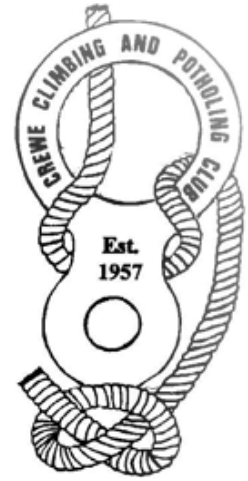


C.C.P.C. Newsletter 155. July - September 2024

Log on to www.ccpc.org.uk

Editor: Steve Knox

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Planned Club Meets, etc., from July to September 2024

Mon. 1 st July	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
Sat. 13 th July (was: 29/06)	Little Neath River Cave, Brecon Beacons, South Wales.	A sporting, active river cave - wet suit recommended.
Sun. 14 th July (was: 30/06)	Porth yr Ogof, South Wales.	An impressive river cave - wet suit recommended. Resurgence pool needs extreme care.
Sun. 14 th July	Millwr Tunnel, North Wales	
Sun. 21 st July	Middle Engine Mine, Derbyshire	
Sat. 27 th July	Illusion Pot, Yorkshire	
Mon. 5 th August	CCPC Social Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
Sat. 11 th Aug	Gaping Gill Winch Meet, Yorkshire	
Sat. 24 th Aug	Notts Pot 2, Yorkshire	
Mon. 2 nd Sept.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, nr. Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
Sun. 8 th Sept	Mandale Mine, Derbyshire.	
****Sept	Slate Mine, North Wales	

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Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation: DCRO team members including a number from CCPC, continue to be ready to assist whenever required, and regular team training continues.

<https://www.facebook.com/DerbyshireCaveRescue>

Latest Call-out: Friday/Saturday, 13th/14th September :- Search and recovery of two cavers in P8, following a fall by one. Both recovered safely. Brilliant work by the team!

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Millwr Tunnel

Sunday, 14th July 2024

I had to miss the Crewe weekend trip to South Wales, due to a preplanned visit to a very secretive but very well-known mine system reputed to be the biggest lead mining network in the UK.

I'd already got a pin from Darren and had planned on making a journey up to look for the entrance myself but then by coincidence a friend from the world wide web invited me to join in on a trip with him and a few other explorers and so to save a wasted trip I jumped at the offer.

So at 10am on Saturday six of us descended the entrance and started the very long approach walk through many old lead workings and down many, many sets of ladders in various states of integrity until we reached the floating railway at the junction with the Millwr tunnel.



From here ten miles of waterway lead to the outflow into the Dee estuary at Baggilt, all mined out during the 18th and 19th centuries to drain the mines under Halkyn mountain which were very prone to flooding as they got deeper. It also did such a good job at draining the mines that it affected the water supply to the villages in the area and also means that the River Alyn now runs dry for part of the year.

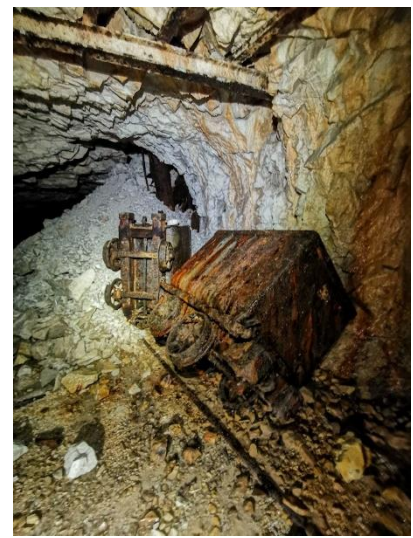
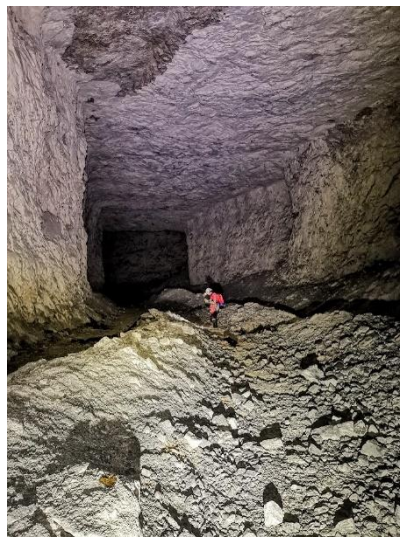


Our goal for the day was Powels Lode, a huge underground chamber with a bottomless lake that terrified the old men, as no matter how much waste rock they threw in the water levels never rose. As we set off down the narrow railway embankment it soon became apparent that water levels would be an issue.

