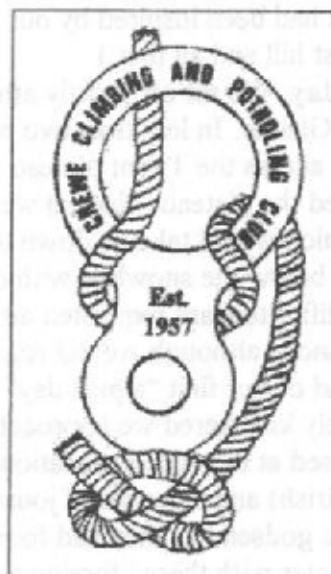


C.C.P.C.

Newsletter 76.

Xmas 2002.

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk



Poorly equipped novice female causes rescue call-out on CCPC trip down Juniper Gulf!

On our October trip to JG an ill- equipped female managed to fall down the entrance pitch of Juniper and survive apparently uninjured! Puzzled?- see 999x2 below.

999x2=???

1998-wrong- it equals a "typical CCPC day in the Dales!" On our way down Juniper Gulf we came across a sheep on its way to the top of the second pitch! It seemed subdued by its experience but remarkably healthy after its (presumably) free descent and it perked up considerably when Darren shared his flapjack with it. Instructing it to stay more or less where it was we completed the trip then called out CRO on our exit requesting a harness in order to effect the rescue. (call-out no.1) CRO turned up with the required kit (a large canvas bag) and the casualty was returned to the surface, limping a little but eating ravenously which presumably is a good sign.

By this time we were well overdue so Tony R duly pushed the button and called out CRO to assist an overdue group of cavers (call-out no.2) Fortunately we were able to prevent too much activity as we met the bobby at Crummack as he came to investigate the "shout". All in all a good day out with a chance to do our good deed for the day.

Haute Route (almost) 2002.

After a 21-hour non-stop drive Jenny, Annie and I arrived in Tasch, the nearest access point to Zermat by road. No sign of Gareth and Darren who were travelling by air and hire-car, they arrived the following morning at around 0930. Not wishing to waste any time we quickly sorted out details for our forthcoming attempt on the "Haute Route" from Chamonix (Le Tours in reality) to Zermat which we planned for the following day.

Sunday. Following complicated and protracted negotiations with the warden of the site (THE most miserable site owner in Europe!) Darren left his car on the large private car park close to the station and three hours later we were buying our cable car tickets in Le Tours for the brief ride up to the top lift station.

A couple of hours later we were sitting on the terrace of the Albert Premier hut supping a passable lager. Sadly the visibility was poor but as I sat there memories of our "Tour de Three Cols" walk in the early nineties flooded back which came about as a result of our (successful) attempt on Mont Blanc

which had been inspired by our conquest of the Gouffre Berger the previous summer. (Deepest cave – biggest hill and all that.)

Monday. We set off shortly after dawn roping up about twenty minutes later as we arrived on the Le Tour Glacier. In less than two hours we were on the col. It was fairly cold but as the sun came up the views across the Trient plateau were magnificent with surprisingly few people on the route. Having crossed the plateau (glacier) we removed crampons and outer clothing before setting off for the Brea lift which would take us down to Champex saving us a 600m steep descent. We accomplished the walk down below the snowline with only one navigational error finding it pleasant if exposed in places. The chair lift attendant requested around £20 a head for the short trip down- the decision to walk was unanimous although we did regret the decision from time to time finding the walk steep and tiring at the end of our first "alpine day".

Suitably knackered we approached an upmarket looking auberge (Bon Abri) where we were pleasantly surprised at the accommodation and prices. A very pleasant evening was spent chatting to the landlord (part Irish) and a couple of journalists trying to write an article on a new long distance walk. I think we were a godsend as they had found the route boring and planned to liven it up with a description of their encounter with these "foreign explorers".

Tuesday. A leisurely stroll to the bus stop left us with five minutes to spare. At this point DC realised he had left his money in the auberge! Seeing him sprint back up the road in four season mountain boots filled us with pity (almost!) The remainder of us were left pleading with the driver to delay his departure 'til Darren returned which fortunately he did.

