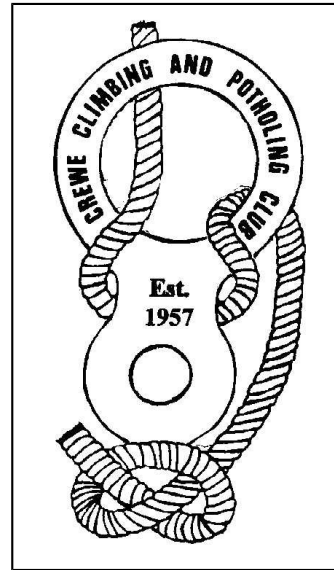


# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 91. Spring 2007

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**50 years and still going strong!**



**Most of you will have already received this but in case you haven't here it is again!**

2007 is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of our club and we are planning a “get together” at The Bull I’ th’ Thorn a pub on the main Buxton- Ashbourne Rd (A515) a mile or so to the west of Monyash. On 23rd June there will be an evening meal at a cost of £20.00 (menus will be sent when you book) and limited B&B accommodation is available at £70.00 for a room. The meal starts at 8.00 pm. For those wishing to camp the cost is £4.00 (plus £6.00 if you want a full English breakfast). There is space for caravans nearby and there are other sites and plenty of hostleries offering accommodation in the vicinity.

Members (and hopefully ex-members) will be around either in the pub or on the camping field throughout the Saturday so if you can't make the meal but would like to drop by and do a bit of reminiscing you know what to do. The area is ideal for walking and the Tissington-High Peak Cycleway is only a stones throw away, cycles are available for hire if required. Some folks may want to go caving (The entrance to Hillocks isn't far away and within the capabilities of anyone who is moderately fit and we can provide oversuits, helmets and lights for those so inclined).

We already have members coming from the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s plus our present members so there will almost certainly be someone there that you know. If you wish to attend the meal can you please send a non refundable deposit of £5 by May 1st, with the balance due by June 1st. (Cheques to CCPC please).

If you can't attend the meal but are likely to drop in during the weekend (Saturday is best) then try and let us know in advance, ideally return the tear off slip at the bottom of the page.

Sadly we have lost touch with many (but not all) of our “early” members – if you have kept in touch please pass on this information and ask them to get in touch, you could even come together as a group.

## **Minera Mine, Nr. Wrexham, North Wales**

This was a Darren Conde 'special'! Darren has a sneaky habit of finding places that no-one else in the Club has ever heard of, never mind visited, and this was one of those.

We headed out to Wrexham, round the by-pass onto the A483, then off on the A525 west through Coedpoeth. Branch left onto the B5426 to Minera, turning right at the small triangular green, up the hill past the church, then left into the quarry approach road, and finally parking at the end near a barrier of huge limestone blocks [SJ 259 520].

The party comprised: Darren Conde, Len Kirkham, Colin Knox, Colin Mills, John Preston, and John Shenton.

The whole area has been heavily worked for minerals, both below ground, in the many interconnecting mines, and on the surface in the huge quarries, but the industries are now mostly closed, although some quarries are still active nearby.

We changed and headed off through a gateway on the left (south side) of the parking area, towards a private house and building project, which was clearly an on-going conversion of disused station and mine buildings. The public footpath we were using followed the track-bed of the disused mineral railway, back towards the east, along the foot of a densely wooded slope. A plan on page 74 of 'MINERA Lead Mines and Quarries', published by Wrexham Maelor Borough Council in 1995, shows over thirty shafts in the immediate area, either side of the railway, but without a better plan it is difficult to be sure exactly which shafts are which ! After a couple of hundred metres Darren led us off, up-slope to the right, to a hole in a shallow hollow against a small rock cliff, all surrounded by overhanging trees, and fenced off for safety. This, we believe, is 'Cabin Shaft', and was to be our route into the workings below. Leaving our gear, we wandered on across the slope, passing a shaft mound, and into a hollow with huge, stone, lime kilns, looking like Aztec ruins lost in the undergrowth. The battery of three kilns, known as the Atcherley Kilns (SJ26005017) were built by 1840. Climbing the bank beyond, we reached another leafy hollow, where a little digging revealed a metal lid in a shaft cap. Eventually we levered the rusted lid up, and were able to look down a shaft fitted with iron ladders, although the condition of the ladders was not good enough to risk a descent. Perhaps we'll rig this shaft on our next trip. It is likely to be 'Footway Shaft'. Returning to Cabin Shaft, we had a look at the shaft mound passed earlier, and found there was an enormous open shaft there, surrounded by barbed wire. The shaft was oval in section, with a lining of dressed stone blocks, although the lining was partially collapsed at one side, and a large concrete base alongside showed that this had clearly been a major engine shaft. Looking at the plan (mentioned above) this is likely to be 'Boundary Shaft', although the Clwyd Metal Mines Survey entry on the internet does not seem to match exactly as it mentions a horse whim circle, rather than an engine platform. (Perhaps we were lost !!)