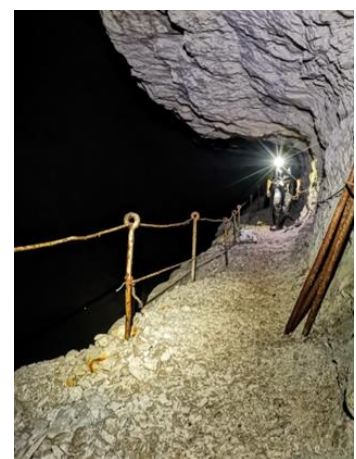
After two hours of up to knee deep wading, we finally got to the, now blocked, Olwyn Goch shaft and its network of floating rails, tubs and diesel locomotives, frozen in time from their last days before the mine closed in 1987.



We had now made it a little over halfway to Powels Lode and we decided that to push on would be difficult given that the passage leading to Powels was over a floating trackway which would be impassable given the high water. As a result, we opted to do the old 'Pilkington Glass' limestone workings to the West. After wandering through a nice walking size passage, the mine suddenly opens up into huge chambers matched in scale only by the slate mines nearby.



After looking at the Eimco rock shovels which were a pretty cool sight in a mine, as most are removed on closure, we wandered off into the vastness of the workings, passing rail networks and mine tubs almost to the point of being sick of seeing them, but they did make very good way markers.



Despite the fact that the Grosvenor didn't reply to any of my requests for a visit they have done a very good job of rigging the place out and we made use of some of it to access the dizzying heights that this working attained.



The walk back was nothing short of gruelling, the water flow pushing you back at each step, even avoiding treading on the eels that were swimming Infront of us was hard but eventually we got back to the relative ease of the ladderway and daylight.

Ten and a half hours and twenty-one miles covered underground we made it out and headed up the very steep muddy hill back to the parking tiers but ready for another go when, or if, the water levels drop during this miserable summer.

With permission of Gaz, more pictures can be found here.:

Gaz Mcshee

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/xsevZQBVAqg3LsUc7>



Middle Engine Mine, Hassop

Saturday, 21st July 2024

An extra trip arranged at short notice by Grace.

Ropes for Middle Engine:-

55m rope (the shaft is 50m, 3 levels to look at, one rebelay).

A 20m in case we have time to do the middle section.

Gaz commented: I've been a couple of times now and there is a lot to see if you can stomach the terrible risk of being trapped or crushed. Last time I was in, there was a very poor rope climbing up to very poor bolts that led to a very extensive passage with a railway in it and a drop into a shaft below that really needed bolting and dropping as it obviously led to more workings of unknown nature. There is a lot more to be seen in this mine but as it stands the highlight is the shaft, it is amazing.

[His write up is in [CCPC Newsletter 130.](#)]



Illusion Pot Yorkshire.

Saturday, 27th July 2024

A fine day in the Dales for five club members to explore Illusion Pot, on the border of Kingsdale and Chapel le Dale. We got to see pretty much everything except the rift traverse. Lots of pretties to look at.



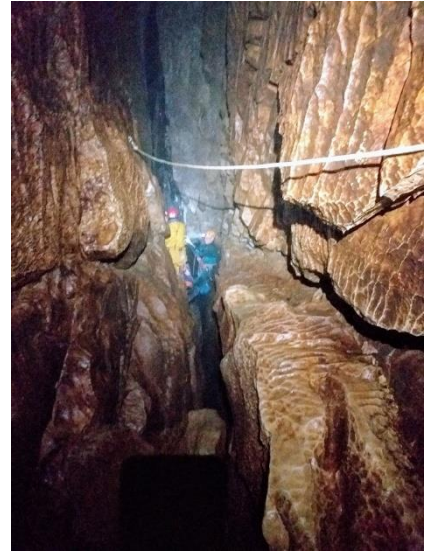
Some photos, courtesy of Grace Chu.