A change of 'bus in Orsieres and we were soon at our destination for the next part of the walk- Bourg St. Pierre. (It was this village that recently presented the French Govt. with a bill {including compound interest} for food requisitioned –and never paid for- by Napoleon and his 30,000 troops on his way to conquer Italy!)

The route to the Valsorey hut is pleasant despite the gain in altitude of 1400metres. I was particularly chuffed to get some (brief) footage of a young ermine-we were lucky enough to see the entire family prior to me getting the camera set up. The last km is particularly steep ending in a narrow gully equipped with pitons and a VERY tatty piece of nylon rope. We were the only residents booked in, as a group of Italians never arrived. As we retired the weather, which had looked suspect all day, took a turn for the worse.

Wednesday. We sat around all morning waiting for the conditions to improve- there was no way we were going to attempt the stretch over the Plateau du Couloir and Sonadon Glacier in bad weather and poor visibility. We deliberated all morning until the boy friend of the guardian made up our minds for us by being particularly unpleasant about us "spreading out" in an otherwise empty dormitory! The decision was made "sod it!" Missing out the steep gully and tatty rope we climbed down a short snowfield that Gareth had noticed the night before onto firmer ground before walking back to Bourg St Pierre. This was Jennies "bad day" as her calf muscles were giving her stick from the previous day. Another up-market looking establishment provided excellent accommodation and meal at a very reasonable price.

Thursday. The poor weather continued so we all took the 'bus down to Orsieres where I was despatched via 'bus, rail, and shank's to recover the Jeep while the rest had a lazy day around the tiny village. The spectacular journey, recovering the vehicle and returning to Tasch took us until early evening. Discussions with misery guts and a visit to the Tourist Office promised better weather. We ate out (the norm) and had an early night having made plans to travel to Mauvoisin to continue the walk the following day, missing out the one-day section already aborted.

Friday. Our "early start" became a "late start" following a flat battery on the Jeep (who says inverters have cut-outs) Our departure was delayed even further by trying to negotiate parking on the site for the hire car the ROOF of which had been damaged during its stay on the previous parking area-DC had calculated the cost could be in the region of £500! He vowed never to hire another car! The drive to Mauvoisin is spectacular and one wonders how the coach drivers negotiate the route. An hour or so

was spent examining the impressive dam before we set off for the walk up to the Chanrion Hut which is "fairly level" (for the Alps) until the final couple of K where one has to gain around 600m! The views of the Mont Durand Glacier, which has a particularly spectacular ice fall on it, from the hut confirmed our decision to "give it a miss" in bad weather was a good one. Sadly, despite being probably the most accessible hut (by 4 by 4) on the route the food was poor-particularly for vegetarians.

Saturday. This was my "bad day"- probably a result of little to eat and a chorus of snorers who kept me awake for most of the night! We began by dropping down around 250m to gain the narrow route leading up moraine to the Ottomma Glacier. It seemed a lot easier coming down it with DC and Kev four years previously when we all thought it to be "horizontal! In fact it climbs steadily for around eight or nine kilometres to the rocks leading to the Vignettes Hut- a total height gain of about 1500metres. A steep snowfield leads from the glacier to the rocks/snow leading to the hut. Although easy the consequences of a slip would spell disaster and both Jenny and I, who were bringing up the rear, opted to keep our ice-axes "at the ready" in order to arrest any slip. The route has a "sting in it's tail" with a very exposed rock rib (very awkward in crampons) leading the final 50 or so metres to the hut. Personally I wouldn't like to try it in strong winds-several of us resorted to "hands and knees" in order to gain the hut. The hut (that had taken us a good 6 or 7 hours to reach) can be reached from Arolla by a steep but easy path was busy with a lot of "weekend traffic" We spent the evening taking bearings and putting grid refs into our GPS in order to make our journey to the Col de l'Evoque the following morning relatively trouble free should the visibility be poor.

Sunday. Excellent conditions with good visibility although thunderstorms were forecast for the evening. With luck we would be tucked up in bed in the Bertol Hut and the route could be finished the following day-we had planned two days in one as we know from previous experience that the walk down from Schonbiel hut could be done in under three hours.

