

C.C.P.C.

Newsletter. December 1996.



If you intend going to "The Berger" in '97, and you haven't contacted Kev (01538 387995) then do so NOW.

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE MAILLONS IN BAGS WITH WET ROPE EVEN OVERNIGHT. They rust incredibly quickly, the answer is probably to take them off the rope as you derig. This will save you having to tackle a bag of wet rope in the early hours of the morning when you get back off your trip. (P.Ton. equipment adviser)

Saturday, 12th. October 1995 : Nicker Grove Mine, Stoney Middleton.

Caves Of The Peak District, Page 221. : - Adit entrance N.G.R. 2155 7596.

Length: 1900ft. Depth: 80ft. - Didsbury Shaft N.G.R. 2155 7603

This was another one of those entries in the guide that I kept coming back to and wondering why I'd never been down the hole. Now I know ! I conned John Preston into coming with me by telling him we were going to have an easy, clean trip down P.8 and a pint afterwards, but I think he suspected something when I parked on the quarry car park below Carlswark. It wasn't too difficult to find the adit entrance, about a hundred yards from the road in a small limestone cliff partway up the side of Cucklet Delph and surrounded by jungle. We dumped most of our gear at the entrance and attempted to put our cunning plan into action. The guidebook had mentioned a shaft entrance further up the slope which we could connect with from inside, about 15 feet below the top. We planned to drop a rope from the surface to enable us to descend the shaft to a lower level when we reached it by using the adit entrance series. We found the shaft well capped with a steel grid, over a four foot length of concrete pipe which had been inserted to support the shaft collar. There would be no chance of exit or entry this way, but we rigged our rope through the grid to use later from below.

The adit entrance led easily to a junction after about 60 feet. The main route turned sharply right, but there was a choked hole and a low crawl ahead, both of which we ignored. Further along the main adit we located a level off on the right which the guide informed us would lead to the bottom of a shaft to the surface, via a tight squeeze, but we decided to leave it until later. (Perhaps this was the shaft we had rigged ?) Further along the main adit we reached the principal internal shaft (with a timber beam across it) and after leaving the tackle we traversed easily past it, and a little way beyond we entered a much larger section of rift passage. There was plenty of evidence here of digging activity, with plastic hose running along in the roof to supply water. At the far end we continued along the adit, often following a modern 'digging' railway track, and at times passing through heavily timbered sections. Much of this passage is walking or stooping height, but one part involved a very cold crawl in standing water. Eventually we reached a sharp right turn with a timbered (modern) shaft directly above. The adit became more and more constricted from this point, and after a sharp left turn reduced to flat out crawling for the last hundred feet to what appears to be the miners' working face. This is much further than the limit described in 'Caves Of The Peak District'.

Back at the timbered shaft, we went up and explored individually, just in case it all collapsed, and found another 'digger's' railway heading off into no-man's land. In the other direction was a kind of washed out bedding cave with a low crawl heading off. This was being used as a digging base and tool store. We were absolutely caked in mud by this time and decided to head back to the main shaft so we could get down to the streamway below to get cleaned off.

A massive eye-bolt in the wall provided a back up for the rope rigged directly to the timber beam (telegraph-pole size) across the shaft, although there were a selection of spits in the wall which we could have used. An easy drop of 50 feet, passing a level at 25 feet which is supposed to lead to the 'Didsbury Shaft' (the one we had hoped to connect with), landed in a mine truck full of water ! Following another railway led, after a short distance, to the top of a shaft with timbers supporting the top section and four stacked oil drums keeping the lower part clear. I went down first and found the oil drums very intimidating. Having slithered to the bottom there was not enough room to raise my feet far enough to use the holes chopped in the sides as foot or hand holds. The way on involved somehow getting out of the bottom drum into a low passage, but by then I had had enough and with a lot of struggling I managed to get back up the drums. John had a go at it and decided he really didn't want to try the bottom of the drums so we headed out, still just as filthy.

We never did find out if the surface shaft we had rigged was the 'Didsbury Shaft', or the one linking with the entrance passages. Maybe next time (you must be kidding !) it would be worth taking an adjustable spanner to take the grid off (4 bolts) so we could go in that way as I really would like to see the stream passage, which is between Streak's East sump and Merlin's sump 8.

Colin S. Knox 19th. October 1996

SNIPPETS (literally) FROM THE MINUTES : (With apologies to Steve.)

N.C.A. have been/ will be (?) contacted to clarify the situation over fixed-aid insurance, as members expressed concern, about possible liability if an aid fitted by a club member failed, causing an accident.

