove to the sounds of exertion and profanity proceeding from below and eventually on was permitted to creep a bit lower and, hanging on a ladder braced against a rickety stemple, survey the scene from one's perch in the roof of the Chamber. There were, I think, three stemples in position when I paid my first visit and I felt three were but a tenth part of what safety demanded. The walls were walls. That is to say they were stones laid one above the other and all quite ready to discuss the situation with one. Above, the great chockstone hung menacingly ready to close the tiny chink which lead back to the warm world above.

The floor was a loose mass of assorted masonry, and in the dim candlelight one descried a hero with one arm through the rope ladder, waggling a crowbar in the debris at his feet and inviting the rest of us to listen to the stones crashing to their unknown floor a hundred feet below. At any moment one confidently expected both hero and debris to disappear completely from sight, and this opinion became in no way altered when one's turn arrived to take over the crowbar. The walls descended gracefully from time to time and the pioneers ascended the rope ladder with the agility and celerity usually associated with absconding bookmakers. Such was the nerve racking ordeal of the Chamber and those who took part in it are not soon likely to forget. Even now one feels the menace of the chockstone overhead; though it be tested a hundred times, and recalls at each passage of the Chamber, something of the early days. Week after week work went forward making the place safer and safer, putting in stemples, cleaning down the walls, listening to the debris thunder down the great drop below. Excitement grew to a fever pitch as it became clear that the floor could be dropped and, after two very hard weekends work, the opening was cleared and the ladder lowered into the unknown cave, now called the Bottle. It is said "fortune favours the brave," and it also said that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread", either of which could apply to the party first to enter the Bottle. On that memorable September afternoon, John Hind, Joe Wells, Maurice Chantry and Henry Chatburn, spent some happy hours admiring the wonders of nature and if their ladder was too short to take them to a further landing, one at least of the party was thankful to make a landing on the floor of the hut and return home a wiser man.

Thus warned 1934 opened with further intensive work on the Chamber in which the indefatigable moles, Chantry and Chatburn, as usual, performed prodigies. Snelgrove and myself encouraged by the Springtime, also ventured forth and assisted in the good work, our united endeavour succeeding in inducing a block weighing one hundredweight to descend and choke the neck again, thus greatly increasing the difficulty of this passage. It was however, virtually impossible to shift the block and so on May 27th 1934, Maurice Chantry was lowered through the narrow neck, down the Bottle and landed on the unknown floor now called the

Flats. I joined him a few moments later and shall not soon forget our excitement and triumph as we realised the magnitude of the discovery, the culmination of almost years of work, by so many patient helpers. We peered wondering into the chasm and listened to the stones we threw, crash below, realised the further depths waiting to be explored. Those were indeed moments lived at the peak of excitement, and we returned like conquerors to the Chamber, feeling as indeed Balboa must have done when first he saw the Pacific. Henry and Snelgrove in turn made the descent. Excitedly we planned further expeditions into the unknown, sitting over the teacups and parkin at the little tin hut over on Mam Tor.

Snelgrove's energy now knew no bounds and a mighty offensive was organised for Sunday, June 3rd. Further rope ladders were acquired, and on the Saturday another descent was made to the Flats, and rope ladders were lowered in preparation for the following day. Sunday dawned bright and fair and the big battalions were assembled at Nettle Pot in good time; that morning I was first to reach the floor of the chasm, closely followed by Henry. We discovered the hole, now called Elizabeth, and Henry Chatburn undertook the first descent. He climbed down to the full extent of the ladder, only to find himself still in midair, the ladder operating like some gigantic spring and moving up and down, he clinging to it, a most uncomfortable sensation. By slow degrees we eased him up on the life line and landed him exhausted in the chasm. We tied on more ladder and Chantry undertook the arduous adventure and again found the bottom still out of reach. Evidently Elizabeth was more difficult than we thought and likely to remain virgin till yet another assault could be organised. There was no more ladder available, and now the business of getting out had to be undertaken. Those were early days and we had not then developed the technique of drawing six hundred feet of rope ladder through the tortuous and difficult exits to the surface. We were raw recruits in those days, unaware of the sorrows of Nettle Pot, sodden ropes, recalcitry ladders, jamming rungs, and the hundred and one trials and tribulations out of which the club tigers of a later date were to be made. Hazy recollections still remain of that famous June 3rd 1934. John Hardy obliged to undress to get through the narrows, after spending patient hours in the Chamber. Sydney Turner stuck fast for 20 minutes and bawling for Douglas to descend and pull him through. Bishop conveniently deaf. George Hyde and Snelgrove tying on ropes on the Flats, Colin Christie patient and efficient: Walter Sissons and Smith doing herculean work at the surface, while the faithful Dinah chased cows and greeted each emerging explorer. So the day ended and Nettle Pot kept its secrets.

