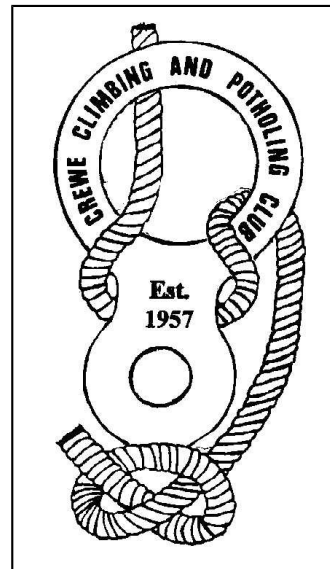


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The Caves Above Peak Cavern Entrance

At the very top of the Peveril Castle enclosure, just below the north-west corner of the keep, a locked gate blocks access to the site of a bridge, where, previously, the western approach to the castle crossed a notch in the narrow neck of land between the upper slopes of Cave Dale and the very top of the Peak Cavern Gorge. This is an airy spot, with the potential for a slip to end in a spectacular fall into the gorge below.

Immediately below the west wall of the Castle Keep there is an obvious, cave entrance, with the remains of a metal grill pulled away to one side. This is Cave Dale Cave No.5, otherwise known as Peveril Castle Cave. An easy crawl leads immediately into a low chamber, which slopes down to the north east for about 6 metres, and which is strewn with litter. This cave is supposed to have once connected with a cave lower down, on the slope leading into Cave Dale.

Just opposite Cave No.5, a narrow path leads below a rock buttress overlooking Peak Cavern Gorge, and reaches Cave Dale Cave No.6. This cave is barely more than a deep scoop in the cliff face, but, with its flat floor, and protected location, it would have made an ideal rock-shelter for early man. This cave is also known as Gorge Top Cave. Returning towards the notch, a distinct badgers track can be seen cutting down left, across the steep slope below the remaining masonry foundations of the Norman bridge. The track leads directly to a very low archway, almost hidden by the soil and debris which has slid down from above, where badgers have dug a way in through the soil fill. Their small waste tip of excavated material is the only reason that this cave was spotted. From the entrance, at least two other badger trails could be seen cutting across the slope and converging at the site.

CAVEDALE CAVE No. 5A
(Brock's Cave)

NGR14858260

Dig ?

Altitude 880 ft. (268 m.)

In the base of the rock-face below the west wall of Peveril Castle Keep, in the top of the Peak Cavern Gorge. A low, arched entrance partially blocked and concealed by the steeply sloping soil surface, and currently in use by badgers. Caution: Any dislodged material will fall into the gorge, close to the show cave entrance.

We were working on the site on 18th April, at the request of Peak Cavern management, removing dangerous, fallen trees, to prevent them falling on the public below, and were able to close the path to the show-cave entrance whenever we needed to send debris down to the gorge below. Persons attempting to approach this cave will be in full view of anyone on the show-cave path, and of residents in many of the cottages at the entrance to the gorge, and digging activities would risk dislodging material onto the path and the area around the show-cave entrance.

Steve Knox

25th April 2006

Rob's Multipod.

For those who didn't make the April meeting- Rob's parents turned up to see the multipod bought with money left to DCRO by Rob- quite an amazing bit of kit which was used for the first time on the Knotlow-Hillocks exercise in April.

Hillocks – Knotlow Exercise April

Around 20 cavers turned up for this practice session using the new multipod. It was used on the open rake (Hillocks) in two different configurations followed by a further session after lunch on the surface pitch of Knotlow – the casualty being brought out from Pearl Chamber.

Belgrave Mine Parking 19504 59361, Top 19595 59224, Bottom 19628 59202

2nd May 2006 :

Bryn-yr-Orsedd Mine (later worked as Belgrave Mine)

SJ 19605930 (O.S. Landranger Sheet No. 116)

[Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record No 18017]

This mine is situated in the hills south-west of Mold, in Clwyd, North Wales.

Location: Take the A494, WSW from Mold, towards Ruthin. After about five miles, pass through the village of Llanferres, then, a mile further, fork left onto a minor road towards Four Crosses. After half a mile, take a sharp turn left onto a narrow lane, and follow this into a wooded valley. Look for a slight widening at an obvious dip in the road, with a footpath sign and stile on the right, and park opposite the entrance to Armon Cottage (room for one car to park easily, or two at a real squeeze).

This mine was developed to exploit the western end of the Belgrave Lead Vein, which runs eastwards from the Alyn Valley to the Cefn-y-fedw Sandstone, crossing a limestone ridge which rises to 408 metres O.D.. The Belgrave Mine closed in 1857.

There is a blocked adit, at road level, only a few metres from the parking place, but access to the mine is through two open adits further up the hillside. Following the footpath (signed Bryn Allyn) steeply uphill for about 150 metres, reaches the top of a level terrace with grassed-over spoil heaps. The lower entrance, a flat-out crawl under a man-made, arched roof, is located at the base of a shallow depression about ten metres to the east of the path. We left our bags just inside the passage, then walked on, up the hillside for another fifty metres or so, to the upper entrance.

