

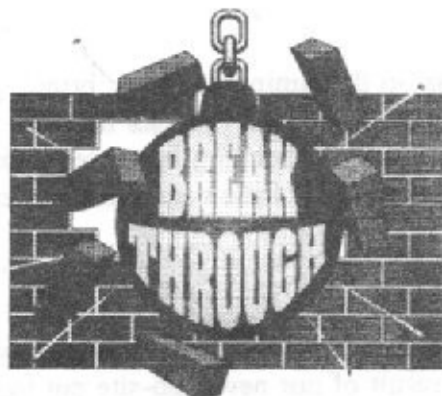
C.C.P.C.

Newsletter

April 2000. No 65



Thanks must go to Lionel for organising an excellent "do" at the Rifleman. The downside is that he will now probably get landed with organising the next one!!!



And now the news the whole world have been waiting for!!! ... on 13 Jan while on a "paramedic training trip" in Giants Paul H. persuaded Matt to leave Max and Ralph to get on with the bottoming trip and to "take a look" at Rob's Dig. Despite having the physique that almost got him on to the "centre-fold spot" in Men's Fitness he managed to squeeze through **and to turn round and get back!** The passage awaits a further visit.

Derbyshire's Latest "Through-Trip"

Steve Knox's dream has at last come to fruition! He's been going on for ages about the possibility of opening up the Hillocks (or should that be Wharf) Engine Shaft. During a period of particularly bad weather in February contractors (paid for by Derbyshire County Council) removed the old cap and replaced it with new concrete beams suitably modified to accommodate a lid made by Nigel. The project is now finished and looks very impressive. Hopefully everyone can now take a well earned rest!

Knotlow Ventillation.

During a visit to photograph work on the above Steve and Mat fitted a ventilation grill (manufactured by Paul N.) to the 210. On a good day clouds of steam billow out so the atmospheric conditions underground can only get better. John Gunn of Limestone Research has been informed and tests are due to take place shortly. Dave Nixon has also done some work at the foot of the 175 (Fourways) to improve the drainage. Mark Lovatt is looking into the access situation on Fourways.

Rescue Practice.

Our next practice is planned for Sat 14 May at Jug Holes and is to look at "Deep Shaft Hauling Techniques." The session is being run by Dave Edwards (DCRO) and an international male model who wishes to remain anonymous. (Ladies-he will be available for autographs once the session is over!) **Everyone** is welcome to attend and the day is as much a social event as it is a "technical" one. Don't be over awed, come along and have a good, informative day out. You wont even be asked to go underground, but if you want to bring your kit feel free!

BCRC Conference hosted by DCRO.

Since I landed the job of publicising this event (in my absence!) I've included a special plug here. The conference takes [place at the Bull iTh' Thorn (Monyash) 16-18 June. Camping is free, there's a stomp on the Saturday night and the ale is "real" and excellent. Details have not yet been finalised but you'll be first to know (as soon as I receive them) All cavers are welcome-you can come along for the conference (or part of it) or just the stomp. If you get bored you can simply go caving.

Lathkill Head/Garden Path.

As a result of getting involved with Wharf/Knotlow (Matt and Steve actually attended a DCA meeting!) we were asked if we could have a look at the lid on Lathkill Head top entrance. Before anyone could blink Paul had redesigned the locking mechanism which he and Steve (assisted by the other Steve and Rob) had fitted managing to fit in a trip into the cave in the bargain. The next job is a trip into Garden Path to do a "risk analysis" and inspection of the in situ ladders.

Rigging Guides.

We are now on our fifth edition! These continue to sell well, as do the laminated topos, bringing in a very useful source of income which includes a generous donation to DCRO. Thanks must go to all who get dragged into the project from time to time either installing or checking bolts, redrawing or rewriting the guides or checking for the inevitable error. It's surprising how little negative comment we have received since beginning this project about 5 years ago.

Lottery Grant and Kit for Beginners.