At Giant's Farm old Mr. Watson has been replaced by his son, and the fee is now £2 per person.

Cave Rescue: A 32 year old man, an experienced caver, having abseiled down Rowter Hole, became unwell and needed assistance. He was variously thought to have had a heart attack, a stroke or an epileptic fit, but no clear reason was decided upon. As a direct result of this call-out D.C.R.O. have purchased an oxygen set for underground use.

Knotlow: D.C.A. have decided that the iron ladder in Waterfall Chamber can come out, if C.C.P.C. will do the work. Bolts will need to be installed at the entrance to Meccano Passage if the location is suitable.

Rope Testing: Ralph has received the results of the tests carried out, and gave a full report to the meeting (see also Newsletter: Nov. 1996). One rope was declared only 'satisfactory', and will be examined further to determine whether it should be scrapped or not. Members were asked for their views, but no conclusions were reached.

Members were reminded once again of the severe damage which can be done to the outer sheath of a dry rope when it is used for abseiling. It gets hot and melts! Ropes must be pre-wetted.

A proposal was made, and agreed unanimously, that The Club should make a donation of £3 for each rope that we send for testing.

The Knotlow farmer has, apparently, made claims that he has lost calves from lead-poisoning because the residue brought out of the mine on cavers' boots has polluted his grazing land. He has, apparently, threatened to bulldoze the shaft tops. They are, in fact, S.S.S.I.s.

Kevin Mountford was congratulated by members present for passing his Mountain Leadership Certificate.

Mam Tor Incident: Bill Whitehouse has received a letter from Buxton Mountain Rescue Team to acknowledge the good work done by the D.C.R.O. team (Crewe members) in getting up before...

Nightmare on Elbrus!

Four years ago a few of us (Ross, Sharon, Melv. and yours truly.) climbed the "Highest peak in Europe." Unfortunately a while later I was to learn that Mont Blanc was the highest peak in Western Europe and that Mount Elbrus close to the Black Sea in Russia was considerably higher! There was nothing else for it, Russia here I come.

The B.A. flight from Heathrow went without a hitch, (except for having to explain for the first of many times why I consistently set off the alarms with my "metallic" leg.) It took 1 1/2+ hours to get through Moscow immigration!!

Death race 2000 then took place in a clapped out bus which looked as though it had been used for stock car racing in a previous life. I was to learn that all vehicles had this dog-eared appearance and I was wrong in assuming that Ladas' for the home market were built with cracked windscreens.

The hotel was excellent despite being on the 26th floor. I was accosted in the foyer by a woman trying to offer me something. I'm not sure what it was but it was going to cost me 10 dollars!

The evening meal was in the Moscow M.Club H.Q. Quite nice except for the boiled egg consommé but still the Russian beer was only 60p a pint and quite palatable. On the way back to the hotel I was surprised to see two uniformed youths who appeared young enough to be in the boy scouts toting automatic rifles.

Following a breakfast of sausage and cold tinned peas (I was to get used to these odd meals) we went on a guided tour of Moscow and the Kremlin. Moscow is a dump with everything in the advanced stages of decay. The exception is the Kremlin which is in pristine condition with no cameras allowed. A brief visit to view old Lenin (Where I got a rollocking for viewing the corpse with my hands in my pockets!) then back to the hotel to collect our belongings for the next leg of the journey by air to Mineraldy Vody. The drive to the airport was through endless slums littered with abandoned vehicles and decaying properties. It would appear that once something is built in Russia it is never repaired or maintained. The only features receiving attention from the authorities seemed to be impressive monuments to some glorious war or military commander. As usual chaos at the airport with yours truly setting off the alarms and having to submit to the usual body search and a very aggressive scrum while trying to pass the check out gates. The plane was packed but fortunately the flight only lasted 2 hours. A long wait for our baggage followed and Andrei our courier advised to change "about 10 dollars" into roubles unfortunately the bureau was closed... they normally are. (There is nothing to spend money on in the Bakar valley.) Once again a very old decrepit bus with the compulsory crack in the windscreen took us on a 3 hour drive through what could have been lovely countryside if it hadn't been for the abandoned vehicles and buildings which were frequent. Our journey time was extended by frequent checkpoints and a road bridge recently damaged by floods causing a detour. The "hotel" made the Red Rose Hostel look palatial! Damp sheets, bed bugs, toilets non flushing, all the things Keith Faulkner had warned me about!!! After a breakfast of salami and salad (right again Keith!) we had a pleasant 1 1/2 hour walk up to a site known locally as "The green hotel." The coach and porters were of course late. We carried our own gear (even me!) while porters carried the tents, food, etc. A couple of us had a short walk around the area while Sergai "Cook" prepared the meal, what luxury.

