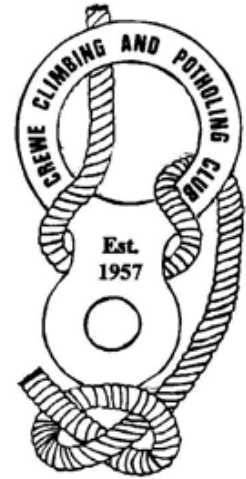




# C.C.P.C. Newsletter 158. December 2024

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Editor: Steve Knox  
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## Planned Club Meets, etc., for December 2024 to January 2025.

Sun. 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec.	Waterways Swallet, Blore, Staffordshire. Annual car park maintenance visit, and trip into swallet – no SRT.	Due to a poor weather forecast, and Members being busy in the run up to Christmas, this was cancelled, however the work was carried out a few days later.
Mon. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec.	CCPC Monthly Meeting. (Also available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs (?) at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Staffs. 8.30 pm.
Sat. 14 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	Gautries Hole, Perryfoot, Derbyshire.	An under-rated cave system with muddy crawls and squeezes.
Sun. 29 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	Perhaps a good day for the Annual Christmas Walk ? Any suggestions ??	Dove & Manifold area ? - includes Ecton Mines.
Mon. 6 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025	CCPC Annual General Meeting, followed by the Monthly Meeting. (Available to Members via 'Zoom'.	Upstairs at The Red Bull, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Staffs. 7.30 pm.
	A Christmas meal has been arranged to follow the AGM. On 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2025.	

**Dates** of future Meets and Events are always redacted from this page for copies of the Newsletter which are placed online, or are otherwise made available to non-members.

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

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## Letter From Scotland

I've been an armchair caver for long enough! Or so I thought when my cardio-chiel gave me the go-ahead to do whatever I wanted. "The world's your oyster!" he declared, which was totally different from when, eighteen months previously, he reeled off all the things which I shouldn't do – a list which seemed to include just about everything I enjoy.

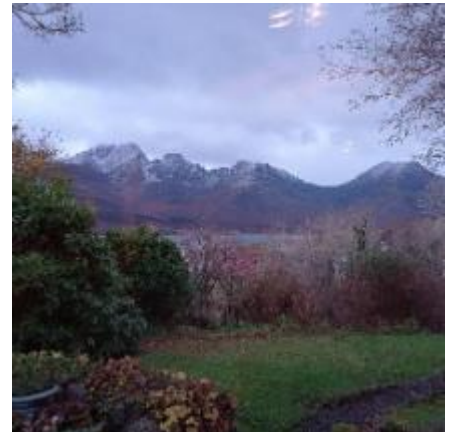
Therefore, when we decided to rent a cottage on Skye for a week at the beginning of



December, I chose Torrin, which is the home for the majority of Skye's limestone caves, and, on the last Saturday in November, I set off with my wife, Alison, and my daughter, Mel, to a cottage with the grand name of "Half of Two". It might be a Skye thing, but there are a lot of houses on Skye with "half" in their name, and it might simply be that it's a way of determining a new number when they either divide a house, or build a new dwelling at the same address. Back home they tend to use A and B for this sort of thing.



*Left: '1/2 of 2'.*



*Right: View from '1/2 of 2'.*

It was still raining as we drove through Glen Sheil and down to the Kyle, and, unfortunately, that was to be the routine, weatherwise, for the whole week. Not to worry, Alison and I wore "suitable clothes" when we set off towards Coille Gaireallach (pronounced Cool-ya Gar-Yalloch, and it is gaelic for wood of the rough ground) to seek out my proposed cave, [High Pasture Cave](#). The cave, which is to the east of the woodland, can be found by following a trod from the main Broadford to Elgol road, where there is an obvious gate in a fence which runs parallel to the trod. However, we found that once the fence leaves the path, the trod continues past what is, presumably, the resurgence for High Pasture Cave and, thereafter, quite a few different trods radiate in various directions. I chose a higher trod, which I thought (correctly as it turned out) would probably be wrong but which would give me a better overview of the land nearer the cave.