The Clwyd Metal Mines Survey records:

*Minera Boundary Shaft - SJ26125182. Lead/Silver (1864-1919)*

*CPAT Historic Environment Record No. 104367.*

*The shaft is located at SJ26125182 with its horse whim circle in an area of woodland much disturbed by mining, on the south side of the disused Mineral Railway. The area bears the scars of earlier mining, visible as shallow workings, now covered in dense vegetation. The 19th century shafts in the area can be identified as the Cornish Shaft at SJ20205180, immediately alongside a siding on the mineral railway, being fenced off and having caving access, the Busy Bee at SJ26165176 and the adjacent Royle's, and Grand Turk at SJ26305170, where a chimney base and stonework remains of the winding engine house are hidden in the undergrowth.*

It is interesting to see that in 1992-1993 when the Mines Survey was carried out, it was the 'Cornish Shaft' which was being used as caver access. Boundary Shaft marked the north-western extremity of the Minera Mines workings on the Main Vein and Red Vein. In 1919, the shaft was re-opened and worked the North Vein until 1933, using a whim for winding. Ladders were used for man access.

Back to the trip. We returned to the shaft we think was Cabin Shaft, and rigged an SRT rope from two convenient trees. Entry requires a backwards walk down an earth slope, and then a slither over the edge of a mucky hole between rotting, and semi-collapsed timbers. The rope requires protection at the lip. Below, a simple descent of about 7 or 8 metres, partly against the wall, lands on an earthy mound in a spacious passage. The obvious, open route leads immediately into the upper part of a large chamber, with some attractive flowstone deposits along the lip of a terrace, overhanging the lower section, down to the right. The domed roof was notable, being made up of narrow, alternating bands of light and dark rock, like a Bassett's Allsort ! We called it 'Bertie's Chamber', just to confuse matters.

We abandoned all SRT kit , and wandered off down a steeply sloping passage which led away from 'Bertie's' to the lower levels. As notes were not taken during the trip, it is impossible to give a clear description of our route, but it was reasonably obvious, and any wrong turns seemed to enter worked out spaces, often well stacked with miners' waste. In places the route led between packs of waste rock, and there were many short timbers set as roof supports. A crawl led through to intersect a stope part-way up, which was like a great vertical slot through the strata. Large quantities of waste rock could be seen perched, like inverted pyramids, on single timbers, jammed horizontally between the walls, and it was a reminder that apparently solid floors needed to be treated with respect ! We continued our exploration, crawling under an enormous detached roof slab, which was supported by packs on either side, and by partially squashed timber uprights.

Throughout, there had been numerous places where narrow mineral veins could be examined in the walls and roof, and as expected, these were mostly lead and its associated minerals, however, at one point there were traces of bright green, which I assume must have been copper. Some sections of wall showed complex mineral mixtures, with individual blocks of Galena (lead ore) showing clearly. Some blocks were the size of modern, domestic building bricks, and it is difficult to understand why they were not extracted by the miners. Darren led us to a short drop over a timbered edge, where we were able to descend, using an in-situ hand-line, to a lower level with more mineral lined pockets. One amazing piece of timber here was covered in brown hairy fungus, like Orang-utan fur ! All passages up to this point seemed to be through worked out mineral areas, but the next section was clearly a link passage through barren ground, being walking height with an arched top, and with waste rock stacked along one side.