A late "early" start followed a breakfast of semolina pudding! A long walk up a spectacular glacial moraine led to the Jankuat glacier where some of the party donned crampons for the first time! A choc. bar at the col. before a short foray into Georgia and ultimately the summit of Gumachi (3805 m.) our target for the day. One of our party member, a Portuguese climber named Joao Paulo dos Santos Queiros (JP for short!) made his own way up to the consternation of Sergai our guide. We found out later that he regularly leads E5 (and I always thought these referred to food preservatives) As we reached the summit the cloud lifted and the sun came out, the views were fantastic. To save time many of the more adventurous glissaded down with Barry (a professor and consultant in rheumatic diseases from Belfast) relieving the monotony by falling into a crevasse!, fortunately with no ill effects. The evening meal was excellent, far superior to that at the hotel and we spent the evening getting to know the "porters" who turned out to be doctors, teachers, lecturers, photographers, etc., earning a bob or two on the side.

Next morning the walk back to the valley and our coach was very pleasant. This was followed by a picnic by some naturally carbonated springs, personally I preferred the excellent Russian wine.

After lunch Dave, Ian and I took a walk through the village. Poverty everywhere. Ex-military vehicles were in abundance as was the odd anti-aircraft gun! We had the unpleasant experience of witnessing a goat being slaughtered and an even more unpleasant experience with a hairy-faced cafe owner who was apparently female! On our way back we bumped into one of our porters who doubled as the expedition doctor. Over drinks in the outdoor bar we got across the point that we preferred the "porters" to eat with us not after us. That evening our porters treated us to copious amounts of "gluevine"

A breakfast of egg, cold mashed potatoes, bread and jam preceded our short coach journey to the village of Vierhunny Baksan where our late start was delayed even further by a Russian "official" trying to extract payment (bribe) from our guide for "not having the right papers." I gather he was told to piss off although something may have been lost in the translation. The porters really suffered in the heat on our 8 hour walk to the camp site with a height gain of 1500 m. Several of us (but not me I hasten to add) had hired extra porters to carry their bags on this 4 day trek. We failed to make our scheduled camp stopping about one hour short. One of the younger porters had developed bronchitis and his life may have been saved by one of Barry's magic antibiotics as opposed to the local stuff. Next day the poor sod was relieved of his load and sent back down the mountain on his own. It was on this day that I first met Alexandria. At first glance he looked as though he would slit your throat for a tanner! Apparently he was removed from his parents as a baby, due to their committing some anti-state activities, and raised in an orphanage in Siberia. His features were rugged with Mongolian eyes and a powerful body yet shorter than me! He took great pride in carrying the heaviest load (over 35 kg!) yet still

arriving at our destination first. On the one occasion he did stumble and fall he remained on his back like a marooned turtle until he and his burden were assisted back into a vertical position! His party piece was to arrive at the campsite first, put up all the available tents, a task I normally helped him with, then shoot off back down the mountain to help others with their load. Needless to say I declined to take part in this last activity!

Friday 7.30 am, up and away on time for a change. 45 mins saw us at our proposed camp site "Syltran Lake", a really beautiful spot at 2950 m. And a further 45mins to "Syltran Pass" 3539 m. where we had our first encounter with a Russian clad only in underpants! Here a few of us took the opportunity to climb a nearby peak of about 3600 m. for some excellent views of our forthcoming attraction .. Elbrus. The flora in this area was OUTSTANDING with countless different species I have never seen before but the dominant variety seemed to be orchids.