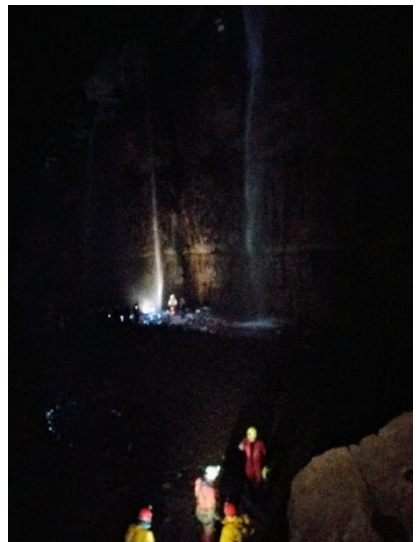
**Gaping Gill Winch Meet:
Stream Passage Pot to Flood Entrance (Wades).**

Saturday, 10th August 2024

Saturday saw four of us travel to Clapham for an early start walking up to Gaping Gill on Ingleborough. Craven Pothole Club had their winch meet on and we were there to take advantage of the many rigged entrances available to cavers, while members of the public got to see the Main Chamber via the winch.



We did a traverse from Stream Passage Pot to the Wades Entrance of Flood. The entrance of Stream Passage is still being rebuilt by volunteer cavers, but reopened during the winch, while work goes on. We picked up a couple of independent cavers on the way, Father and Son Ian and Jack, who were doing the same trip. Sixty cavers were underground that day and we got to see many of them. This led to a few traffic jams at pitches, but it made for a very social trip.



Five hours underground, including a visit to Main Chamber to see it lit up with the lights that CPC had installed.

Photos from Neil Conde.



Nant Y Creiau Mine, Devil's Bridge, Wales. Sunday, 11th August 2024

As sad as I was to miss the Gaping Ghyll trip I had made plans six months prior to meet friends from down south and go on the hunt for a very rare, in the UK artifact, an underground waterwheel in fact not just one but two and both in the same mine.

Nant Y Creiau is a very old lead and zinc mine in the Devils Bridge area of mid Wales the mine although quite small was one of the most productive mines in that part of Wales although it also forced more than one investor into bankruptcy.

The mine itself was very wet, and even today the deep Adit can flood rapidly in wet weather due to an impenetrable collapse close to the portal. At some point prior to 1846 the decision was made to install two waterwheels into the mine one to pump water out of the mine and the other to draw ore from the levels below the valley floor which filled quickly with water but were very productive, far more so than the levels higher up and which stayed relatively dry.

The wheels were made of wood and carried into the mine in sections then built up in situ. A novel method was used whereby the wheel pits were built into the stope with pile of deads packed onto 'stulls' these supported the wheels, and all the associated timber and metalwork required. The larger pumping wheel was placed higher up in the stope whilst the drawing wheel was built again on dead stacks but laid on bedrock or false floor above the stope below.

The water driving the upper wheel was then fed to the lower wheel to drive that and the tail race water emptied into the adit to drain away via wooden launders which are still in incredibly good condition.

History lesson over and down to the explore. I got there before the others had woken up and as I'd never been to Devils Bridge before I went and did the touristy thing and saw the three bridges famous for people jumping off and also the waterfalls that clean up the mess afterwards. It was quite nice to be alone in such a beautiful place as a few hours later it would be rammed with screaming kids and moaning adults complaining about how much it cost to go down and up these ridiculous steps and suddenly realising how their lifestyle has left them totally unfit and a long way from their comfort zone of the pub high above the valley floor, a good two hundred plus very tall, slippery and uneven slate steps away.