The next assault was fixed for July 21st but in the interval there was little peace. Parties laboured hard at knocking away knobs and protuberances in the passage down: Snelgrove and I, conscience stricken by the big block which still choked the chamber,

made an effort and at last succeeded in shifting it. At last Saturday July 21st arrived and during the afternoon, ladders were placed in position and 250 feet of rope ladder were lowered to the flats and coiled there, a feat which seems rather wonderful looking back, besides being very unnecessary. Maurice and I, who had performed this fearsome feat of coiling ladder, prospected the flats, and reached the grotto above Firbeck Hall passage. The party then retired to the Nags Head for supper, a true account of which Douglas Yeomans could possibly supply. Next morning, the party being evacuated from the pub still intact, the flats were quickly reached and the chasm again descended. The ladder stored the day before, was lashed and lowered down Elizabeth, and George Hyde volunteered to make the descent. His naturally bright and sociable disposition, allied to his exceptionally strong arms, fitted him for this feat of strength and his running commentary during descent, landing and ascent, so overwhelmed those present that they were only concerned in hauling him back to a place of safety with all possible despatch. George was the first to set foot in Elizabeth, and if his report of what he saw there was a little hazy, it is little to be wondered at; he did, however, find a further passage leading to yet another descent, so honour was satisfied and we realised that other methods would have to be adopted if exploration of Elizabeth were to continue.

Besides this feat, the fact that two of us pushed the Stalagmite Passage to a point some distance up the stream, is only of historical interest. More memorable to those who assisted, was the drawing of the tackle and those unfortunates who remained on the surface spent a happy hour toiling at the 600 feet of ladder, wafted by the ceaseless flow of profanity from below.

Up to now our main efforts had been concentrated on Elizabeth, but the passage explored by Chantry and myself on July 21st still awaited investigation. On August 26th John Jenkins and his Birmingham braves arrived in force, and strengthened by this reckless gang of desperadoes, it was decided to make this passage our chief objective. About twenty men were put down to the Flats in record time, the Birmingham men proving themselves to be true Tigers and moving at speed, urged on by ourselves at strategic points; cannily led by Maurice Chantry and Alan Thrippleton, the rope ladder was dragged by Birmingham efforts to the hole, fixed, and Maurice was able to descend some 60 feet and enter a gallery which led into a fresh system of passages and drops. The Birmingham braves were now in their element and pushed the assault with reckless determination. The Matterhorn drop was negotiated and finally the party entered Firbeck Hall, an imposing chamber, difficult of access and fraught with danger. One of their number interposed his head in the path of a falling boulder, but bore his hurt with stoic calm until a doctor at Castleton was able later to stitch him together. Alan led the party back again, and we congratulated ourselves that no more harm had befallen

such a cheerful gang of ruffians.

The season was now approaching its end, and the club was sufficiently exhausted to mutiny at the mere mention of Nettle Pot. The winter was therefore spent in planning a winch to overcome the appalling climb in Elizabeth. Henry Chatburn undertook drastic alterations to the hut which had done three years service and was in parts beginning to show signs of wear. Assisted by Maurer and Chantry, Henry relaid the floor and increased the floor space, the work being completed by April 17th 1935. In the meantime he and John Hind had designed and built the winch.

The Easter Meet. April 20th 1935, stands out as one of the most miserable and abortive expeditions ever attempted at Nettle Pot. A violent thunderstorm raged on the Saturday afternoon, and the shaft soon resembled a shower bath. It was all but impossible to keep a candle alight. It was bitterly cold and all were literally soaked to the skin. We shivered on the mud flats and only an academic discussion on rose petals restrained our tongues from more pungent observations. The winch which was being lowered in parts, stuck in the shaft, and finally we lost all contact with the surface. One of us eventually climbed the dripping Bottle and we emerged to willing friends who stripped us naked, rubbed us with towels, and poured whisky down our throats. Next day it was still wet but work was continued. The winch was eventually lowered and John Hind and Henry Chatburn set to work to assemble it in the dripping depths of the chasm. There in the flickering light of candles, casting strange shadows on the tortured walls, resounded the clang of their hammers while the helmeted figures bent to their task like inquisitors in some medieval dungeon. The rest of us dragged our weary way to Firbeck Hall and attempted to explore in a desultory fashion. Chatburn and Hind joined us later and managed to reach the bottom of the drop at the start of the Passage, but I do not recollect that anyone else had enthusiasm enough to follow them. They reported a further drop, as yet unexplored. The next day Monday, found us with still less enthusiasm: indeed the ordeal of putting on sodden clothes and entering the still dripping depths, was enough to cool any ardour. The shaft was wired and a little work was done at the foot of the Bottle, clearing the passage from Bottle to Lip (a typical D.P.C. connection), a passage which hitherto had been perforce performed in the prone position. Thanks to these efforts, it was now possible to move in a stooping position, great advantage when falling stones rendered speed a necessity. The telephone has yet to function. The day degenerated into an orgy of profanity as the ladder were drawn and proceedings brought to a close.