We didn't bother roping up until we began the climb up to Col du l'Eveque. The route through the crevasses was obvious and easy (much easier than the "short cut" taken four years earlier) As we approached the col we could see climbers approaching us-presumably from one of the Italian huts as it was too early to have made it from Arolla or the Bertol Hut. As we descended the steep ice and snow towards the upper Arolla Glacier it began to rain. Reaching the glacier we donned waterproofs-non too soon as it really did begin to hammer down.

Regrouping just before the Plans de Bertol we ate a miserable lunch while we discussed the advisability of the 700m climb up to the hut in wet cloths with a thunderstorm forecast. There would be no way of drying our wet clothes (and Darren wasn't even carrying a gore-tex!) The following day over the Col de Valpelline would be miserable. Having convinced each other of this we set off DOWN to Arolla via a circuitous route involving a climb and traverse across loose scree instead of the correct route along the glacier! Again we were lucky to find cheap accommodation in a dortoir belonging to the best hotel in town! An excellent meal was followed by a copious quantity of wine and a good night's kip

Monday. Jenny's turn to collect the Jeep- the round trip would take her about eight hours (assuming it would start) The rest of us set off on a walk of "around eight K" to Evoline although in the event it felt more like double that despite superb views of the north side of The Matterhorn. Once again it was evening by the time we arrived in Tasch.

Tuesday. Again an early start was planned-for some strange reason I had agreed to do The Briethorn (Switzerland's easiest 4000m peak) Needless to say we missed the first train but caught the next and were soon donning crampons on the Klein Matterhorn. It takes around two hours from the cable car to the summit. Most of us found this OK but Jenny was beginning to feel the affects of the altitude. We decided to continue along the ridge towards Pollux and Castor although we had no chance of reaching them in the time available. As we reached the col at around 4000m Jenny was feeling distinctly unwell but a superbly corniced ridge beckoned. A decision to cut the rope (MY rope!) was made enabling Darren and Gareth to continue along the inviting ridge while Annie and I accompanied Jenny to where the air had a few more "O s" in it, it took a drop of around 1000m before she felt better.

Wednesday. An easy day was planned – in the event we drove to Gasenried and walked up to the Ried Glacier a climb of around 700m, far more than we intended. Darren and Gareth pretended to be ice climbers while I tried to fake some “crevasse –jumping shots- just for the film you understand! On his descent Darren picked up an unusual souvenir-the tail end of a mortar shell which he found embedded in the ice.

Thursday. Darren and Gareth caught the Gornergrat train for an attempt on the Monte Rosa. Jennie, Annie and I set out for a saunter up to the Gorner Glacier our route being cut short by a steep wall of ice, steep unstable rocks and the possibility of a slip ending in (grade 7!!) white water and a watery grave.

Friday. A cloudy day and unknown to us the two lads were battling against poor visibility, high winds, extreme cold in an attempt to succeed in their Monte Rosa summit bid before finally turning back (along with other potential summiteers) with about 200m to go. Jenny and Annie set off in the direction of the Taschorn while I caught the train and cable car to Furi in an abortive attempt to get some decent shots of the last days walk on the Haute Route. Sadly this was thwarted by the low cloud but I do recommend anyone contemplating the route east to west to use Furi as a starting point. Surprisingly the path taken four years previously (by Kev, Darren and I) was no longer accessible due to constant rock falls. Darren and Gareth were in bed by about 6.30, some indication of their efforts earlier in the day!

Saturday. Glorious weather with perfect visibility, inevitable I suppose as it was time to leave. Darren was left to negotiate costs with misery guts as the girls and I set off on the 20 hour drive home.

Sunday. Ending on a good note- for some inexplicable reason the hire company failed to charge Darren and Gareth for the damage to the roof of the car.

Would I go again? Probably- if it were not for the increasingly long “to do” list that gets longer the more I cross off!

Ralph, July 2002.