Because of the extra height gained, I managed to see, in the distance, the small valley in which the burn flows - the burn which will ultimately pass through the cave. Aiming for and crossing said stream, we discovered that it was in high spate which didn't augur well for any future caving trips, unless the water diminished. Following the burn, we got to the point where it simply sank in a bouldery patch in the base of the tiny valley. A little further on, we found a small hole from which the loud rumble of the stream could be heard, and we assumed that

this was [Upper High Pasture Cave](#). A little further on was the definite article, with a wooden surround and a wooden lid, which was partly broken, but still capable of deterring sheep or deer – for the time being.



*Left: 'High Pasture Entrance.*



*Right: 'High Pasture Sink'.*

I hadn't planned to descend the cave that day, but was keen for Alison to know where the entrance was, as I would almost certainly be caving solo. But the cave guide (the latest one is a 1995 edition) states that you descend through the boulder ruckle to the stream which is followed as a crawl which I considered might well sump in the kind of torrent entering at that time, so, not wanting a short, wet trip, followed by a long wet walk back, I put it off for another day.

Unfortunately better weather didn't arrive while we were on Skye, so we contented ourselves with wet walks out to Irishman's Point, up to the Old Man of Storr, round to Camas Malag and, of course, the Fairy Pools of Allt Coir a'Mhadaidh, over in Glen Brittle. All much quieter at this time of year ... especially during the wet season! But my caving was still a big fat zero



*Left: Fairy Pools, near Glen Brittle.*



*Right: 'The Old Man of Storr'.*

Once back home, I packed my gear again and set off on the Ullapool road for a weekend in Assynt, for this was the GSG's annual Christmas Meal Weekend. This annual culinary delight is courtesy of one of our members who really is an excellent chef, and who provides us with four or five courses of high standard food all for a tenner – and all the tenners go to charity. During the days of that weekend, there is usually a bit of caving going on, but, when I arose on Saturday morning, the only trip on offer was a dig in [Uamh nan Clogaid a' Bha Air Chall](#) (usually referred to as UNCABAC, means Cave of the Lost Helmet) which I didn't think would fit the bill, or satisfy any of the requirements I'd received from Dr Brendan!

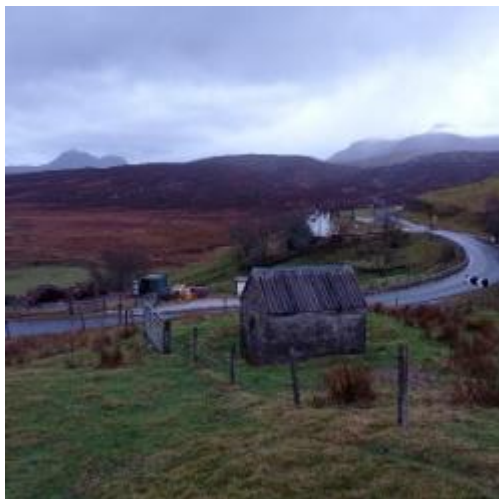
So I decided that, like last year, I would simply get wrapped up and take a walk over the braes above and behind Knockan Village. I set out for [Uamh an Tartair](#) (Cave of the Roaring) but, unlike last time, when I followed the Abhainn a'Chnocain up to the rising at Fuaran a'Ghlinne below the dry waterfall below An Tartair, this year I would follow a trod marked with posts



above and parallel to the true left bank of the stream to a feature known as The Crater, a very deep shakehole, not far from [Uamh Mhor](#), the pothole entrance to Uamh an Tartair. After examining this, I looked into Uamh Mhor and descended to the cave of engulfment, which was being pounded by a very heavy stream.

Last year I walked up to [Cul Eoghainn](#) and [Poll Eoghainn](#) and thence to Knockan Crag following the stream which enters the latter cave, but this year I wanted to seek out a couple of caves between Cnoc a'Choilich Beag and Cnoc a'Choilich Mor; I hadn't thought to look up their grid locations before I left the hut, but decided to simply go and see what I could find. Well I managed to find what I believe is [Black Finger Pot](#), an old GSG dig which, unfortunately, was filled in at the request of the farmer. It's in a wee bealach between two high points, but with a significant block of limestone below, and sinking a small stream, so I could see why it would be a site of interest.