Upper Entrance: In the base of a small limestone cliff is a partly buried adit entrance. A crawl down an earthy slope leads to a walking height passage with a level floor, and after a short distance the top of a deep stope is passed, along a ledge, on the right. A belay plate is fixed

to the wall above the narrow slot, and apparently this is the route which eventually links with the lower entrance series. The passage continues, with numerous stopes, above and below the adit level, and many worked out cavities. We noted individual bats (fifteen in total) hanging from the roof and walls, often in the most exposed positions, and Darren commented that there had been much greater numbers present on a visit earlier in the year. A significant feature of the adit is the right-hand wall (heading in) which is 'slickensided' – highly polished by pressure, as one layer of rock is forced across another by earth movement. In one area, the wall had the appearance of gleaming black marble, with fine, white veins all across it. The miners have utilised this hard, and easily identifiable layer, generally less than 30 degrees off vertical, as a guide and safe supporting wall, as they have worked the softer, ore bearing layer which lies adjacent to it.

The easy, walking height, passage ends at a short crawl which ends on a loose, gravelly slope into the open top of a shaft, or ore chute, at least 15 metres deep to the lower workings. A number of small, 'coffin level' type passages, all displaying clear pick marks, can be explored in this area, where the miners have followed tiny vein 'leaders' into the barren ground on either side of the main workings.

Back towards the entrance we descended a narrow, open stope, using a handline to reach the top of a steep, gravel covered slope, about 4 metres below. Following the slope down reached a lower horizon, where we were able to follow the slickensided wall along the base of worked out stopes, until eventually stopped at a major collapse, with a number of scaffold poles and timbers protruding from it. Again there were highly polished areas of wall, including a patch displaying red, 'birds-eye', patterning. In many of the stopes we could see timber stemples still in place, some secured by enormous wedges, and there were excellent examples of 'egg and eye' features (cut out sockets in opposing walls) where timber stemples and platforms had been used to access the vein. Returning to the handline, we noticed an alcove on the right, where a tiny inlet had left superb flowstone deposits on the walls of a choked natural rift above.

Lower Entrance: An easy slither under the arched entrance gives access to a short, crawling height, passage to the unlocked metal gate. Almost immediately the passage enlarges, and quickly becomes walking height before entering an enormous worked out stope on a broad ledge. A corroded metal water pipe runs horizontally into the distance, across the open stope, and apparently collects water from a dam on the other side, for use at a farm further down the hillside. Various timbers and rails are jammed across the stope, but we did not attempt to cross over. A few isolated bats were seen roosting in this area, and there was evidence (numerous droppings) that many more bats use this part of the mine during the winter months.

From the broad ledge, Darren rigged a pitch of about 8 metres, with a rebelay at a jammed rail halfway down, to reach the rubble floor of a lower section of the stope. At the bottom of the pitch, a large passage led under an unworked section of vein to rejoin the main stope at the top of a narrow slot, partially obstructed with old timber stemples and discarded rails. Darren rigged the slot as a short pitch, followed immediately by a steep and loose slope to a 'window' directly into the top of the main pitch where a bolt provided a rebelay. A good ledge at the rebelay made the change-over easy, and the remainder of the pitch was against the inclined rock wall of a deep shaft, or ore chute, between the sides of the stope. The pitch was about 35 metres deep, including the slot at the top, but was mostly at about 15 degrees off the vertical, with many ledges and cut steps in the footwall, so was an easy descent. The pitch lands at the base of the major stope, and back towards the valley, this level might well have linked to the blocked adit close to the car park, but we did not explore in this direction. Heading east, the passage suddenly changes to a gravelly crawl under two low arches, to enter a superb, walking height, horizontal level, with about 30 cms. of standing

water, for the first 75 metres. Eventually the water ends, and rail tracks and sleepers can be seen continuing as the passage gently rises into the base of another high stope. There are many patches of cave-pearls in this area, often between, or next, the rails, and care needs to be taken to avoid trampling them. The rectangular timber sub-frame of a small ore-truck still stands on its four iron wheels on the rails, although it is in a fragile condition. Nearby is another sub-frame, without wheels, as well as sections of rail-track, and a length of chain which may once have been part of a hoist system. High above, at the top of a worked out stope, is the dark opening at the bottom of another shaft, or ore-chute, which must link with the workings above. Small pieces of Lead ore were noted on the floor here.

As in the upper series, many parts of the horizontal levels have been driven against a slickensided wall, although it seems that there are a number of these features, running parallel to each other through the hillside. Horizontal progress is eventually halted when the main level becomes a hand-picked passage, similar to a 'coffin-level, with a run-in of crushed vein material spilling into it from workings beyond.

Our return to daylight was uneventful, although the angle of the big pitch made 'normal' ascent methods awkward, resulting in some wall-walking ! Clearly, there is much more to be explored, or re-discovered in this mine, although the existing fixed anchors on pitches may need to be improved.

Party members: Darren Conde, Ralph Johnson, Len Kirkham, Colin Knox.

Colin Knox.

8th May 2006