Wharf (Hillocks) Sough

Prior to 1740 a sough was driven in order to drain Wharf Mine (now often referred to as Hillocks). CCPC and others have been active in this mine from time to time with one of their objectives being the location of this ancient drainage level. One of the possible sites we thought worthy of further investigation (we are investigating several!) was the flooded level one finds by turning left at the foot of the “Hillock Entrance”. In 1963 John A Robey wrote in a PDMHS journal (No1, pp51-56) that he had been informed by Dr T Ford that “this level dries up in extreme drought giving no possibility of an extension.

Having visited the site on a moderately regular basis since the late 50s I have never seen the level “bone dry” so remained unconvinced. In June 2000 (CCPC NL 66) Max Higginson was persuaded to dive the “sump” reporting that the way on was blocked by boulders. In Summer 2001 an abortive attempt to pump out the level was abandoned when the generator refused to behave itself!

On Sept 11th 2002 a group of (mainly) Coffin Dodgers CG drawn from Crewe and Masson visited the site armed with the kit necessary to pump out the level. Early evening Matt found an excuse to disappear for a while leaving me to guard the “jenny” while Dave went to collect more fuel and a fish and chip supper. Eventually Matt returned armed with his usual display of “essential” IT equipment including laptop and other peripheral paraphernalia. Things went well with the level dropping rapidly until after about 8 or 9 hours the fall in level slowed considerably and it was obvious that our technique had to be improved.

Two days later Matt Ryan, Andy Banner and self turned up armed with the usual kit plus a more powerful pump and a longer (and less perforated) outlet hose! Sat evening saw Andy and Matt on “pump duty” with me admiring the generator and the bats that, presumably disturbed by the nocturnal intruders, circled the shaft as the group climbed out. By around midnight Andy had disappeared so Matt made a last check of the pump (his umpteenth trip up and down the 200’ shaft) before we turned in at around oneish.

At three we were awoken by silence- the generator was out of fuel. It was duly filled and restarted but "didn't sound right". Neither of us fancied a nocturnal trip so we went back to bed leaving the site in silence for a few hours. At around 7 we restarted the generator and Matt made yet another trip to check the business end.

By lunchtime the level had dropped to within about 12" of the "floor" but it was obvious that time would not permit us to finish pumping AND explore passages measureless to man.

At this point Andy arrived back on site so we took the opportunity to pull the heaviest of the gear back up the shaft.

On a recent visit the water had not returned to its previous level.

Ralph J

Refurbishment in Oxlow

Following an inspection by mines inspector Dave Carlisle (funded by PICA) our previous concerns about the entrance slope were confirmed: despite sterling work by Brian Edmonds and Jim Shallcross (and are large quantity of polyurethane foam!) it was "on the move". (Older cavers will remember the slope when there was barely a step in it let alone a pitch!)

Following discussions Nigel Cooper (CCPC) studied the report and agreed to take on the job of team leader. On Saturday 5 October work began with the 4-man team from Crewe being supplemented by Masson member - Ann Soulsby. Other MCG members Dave Webb and Mick Watson collected the heavy sheets of "Armco" and delivered them on site on Mick's works flat bed lorry. (Dave stuck around for a while but then beat a hasty retreat in the direction of Titan!). Thanks mainly to Andy Banner's muscle, the heavy metal work soon found its way to the foot of the shaft. I was assigned to surface duties while those already mentioned plus Len Kirkham got to work "at the face". Sadly the job had to be abandoned late in the afternoon due to "technical difficulties" but plans are afoot to complete the job on Sat 19 October.

According to plan (for a change) On Sat 19th October the above team, supplemented by Andy Herries and Lionel Parkinson duly arrived at Oxlow to complete the work. After a very long day the majority of the work was completed with all the supporting steelwork securely fixed in position. A little tidying up remains to be done as does some pointing further down the slope and to the ginging in the entrance shaft.