I wandered down and past the old GSG hut in Knockan. Originally, this was a building made entirely of wiggly tin. Eventually it was upgraded with the addition of a breeze-block toilet block. But one day a strong wind caught it and much of the hut just flew away – all that remains today is the toilet block. The new hut, around the corner in Elphin, is much cosier!



*All that remains of GSG's old hut is the toilet block.*

*GSG New Hut.*

None of the caves in this region is extensive by even Assynt standards, and for that reason, most visiting cavers, and even GSG members, concentrate on the more famous caves in Allt nan Uamh and Traligill. But the bland, soggy moorland that covers the Knockan hills should not be ignored because we all know that the geological contortions beneath these hills is capable of creating voids which are far bigger and more impressive than anything the wee burns which flow off the tops could manage. The old adage "Caves be where we find 'em" was never truer.

The meal Saturday night consisted of spicy fish soup, followed by fishy blinis, followed by a falafel salad, followed by pork loin with stuffing and roast vegetables followed by tiramisu or trifle or Xmas pud, followed by stilton and port – not bad for a tenner.

The following morning, after the usual tidy up, most folk were keen to hit the road, but the day was much nicer than the Saturday, and I was still anxious to get underground. So I drove over to Inchnadamph and walked up Traligill for an easy solo trip into [Cnockers](#) (AKA Cnoc nan Uamh). The main dry entrance to the cave is known as [Uamh an Tartair](#) (Cave of the Roaring, the same name as one of yesterday's objectives) and it certainly lived up to its Gaelic name as there was a huge rumble emanating from within as I donned my helmet and knee pads.

Passing through the short crawl, I was soon confronted by the source of the noise – deep, white water thundering from left to right, with my objective on the far side. Caching my phone, wallet and anything else I didn't want to get soaked, I made my way across quite gingerly, wishing I had thought to bring my walking poles (which were down in my van in Inchnadamph) so that I could have done a better, safer job. Anyway, I got across with a bit of a soaking, but otherwise unscathed, and carried on through the cave. It's not a long, difficult cave but within its brief confines it holds a lovely collection of scrambles, easy traverses and even pretty bits; there's an optional deviation through a maze of crawls known as the Rabbit Warren too. If you're ever passing by Loch Assynt and have with you a light, some old clothes, wellies, a helmet and a couple of hours to spare, I'd recommend Knockers. I reckon even Ade would be impressed!!!

All the best, Alan

**Please Note:** You can read Alan's earlier article about this fascinating area, in CCPC Newsletter No. 150, November – December 2023, pages 13 – 16. – including a very useful map showing cave locations.

A might be a little too far for a day trip (!) but would be attractive as a 'new area' for a short break in the summer – preferably before the midges become too much of a nuisance. **S.K.**



**14<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**Gautries Hole**

**Gaz Mcshee**

NGR 10158145. Grade 3. Length 240 metres. Survey on page 90 – Caves of the Peak District.



*Left: The hugely impressive entrance shakehole (now clear of farm rubbish !)*

Two of us took on the nasty niceness of Gautries Hole this morning. Having just finished a night shift it was just the shock to the system I needed to snap me back into life and enjoy one of the best Derbyshire Swallets going.

From the off, the darkness sets in, killing your lights and adding a sense of foreboding for what is to come. The streamway is entered quite soon after the entrance, and judging by the foam high on the wall the whole place had been sumped quite recently, but not today.

We passed the sink in the floor, marking the point at which the water traps you during heavy rain, and stepped up into First Chamber for the way on. I wonder where all that water goes ? - because that's the last time you see the streamway for the rest of the trip.

*[Right: Is that the guide rope for diving out if the passage sumps ? Not my idea of fun. Ed.]*

We headed off up South West Passage to Angle Chamber, taking the South East Passage to the sump, before returning to the high-level traverse to the Muddy Duck and Pool Chamber (not quite sure where the pool was but it definitely wasn't there today).

From here on in it was a lovely, flat-out squirm through the passages, hardly ever getting off our backsides for a rest. Jenny even had to dig





out one upward crawl in order to get through, but then I had to dig out the fill that she had removed in order to get past myself.



Shortly after "Jennys dig" we met the sumps. Sump one was passed easily, with plenty of space for a quick passage. Sump two was a little deeper, but still easily do-able without drowning.