Whitsuntide drew near with fairer prospects, though mutiny was in the air and only the Club Tigers could be induced to appear. Paul Maurer was away, so we were denied the hot soup which his dextrous handling of the Primus had produced for us at Easter. Walter Sissons, Chantry, Chatburn, Thrippleton,

Grainger and myself turned out on the Saturday and lowered the ladders. On Sunday we were reinforced by Walter Smith, John Hind, George Hyde and a stalwart visitor. The ladder was lowered down Elizabeth and attached to the winch, we floated down like fairies to the bottom, scarcely bothering to place a foot in a rung, a tremendous saving of energy. Only George Hyde had been there before and a more detailed examination yielded some results. Henry, Alan and I climbed a rock slope and surmounted the chockstone, leading to a second narrow chamber, receiving a nasty fright en route when a large stone fell out of the roof and crashed between Henry and myself. Maurice had a look at the Rat Hole found on the previous visit by George, but drew back when the floor ran in and crashed into the unknown depths below. We decide further work was necessary before we could safely venture forward and discreetly floated upwards to our friends 170 feet above. The winch at all events had proved its worth, and another time a ladder would not be necessary. Monday found us with Walter Sissons, Chatburn, Grainger, Chantry, Thrippleton and myself to draw the ladders. Necessity being the mother of invention, we improvised a hitch with the winch to ease the stern effort of lifting the 200 foot ladder out of Elizabeth, till the tangle of ropes and ladders in the chasm defied description and made us all roar with laughter. We ate our lunch in the comfort of the little Tackle cave, and rested ourselves for the ordeal of getting the gear to the surface. Henry went up and joined Walter on the surface, and these two supermen set to work in grim earnest to lift, assisted by ourselves, set at strategic points in the shaft. The never ending succession of ladders disappearing slowly upwards, now catching and having to be lowered and eased, jerking and grinding against the narrow walls, to the shouts, curses and instructions of the weary men. We came out at last into the June evening, with a sigh of relief.

The hills, range after range lie before us as we strip off the sodden overalls and wet clothes beneath. The air is warm after the damp caverns below, and we dress leisurely, savouring the flutter of the wind about our tired bodies. Pipes and cigarettes are aglow and we linger by the hut, chipping the surface gang as they stow away the last ladders and coil the muddied ropes. We turn towards Mam Tor and the promise of tea. To our left stretches the long line of Rushup Edge, in front the battlemented mound of Mam Tor, dying away on the right in the ridge of Back Tor and Loose Hill, while behind it looms the Mass of Kinder grimly stark in the dying day. To the North West, Win Hill looks like a trifling hillock set on a level range, while behind, Derwent Edge stands like a great fortress frowning over the miles between. North East, the valley runs grandly into the distance, carrying the water whose source we so vainly search for beneath these bare limestone uplands. We linger a moment as the hut is closed, then shouldering our sacks, stumble downwards across the fields, leaving Nettle Pot and her secrets locked in the deep bosom of the great limestone hills.

Don't forget, these are the planned trips only. Other trips often take place, often at short notice. Simply attend the meetings/keep your ears open or ring John Martin (01625 428914) or Ralph (01782 515753.) Failing that organise something yourself and pass the word around. If there is something you really want to do then ring John. It's not been included because you didn't ask!! The rest of the year is almost finalised so RING NOW.

Jan 10	Nettle /P8	3-4(2-3)	(SRT (Ladder)	Castleton	P8 beginners
Jan 23	Aygill	3	Can be v. wet	Yorks	Other alts
Feb 7	Craig y fynon		Max 6	S Wales	Max 6 1030 Rock + Fountain
Feb 14	Robin Shaft	3	Mine	Ilam	
Feb 27	Rowten/Bull Pot	4/3	SRT (SRT)	West Kingsdale	Beb Bull P.
March 7	Giants Hole		Rescue P.	Castleton	ALL TEAM
March 13	Birkwith/Old Ing	2/3	Beginners	Birkwith Fell	
March 21	Peak =+W.River	2/5	Beg 12/ 5 in WR	Castleton	9 am TSG hut £4
April 10	Marble Steps	3/4	SRT	Yorks	
April 18	Milwr Tunnel			N. Wales	
May 8	Diccan/ Lower LC	3/4 2	Exchange ...(Alum)	Alum (Yorks)	Beginners LLC+Alum
May 23	JH Mine	4/5	SRT	Castleton	STRENUOUS
May 29	Grotte de lac Diau	All downhill!	SRT/ thro' trip	France	Weeks holiday(?)
June 19	Meregill /Sunset	3/4		Chapel le Dale	

Planned Trips for First Six Months of 1999

It was agreed at our last meeting to donate £100 to the DCA bolting programme.

Reprint of an article written by Kev. "years ago!"

Well it all started sometime in early October, Liam Kealy phoned me up at work to tell me that Alphonse from the Speleo Club of Liege (Belgium) who is a friend of ours had organised a trip through the Bel Espoir to the Grotte de la Diau. I went silent for a few seconds, I think Liam thought that I had gone speechless because I was so impressed, actually I had never heard of the name and I had to ask Liam if it was a cave that he was talking about. "Yes, it is. Its near to Annecy". "Great!" I replied "Where's Annecy and which country is it in?" Ten minutes later and after finding out that it was in France, I agreed to go.