Matt bottoms deepest cave in China! Received an email from Matt- the expedition had reached the bottom of the deepest cave in China at -920m (about 5k horizontal) His report follows :

It's a bit longer than I was planning but how does the following sound ? I've attached a survey as we left it in June, we're drawing the rest of it up at the moment but I wouldn't risk delaying publication since it's going to take a while and probably be of fairly limited interest anyway. In May/June this year Brian Judd and I took a brief diversion from the Hong Meigui expedition to go and take a look at a shaft (Qi Keng Dong) he'd found while waiting for a bus on his way back from an expedition in Tian Xing (Jiang Kou, Wulong County, Chongqing, China) last year. The plan was to bottom this one shaft and then go and join the others in a neighbouring caving area. Nothing quite happens like it's supposed to and our supposedly low key minimalist three or four day expedition got off to a flying start when a company which runs a show cave amongst other tourist attractions decided they'd like to send some reporters along with us. Oh, and provide a translator, jeep, food, accommodation and as much beer as we could drink. Even more to our surprise we were actually allowed to go caving in our chosen cave and the reporters stayed out of our way. Perhaps even more surprisingly was the fact that the cave continued to go, to the extent that we ran out of rope in a steeply dropping streamway (we'd already long since run out of hangers which had lead to some necky rerigging to get as far as we did). Our next task was to contact the others (Erin Lynch, Duncan Collis, Rob Garrett), which after a lot of

hassle we did. It turned out they were staying in a farmhouse about two hours walk from the nearest phone although a couple of days later and just before we'd been going to give in and derig someone walked down from the village to get a message to them and they rang us back. It turned out their area was also going strongly and large quantities of beer on both ends of the line didn't make the decision process any easier or rational but eventually we managed to persuade them to come and join us - the free beer probably helped matters our way. The others were less impressed by our somewhat minimalist / wet rigging but we continued rigging down for a few trips and lost a lot of height but a multitude of factors got in our way, a broken drill, a broken tooth (mine!), a visiting parent, an approaching world cup and an ovulating wife who wanted impregnating. We left the cave still going at about -660m and derigged with a vague plan to return sometime. We had a bit of a holiday and then continued with expeditions to other areas before finally going home and attempting to join the real world again. I soon decided this was a bad idea and I'd be much better off going back to China and made tentative plans to go out for another few months spanning Christmas and New Year. Just when I ought to have been starting a PhD I started to get some interesting e-mails. The China Caves Project expedition to Xin Long (The great crack) had been very much flooded off and Erin and Brian plus two others had gone back to Tian Xing and continued pushing on down. This continued as a single 160m pitch (rebelayed !) to horizontal development. I enviously watched the survey grow from afar and then progress be halted by a lack of cavers with only Erin and an injured Brian left and an urgent e-mail requesting assistance. How could I refuse - I could either eat into savings by not working in Britain or live for free (near as) in China. Before I could even finish the write up of the previous trip I rented my house out for six months and bought a one-way ticket as soon as I could organise it all. Got a long stay visa in Hong Kong and a train across China and made a start at catching up on the survey backlog while we waited for more reinforcements. A couple of weeks after the original e-mail and there were eleven of us in the country working on Qi Keng Dong and other nearby entrances. Again sponsored by the show cave company only without the reporters this time. Erin and Brian had built bamboo, gaffer tape and tarpaulin hammocks and some hand stitched sleeping bags made from Chinese duvets and set up a campsite at the bottom of the vertical section of cave and we took it in turns to push the lower section. This lead to a Peak Cavern plus sized streamway in dry weather (and a torrent if it rained at all on the surface). Brian's far point had been part way down a fantastic 60m pitch in this streamway, "Dragon's Mouth". Everyone who visited said it was the finest pitch they had ever seen, and between us we've seen a huge number of pitches. The only comparison is GG main chamber on a wet day but that's not even close. The entire chamber was full of spray yet the water fell clear of any ledges and straight to the floor. The descent was rigged hanging within a couple of meters of the wall and 5-10m from the waterfall and was rebelayed halfway. At the bottom was a large and very windy lake. Under normal conditions it felt like standing at the top of a Scottish mountain in winter or on the coast in a storm. Under heavier water conditions swimming around its edge was very intimidating with foot high waves bashing you against the cliffs. It didn't help that I'd decided not to bother with a wetsuit that day! Sadly we just didn't have the photo gear for it - definitely a couple of flashbulbs shot and our combined flash guns and slaves wouldn't have helped even if we'd had the lenses for it. By chance it was my turn at a pushing trip on the trip that got to the bottom of the streamway at -920m making it easily the deepest cave in China (By some definitions the Great Doline that CCP have been pushing is slightly deeper but since the first 666m is in daylight with a footpath to the homes at the bottom we don't think it counts, and nor does anyone else, China Caves included.) We detackled the streamway and headed back to camp where we had a night's rest before heading back to the surface with as much metalwork as we could carry. Sadly a seriously optimistic surface team consisting of Chris Densham and Harvey Smith thought they'd have a go at hand bolting a traverse - which had stopped high level progress - with the hope of finding a bypass. This meant in less than an hour after we'd surface (just long enough to plot the survey) they were on their way back down with all the gear we'd just prussicked out. They actually found a bit of cave passage on an epic pushing trip and so the exploration continued and a couple of days later following a frantic call on the Nicola System radio I was back down with Chris for the last two pushing trips before we would be out of time and need to