The kit bought as a result of the lottery grant has been very useful in introducing a host of new and potential beginners. Enquiries continue to pour in largely as a result of our new web-site put together by Matt. Last weekend alone the village of Monyash was inundated by "Crewe" members and potential members with Ed's' café being full even before he officially opened! Cuddy and Neil even brought along the contents of a primary school for a trip down Hillocks (with uncle Tony R) to keep them all in order. Start em young seems to be their motto! Seriously now- if you have some colleagues or friends who might be interested bring them along (or put them in touch with Matt), a club can only survive with a regular influx of new members.

Congratulations to Matt! It looks as though Matt will be at Keele for a while yet-he's been offered a PhD. Even better news for CCPC, Matt has only been with us about two years but has put a vast amount of effort into the club ,has risen through the ranks to become training officer in what must be record time and holds the world record for the distance driven for a pint of shandy! (High Wycombe to Pooles Cavern!) Some say he is a candidate for the "Wally Award"! The down side of all this is that we are stuck with him for another 3 years!!



Not
that
sort of
doctor!!

Have You Seen the Club Training Videos?

If not you should have! They are produced by Andy Sparrow and are compulsive viewing (for anyone who wants to get it right!) There is no charge but it has become traditional to make a donation of a pound for the privilege. Ralph also has a training video on ice climbing if anyone wants a look at it. They are guaranteed to give you a better nights viewing than that normally available on a Saturday evening!!



Two Warmbac oversuits (One large, one extra large) £56.00

Free to members!-Oldham spares.



He's in a hurry to pay his subs!!! Have you paid yours? Full £16.50, Associate £8.25.



One off
joining
fee £2.

New Members -Hire of Kit

At a recent meeting it was decided that new members could use kit FREE on 5 occasions after which a hire charge will apply. This means that you can use "basic" kit 5 times and "SRT" kit 5 times. Somewhere like Knotlow would obviously score "double" (one basic life, one SRT life) Carlsark would score "single" since no SRT kit is involved. A fee of £5 was suggested for basic kit, the same for SRT kit. I'm not sure that's clear-if its not please ask!

Centrefold on Way to Film Stardom!?

A well known CCPC centrefold model (who wishes to remain anonymous!) took his first step to film stardom today. Accompanied by another decrepit (founder) member of CCPC the pair were filmed rambling on about their part in the Neil Moss incident in 1959. They rounded the day off with a trip to the site of the "rescue" not bad since Brian had not been back there since the incident occurred and has not caved for a good few years. Onlookers were impressed with his fitness and agility (they used to breed 'em 'ard in them days-have you heard this before-when men were men!! etc) I didn't mention that he still leads "E something or other" and departs shortly for a "first ascent" in Alaska-and he's even older than our "anonymous centrefold"!

Wharf Mine Engine Shaft, Monvash, Derbyshire.

Paul Nixon, John Preston and I made many visits in 1998 to Wharf Mine Climbing Shaft during the project to open it, and, later, to repair the surface ginging. We were always interested in the possibility of gaining access to the capped engine shaft, seven metres away on the other side of the field wall, and the opportunity to take this idea further came when the landowner, Mr. John Mycock, came up to see how things were going at the climbing shaft. During the conversation I asked if he would have any objection to us opening the engine shaft, but he had no idea there was anything there, and thought the cap was just a patch of rough concrete for his cattle trough to stand on! Once I explained the situation he was happy for us to open the shaft top, so as long as we took appropriate care to make sure the site was always safe.

We left things until the repair work on the climbing shaft was completed, then in July 1999 Paul and I went out one Friday evening to try to carry out an inspection of the interior of the shaft collar. I'd already tunnelled in on the day when we fitted the 'P' bolts at the bottom of Wharf Climbing Shaft, but that was in order to pass a message to Brian, working with the drill far below (on a very long extension cable from the surface generator). Paul and I removed enough stonework from the top layers of the ginging to make a flat-out crawl under the edge of the concrete possible, then, with ground

anchors hammered in, plus extra belays on all the fence posts within reach, I pushed the end of a 10 metre electron ladder through into the shaft, followed by the SRT rope. the funny thing was, that the rope didn't really seem to be very long ! When I collected it from Ralph I thought I had picked up a 70 metre length, but it turned out to be a funny looking 4 not a 7, so we were about 30 metres short. Remember the golden rule and always tie a decent knot in the end of the rope !