Two days later Liam contacted me again to tell me he could not go, and the only reason he could give me was that he was married!! With my looks and my receding hairline I do not have those setbacks in life. So that following weekend I went up to Yorkshire and visited a pub and met a few cavers. After a few pints of best bitter I had forgotten the names of the caves, so I just told them that it was a through trip in France near to Annecy. Straight away Paul Vale said "That sounds like the Bel Espoir, I'll come with you. When are you going?" So we headed for Annecy on the 23rd October, but Alphonse and his friends were not planning to arrive until about the 27th, so Paul and I spent the spare time finding the Grotte de la Diau and exploring it to the far sump. The next day we spent all the time on top of the plateau above the village of Aviernoz. After about six or seven hours Paul managed at long last to find the entrance to the Bel Espoir. The entrance turned out to be the other side of the plateau from where we had started looking. The next day we met Alphonse in the village of Thones where he explained, much to our amusement, that there was a new cave called the Tanne des Trois Betas that they were planning to do instead which still joined up with the Grotte de la Diau. Four of Alphonse's friends spent until 12 o'clock that night rigging the cave down to the sixth pitch so that the next morning there would be no hold ups and so that we could descend the entrance pitches without any delays.

From here on Alphonse takes over!

From the village of Aviernoz go down the side of a telephone cabin in the direction of Chalet de l'Anglette. This is a small tarmaced road which climbs with S bends for several kilometres, the last 3 k. are unsurfaced. It is a rocky road which cavers can take if they go very

gently. This last bit seems rather long and you eventually arrive at a chalet at 1500 m. - last point for cars. The cave lies one hours walk from here.

Take the little footpath which is by the chalet. After about  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour of steep walking uphill, at the top of the ridge there are two directions. Take that marked "Grotte de l'enfer". Follow the red marks which are straight ahead (not the red and white marks to the left). Pass in front of a sign marked "Grotte du diable". Continue straight on as far as a big rock where there are two red marks. One path leads straight ahead to the "Bel Espoir", the one to the left leads to an area of clints where one soon finds cairns each marked 3B. It is essential to follow these cairns - ideally on a bearing of 140.

There is little vegetation here, but one eventually comes to a depression with pine trees and vegetation - cross this climbing out on the far side. You can see the very small entrance to the Tanne des Trois Betas 50 m. further on.

The entrance is tight for several metres leading to a pitch of 88 metres. After 20 metres a bolt is required, a small traverse on the left leads to a niche. At this niche a sling is needed with a deviation 4 m. further down. The second part begins at a larger niche which again needs a tape of sling. The last part of the pitch leads to a chamber.

Follow a meander part way up for 15 metres to reach a 22 m. pitch (tape sling). This is followed by an 11 m. pitch. (These two pitches can be treated as one).

A short meander is followed by water which can be avoided by means of a hand line.

A 10 m. pitch is followed by a short meander at the end of which is a short handline leading to a 63 m. pitch. First drop of 12 m. to a bolt followed by 50 m. but there is a nub point 1 m. below the bolt.

At the bottom follow the large descending passage in the direction of the current of air. It is bouldery underfoot, some can be climbed, others one is forced to crawl underneath. Traverse round the pools of water (le bassin des pieds). Do not go down the next 13 m. pitch. Part way down a ledge on the right has a hand line. 5 m. pitch, 23 m. pitch, 6 m. climb.

One reaches a larger area when several metres further on a line leads up a 7 m. wall. At the top the draught is very strong. Re-descend to the "Salle des Rhomboedres". Follow the right hand wall into a gallery then follow the black telephone wire. This corridor should be followed to the "Puits des Echo", 3 m. 20m. 40 m. The top is tight but the bottom is more pleasant. There is a severe rubbing point 4 m. below the last bolt.

From the base of the "Puits des Echo" follow the mud banks for some metres to a breakdown area where there is a climbdown of 26 m. to an active streamway. Follow this streamway down a series of climbs:

- 5 m. climb
- 7 m. pitch
- 5 m. climb (wet)
- 12 m. pitch - follow the streamway (la rue d'eau)
- Down 4 further pitches
- 8 m. pitch
- 5 m. climb
- 30 m. wet pitch (equipped with hand line)
- P12 - cascade
- A large meander leads to an 11 m. waterfall pitch

The streamway soon joins the collecteu of the Diau. Follow the large pools of water to arrive at the "Salle de Chaos", a vast gallery ending with a lake which sumps. To the right the "Labyrynth" is no problem since the way on is obvious - follow the current of air. Once again there are pools of water as far as the rapids fixed with a metal ladder (Cascade Tremeau). Cross the deep pool followed by a streamway, cascades and lakes.

(Cascade Bocquet and Cascade de la Toupie). At the sump take the route with moonmilk. (la Savonette - the Soapdish). On the right bank eventually climbing a rift on the left using wooden stemples, climb down 2 metal ladders and take the passage on the extreme right to join the river.

The passage enlarges before one reaches the "Carene" with fixed ladder and deep lake which can be traversed to a second ladder which enables one to rejoin the streamway. Pass close to a flood level warning - if this is over 40 you shouldn't be here! There are 2 further ladders before reaching the entrance of the Diau.