A very steep descent eventually led to a difficult river crossing where the vast majority of us got wet with Bob doing a spectacular double pike into the ferocious torrent before being rescued and landed like a beached whale. Lunch in a very secluded valley where the only occupants were two horses (saddled and hobbled) was followed by a 3 hour uphill grind to our campsite on the bed of a dried up lake at the foot of the Irik Glacier. As usual Alexandria was first to arrive and we had pitched several tents before he disappeared to assist the others with their loads. We experienced our first "Mountain weather" before our evening meal with heavy rain, hail and high winds. This coincided with many of us getting a dose of the "runs" and finding a secluded spot proved to be quite difficult as the evening progressed and the signs gave less and less warning! Our evening meal of tinned fish and pasta did little to settle our stomachs with the result that "Imodium" seemed to be the most popular dessert! I slept fully dressed ready for immediate action!! A spectacular thunderstorm overnight left many of those in brand new "Hilldome" tents wet. We left at 7.30 am. up steep glacial moraine to the foot of the glacier which took a further hour before we reached the Irik pass. How Alexandria coped with smooth soled Boots and no crampons I don't know, and he was still first to arrive! As we dined we met our first new face for two days. Christened "underpants man" he had at least put on a lightweight windproof suit., after all it was bitterly cold. Apparently he had "opted out" living the life of a recluse spending his time wandering the hills to while away the monotony. A 2 hour very steep scree then near vertical grass descent led to the floor of the Irik valley creating a gap of almost 90 mins between first and last. Light rain began as we waked for two hours to our campsite amongst pine trees and wild delphiniums close to the banks of the river. A really excellent meal including meat was followed by a bonfire although I must confess to retiring early due to my gastric problems. Interestingly many of the group had started to take "Diomox" to assist with the forthcoming altitude problems. Personally I decided to stick to the vodka.

Again heavy rain overnight led to leakage problems. Breakfast of "kasha" (porridge) and weak tea and we were off downstream to the village of Elbruz. At one point the path cut through a section of glacial deposits and personally I felt that this was the most hazardous part of the journey with large boulders perched above us in the mud just waiting for the next rainstorm., Memories of Chamonix last year where Steve Knox and I had a very close shave came flooding back. Within site of the village we met many Russian tourists who had come to sample the mineral springs, a feature of the area. Our porters drank copiously, apparently the water did wonders for ones sex life but the majority were simply glad to have rid our bodies of the last dose of nasties without introducing further complications. From up above the village looked quite picturesque but once inside the same old semi-derelict blocks of apartments, abandoned military vehicles including a troop carrier and poverty everywhere. The "shops" consisted of portacabins with very little stock but I did manage to top up our supply of vodka! Incidentally the villagers were obsessed with security. Every little building was secured with a massive padlock, even piles of cow shit! Over lunch we negotiated a substantial tip for our porters, some who were about to leave us to service an American expedition.

After lunch while most of the group rested I went for a walk up a local peak of 3404 m. but cut the ascent short when I came across 2 ferocious sheep dogs and a very dubious looking individual masking as a shepherd. I was informed later that I was lucky not to have been arrested by Georgian border guards since I had strayed close to the border and following the break up of the SSSR Russians were no longer welcome. On my return to our hotel the yanks had arrived, talk about equipment they had even brought their own guide! An excellent evening meal followed (or was I just getting used to the diet?) followed by the usual copious quantity of vodka.

Our bus to the Elbrus cable car only just made it due partly to being knackered and partly to being overloaded since the "American" coach had broken down altogether. To rub salt into the wound they jumped into the car in front of us! Two cable cars followed by a chair lift preceded the snow cat journey to Priut (hut) 11. Most of us paid the \$2 for our packs but opted for a two hour walk to aid our acclimatisation programme. The surroundings to the hut were grotty in the extreme and the bogs (2 seater) even worse than those at the Gouter hut on Mont Blanc! However the view towards the Black Sea was magnificent if a little hazy. I sat outside for hours just taking in the view and talking to many people of many nationalities. The general opinion was that this was the worst year ever for summit successes due to poor weather and conditions on the summit were atrocious and had been for several days. No one had made the summit for over a week and according to a Hungarian who had made two attempts it was bitterly cold with high winds and poor visibility. Things were not looking good.

There was a very bad thunderstorm overnight which I managed to sleep through. I risked the bog before breakfast. High winds up the twin seater made this a risky business and I wondered if this is where the expression "Getting your own back" originated? I found the return journey up the path and stairs a real effort at this altitude (4157 m.)

We left at 10 for Pastukhova rocks, the highest trig point in Europe, 4690 m (or so I was told) The 2 hour climb was very hard at first but once I got going I felt good, I seemed to have acclimatised well thanks to the previous weeks programme, likewise the rest of

the group except for Tina who really struggled on the return. It was noticeable that the vast majority of participants, even the hard up porters, used two trekking poles on the snow and rock sections. I was seriously hampered by having left the snow baskets off mine in the UK. I didn't feel like descending having gained all this height and the weather looked quite good. However our guide was insistent and it was late and we had no food left. JP and Luis (Manuel Aguiar) felt likewise and to make matters worse a second group of Portuguese had arrived intending to be the first Portuguese climbers to reach the summit, the race was on! As I sat outside the hut the two of them were ages coming down, for a while I thought they had succumbed to the temptation. At about 4 p.m. a cat arrived absolutely bursting with goodies. Eggs (what wouldn't I do for an omelette), Cappuccino coffee, the list was endless. Next minute Alexandria emerged from beneath the pile, bloody yanks! Apparently they were stocking up for the American "push" (porter assisted) I wondered how the hell Alexandria was going to achieve this in his army shirt, shell suit bottoms and leaky boots. Still those cigarettes he smoked almost continuously did have a strange yet vaguely recognisable aroma! Apparently French, German, and various mixed groups from the SSSR were expected, things were hotting up. Later that evening a British group led by an American guide returned from a summit attempt. Many of their number had turned back but some had reached the lower (and easier) East summit (5621 m.) Note from my diary; "Sergai doesn't look too happy."