More flat out crawling, and we arrived at the rising passage to Poundland. Jenny went first, but after giving her all, couldn't pass the eyehole into the extension, so came back. I went next but I couldn't pass it either, which was weird, as it looked so flaming easy ! No Poundland for us today then, and probably less chance after Xmas.



Back with Jenny at the slope bottom, I crawled through a low passage to find myself located at the top of a short pot, with a decrepit electron ladder descending to a sump, with a scaffold platform. There was no chance we were climbing down that ancient relic of a ladder though - today was not the day to die !

Back out we went, having thoroughly enjoyed that masterpiece of nasty, dirty, tight and wet cave, born of water and beautifully hostile to humans, especially fat ones.

Back at the car one shock remained. My car had been joined by another, and to our surprise the inhabitants of the car were also joined ! Fortunately, I'd left my keys under a rock by the gate, so as Jenny went back for them, I stood by the road while the inhabitants of the car untangled themselves. I gave them a coy smile and a wave as they drove off; kindly they smiled and waved back, looking like they'd had as much fun as we did, getting deep down and dirty in Derbyshire.



Cheers Jenny, for another great trip and proof that lack of numbers doesn't necessarily mean cancelling a trip. Have a great Xmas and New Year all. See you for more adventures in 2025 !



Link to the pictures is here, they are rough but totally give a feel for this beautiful bit of cave:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DkRJUPHDFy2mLkND6>

All the best. **Gaz.**

**Editor:** I should add that Gaz always includes a large number of excellent photographs with his trip accounts (102 for this outing alone !!), so I have to select a more modest number to accompany his write-up, and to try to convey some impression of what was involved. Any 'misplaced' photographs are entirely my fault.

On 16/12/2024 **Jenny Drake** added:

'Excellent write up Gaz, but there are some continuity problems with the photos. I start off with a red oversuit, then It looks like I've swapped it for a grey/brown one part way through the trip, only to go back to a red one again at the end !'

On 16/12/2024 12:00, **Alan Brentnall** joined in:

'Good write-up, as usual, Gaz - and the photos bring it all back. From what I can remember, after the uphill crawl there's a squeeze but it does get roomier and levels off, and then there's a left bend and a tightish climb down to the dig. When you add up all the downstream stuff too, it's an amazing system.'

16/12/2024 **Jenny Drake** again: 'I actually had my head and arms in the little chamber, just couldn't get any purchase for hands, or feet to force the rest through the squeezey bit. It was most frustrating !'

**Yuck:**

My last trip into Gautries was many years ago, with John Preston, and it turned into one of those places that you wanted to get out of, very quickly ! Soon after entering, we were crawling through a shallow pool in South-west Passage (I think it was), when I spotted a hideous life-form in the water, just centimetres from my face – a tape worm ! For those unfamiliar with this beastie, it is a parasite, and this one looked like a ribbon of pale connected squares at least 50 centimetres long, and it was moving. We backed off very quickly and decided to do P8 instead.

If you think we over-reacted, or were wimps, you should look up 'Tape Worms' on the internet, but prepare to be disgusted, and definitely don't do this before you sit down for a meal !!

I have purposely not included a photograph here.

**Steve Knox, Editor.**



**From the Archives:- CCPC Newsletter No. 67. October 2000, Page 6.**

**Well, maybe one day !!** (-not **P8**, but **Gautries** instead). **John Martin**

Having discovered that in nearly 10 years of caving Gareth had never been down **P8** we decided to remedy this. In an effort to resurrect our Wednesday evenings out, Mark, Gareth and I set off, having arranged to meet one of the new members, Colin, at the lay-by.

Following a prompt start from Macclesfield we headed for Perryfoot, full of enthusiasm despite the torrential rain that had fallen all day. We arrived at the lay-by to find Colin surrounded by two other parties, one a bunch of beginners, some 10 to 15 people in total.

Mark tried to suggest that taking a lot of novices down **P8** in those conditions was not a very good idea, but this was greeted with the response that one party was led by someone from DCRO. This turned out to be Howard Taylor, an old pal of mine from way back. We saw chaos ahead, so on with plan B: **Gautries**, poor Gareth would just have to wait for another day to do **P8**.