Entrance to bottom of "Puits d'Echo" with twelve people - 5 hours.

Three hours from here to "Collecteur".

Further two hours to exit.

Sudden flooding can occur. Check limniograph in the Diau first - if above 40 DO NOT DO the trip.

2 x 50 m. ropes are sufficient.

Some ledges are small - the system is cold, avoid large parties with long weights.

To find "Grotte de la Diau" take the road from the village of La Verrierie following the right bank of the river as far as a car park. Several paths lead to the head of the valley on the entrance of the Diau - about 20 minutes walk. (X905,80 Y114,10 X962).

The caving trip from the Tanne des Trois Betas to the car park at the Grotte la Diau took us twelve hours but it could easily be done in about eight hours depending on the size of the party. The reason it took so long for us to descend was the fact that Paul and I had to wait at least one and half hours when we were only three hours into the cave, so that all of the Belgian cavers could change either into wet suits or into pontoniers and to have a cooked meal e.g. Bacon, eggs or potato and meatballs with a hot drink. This meant that they all had to carry large tackle sacks all through the cave, whilst Paul and myself only carried one small personal S.R.T. sack each, with just S.R.T. equipment in them plus spare water, two bars of chocolate and a couple of tins of pate. Paul also carried an emergency brew kit. Both Paul and I thought what we carried was sufficient

for such a trip. We both used wetsuits and would do so again if the cave was visited again sometime in the future. It is an enjoyable trip with the water in the La Diau making it even more enjoyable and sporting if one wears a wetsuit. There are also plenty of other good caves in the area to keep you busy.

That dreaded word "Digs"!! The whole world now knows that the recently opened Wharf Shaft collapsed! Work continues on re-opening/stabilising it.

T.Pot told Ralph about a new top entrance to Lumb Hole but attempts to elicit it's whereabouts have not been terribly fruitful up to press.

Whilst involved in a "pub crawl" in Buxton (all in a good cause for a change -DCRO, £250 raised!!) Ralph was asked if CCPC were interested in digging out the top end of Pooles Cavern. It would seem that we do have some takers!!



By the time you read this Ralph and Darren will be packing for their trip to Aconcagua (The Andes) Before you complain ... you were invited. Ralph will probably running a trip to K2 base camp/Gondogora La in July/August '99 (see Newsletter Sept'97) If anyone is interested the trip will cost about £2000 so start saving NOW. For details see Ralph or contact "Himalayan Kingdoms" direct.

You will see from the meets list that CCPC proposes two trips to France this year, one to Grotte de la Diau (article from previous journal enclosed) and one to the Pyrenees. We may meet up with "The Belgians" on these trips.

## Rigging.

Avoid; hazards such as stone fall and water.

anything that makes the ladder difficult to climb e.g. tight constrictions.

sharp edges.

having the rungs flat against the rock.

Try to; rig the ladder within easy reach.

have enough rungs at the top to make getting on and off easy.

Always; coil spare rungs at the foot of the pitch.

### **Tension produced in sides of tether with various angles. (ref. Diagram 2)**

150degrees = 200%, 120 degrees = 100%, 90 degrees = 70% 0 degrees (parallel) = 50%.

Aim to keep the angle at 90 degrees or less.

**Tethers** are normally of wire with an "eye" at each end equipped with either a "C-link" or maillon. However tethers of nylon rope or even tape have their place, they are stronger but are less hard wearing. Maillons are stronger than "C-links" but fiddly and easily lost. **Ladders should never be climbed without the use of a safety line.**

**Spreaders** are short wire tethers with an additional eye at their centre and are used to improve the angle produced by the short "tails" of the ladder as they leave the final rung. They are more versatile if the central eye is replaced by a maillon and eye splice arrangement.

The "tails" of the ladder are its most vulnerable point since constant flexing, when fastening after coiling for example damages the wire particularly if they are galvanised. There are two schools of thought on coiling ladders.

**Ladder climbing** is hard work! The weight should be kept on the feet with the leg muscles doing most of the work. The rungs should be gripped from behind and the ladder climbed from the front not the side. Some cavers find placing one foot onto the rung from behind (heel first) makes climbing easier on free hanging sections. Some means of resting such as a carabiner on a short safety cord. is a good idea. **Rungs are inherently weak and the carabiner should be clipped round the wire not the rung.**

If the ladder rests against the wall then keeping the rung under the instep, the toe against the rock and leaning backwards slightly while grasping the rung from the front helps. Twisting the body at 90 degrees is another option.