The dining room was like the United Nations. In addition to the groups mentioned previously there were Turks, Ukrainians, Hungarians and possibly others. Outside it was snowing heavily and I had developed a heavy cold. That night Andrei (our second guide) came round checking each person's gear item by item. I don't know whether I should be complimented or whether he had written me off but he said he wouldn't bother with mine!

Our 3.30 start began at 3.50, not bad for Russia. Tina had decided not to join us. We reached the Pastukhova rocks in 2 hours. God it was cold. I donned an extra pertex windproof top over my Buffalo shirt, pertex trousers over my thick fleece ones and put on goretex gloves over my Dachsteins. The lack of snow baskets on my poles was a real pain. We continued in strong winds up to the saddle, my gastric problems suddenly overtook me. "This must be one of the highest craps in Europe." I mused as I squatted in the snow. Apparently others had suffered during the night and had seen the sense to take medication to delay the problem. We reached the col. with its ruined refuge at about 1.15, not much hope of shelter there I thought. In the distance we saw Val and Andrei turn back.

Conditions were good, we abandoned our sacks and set off for the summit at 1.30. **How many times have I advised people never to get separated from their survival equipment.** As an afterthought I put on my waterproof duvet, it probably saved my life!

Quote from guidebook "The steeper section to the main summit rim immediately above should not be tackled in poor visibility or high wind." We had both. Steve and Rich turned back before we hit the steep bit.

We reached the summit at about 3 p.m. Conditions had deteriorated causing us to use ropes on the normally easy route up and severe icing on the rocks didn't help. A thin covering of fresh snow lay on hard ice. Can't say I was terribly happy since many of our group were inexperienced in these conditions. Visibility on the summit plateau was poor but we could just make out the small rock ridge leading to the summit cairn. That last 10 metres went on for ever. I must have had 3 or 4 rests. Gasping for breath with head swimming I finally made it. JP and Luis were over the moon. Not only were they "on top of Europe.", they were the first Portuguese to stand there ... and the "official" expedition were still acclimatising in the hut!!! Pausing for the stragglers and for a few photographs we set off behind Sergai.

Conditions got worse, the wind was now ferocious and visibility close to a "white out" Sergai's course seemed erratic and it soon became obvious that he was trying to navigate unsuccessfully without a compass! He had, like me, left it at the saddle with the rest of our survival gear. Luckily Bob had one but of course a compass is not a lot of use once lost. We set off in a southerly direction although my instincts said south east. We reached some very steep ground "Convex?" I thought. Sergai must have read my mind, "Sorry Ralph, we'll have to go back to the summit." Bob, not a religious man confessed he prayed for the first time in years at this point. Maggie, Nick and Ian looked rough. I pointed out their condition to Sergai advising a snow hole before everyone was too tired to dig one. After all we did have the radio.

We suddenly had a stroke of luck. We had stumbled across our descent route. By now conditions were appalling. It would be necessary to fix ropes all the way down. Sergai lowered a rather worried looking Pasha down to the full extent of the 50 m. (7mm) prestretched rope. I followed then the others hand over hand. (It is Russia and speed was essential!) Nick's glove blew away, Dave had frost nip in his right cheek, my hat had frozen to my ears and everyone sported long icicles from the tips of their noses and beards. We all looked like Stroud and Fiennes when they walked the Antarctic! We reached a traverse and Pasha bravely (?) set off down. I suggested a mid-way belay and Sergai nodded in agreement. I set off. Next minute I was speeding off into the unknown, ice axe brake snow too thin, ...ice too hard. At the last moment I hooked the pick of my axe over the slack rope coming to a sudden halt, thank God, as Sergai and Pasha, both unbelayed, took up the strain. I had snow in every conceivable pocket and orifice! No time to ponder on my good luck I fixed the belay and down we all came. Dave told me later that he felt things were getting so bad and we were so slow that he considered "taking his chances and setting off alone." We were to find out later he was an ex marine but his evasive replies when asked about his career led us to suspect SBS. After 4 or 5 rope lengths we reached easier ground and made further progress crocodile fashion each holding the rope in one hand. At last we reached our gear, or rather where it had been since it was now buried in snow. A brief meal of chocolate followed our excavations.