Wriggling in was intimidating but once inside the shaft I could see that the ginging was in good condition, but the concrete cap itself was too small for the shaft, and was barely supported by the stonework which protruded on all sides, except, of course, the side we had just removed to get in. (OOPS !). Part way down, on one side, I could see that the ginging was supported by a shallow stone archway, and the shaft doubled in size below and plunged a further 15 metres (approximately) to a massive ledge, directly below the roofed section. The direct route plummeted all the way to the main chamber far below, as a single hauling shaft, but our rope barely reached halfway. Having been suitably frightened by the experience I grovelled back out to daylight so that Paul could swing around inside the shaft, making appreciative noises. Eventually we decided it was time for the pub so we removed our gear and closed the access hole we had made. We could see that the existing cap was in a precarious state, and would eventually end up in the main chamber if some thing wasn't done, so we started to make plans..

We were going to use concrete railway sleepers, with a steel frame and lid across the centre of the shaft, but, in trying to scrounge the sleepers from a Derbyshire County Council stockpile other people became involved. Ralph made contact with Mike Wright from D.C.C. and there suddenly seemed to be the prospect of D.C.C. organising a contractor and materials to cap the shaft in the interest of public safety ! A site meeting had to be arranged with a representative from English Nature (the shaft is within the Upper Lathkill Site of Special Scientific Interest) to ensure that there would be no objections, and with Mike Wright. Luckily Ralph was able to cover this as it was mid-week.

Mike agreed that the shaft could be dealt with by his department, and that he would allow us to incorporate a cavers' access lid into the cap. Massive concrete beams would be used rather than sleepers, to ensure a satisfactory overlap all around. The Millennium came and went while we waited for the weather to improve so that the contractor could use heavy equipment on the site. Paul scrounged the steel for the frame, but this was put together by Nigel to fit his existing surplus 'Bang Store' door, and this went out to the site in mid February, so that the contractor could use it as a pattern for cutting the access hole in the slab. The two 'Tembo' beams provided by D.C.C. were each 16 feet long by 4 feet wide, and 10 inches thick, and because of their weight could only be moved using a J.C.B.. They were cut to 12 feet in length, and while the aperture was cut, the J.C.B. was used to re-seat existing sleepers on other minor shafts in the neighbouring field. Mike had gained the necessary approval for the work from Mr. Mycock. After a good start the weather turned, and snow prevented the job being completed the next day, or for the rest of that week. Luckily that meant that I could be on site for completion, as the following week was half term.

I went out to Monyash on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, but no-one turned up to finish the job. We later discovered that the contractor had had an accident on another job and had to be replaced, which delayed the work even more. Finally, on 25th. February, the alternative contractor arrived on site, and by midday I had watched the old cap being removed, and the new beams swung into place on the levelled ground around the exposed shaft collar. The cattle trough was relocated and the 'caver opening' was covered for safety by a concrete 'offcut' until the lid and frame could be fitted. (Incidentally, a conservative estimate of the cost of the project to this point was about £800.)

We couldn't wait any longer, and with the concrete slabs in place, Paul, John Preston, Matthew Ryan and I turned up the following Saturday (4th. March 2000) for the grand first descent. We took a length of steel tube as the belay bar, backed up to the concrete slab with the cattle trough on it, and rigged the drop very carefully (and slowly) while Paul went in through the oil-drums to rig the first pitch in Hillocks. Eventually, with Paul back, there was no more reason to delay, and I slipped cautiously over the edge and started down. This is a stunning shaft, although I was probably too tense to really enjoy it, especially as the rope turned out to be just a little faster than I like. It is a superb free-hang, but lower down I was able to rest my back on the wall while I took a couple of photos (not too terrified for that). About two thirds of the way down (later measured at 19 metres up) I spotted a horizontal opening, partially blocked by rubble, in one wall, but I was more interested in getting to the bottom of the shaft than in airy acrobatics, so I took a quick snap of it and continued my descent. The shaft was later measured at 58 metres deep. John came down next, equally disconcerted by the speedy rope, followed by Paul, and finally Matt, who by that time was well frozen waiting on the surface.