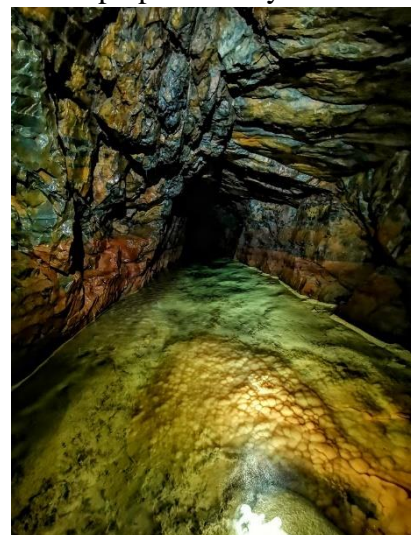


Once my morning walk was out of the way I headed back to the others to get ready only to find that one had pulled a sicky and another had fallen off his motorbike and damaged his hand so no SRT for him. That left two of us and a major rigging challenge a long way out in the forests of mid Wales.

As it was, just Milda and myself made the trek, and as she couldn't do the rigging I felt the need to step up and carry the hundred and sixty metres of rope along with the crabs and maillons to the mine entrance hidden away on a lonely hillside somewhere in the wilderness but an hour later and already sweating like a pig in the warm humid and drizzly Welsh summertime it was time to

start the fun bit.

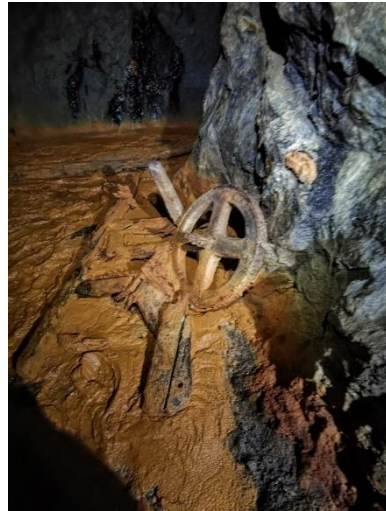
I'd decided not to wet the ropes so that they were lighter to carry in; sometimes I'm a bit clever like that, but after entering the mine the ropes got dragged through a flooded passage and now weighed a ton; fortunately after ten metres the longest rope, the fifty metre, was dispatched and my life got easier, well kind of.





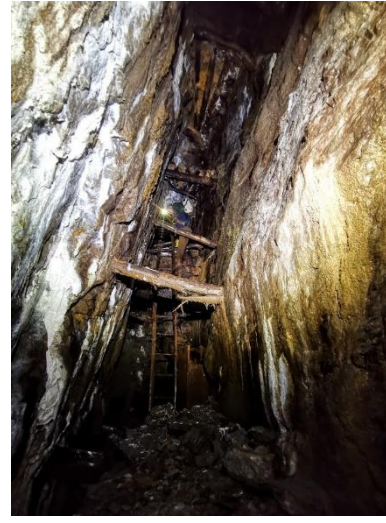
The discovery team had done a great job of placing exploration bolts but had left them without hangers so I had to place 'on lead', and remove 'on egress' - this was, to say the least, time consuming, but I was keen so off we went into the unknown - for me anyway, Milda had been here twelve months before but only got as far as the first wheel which required a Traverse over the drawing shaft that she wasn't comfortable rigging so had sensibly backed off.

After the first pitch we were in the adit which was unusually dry - normally it's over your boots I am told, and as it's filled with iron can be horrid for your skin but being so low you could see the old mine cartway and even a collapsed wooden wheelbarrow that would normally be hidden in orange liquid.



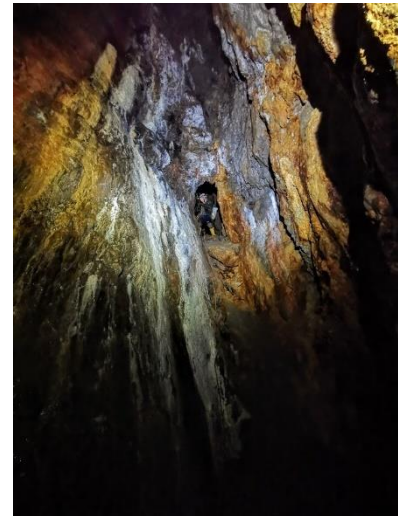
Off this passage another pitch led to the site of the first wheel assembly.