Dave asked to be allowed on ahead and Sergai agreed, after all the route was well marked. I agreed to help bring up the rear, after all there was no reason to rush back to the hut. I was going to enjoy the rest of the day. I sat down until I felt cold then followed the others down. The going was really hard at first in thigh deep soft snow. Once again I cursed my inadequate poles. I caught up the

stragglers who were by now really struggling. Maggie in particular was progressing very slowly, at about the same speed as on the ascent, and Nick and Ian were little better. After a while I spoke with Sergai and advised hot food and possibly shelter be sent up to the Pastukhova rocks. Shortly after he made a call on the radio.

About 45 mins short of the rocks Sergai muttered something about "going on ahead." I estimated it would take possibly 4 hours before the stragglers reached the hut, the time was 7 p.m., it would be dark. On arriving at the rocks there was no help available so I checked my bearing on the hut which I had taken the previous day. Thirty mins. later the weather closed in again, Ian who had gained a little, possibly due to the sight of the hut, started to play a tune on his whistle which did nothing for the confidence of the others. Elly seemed OK but Maggie was close to tears and threatening what she would do if she ever saw a Russian guide again. Nick and Ian seemed most doubtful about my abilities with a compass. (Does this sound familiar!)

After about an hour two figures loomed out of the mist, Sergai cook and Sergai green (named after an anti-something he often wore on his lip!) They shouted against the wind that speed was of the essence as the weather was worsening as a thunderstorm broke out to our right. It became obvious after a short distance that a) We could no longer see the marker posts. b) The two Sergais didn't know the way! I failed to explain and they were in no mood to listen that my compass couldn't lie! Lo and behold who should appear out of the mist but Alexandria, well wrapped up for a change. A heated discussion took place. Was it left or was it right. They were still not prepared to "listen" to my trusty old "Silva" It did occur to me that we could be in the middle of a crevasse zone so bringing up the rear seemed to be a good idea. After a while we bumped into some tents and knew that by following the nearby line of rocks we would end up at Priut 11. After a welcome and meal of spaghetti prepared by Tina (Sergai being on the "rescue") we retired after 18 hours on the go. I must confess to helping Sergai c. and g. to finish off the remaining champagne, vodka and a couple of bottles of beer before I felt ready for bed, purely in the interests of East West relations of course.

Next morning there was the usual delay waiting for the cats to arrive, most of us cramming into them for the journey down. Surprise, surprise. We had been transferred to an upmarket hotel "in compensation for the poor service earlier in the holiday!" After lunch Dave, Rich and myself went walking in the hills close to the village before sampling an excellent bar in the hotel.

Evening meal. What a surprise! Excellent food, all the porters present, with champagne and as much vodka as you could drink. I don't recall going to bed!

The following morning saw Dave, Steve, Sergai and myself catching the local ski lift up to one of the local peaks where we "chewed the fat" about topics ranging from "Glasnost" to the price of gear. There followed a brief call to the local market where we were taught the skills of barter for our souvenirs and presents. A quick lunch and we sadly said goodbye to our hosts before setting off for the airport. I lost count of the number of times we were stopped, apparently the Russians had suffered a real tonking at the hands of Chechen rebels about 250 Km. away.

Following the inevitable wait at the airport we boarded our Aeroflot flight for St. Petersburg and couldn't help noticing the "body filler" patch on the wing! We were first on board followed by various Russians and animals including dogs and cats one of which livened up the flight by escaping and refusing to be caught. The "on board drinks" consisted of water or lemonade and the "meal" of sponge cake followed by a cup of tea! Not quite British Airways!

The hotel in St.P. was incredible. I estimated 600 rooms with miles of corridors and a mere £80 a night. The beggars arrived on the forecourt as the prostitutes went off night shift.

I'm not a city person but was highly impressed in this old city, home of the Czars. The shops were well stocked, people well dressed and not a sign of litter anywhere. A complete contrast to Moscow and the rest of the country. An excellent lunch was followed by an uneventful journey to the airport and flight home leaving me well satisfied and eager for a taste of other far flung places.

JRJ. AUG 96

Saturday, 16th. March 1996 : Stream Passage Pot / Bar Pot.