I wanted to have a look at a series of small climbs and flat-workings that begin on the buttress to the right of the level with the 'Old Man's cross cut' in the roof, and extend over the top of the main chamber. I struggled up to the first level, followed by Matt, and we explored a couple of exposed traverses while Paul prussiked back up the Engine shaft to look at the opening in the wall. He managed a very difficult entry, the sort where you hook your ankle round a balanced boulder while attempting to back-prussik horizontally into a body sized slot while 19 metres up in a shaft (think about where the rope was hanging - not into the slot !). At about this time Matt and I realised that Paul now seemed to be somewhere above us, both by the curses drifting down, and by the rocks rattling down around us. Paul was able to haul up the main S.R.T. rope in the shaft with a second rope attached, and feed it into a space which he could see, but dared not crawl into, at the back of the ledge he was lying on. Surprise, surprise the rope reappeared close to the highest ledge Matt had reached, then dropped directly through another opening in the roof of the main chamber, to reach the floor below. Fortunately this also gave Matt a safer way back, as once Matt had taken hold of it, Paul released the second rope from above and Matt used it to abseil back to the ground. He dropped it around a rock bridge and John Preston acted as a ground anchor while Matt came down the other side. Paul decided he had had enough and wriggled back out and re-joined us below, then we made our way out via the normal route, free-climbing the second pitch, and using the rope left earlier on the first pitch. Incidentally we also spotted and recorded two previously unknown (by us anyway) miners' inscriptions.

The frame had gone back to Nigel so that he could continue the construction of the lid, and this was finally finished by Paul, followed by a painting session while it sat on the trailer in Paul's drive, then Paul and I took it out early on Sunday, 12th. March and fitted it into the slab. We were finishing off, and installing a stainless steel belay stake at the edge of the slab when a number of other members arrived to descend Knotlow Mine. We managed to persuade Steve Evans and Rob Farmer that they really needed to help us with some work at Lathkill Head top entrance, where we replaced the padlock with a nut and bolt fastening, and installed another belay stake. Naturally we also needed to have a quick trip down in order to check the P-bolts while we were there !

The following weekend I was back at Wharf for another painting session, and was able to impress a group of Masson C.C. members with the quality of the finished cap. Fortunately the wet paint kept them out, and a week later Paul and I were back to add six steel clamps and bars to lock the frame into the concrete. As we prepared to get started two of the Masson group arrived, but agreed to descend Wharf Climbing Shaft instead, so we could finish the job. We later rigged their rope for them as we expected them to come up the Engine Shaft, but they reappeared from over the wall having kept clear at the bottom in case of falling tools, and then they had the pleasure of being the first to use the new lid and the belays. (We wanted to make sure they were safe before we used them ourselves !!)

We were a little overburdened with rope, the electric drill and battery, a bolting kit, camera bag etc., so we lowered the bags first, then Paul descended next, intending to re-enter the opening in the shaft wall. I hung about on the surface, gradually getting colder and colder, until finally I decided to use some brain power and follow Paul on the Masson rope. No problem getting in, apart from the usual terror, and then off I went. I managed about ten metres before the horrible creaking sounds from the rope had me completing the fastest ever (for me that is) change over, rope to rope, and abseil to prussik, and then there I was back at the lid with everything possible clipped in. Once totally safe again I felt rather silly, so, as Paul's weight had come off our rope, I changed back to abseil and gently slid down to join him, trying to look as if I wasn't completely freaked. The slot looked horrible, with lots of loose debris all along the edge, and Paul peering at me from the other side. I tried the swinging in bit but with little success but then Paul got hold of one foot and dragged me in with me screaming, 'Don't let go ! DON'T BLOODY LET GO !!!'