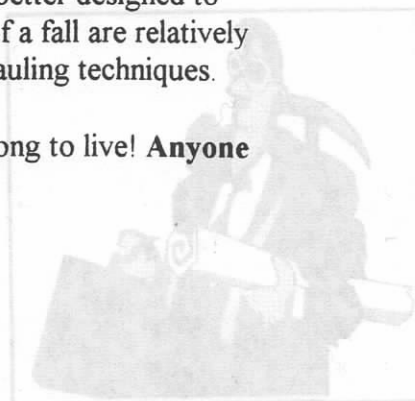
Care must be exercised when passing the safety rope down the pitch to prevent it becoming entangled or worse still passing through the ladder. The rope should be loosely coiled and thrown well clear of the ladder unless a "pull-back system is" used. Static caving rope is preferable to dynamic rope for use on ladder pitches since the sheath is better designed to prevent the ingress of gritty particles, the forces involved in the event of a fall are relatively small and the rope performs better if abseiling or one has to resort to hauling techniques.

**Harnesses**. A caver suspended on a belt around the waist has not got long to live! **Anyone contemplating climbing a ladder should wear a sit harness.**

Ralph Johnson

October, 98

Document2

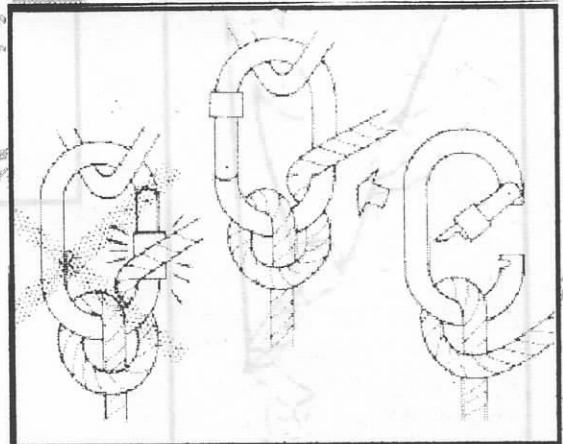


## Ladder and Line- Safety Rope.

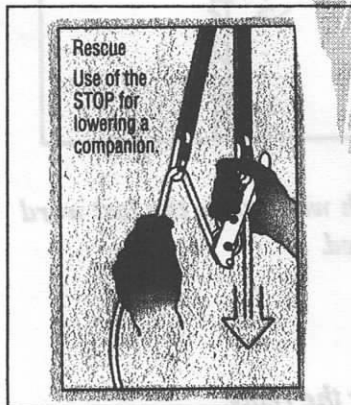
Some form of mechanical device is far superior to the good old fashioned "round the waist" or worse still "over the shoulder" belay and there is no doubt that a "direct" belay (where the belaying device is fixed directly to the rock and not to a tethered caver) is superior in every way to an "indirect" belay. There are a large number of such devices on the market designed specifically for climbing but it seems logical to limit our choice to equipment already carried or that can be put to other uses underground. It goes without saying that all anchors should be "bomb-proof". **Never trust your life to a single bolt, not even an "eco-hanger"**

Choice of rope has already been mentioned, an 11 or 10 mm static rope is preferable for underground use.

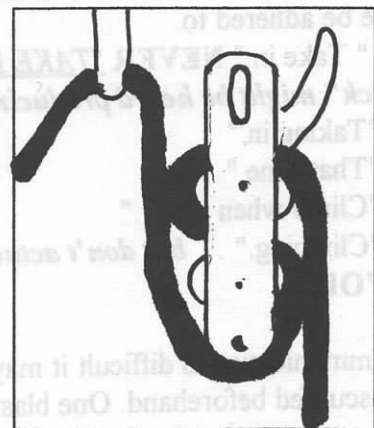
**Italian (Munter) Hitch.** Used in conjunction with a large "DMS." karabiner this is probably the most "fool-proof" system. Its disadvantages are: it kinks the rope and it cannot be converted to an efficient hauling system. It is also difficult to assist a tired climber.



**Petzl "Stop".** A more flexible alternative is to use an "inverted" Petzl Stop. This does take practice and is open to "user error", the most likely error being too slow in releasing the brake. This system can be readily converted to a hauling system should the need arise. A friction krab should be ready should the need for a lower be required.



While ascending the second capstan can be omitted but a friction krab must be ready in the event of it being required.



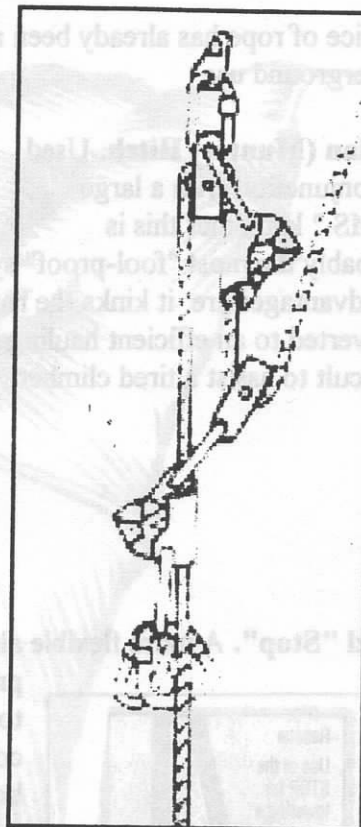
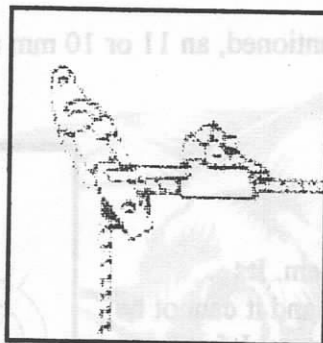
**Pulley-Jammer.** This system is ideal for life-lining a caver ascending a pitch, particularly if assistance is likely to be required. Unlocking this can be a problem since slack has to be generated in the system to release the cam. With a small team at the head of the pitch this is no problem, the team simply hauling in the rope while the jammer is released. **Before doing this the rope must be backed up to a "bomb-proof" anchor well**