The first thing you see is a timber platform covered in collapsed stulls and old wooden ladders leading up to a platform and the surprisingly intact remains of the launders that drained the wheels spent water down into the adit for drainage into the valley. At the top of the ladders, (yes you can climb them even though they are nearly two hundred years old,) a very sketchy platform leads you over the drawing shaft and above you, can be seen the pulleys with the rusty chains still in situ, that once drew the buckets of ore from the bowels of the earth below.



Next up is the traverse over the flooded drawing shaft, very sketchy to rig when you have to place your hangers first, but it leads to the first wheel. Sadly, almost its entirety is covered with collapsed

material and just a tiny portion remains visible, but that's not why we came, we were after the sister wheel higher up. After a very sketchy unprotected climb up the rubble burying the wheel with the constant fear of falling back into the drawing shaft a thank God bolt is reached and from there another pitch drops you into the stope beneath the second wheel.



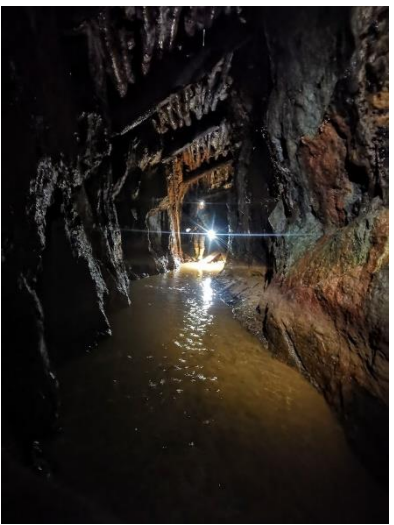
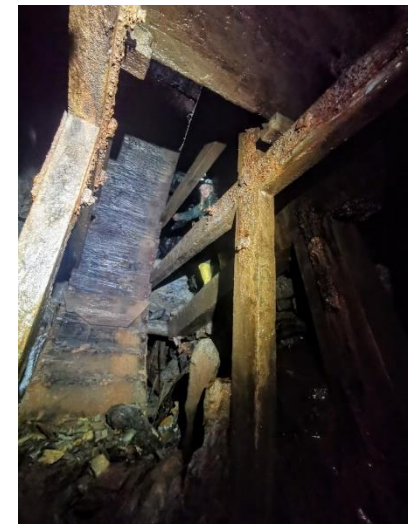
Now bear in mind that for the whole of this trip the roof is not your friend, the floor is not your friend, and from here on in, the guy or girl climbing is not your friend either because now you start to kick stuff down on you compatriots hopefully just bits but the potential for full on 'stull' collapse is very real, and from here the hard bit begins.

The second wheel is situated high above the first and is accessed via a bolt climb straight up the stope wall through and over the packs in the void and as the first explorer had slightly longer arms than me, placing the hanger plates was torture but little by little, I wormed my way up until I was standing atop of a pack in the stope looking up through the stemples to a wooden platform. After waiting for Milda to climb up we wormed our way up to the platform and dropped a short pitch to yet another tricky bolt-climb up. This time the holes in the packs above allowed the first views of the second wheel, seemingly floating over our heads.



Fully visible, and almost intact, the huge wheel, about five metres in diameter, leaned at a slight angle, resting on the side wall of the stope due to the collapse of one of its supporting beams. Once up into the wheel pits the beauty of this relic became clear. At one end of the man-made supporting structure was the balance bob, complete with its con rods, and at the other end was the angle bob

with its lifting rod dropping down into the flooded pumping shaft below, and in the middle was the wheel, all timber and in incredibly good condition.



After spending time admiring the beauty of this almost medieval masterpiece we had to leave, and now the real effort started. The gear we placed had to be removed which meant freeclimbing down to the next plate to remove the one above; fortunately the riggers had left maillons in place so that the descent could be done on a pull-through, derigging as you went, this helped no end and

eventually we made it back to the exit and a lovely warm evening. We had entered the mine at 10am and stumbled back out at 7pm, very tired, and very happy.