Obviously I made it, and ended up lying on top of the rubble, wrapped in rope and clipped to Paul. Make no mistake this was a tight slot. I had to remove my helmet so I could turn my head to see what was on the inside of the slot. Paul was standing on two small ledges at the top of a superb shaft, about 1.5 metres by 1 metre, which dropped vertically below him. There was little we dared do until the Masson pair had prussiked back past us, hauling their rope up out of the way, then we dragged our own bags up from the Engine Shaft bottom and managed to squeeze them onto the ledge somewhere.



With no belays available, all this was really precarious, but at least with no people or kit below we were at last able to start work making the space more comfortable. I pushed everything within reach of feet or hands out into the Engine Shaft, while Paul kept his cows tails clipped to mine. The ledge is only about 1.5 metres wide, between the two shafts, so if one of us started to go the other one had to fall the opposite way ! Eventually there was enough space to sit up, so we were able to get organised and put in our total stock of three spits, two for a 'Y' hang for the new shaft, and one on the upper lip of the ledge, in the Engine Shaft. More rubble clearing followed, then Paul rigged the new pitch and set off down. It was another gem, rounded at the top, then changing to a more angular section where it broke into a natural rift before reaching Matt's high point of two weeks before, then straight down to the floor of the main chamber. There are at least two rub points which will need deviations, easily spotted by the polished surface and half-round grooves left by the miners' hauling ropes as they passed the same points. I followed Paul, making a few notes and measuring the new pitch at 19 metres. The ledge is 'Balcony', and this is 'Balcony Pitch'. Note: there are only three 8 mm. spits in place, all currently fitted with hangers (which should be left), but 'P' bolts will be fitted as soon as possible. We decided against reclimbing Balcony Pitch because of the rub points so Paul de-rigged by climbing the Engine Shaft rope again, then we made our way out via Hillocks entrance.

Access to the Engine Shaft is either via the normal Knotlow stile from the parking area, then turn right and walk up the field to the top left corner, or via the new stile in Blackwell Lane which gives access to Wharf Mine Climbing Shaft, then over the timber rails at the back corner of the copse. Anyone using the new Engine Shaft entrance must ensure that the shaft top is left in a clean and safe condition, both during and after their visit, and they must be courteous to Mr. Mycock or any of his staff. Please be particularly careful about leaving the lid open if there are any farm stock in any of the adjacent fields (as these interconnect), until the inner safety gate is in place.

Colin 'Steve' Knox. 27th. March 2000

P.S. Our commiserations must go out to Nigel who was unable to attend the "topping out ceremony" due to his "welding arm" needing a short stay in hospital for surgery!! Nigel put in a vast amount of work not only in designing and constructing the lid but also in site visits where he was able to convince DCC and English Nature as to our (i.e. his!) ability to produce a product to meet their strict specifications. It has been said that Nigel's erections are becoming famous! Hopefully he will make a speedy recovery-before our next project is in need of his skills!

And now-what you've all been waiting for-Meets.

4 April DCRO Pindale "Equipment"	6 May Diccan/Alum
9 April Flood Entrance/Stream Passage	27-29 May Yorks weekend
14 May Jug Holes. DCRO "Hauling"	
4 June DCRO Carlswark "Casualty Evacuation"	17/18 June BCRC Conference
10 June Odin Mine	9 July Pindale
24 June Pillar Hole	23 July Oxlow
16 July Lost Johns	26 Aug Stoney Middleton
6 Aug Chapel le Dale	
10 Sept DCRO "Casualty Care."	

Please bear in mind that this only represents a fraction of what really takes place. Trips are often organised at short notice - the best policy is to attend the monthly meetings, if you can't do that ring John, Matt or Ralph to see what is going on. There is normally something on every weekend and often mid week as well.

STOP PRESS. He's Back!! One-armed caver accompanied by muscular bouncer(!) seen carrying buckets of concrete in direction of Titan. I bet he can't build a lid that big!!

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