An easy trip in to the first chamber was in surprisingly low water for the amount of rain that had fallen over the last two days. The low crawl to Angle Chamber was also quite dry but the puddles were still mightily cold on the tackle (bags that is). A quick pull on the hand line put us in the passage to the duck. Much to our amazement it was dry with only a few mm of water in the bottom so a full soaking was avoided,

A ladder was rigged to make the climb back from the main chamber easier, and soon we were all by the Dam at the terminal sump. The tube at the side is usually sumped after 3 or 4 metres but I could see way beyond this, and I was soon engaged in a wallow in mud. About 8 metres of passage followed to a muddy blockage with an opening to the right, which even Matt couldn't have fitted, through but from which the sound of running water could be heard. This is definitely worth another look at.

In the meantime Colin was attacking the main sump, which was completely dry. After a few minutes work shovelling sand he was able to wiggle through feet first, to find that there was a low passage beyond. As none of us brave souls fancied the prospect of going after him if he got stuck, we suggested he left this for another day, when we could bring some gear with us. As the guide says this sump is blind, this may be worth getting the club involved. The generally low level of water in the cave was very surprising, given the fact that it had rained heavily for 2/3 days prior to our visit, and we wondered if the storms of the winter had cleared a blockage lower down the system.

On the way out a look down the passage beyond angle chamber showed that the sump was some 15 metres lower than normal. A climb down a pitch I have never seen before led to a small continuation before the sump was seen. Yet another change. !!

Back though the puddles, Colin and Gareth had a play down the first section of the cave where the pipes are still sluicing, and then off to the Pub to listen to the Folk singing and to drink the odd beer or two, or three or four in Mark's case. Maybe not **P8**, but we had a very interesting night out.

**John Martin**

**[Included here with the kind permission of John Martin – Thank you John, Editor.]**

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Remember that all previous Newsletters (there are 157 before this one) are available to read on-line, via the CCPC website, and although we have a 'Contents' list, we do not yet have a proper index. John's article was listed in the 'References' for Gautries, on page 93 of: 'Caves of the Peak District'. There is no doubt that the Newsletters or Journals of any caving club hold a wealth of fascinating material, which can record new explorations or achievements, and which can stimulate projects to open new routes. John Martin's account (above) clearly identifies several locations worthy of attention, but it was years later before their full potential was realised by others. **Ed.**  
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## A Brief Tale of Ropes (or, No wonder we are short of Members !)

In the distant past, when SRT was still in its infancy, CCPC had a policy of recording the actual use of each of our ropes: – the particular rope and its length; the date and place; how many descents and ascents were made. The information (sometimes a little confusing) was recorded so we could see which types of rope were most resistant to wear, and thus needed to be replaced less often.

For example:

Edelrid – June 1979 - 385' Gaping Ghyll – 4 down, 7 up. <b>+3</b> Rowter – 2 down, 2 up. Cut to give: 200 (red/red) and 150 (blue).	Edelrid – June 79 – 275' Stream Passage (GG) - 6 down, 3 up. <b>-3</b> Eldon Hole – 2 down, 2 up. Rowter – 1 down, 1 up. Knotlow 210 – 8 down, 8 up. Cut to give 150 + 120.
150' (red/yellow) Maskhill – 3 Lost Johns - 3 Dale Head – 6 Oxlow – 2 Knotlow – 1 up Knotlow – 3 down, 2 up. <b>-1</b> W. Icicle – 3 down, 3 up. Maskhill – 1 down, 2 up. <b>+1</b> Rope shrank to 120' Knotlow – 8 down, 1 up. <b>-7</b> Maskhill – 2 down, 2 up. S.Wales – 1 down, 1 up. W. Icicle – 3 down, 3 up.	120' (green) Water Icicle – 2 Nettle – 2 Water Icicle – 2 Maskhill – 3 Water Icicle – 3 Swinsto – 2 down. <b>-2</b> P8 – 1 Mandale – 2 Water Icicle – 3 down, 1 up. <b>-2</b> Oxlow- 2 Knotlow – 1 up. <b>+1</b> W. Icicle – 6 down, 1 up. <b>-5</b> Rope damaged – cut to 90'

We were definitely 'in profit' on the Gaping Ghyll trip where we gained 3 extras, but I can't quite understand how nobody noticed the number of Members we seem to have 'lost' on a regular basis ! Do we still have an abandoned Member sitting at the bottom of Knotlow, since his/her trip in 1979 ? ( This could have been the mysterious individual who came **up** on the previous trip even though no-one went **down** – very puzzling.) To be fair, we gained one extra from Maskhill the same year, however things seem to have reached an all-time low on the next Knotlow trip, when 8 individuals went **down**, but only 1 came back **up** !