derig. Tales of four draughting leads were less impressive when we were told about the swimming duck to get to them but we settled down for a night's sleep anyway. We awoke to the rumble of water that meant the streamway was definitely up. After a lot of sleeping and eating and a notable absence of radio contact for weather forecasts there was still no sign of the water going down - which was a shame since the previous pushing team's SRT kits (Erin and Duncan) were in the streamway and they obviously couldn't get out without them. As a four we set off with as much flotation as we could muster and set off down the streamway re-rigging many of the traverse and flotation lines in the process for a somewhat "sporting" trip. Chris and I borrowed Erin and Duncan's gear and set off to see what chance we had of retrieving the gear which had been left at the pushing front but it was basically none and so we decided to abandon the kit and go back and eat and sleep some more. No sign of the water going down and still no luck raising anyone on the cave radio we set off to make a very wet start on the derig but we soon realised boiler suits and nothing else (normally we were overheating on the prussic out) were not adequate clothing and even with all our thermals (which we'd been wearing at the campsite) we only managed to derig the bottom rope before it was realised we were far too cold to do any more. By now we were supposed to be going to sleep after our final pushing trip (and Erin and Duncan should already have surfaced) so we knew there was a derigging party coming in soon to take over so we abandoned some of our tackle bags with kit from camp and made a hurried exit passing the derigging team on the way in. A short night's sleep and news of a successful derig of rope to nearly half way up the cave and all four of us plus Harvey were back down again, this time in TSAs and furies which was far too warm but strangely we all now preferred it that way. We managed to get all of the rope to the bottom of the entrance pitch before midnight and we returned the next morning to haul it all directly into the back of a truck which took it all down to the river so we could wash it all. Another day to measure and check it all and the expedition was over leaving just Erin, Duncan and I in country. While we had been underground not pushing Qi Keng Dong, the second deepest cave in China, Dong Ba had just hit BIG horizontal development and a connection with Qi Keng, the show cave, the surface or all three. It's entrance is much lower down the valley and it's deep point is at a lower elevation than Qi Keng's (and still going at -650m) so a connection would create a deeper overall system as well as letting us get 150 squids worth of gear back. After a couple of days off we're going to continue pushing Dong Ba for a week or two before derigging this cave and moving on to some horizontal caving since this prussiking's starting to wear us all out - not only have we worn out a huge number of Stop bobbins but also a surprising number of Crolls and Hand Jammers (in a variety of different failure modes depending on technique and model revision). We brought out just over a hundred quid's worth of gear per person and spent a total of 25 quid per person during the expedition on various things but our food, accommodation and beer was sponsored by the showcave company again. I think my total transport costs from Hong Kong came to about 30 pounds so it was a pretty cheap expedition overall. The other piece of good news is that the showcave company have offered to sponsor another expedition next year so if anyone's interested in some deep caving then let me know. In the short term (i.e. before I really should think about returning to Britain) we've also got expeditions planned to the huge horizontal fossil stuff China's famous for, more SRT, plus big river caves - as well as to an area with better depth potential than Tian Xing (which has a theoretical limit of about a kilometre and even this is about to be reduced by a new dam) If you want to know more about the sort of things we've been up then there's a lot of disorganised information, photos etc on:

www.survex.com/~erin/

www.survex.com/~hmg/

www.survex.com/~hmg/tianxing.htm

<http://homepage.mac.com/brianjudd/cavedive/cave.html>

www.mdryan.net

Let me know on [REDACTED] or via Ralph if you might be interested in coming out at some stage and I'll send you some more details. **Matt.**

Hillocks.