Ralph Johnson

October, 98

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back from the pitch head using an Italian Hitch or other suitable device. With a lone caver at the pitch head the method of release takes practice. Clip in a long "cows tail" and connect your "Stop" to the dead rope, lock off the Stop. A "bounce" on the descender while at the same time opening the cam on the jammer is all that is required. Gently abseiling allows the top caver to descend until his weight is on the "cows tail" at which point the "casualty" will be lowered gently down the pitch. **This does take practice!** A pulley jammer system once installed is very useful for sack-hauling.



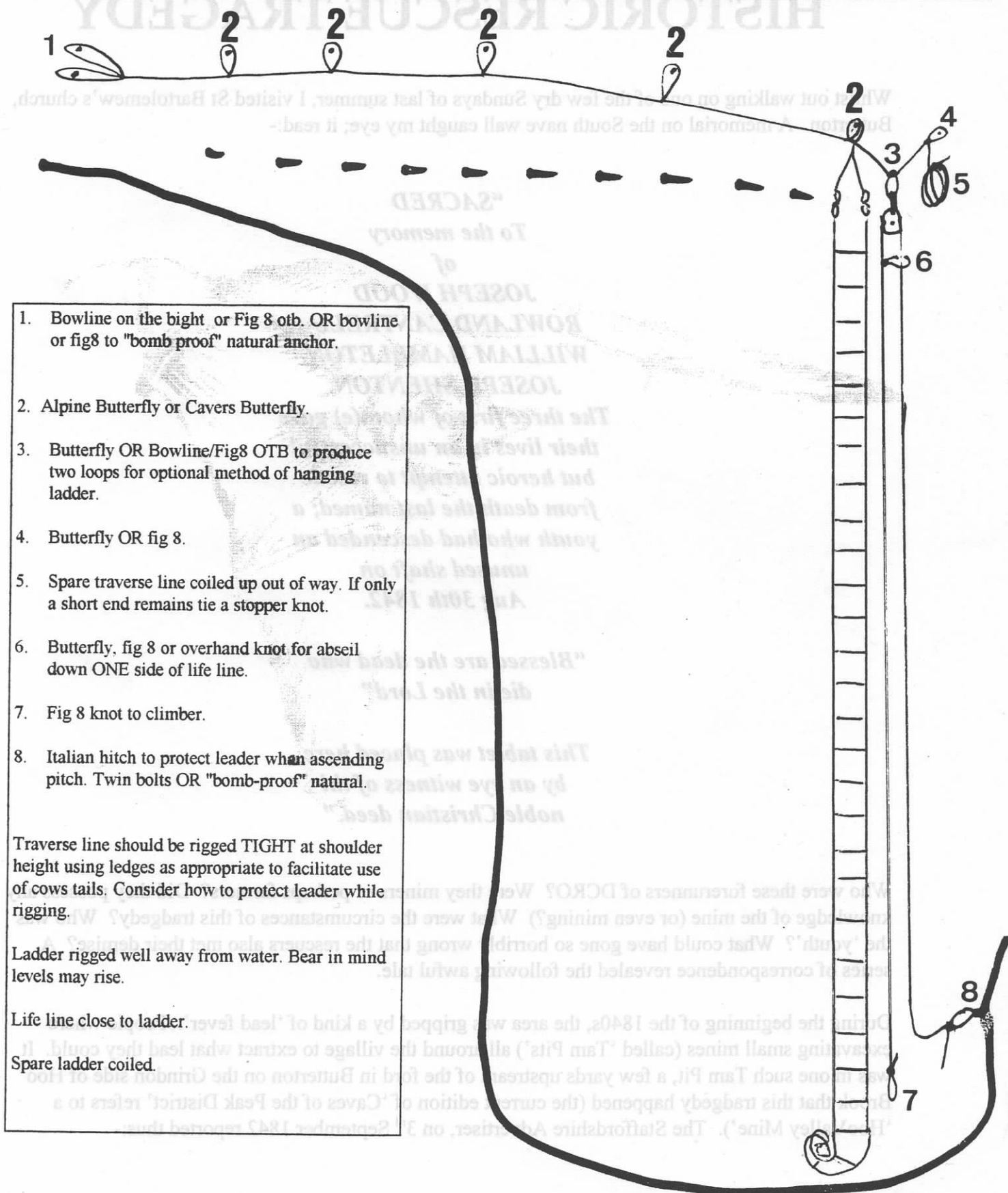
**Communication.** This is best kept to the bare minimum. A standardised set of calls is in existence and it is advisable that these be adhered to.

