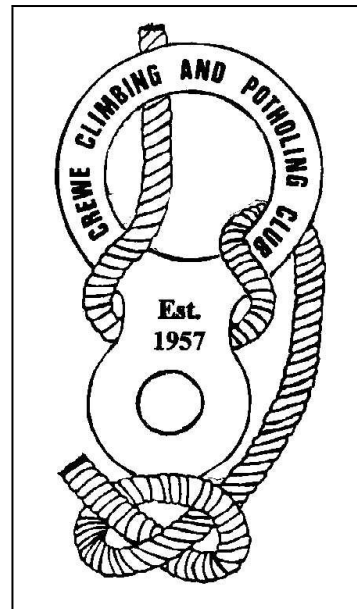


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OK so it's rather brief-you'll have to blame the F+M epidemic!! At least we are slowly getting back into action. Meets I'm afraid are still being arranged on an ad hoc basis 'cos as soon as we publish a meets list there is another outbreak and the area shuts down. If you are on our email list you should get regular updates (Although my computer has been out of action for best part of a month!!) if you're not you will have to ring John Matt or Ralph to see what's happening (there are normally 2 to 3 trips a week.)

(having fun in) DIDOS CAVE , Matlock

Due to foot and mouth restrictions on most cave diving sites around the country, Easter Monday saw Paul Gamble, Justin Higginson and myself dragging diving gear down Didos cave in Matlock. Didos is only a short (60 m) carry to the sump pool with a bit of a climb down to get to the water although the last bit of passage is a bit of a pain in the arse with diving gear. There are two ways down to the water, one being a bit easier in diving suits although this then involves a short duck to get to the diving base, the other way is better for lowering and hauling gear.

After an enjoyable dive, we were in the process of hauling the gear back up the climb. Justin and myself had gone back through the duck and then whilst Justin hauled stuff up the climb I started ferrying stuff past the 'pain in the arse bit' leaving Paul in the sump pool to tie on the cylinders for hauling.

After a few minutes Justin screamed back up the passage " Paul's gone!"

Feeling a wind up coming on I casually questioned this, to be told that Paul had gone into the duck and not come out on the other side. I rushed to a position where I could see both sides of the duck from above and sure enough, no sign of Paul. The seriousness of the situation fell on us both like a ton of bricks. We both virtually fell down the climb with me landing in the sump pool which I quickly groped around in with no success.

Well over a minute had now passed and we made plans to use a mud bank to resuscitate him on once we had pulled him out, but after searching the duck with our feet from both ends (the duck is only about three feet long) there was still no sign of him! Until Justin noticed an undercut underwater going off to one side of the duck. I pushed my feet in and felt an ongoing passage for one body length. This had become a nightmare, not only did we presume Paul drowned but we could not even find him to help. All the gear was at the top of the climb and so Justin shot up there and hurled down a cylinder, valve and mask which I entered the water with. After only a few feet I came across Paul's foot and to my great relief Paul shook it. He had inadvertently swam down this passage and luckily found an air

space to breath from (although he said it was so small had had to take his helmet off to breath from it) but was disoriented and unsure of which direction to return. I swam back to Justin to get another cylinder to get Paul out with but whilst Justin was sorting this, Paul had realised which direction I had come from, taken a breath and was heading back out, we could hear his helmet scraping along the roof and when it came into sight I grabbed him and pulled him to the surface.

I cannot even begin to describe the relief of seeing him back alive although Paul seemed quite unfazed by the whole thing, his first words on surfacing were " you bastard, your wearing my mask ". Justin and I then sat there for a few minutes to recover and let the adrenalin fade before making our way out and back to the car through a very busy Matlock in caving gear!

Looking back, none of us had noticed the passage on the way in although the water levels were quite high on the day and it might have been a bit more noticeable in normal conditions, and on returning home a good look at a survey showed it quite clearly, and what's more, its over 10m long.

What we make light of since could have had a very different conclusion.

What if Paul hadn't stayed so calm?

What if the air space wasn't there?

What if we hadn't got any diving gear to look for him with, leaving him to go again in the wrong direction?

Such a simple looking duck would never normally warrant a hauling line but that would have prevented the problem, as might have wearing a mask. The best defence against this sort of thing would have been to have studied the survey closely in the first place and sought advice of others who have visited the cave. Still, another lesson learnt, although its taken a couple of weeks to persuade Justin to come caving again!

Post script..

We have since returned to Didos and dived in normal conditions. The duck is much shorter but once the silt is stirred up you would never know the side passage exists, although the chance of someone getting lost in a one-foot duck is very slim.

We did however have a swim down it, to find the air space now big enough for us to talk to each other in. however it is blind after 10 - 12 metres and not suitable for free diving.

Max Higginson. (Apologies to Max for the delay in printing this-it JUST missed the last NL deadline!)

New Zealand Trip Feb 2002

Well she's finally made an honest man of him-almost!" Kev and Bron are getting wed on the 2nd Feb 2002 and you are all invited. Apparently there will be lots to do both before and after the wedding so start saving and planning NOW.