The general census of opinion is that pumping out the "sump" should wait until spring when hopefully the weather will make surface duties a little less unpleasant. Len has access to TWO pumps and gradually we are building up a stock of outlet hose. Lionel and Nigel are in the process of sorting out the "jenny" which seems to be producing insufficient voltage.

Question- does it matter on which side you have the opening on your sit harness maillon?

Insurance.

As mentioned in our last newsletter – our insurance has doubled. Obviously this will lead to an increase in annual subs but it also means we will have to "tighten up" on our procedures. If "members" don't pay up on time (end March) they will have to be classed as "visitors" and charged temporary membership until they get round to paying. Not only do late/ non-payers cost us money – if there was an accident for which the club was liable then we would not be insured. Increasingly landowners are demanding that cavers have evidence of insurance before being given access. Already Dan yr Ogof management have insisted on this so have Chatsworth Estates who control Lathkill Head and Garden Path. It seems certain that the custom will spread. Its worth considering this when caving in an "informal" way with mates who may well not be insured. It may be worth persuading them to pay temporary membership if only to cover YOU! We are hoping to come to some arrangement whereby members who are in several clubs do not end up paying twice (or more)

Answer "yes" – on the LEFT, but why?

Equipment.

A couple of years ago the club received a lottery grant towards providing gear for possible members. This was to provide the opportunity for aspirant cavers to "have a go" at minimal expense before making a decision on joining. It also meant they are adequately clad as opposed to caving in "cast offs". On a couple of occasions we have hired out this equipment **at a commercial rate** to three organisations (Up & Down Adventures, Manchester Metropolitan Uni, D Edwards Associates) and the income from this should **more** than compensate for wear and tear when replacement becomes inevitable- we're not going to get another grant! Perhaps members who take out the gear should consider a reasonable donation when using it with friends who are NOT likely to become members.

The opening should be on the LEFT when the maillon is in the correct position (– with the opening at the bottom.) This means that as the rope runs across it (as you ascend) it will tend to tighten the screw thread not undue it. That's why you occasionally find your maillon has mysteriously undone itself!
P. Ton (Equipment Adviser)

What to do if

DCRO are considering running a course next March (last weekend) on "what to do if the worst happens" It's aimed at ALL cavers so ANYONE interested please let Ralph know ASAP. He's trying to gauge interest to see if the course is worth running. Cost £20.00. Optional trip down Peak Cavern on the Sunday (cost –as usual)

Meets.

You should find a separate sheet somewhere with this lot detailing trips Jan- end March. And that's just to be going on with! There will be others. Neil Wood is trying to arrange some trips in the Matlock area.- and if you want to get involved in a "dry, dusty dig" see Len- on second thoughts.... Brian G is keen on a "quickie" in Ireland. (Due west from Hollyhead) any takers?

Oxlow.

On Saturday 16th Nov Jenny, Andy B, Alan and Dave Webb returned for the "final hit" on Oxlow. The day began with veterinary duties on "Snowy" one of the Oxlow cows. Having turned the cow (and treated her bed sores) we failed miserably to get even close to the hole in the Jeep. Roy (the farmer) came to the rescue moving some of the gear up in his Daihatsu (off road tyres) We spent a good day, cutting and fitting Armco (the genny worked well!) packing material behind the steel (not finished) and pointing up some of the loose gining.

The day ended with yet another visit to the intensive care barn where we made an unsuccessful attempt to get Snowy on her feet. Trying to lift ½ ton (should that be tonne) proved too difficult for the Coffin Dodgers – even with the addition of the youthful Jenny. She, the cow that is, looked distinctly unwell when we left her.

The next (and final) job is to do something about the timber towards the foot of the slope. Discussions as to a sensible course of action are currently taking place.

A dry/dusty one!!