Here is a link to the full set of pictures of the trip for those interested:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/YkNSHQ8FVELCrKfd6>

Gaz Mcshee

All text, and the amazing photographs are included here with Gaz's permission, and with Milda's permission for the inclusion of photographs which include her.

Thankyou. Ed.



Owl Hole, Derbyshire.

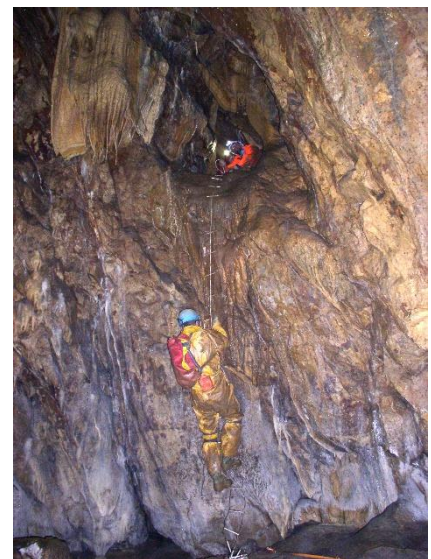
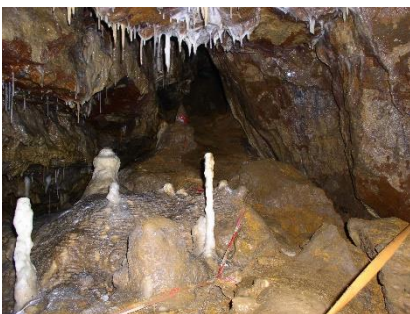
Saturday, 17th August 2024

A few weeks back, I received a new rigging topo from Birmingham Student Cavers for Owl Hole. I'd been considering adding one to the CCPC Guide since The DCA had rebolted the climb to the Crystal Pallas series. A visit was in order to check what the students had drawn and to take a look at the short pitch into the large chamber beyond.

Owl Hole is a place I had not been to before, though it has been on my to do list since Gaz did the climb up to it using rock techniques, before it was rebolted. Just for added complication, I decided to get there by push bike. This meant minimal kit; no welly boots, no oversuit, no rope, just a helmet with lights, a harness, two sets of cowstails and a foot loop. Hopefully not too much weight for me to be able to get up Peak District hills.

I took the train out to Chinley and set off over the first hill to Dove Holes, then down to Buxton. From there, it was uphill to Harpur Hill and into new, to me, territory. A graded track for push bikes took me to the Buxton Speedway and back on to tarmac to the cave entrance. Here my lack of an oversuit, or even a boilersuit first showed up my poor decision making, with severe nettle rash approaching the depression with the cave. Once down at the bottom, the line of resin anchors was obvious, and I got harnessed up for the climb. This turned out to be simple enough. Use your foot loops in a high anchor to lift yourself and cows tail into other anchors. Rinse and repeat, taking care not to climb above your anchors, or be reliant on a single one.

The top was soon reached. A short way in is a gate to protect the pretties inside. This needs two adjustable spanners to undo the nut and bolt securing it. Beyond is a mud slope up to a well decorated series of chambers, passage and avens. To the left is a descent to a 5m pitch. Probably best rigged with ladder and line, as there are no suitable naturals close enough to the sloping pitch head to avoid rope rub with SRT.