1. "Take in." **NEVER "TAKE IN SLACK" particularly mid-pitch when only the last word "slack" might be heard producing the opposite to the effect desired.**
2. "Taking in."
3. "That's me."
4. "Climb when ready."
5. "Climbing." ... **but don't actually start climbing until you hear the reply**
6. "OK"

If communication is difficult it may be necessary to use whistle blasts. These should obviously be discussed beforehand. One blast STOP, two blasts UP, three blasts DOWN.

**Self-lifelineing.** It may be advisable for the leader to line himself up pitches. If so then some "means of escape" should be considered should the ladder fail. This normally involves changing to abseil or prussik, in which case it might be preferable to SRT the pitch in the first place since all the necessary gear is already being carried.

## Ladder and Line. Suggested Rigging for a "Typical" Pitch.



J R Johnson  
October, 98  
Document3

# HISTORIC RESCUE TRAGEDY

Whilst out walking on one of the few dry Sundays of last summer, I visited St Bartolemew's church, Butterton. A memorial on the South nave wall caught my eye; it read:-

**"SACRED**  
**To the memory**  
**of**  
**JOSEPH WOOD**  
**ROWLAND CANTRELL**  
**WILLIAM HAMBLETON**  
**JOSEPH SHENTON**  
*The three first of whom(e) gave*  
*their lives in an unsuccessful*  
*but heroic attempt to rescue*  
*from death the last named; a*  
*youth who had descended an*  
*unused shaft on*  
*Aug 30th 1842.*

**"Blessed are the dead who**  
**die in the Lord"**

**This tablet was placed here**  
**by an eye witness of thi**  
**noble Christian deed."**

Who were these forerunners of DCRO? Were they miners or perhaps farmers? Did they possess any knowledge of the mine (or even mining?) What were the circumstances of this tragedy? Who was the 'youth'? What could have gone so horribly wrong that the rescuers also met their demise? A series of correspondence revealed the following awful tale.

During the beginning of the 1840s, the area was gripped by a kind of 'lead fever'. People were excavating small mines (called 'Tam Pits') all around the village to extract what lead they could. It was in one such Tam Pit, a few yards upstream of the ford in Butterton on the Grindon side of Hoo Brook that this tragedy happened (the current edition of 'Caves of the Peak District' refers to a 'HooValley Mine'). The Staffordshire Advertiser, on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1842 reported thus:-

## MELANCHOLY ACCIDENT NEAR LEEK

### Loss of Four Lives

On Tuesday last, two boys were amusing themselves near the shaft of a lead mine, which had been closed about three months, owing to the dryness of the season. The pit's mouth had been closed up and made quite secure and a quantity of loose stones had recently been removed from it by Mr Rowland Cantrell, the surveyor of the township, to repair the highways with. The boys rolled away some large stones which were over the pit's mouth, and were descending the

ladder which is placed on the first "bundling" or landing; when the foremost of them, named Joseph Shenton, had got down a few yards, he said to the other who was immediately above him "I am dying," and he fell down to the bottom of the ladder; he [Cantrell] went down after him, while the boy proceeded to Mr Wm Hambleton's the step father of Shenton, who was dining with a party of his friends, it been Butterton Wake. He lost no time in repairing to the spot and

descending into the mine to assist Cantrell in bringing up the boy; but he like his two unfortunate predecessors fell a victim to the foul air. In consequence of their not returning, a fourth person, named Joseph Wood, a farmer, about 50 years of age, being little aware of the fate of the three others, willingly offered his assistance, and he also descended the ladder. When none of the four returned to tell the sad tale of woe; an awful pause took place, and the fearful reality was soon discovered.

The graves of the four unfortunates lie by the North East corner of the church, all buried close together on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1842. Joseph Wood had been 56 years old, Rowland Cantrell, 40, William Hambleton, 31 and Joseph Shenton was just 11.

I would like to thank the Reverend James Marsh, Mr Barrie Wilkinson and Margaret Bury for their help, time and trouble in researching this article.

Mark

The above incident highlights a much ignored danger in lead mines and recent reports of 'bad air' in certain mines around Monyash should be taken very seriously!

## Kogues Gallery.

How many of these villains can you recognise from 20 and 25 years ago? Many are obviously in disguise, .....wearing wigs and beards!!



1974. Dave Alsop. Malc. Holmes. Pete Steadman. Mick Stratford. Alan Walker. Rus Barrat. **John Preston.**  
 Alan Burns. Jeff Fox. **Tony Reynolds.** Rob. Heath. **Steve Knox.** Brian Mather.  
 Odin Rescue Practice. Sadly Rob and Mick are no longer with us.



1978. John Gillet. Pete Heath. Eric Rogers. Rich Wilson. Liam Kealey. **Tony Reynolds.** Denise Pinnington.  
 Heather Beach. **Tony Gamble.** Dave Riley. Alan Scragg. Bob Panton. **Paul Holdcroft.** Malc Jump. Paul?  
**Ralph Johnson** Knotlow Rescue Practice.