Since becoming involved in the club's activities over a year ago, much progress has been made on digs already established – notably Hill House, where the "cut and cover" has been replaced by Imtrdia concrete pipes. This copper mine is one of the oldest in the area, abandoned in 1800 as "worked out." It will be fascinating to walk up the level for the first time in 200 years. Great care needs to be taken by the first in. The portal is to be gated shortly, by LK & DC. The stow has been removed from the shaft near the "trig point" 1420 AOD, and taken to Lime Kiln Shaft dig. Hill House now awaits better weather.

Royledge

The Royledge copper mine is accessible to members on request, as are other mines in the Manifold area. A curious aspect of the Royledge dig some 10 years ago came to light, as a slab was lifted from the sough top at a point 20 yards short of the entrance, and 10 feet down. On the underside of the slab, the letters "CCC" and a date "1982(?)" inscribed. Had Cheshire County Council started to crawl up old soughs?

A chance communication with Paul Holdcroft 2 years ago (news is slow to reach Milton) revealed that Crewe Caving Club had forced a member (probably ex "Boot Neck" Tony Reynolds) up the sough. At the point of inscription, the sough was approximately 1 foot high and run in thereafter.

Ecton

The disgraceful and sad state of affairs at Ecton is the same – "No Access" – and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. However, I did succeed in organising access for 2 trips this year for Crewe members.

The National Trust Project

Two years ago, a colleague and I were contacted by the National Trust - via PDMHS - to inspect and advise on collapsed mine workings on Trust land north west of Ecton. A tractor and slurry spreader had collapsed into an ancient lead working. The voids were descended by SRT, and successfully restored by back filling and compaction. OS co-ordinates were noted of the affected area.

Following on from this, I was invited to a meeting at Ilam National Trust Offices to discuss the possibility of further involvement with mines on National Trust land - initially around Flagg, Knotlow, Manifold, and Wetton Hill area (see Newsletter Summer 2002).

This will entail underground survey, inspection, safety and stability, archaeology, environmental impact i.e. pollution, a mandatory risk assessment for personnel involved above and below ground,

insurance cover, and a general report of our modus operandi in regard to rope access, etc (Ralph's department).

I have submitted a covering report to address the above criteria to the National Trust office at York, and understand from Ilam that so far this has been favourably received.

Hopefully, this will secure an exclusive agreement for Crewe with the Trust, comparable to the DCC at Alderley Edge.

Lime Kiln Mine Newbold

A geological phenomenon in the form of an inlier of "Lower Carboniferous Coral Limestone" exists south of Astbury. No other source of this valuable mineral was available within the constraints of horse drawn transport, the nearest being Buxton or North Wales.

The limestone was mined from several shafts in country estates of Lord Egerton of Tatton Park, and the Shakerley Ackersley family of Rhode Hall.

The area around Lime Kiln Farm has been excessively mined from early times via two adits, and several shafts. Permission was granted to excavate what is known to the exploration team as the "climbing shaft."

The stow "Windlass" was removed from Hill House and sited on the above shaft, the brick gining having been stabilised by an 8 foot long x 3 foot steel liner – actually two galvanised rubbish bins supplied by DCC Alderley Edge Mines "to whom we are indebted" – welded together.

Approximately 10 foot of rubbish was wound up, and access down the shaft established into the main horse tramway level. A problem with gas - actually H_2S - "got" Darren, who was swiftly rescued by the stow. Still, you are bound to lose a few.

Access through to the big engine shaft confirmed our suspicions of a substantial blockage of domestic detritus from the cottages.

A large gantry has been fabricated and sited over the shaft, and bags used for building materials used for drawing up the awful rubbish. A local person was heard to describe this contraption as "a huge erection, with a large bag beneath" – the mind boggles

The motive power is supplied by tractor, driven by Mr Potts the owner. The team involved in this shaft clearance deserve a medal, the Conde brothers deserve one for each nipple. Access beyond the shaft has now been gained midway to the lake, where a further collapse has occurred.

At the time of writing, we are planning a pumping operation at the bottom of a 60 foot dip "decline" to see if it goes. A stage by stage video record is being kept by Ralph, and a detailed historical paper will be prepared in due course for PDMHS mining history.

Len Kirkham

A big thank you to Glenys and Nigel Cooper for "sorting" the Mow Cop paper onto disc.