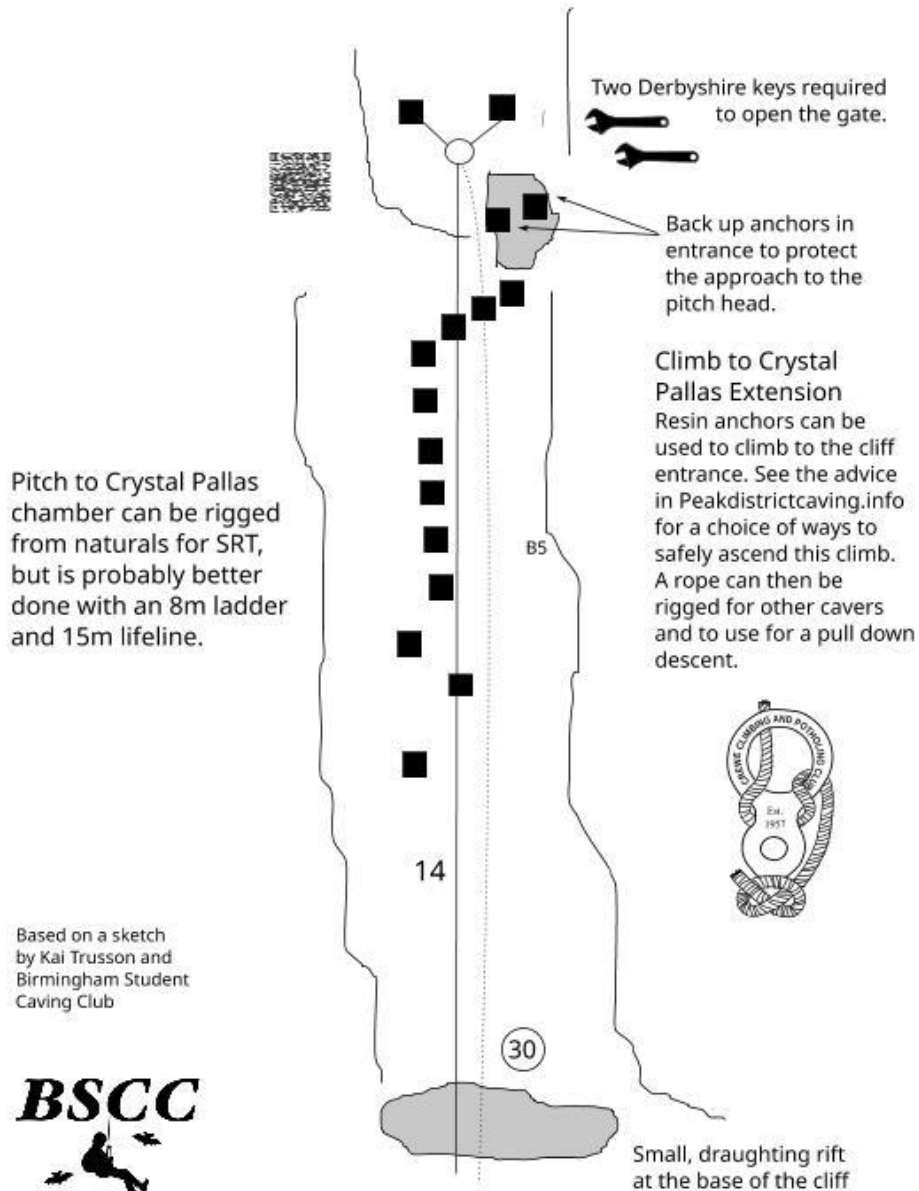
After making notes, I returned to the entrance, locking the gate behind me and carefully descended, using the same technique as before, as I had no rope for the pull through anchors. At this point the second problem with leaving the boiler suit at home became apparent. I was caked in the finest Peak District mud. So much so that as I started cycling back a concerned couple in a car stopped and asked me if I'd fallen into a ditch! They turned out to be the landowners for the nearby Bottle Pot, who I'd met earlier in the year

Above: The internal pitch.

while getting changed for that trip. I made it back through Buxton and to Chinley for the train. A fun day out. Below is the topo ready for the Crewe CPC Rigging Guide. Some notes: Don't leave an oversuit of some sort behind, no matter how simple the trip! A call out with a responsible adult is even more important than when caving with others.

Jenny Drake

Owl Hole - Dove



Based on a sketch by Kai Trusson and Birmingham Student Caving Club



The Owl Hole photographs are from a set of 40 I took on a trip I made with Paul Nixon, Tim Campbell, and Ralph Johnson, on 19th August, 2005 – wow, that was 19 years ago ! At that time, there were enough bolts and hangers in place to make the initial climb easy, 'leap-frogging' opposite ends of a rope from one hanger to the next, and swopping jammers from one rope to the other each time. I ought to print a set of photos to take on a repeat visit to see how well the formations have survived.

Steve Knox, Editor.