A short crawl, over debris from the base of a blocked shaft in the roof of the passage, led through to a narrow ledge around the side of a huge shaft, at least 3 metres in diameter. Leaning out and looking down it was possible to see the upper part of a ladder way at least 15 metres below, but it was impossible to see the shaft base clearly, or anything much above the overhanging roof over the ledge. A section of metal pipework, either for pumping or for compressed air , stands vertically in the shaft, but is not secured. We headed off to the left, beyond the shaft, and explored more passages and workings similar to those already seen before turning back. I crawled up a low passage on the left when leaving the ledge round the shaft, and entered another labyrinth of passages, passing a semi-collapsed shaft with hand lines rigged. Darren, Len and Colin M. explored this area, while I caught up with John P. and John S. who were returning to the main chamber.

After a refreshment break, the three of us set off into the lower section of 'Bertie's', taking plenty of photographs of the superb flowstone formations and straw stalactites. The lime working above has contributed to the rapid growth of these formations, some of which cover miners' walls which are probably less than 150 years old. In several places the cream and white formations have been stained a vivid red colour by ferrous deposits in the rock. We

followed a series of unnecessarily large yellow arrows, which led us round a circular route through many chambers and passages. At one point we passed directly below a shaft which opened to daylight. The shaft was square at the base, but round at the top, where it was surrounded by overhanging ferns under a canopy of trees. Further on, John P. climbed up a short, partially collapsed, wooden ladder, into a chamber which led through to the base of the entrance shaft on the opposite side to the route we had followed. Following our 'arrowed route', we rejoined the main chamber, just as the others arrived back, having explored a route which led much deeper into the mine.

We all exited without difficulty, despite the horrendous condition of the timbers supporting the opening, which, of course, were much more obvious from below ! A short search of the woodland brought us to the fern-fringed shaft-top which was surrounded by a couple of strands of barbed wire. Although open, the stone lining at the top was not sound enough to make a descent a safe proposition. I am uncertain which shaft this is on the plan of the area, and it really needs a sunny afternoon with a large scale map and a GPS to try to identify the shafts properly.

Once changed, Darren insisted that we all walk round the whole of the quarry area, so he could point out all the other holes, both mined and natural that he has located, and finally we examined the vast Hoffman lime-burning kiln which is partially buried in the middle of the quarry floor at SJ 256502.

This was a brilliant day, in a totally new area, requiring minimal SRT, and only a boiler suit, as the whole mine was dust dry ! Thanks Darren.

Colin 'Steve' Knox. 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006

### **Competition time.**

**Who** said this, **where** and **when**!

I know of no AWFUL PREDICAMENT to me G\*\*\* taking L\*\*\*\* ..... At this point the ceremony ceased and had to be re started.

Fig 8 to the first correct entry drawn out of a caving helmet!!

### **Now for a bit of history!**

*Reply to query prompted by new web site.*

The original 6(CCPC members) in 18th SW Cheshire Scouts Crewe were (I think): You (Ralph) , John Shires, Mike Scott, Bill Lewis, Pete Owen, me(Brian) although I think that I joined slightly later from Scouts in Nantwich (plus Trevor - who kept goal for Crewe Alex reserves but didn't go caving). Then there was also Micky Potts (remember the Bradford Van?) Marcus Manuel, Anne, Ros Delves, Dave? Fenn (had one toe missing), Dennis Allen (have photo of him in upper series of Giants), not sure whether Little Mac came caving with us. Memory is beginning to run out so I've probably forgotten someone .....

I do seem to remember that after a series of light failures using various home made lights adapted from bike lamps and, in my case some bits from an old radio set, not to mention ex WD NiFe cells (still got the burns?) and exploding carbide lamps ("Daylight" and also

"Premier"), I was appointed inspector of lights and had to issue a certificate expertly printed by Mike Scott.

Brian G.