On these entries alone, we seem to have mislaid 15 individuals. Seriously though, I'm not sure how much we learned about the quality, or life expectancy of the different kinds of SRT rope available at the time (except by reputation). We did discover that the original length of a rope, when new, couldn't be relied on after a period of regular usage – the ropes shrank ! A 250' 'Blue Water' rope, purchased during 1980 (exact date unknown) was measured in July 1981 and was found to be 225', a shrinkage of 25' or 10%. People developed their own preferences, much of it based on each rope's handling characteristics. There were stories of some ropes becoming so stiff that you could practically poke them vertically up to the top of a pitch from below, but no-one came up with a way of making the rope tie its own knots at the top. Certainly, some ropes became so solidly knotted after being loaded, that they had to be un-knotted later, on the surface, or at home.

**[Remember, if you want to see more interesting material in the CCPC Newsletter then you might have to contribute something yourself for others to enjoy. My thanks to our regular contributors.]**

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 That's enough for this issue. I hope you found something of interest.

Keep caving, and keep safe. **- Oops ! A couple of late additions to follow:**

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**POET'S CORNER:**

14/12/2024

**The Night Before Christmas. - Jenny Drake**

T'was the trip before Christmas, when all through the club  
Not a caver was stirring, not even a bat;  
The wetsocks were hung up to dry with great care  
In hopes the smell soon wouldn't be there;  
The cavers were nestled all snug in their pits,  
While visions of caverns danced in their heads;

(With the deepest apologies to Clement C Moore for mangling his poem.)

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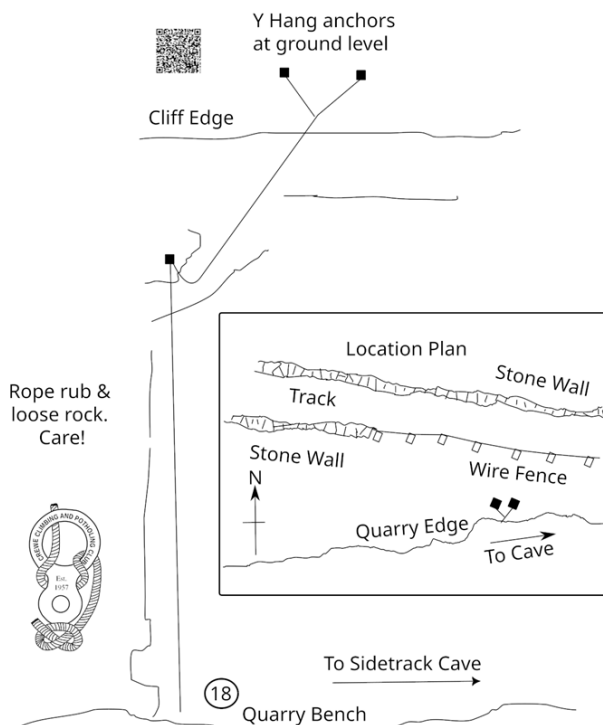


**Sidetrack Cave Eldon Quarry.**

**20<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

Jenny and Grace visited Sidetrack Cave in Eldon Quarry, on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> December, so Jenny took the opportunity to produce the topo (below) to show the rigging for the descent to the entrance on the quarry terrace. [See: 'Descent' issue no. 169, pages 26 & 27, for an account of the discovery of this cave, and with a useful survey.]

**Sidetrack Cave Cliff Access  
Castleton**



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**Now that definitely is the end. I wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas, and I sincerely hope we can all enjoy a peaceful and harmonious New Year in 2025. Steve Knox, Editor. 22/12/24**