John Preston and I met up with John and Richard Martin and Gareth Williams for breakfast at Inglesport, which must mean we'd got to go caving again. We met up with Ralph and the others at Clapham then set off on the plod up to the moor. John P. and I took the pretty way via Ingleborough Cave, much to the amusement of Ross who saved 30p. by using the moorland track instead, mind you we had already saved £1 and four hundred yards by parking next to the wood-yard gate instead of on the main car park. We met up near Bar Pot then six of us headed across to Stream Passage Pot entrance, while Ralph, Ruth and Tim went to rig Bar Pot.

The way in to Flood Entrance Pot is a series of oil-drums set vertically in the base of a shake hole, and despite being only 4 metres has to be rigged as it is so polished. It drops into a small chamber with a contorted squeeze (not as bad as it looks) leading through to the top of the first pitch (6m.), which can be easily rigged using the entrance shaft rope.. Ross rigged all the pitches, which made a pleasant change, so John P. and I followed him down a pleasant streamway with the rest of the tackle, while John M. and the lads brought up the rear.

The second pitch follows a narrowing of the passage which forced us to climb up and traverse along at roof level, and although there had been 'P' bolts on the first pitch, we needed to use a couple of hangers for the traverse line. A 'Y' hang from 'P' bolts at the pitch head allowed an easy drop (26m.), with a deviation about half way down to pull the rope out of the spray for the last part. A traverse led out immediately onto an exposed ledge on the left wall with the blackness of the third pitch dropping away below. At first only the right 'P' bolt of the 'Y' hang is visible, but once Ross was at the end of the ledge he could see the other 'P' bolt high up on the left wall. It must have been put in by someone with a very long reach ! Ross demonstrated his climbing skills (or lack of imagination ?) by scrabbling up the wall above the ledge, which was almost non-existent at that point, to balance on his knees on a greasy bulge while hanging on with one hand as he rigged the rope with the other. Eventually he was safely back on the ledge and set off down the pitch (32m.), with one deviation about 18 metres down which forced Ross into a series of pendulums before he could reach it out on the far wall. I found this particular pitch very intimidating at the top, but the deviation made it a straightforward, dry drop.

The fourth pitch (26m.) followed immediately and was rigged easily after a short traverse at the end of a series of huge, jammed blocks with deep holes between them onto the pitch below. It was an easy drop into a chamber leading directly into Stream Passage in the Gaping Ghyll system. Once we were all down we set off through a cascade from the passage roof into a large passage which enlarged into the huge Stream Chamber. The guide book said turn right, so of course we went left just far enough to get plastered in sticky, red mud before turning back and going the right way. We passed Mud Pot and then passed through the narrows into Sand Caverns where John P. and I were 'buzzed' several times by a high-speed bat !! We were surprised to see one so far from the Main Chamber. We followed the tourist route to the Main Chamber and spent some time enjoying the spectacle of the falling water, occasionally punctuated by the sound of rocks being thrown down the shaft by idiot walkers above. Next time you are there check out the amazing dig complete with railway, heading out into new territory, up in the big alcove in the wall right of the shaft.

We never saw Ralph's party, but we met a group who told us they'd gone out. Ross decided he would still go out through Stream Passage to de-rig, even though the rest of us were going out through Bar. We had an uneventful trip out, de-rigging Bar on the way, to find snow falling outside. John M. and the lads headed off to the valley with the ropes while John P. and I jogged round and round in the snow, in the fading light for an hour, waiting for Ross to appear so we could carry a share of the kit. We could hear him cursing long before he appeared at the foot of the oil-drums as we hauled the tackle bags out. John P. and I walked back across to Bar Pot to pick up my S.R.T. bag, while Ross disappeared on his own route into the falling snow. We didn't waste any time on the way down, but everyone else had gone by the time we reached the car.

Maybe I'm getting old, but I can't help feeling that we ought to ensure that everyone is off the hill, not just out of the hole, before everyone else leaves.

Steve Knox

Notes from a talk by Bill Whitehouse on 13th. May 1996:

Dealing With Hypothermia

D.C.R.O. has dealt with about 75 victims during the last 10 years. 27 of them were hypothermia victims. One incident involved 6 beginners in P.8 one night, in snow-melt conditions.

What is hypothermia ? It is when the body core temperature falls below 36 degrees C. (96.8 degrees F.). The core includes the major organs of brain, heart, lungs and liver. Every caver is a potential hypothermic, and hypothermia will kill if nothing is done once this sets in. From 36 degrees down to 33 degrees is described as mild, but below 33 degrees the condition is profound, which is very dangerous. Shivering stops at 32 degrees, and there is a progressive loss of consciousness from 30 down to 27 degrees. Derbyshire cave-air is about 11 degrees C.. Knowing the temperature underground does not help when dealing with a victim, so temperature is not normally monitored.