*This was produced as a result of one of our original members (Bill Lewis) who tracked us down via Matt (and the NEW web site). Incidentally, Bill held the rather dubious school record for number of canings in one term with Ralph coming a very poor second. Ann Austin held the women's record for spankings- but that's another story!*

*Not seen the new web site- now's your chance [www.ccpc.org.uk](http://www.ccpc.org.uk). There is still quite a bit of work to do so now is your opportunity to contribute.*

### **P8 Shout.**

A group of 9 mature students (Royal Vet College) plus Ralph, Alan, Brian G set off down P8 with Alan & Brian rigging Waterfall Pitch with Ralph bringing in group with practice abseil with Stops on Idiots Leap (They are all climbers and some have caved before, all have abseiled on Stops before). Brian remained at Waterfall Pitch to help with group while Alan rigged "Iron Ladder" Pitch then returned to help with students.

When I met Alan at top of IL pitch he complained of feeling dizzy, it was agreed he descend the pitch for a rest and refreshment. I watched group as they abseiled the pitch (I could hear Alan being sick- not a pretty sound).

After 6 novices had descended Brian descended and led the 6 towards the bottom, of the cave. The last 3 descended followed by me. Alan said he felt worse and after a short discussion said he felt fit enough to make his way out. I took my 3 students and caught the others up as they were traversing the water in the lower streamway. I left all the novices with Brian and returned to Alan.

1300 aprox

When I arrived at foot of IL pitch Alan looked worse and informed me that he had tried and was unable to exit. I put him in a poly bivvy bag, gave him balaclava and gloves sat him on sit mat, used what rope I had with me as insulation then rigged the pitch with a ladder before descending with a KISU and the rest of our emergency kit.

The vets returned and all except the most experienced one were put into the KISU along with Alan. They were provided with 3 more bags of emergency supplies. I accompanied Brian and the 1 vet to the top of the Waterfall pitch and the two of them set off to raise the alarm. (1345) I returned to the group and took the next two most experienced climbers to the top of the Waterfall pitch where I met Brian who took them to the top of Idiots Leap.

(1445) I returned to the group where Brian (A first responder) examined Alan while I got two more vets up the pitch. Satisfied with Alan's condition Brian and I took the vets to the Waterfall pitch and Brian took them to the top of Idiots Leap.

We repeated this procedure and as the first of the penultimate pair arrived reached the top of the pitch Keith, Tom (and maybe one other) arrived at the pitch head. Keith and then Tom descended before the remaining vet exited with Brian.

Keith, Tom, one other, and I arrived at the Kisu together. Tom examined Alan while Keith, one other and I set up the Heyphone. (This cost me a pint as it worked)! Brian arrived and the two of us set off passing about 6 DCRO personnel on the way. I spoke to the surface team (inc

Bill) then walked to the farm where I could check on my group (and recover equipment etc. They all seemed in good spirits).

I drove up to the DCRO CRV and after a while drove to Castleton to get into dry clothes and visit the loo! On returning to the CRV I was asked to call out 4 of the "Crewe Team".. It took about an hour for 5 CCPC members to arrive (1 was already on site and 5 others were already involved in one way or another.

By this time Alan must have had enough! As the stretcher reached the top of the Waterfall Pitch he decided (and Tom agreed) that since the purpose of the stretcher was to keep him horizontal and the likelihood of this being possible in the entrance series was remote, he would walk out with assistance. This was just as well as by now many of those who had been underground from the start were beginning to feel very cold. Alan surfaced at around 9.30 pm with the team (and all the gear), not far behind him.

Ralph J.

### Meets.

Sun April 1<sup>st</sup> Oxlow-Maskhill exchange (P8 for beginners)

Mon April 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting

Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> April DCRO Communications. Pooles Cavern.

Sat April 7<sup>th</sup> Tatham Wife (Yorks) \* Easter

Sun April 8<sup>th</sup> Swinsto Hole (Yorks) \* Easter

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> April. DCRO Eldon Hole

Sun 22 April. Eldon Hole

May. Agen Allwedd S Wales. (To be confirmed)

Sat May 12<sup>th</sup> Meregill Hole (Yorks)

Sun May 27<sup>th</sup> Odin Mine

June Ogof Draenen S Wales. (To be confirmed)

Sat June 9<sup>th</sup> Ireby Fell Cavern (Yorks).

Don't forget – if your favourite trip isn't listed the Darren's the man!