LED BULBS

After reading a report by the cave diver Rick Stanton as well as a contact in an old CCPC newsletter, I decided to look into this latest craze. My helmet mounted diving lights only last for about three hours on NiCads (six - eight hours on prime cells but this gets very expensive with four or six, six cell units) which after a few four hour dives last year left me swimming out on just one kidney pack, which leaves no redundancy in the event of a failure.

A phone call to Coventry based caver John Biffin (02476 888949) resulted in him 'knocking up' two special bulbs to fit a Princeton Tec 40 torch kindly donated to the cause by Paul Gamble., which after a bit of modification with a file and soldering iron to the torch produced a respectable beam that seemed very bluish to start although I don't notice it any more.

I left the torch on to test the duration (much to the annoyance of my girlfriend who became sick of seeing it around the house) and found it produced at light bright enough to cave with for about two days and then reduced to the level of a crappy pilot light (i.e. one of mine) for at least eight days, when I got bored of the test and put it away.

The bulb John Biffin supplied runs at 4 volts and so I had to fit a dummy cell from Maplin Electronics to produce 4.5 volts in a four-cell torch. The batteries were cheap ones from Ikea (£ 1.90 for 10) and I suspect the performance would be increased with Duracells or similar . Paul Gamble now has a similar unit but with seemingly less duration, indicating that a few more teats are needed to find the optimum set up.

The bulbs seem to continue to function at lower outputs at relatively low voltages when compared to a tungsten bulb which might go some way to explain the long duration. Whatever the reason, this type of bulb would be an ideal back up light or for use in an underground camp. They are far from cheap but are apparently a lot more resilient to physical knocks and have a life of hundreds of thousands of hours.

On a last note, I have heard a few people mention that some that certain 'makes' of bulbs have higher output than others. Whether this is something started by the various people that make these things to fight off competition I don't know, but I am very happy with mine so far.

MAX HIGGINSON

Bits n Pieces.

Salesman of the year must go to Jim Shallcross who managed to dispose of a considerable quantity of our old rope plus three surplus “monster” karabiners AT A PROFIT!

If you haven't already heard the fixed ladder installed in P8 by Terry and Keith around 12 years ago (to replace the old one) has been removed by Gareth and Matt (on a pre-emptive strike- Jim and Brian E. had planned to do it the following night!) Plans are afoot to replace the one in Oxlow with a pull-thro' - And it must be time we removed the one from “Rob's Dig”

If you are visiting Majorca and want to do some canyoning I have loads of info brought back from the trip in August (Article due in next issue- I hope!)

Jim Shallcross would like to know if anyone is interested in some “Tin Mine Exploration” in Cornwall –bank holiday 2002.

Constipated? Nigel Cooper is organising a one-day course on removing blockages. If you want to know more contact Nigel.

If you want details of a “Sponsored Trip” to S. America contact Ralph. Basically you get sponsorship (£2000+) and then go trekking – charity keeps the profit.

“Stockport Tunnels” has had to be postponed (due to the brewery being fully booked! Or maybe they were familiar with Mark's drinking capacity when the ale is free!!)

Tunnels Walk on the Monsal Trail is booked for 27 October. Contact John (£5.00 I think) if you want to ab off the bridge let Ralph know.

Ralph has a very useful contact if anyone fancies caving in Romania.

Oversuits. These are a bit thinner than Warmbac therefore more flexible. Waterproof ones at £35.00, breathable £40.00 Prices correct at time of going to press. I need to order 5 so if you want one let Ralph know. Ralph still has some breathable “gore-tex” jackets at around £45.00. These are imported from Nepal, hence the ridiculously low price.

Brief Summary of Watson.

The Yorkshire Dales are beginning to open up so those bored with the same old Peak District trips will be making sorties further north on a “last minute” basis. Ring as usual for details.

1 October. Meeting, Bleeding Wolf 8.30.

6/7 Yorks? (Bull Pot?)

12-14 October BCRA Conference in Buxton. **Help required.** (CCPC+DCRO) For those wishing to attend the conference Steve Knox has details.

18 October (morning)” Dyson Washing Machine goes underground” (in Peak Cavern).!!! If you are free and can help ring Ralph. If you are simply curious –hard luck. This could be your chance to become a film star!!

20 October DCRO General Meeting.

21 October DCRO Exercise. Peak Cavern.

27 October. Monsal Trail tunnels (with option to abseil) Contact John.

18 November DCRO Whitehall. All welcome-I don’t have details of the programme.

2 December. I am arranging a “guess the age” competition at a hostelry in Castleton at around 2.30 (pm!) Sunday 2/12/01. Those fit enough/slim enough/so inclined can join me on a nostalgic trip down Peak first. Those too old/infirm/ incapable can still join me for the competition –why not go for a walk or a bike ride first. (Modest refreshments provided)

Ralph J.

PS If you are coming please let me know a couple of weeks in advance.

There will be lots more but as already stated plans are being made at short notice to avoid F+M problems.

Nothing here you fancy? Want to try something different, or one of your old favourites? Give John a ring-he’ll be glad to oblige.