Methods of treatment are important, as treating for mild hypothermia will kill a profoundly hypothermic victim.

The human body is designed to lose heat rather than to retain it. The core heat moves to the surface where it is lost from dilated blood vessels. Heat is also lost by evaporation (95% through the skin and 5% by respiration).

Cold results in contracted surface blood vessels and shivering. The shivering generates heat but uses up energy very fast.

Ways that heat is lost:

Conduction: Heat lost through contact with cold surfaces.eg. rock, water, etc..

- insulate the victim from cold rock (air is a better insulator).

- get the victim out of water (240x more heat lost in water).

Convection: Transfer of heat to air or water moving past (wind-chill).

- There is a faster temperature loss in air currents.

- move the victim out of the draught.

Evaporation: Heat loss as liquid converts to gas.

Radiation: Direct emission of heat energy to cooler objects.

- difficult to combat (heat can be radiated to the victim).

Effects:

Heat loss affects the brain, muscles, circulation, heart and kidneys.

Brain- (affected first) slows decision making, makes people disagreeable and confused, they lose interest in keeping warm, become lethargic, drowsy, then comatose.

Muscles- stiffen, make victim clumsy and unco-ordinated.

Circulation- less oxygen carried, carbon-dioxide builds up, and blood thickens.

Heart- pumps slower and weaker, down to 20 beats/minute. Pulse can become undetectable. Heart-beat becomes irregular, then spasm occurs (ventricular fibrillation), then the heart stops.

(Note: Drug circulation will be slowed as this happens.)

Kidneys- the victim becomes dehydrated, and as the kidneys compensate for fluid collecting in the core urine is excreted.

Recognising Hypothermia:

(Many signs and symptoms mimic other problems.)

Starting points: Is it likely ? How long has the situation existed ? What has happened ? Conditions: cold, wet, windy, draughty ?

The victim: -unfit, tired or ill ? -under effects of drugs or alcohol ?
-insufficient food or drink ? -young, thin or slightly built ?
-inadequately clothed ? -immobilised ? -in water ?

Signs of mild hypothermia:-cold and shivering, loss of interest in all but warmth, negative attitude, irrational, confused, slow and clumsy, slurred speech.

Signs of profound hypothermia: -cold but no shivering; cold, non-pliable, pale or blue skin; weak, slow pulse; slow, shallow breathing; slow thinking and poor decisions; careless about the cold; incoherent; drowsy; loss of vision; acetone smell on breath; soaked in urine.

IMPORTANT: No-one should be regarded as dead. Only a doctor can determine this.

Treatment:

Stop mild hypothermia becoming profound hypothermia, and preserve life.

Mild hypothermia: -remove the victim from water or draught. -insulate the victim against further heat loss. -rewarm the victim using warm pads or a warm drink (can the victim hold the drink ?) -monitor the victim's condition. -evacuate the victim (GET HIM OUT).

Profound hypothermia: -insulate the victim. -evacuate by stretcher. -avoid rough handling or movement (this pumps blood).

DO NOT RE-WARM.

DANGER: C.P.R. on a profoundly hypothermic casualty could KILL the victim if a pulse exists but cannot be detected by the rescuers. Only try C.P.R. if the carotid pulse cannot be detected after a full minute of searching. Once started it must be continued until the victim reaches hospital (how practical is this ?). - ventilation could be tried without chest compression.

REMEMBER: Look for other injuries and medical problems. Continue to check your own safety and that of the victim.

Use of the 'Little Demon':

The 'Little Demon'^{*} produces warm, moist air for the casualty to breathe, by using carbon-dioxide and medical Soda Lime. This device should be treated as an additional method of insulating the victim, via the air-way in this case. It has marginal value but can be good for the morale of the patient. Demonstrating on a rescuer helps to boost the victim's confidence.

Note: I took down the above information at the time and have not checked it for medical accuracy. It is reproduced here in order to make Bill's excellent talk more widely available to members, and to stimulate discussion and a greater understanding of the condition. If there are any glaring errors they are mine, and I will be happy to be corrected.

Colin S. Knox 20.5.1996

* Better known as 'Little Dragon'

HELLO! Is there anybody out there? Has anyone got this far? Has anyone got any ideas / opinions? ... Has anyone been caving? Why not pen to paper (or whatever the modern equivalent of that is) and give the rest of the benefit? Try it once .. it's not that hard HONEST.