

A photograph of a person in a cave, wearing a helmet and climbing gear, standing on a dirt floor. The cave walls are covered in numerous stalactites. The person is wearing a blue jacket, red pants, and a white helmet with a headlamp. They are standing on a dirt floor with a red and white striped rope in the foreground. The background shows the cave walls with many stalactites hanging from the ceiling.

Craven Pothole Club *Record*

ISSN 1463-6131

Number 131 (July 2018)

Craven Pothole Club

Founded 1929
www.cravenpotholeclub.org



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Front Cover: Emma Akam in the Minarets in Lancaster Hole (photo: Kevin Gannon)

Back Cover: Moelwyn Mawr from Moel Siabod (photo: PBW)

Craven Pothole Club Record

July 2018

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Typeset in Scribus 1.4.6 with URWPalladioL, URWClassico, and Luxi Sans.

Editorial

Now is the time for all good members to come to the aid of the winch meet — to 'plagiarise' an old typewriter drill. Yes, it's that time of year again. Details of the 2018 meet are given opposite, with the tractor schedule on the following page. And unless you've been stuck in a cave since the AGM (which I suppose *is* possible!) you will know the winch meet is being run a week earlier this year as a trial – the main meet ends with detackling on the weekend before the August Bank Holiday, and gear sorting, tent drying, etc will happen in Horton on the Bank Holiday weekend.

This edition of the Record has something of a historical flavour, leavened I hope by a large number of Meet Reports signalling the Club is vigorous and active, and an interesting commentary on the hydrology of the Ribbleshead area by John Cordingley showing, once again, how important field work is!



▲ Looking across to the Snowdon horseshoe, from Moel Siabod.

Since the last Record I've been up quite a few hills with Tom: Tryfan, Cader Idris, and Moel Siabod in Wales; and in the Lakes a sneaky dash up Scafell Pike (this was the same weekend as the meet, but we started from the 'other' Seathwaite, at the top end of of Borrowdale). The last two were an exercise in contrasts: Moel Siabod we practically had to ourselves: it is not often visited although it is a fantastic viewpoint into the main Snowdonia massif; whereas despite an early start Scafell summit was already crowded and on the descent we frequently found ourselves having to stand aside to allow the ascending masses to go past!

Patrick Warren

Thanks once again to Seán Karley for diligent proof reading.



Gaping Gill 2018

Yes, it's that time of year again. The 2018 Gaping Gill winch meet is nearly on us – earlier than usual. Paul McWhinney will be meet co-ordinator on the fell, with John Helm co-ordinating the pre-meet planning. The following people have 'volunteered' to look after the critical aspects of tackling and de-tackling (though, perhaps not all of them know this yet):

Gear run co-ordination; tractor & trailer wrangling – Pete Jones (supported by Russell Myers and Edward Whitaker)
Gantry mantling and dismantling overseers – Ian Patrick & Tracey Jones
Steps subcontractor – Edward Whitaker
Engineering – Andrew Lister
Electrical gaffer & best boy – Dave Allanach & Dave Barker
Catering – Dave & Becky Milner
Toilets – Terry Shipley
Tackle (SRT) – Mike Whitehouse
Tentage – John Webb
Estate liaison – John Helm
General enquiries – Chas Roberts
Meet co-ordinator (on the fell) – Paul McWhinney
Day leaders will be needed – this will be you!

Now to the all-important dates (tractor schedule on next page):

July 20th-22nd – gear fettling weekend at Horton (and drinking tea)
July 21st (Saturday) – GG open meeting, 18:30 at Ivy Cottage
August 2nd (Thursday evening) with first runs from Horton on Friday 3rd and the full tackling weekend on 4th /5th.
August 6th-9th – Members' week
August 10th (Friday) – public winching starts
August 17th – LAST day of winching
August 18th/19th – de-tackling (no public winching) (fell cleared on Sunday)
August 25-27th (Bank Holiday weekend) – tent drying and gear sorting weekend at Horton

This year we are having a trial of moving the meet forward a week. Part of this is to make it easier for people to stay for the final weekend.

If you need to leave gear at Ian's yard in Clapham mark clearly, and let someone know who is going up with the gear run.

Visiting cavers are welcome – please call in at the booking-in tent to let us know your intentions. If entering the GG system, by any of its entrances, it is essential to visit the booking-in tent to get a numbered wrist-band, and return the wrist-band afterwards otherwise we may initiate a search-and-rescue.

Competent cavers are welcome to use the CPC SRT rope in any of the entrances. Access to the main shaft is not permitted during public winching, and outside of that is at the discretion of the day leader or meet co-ordinator.

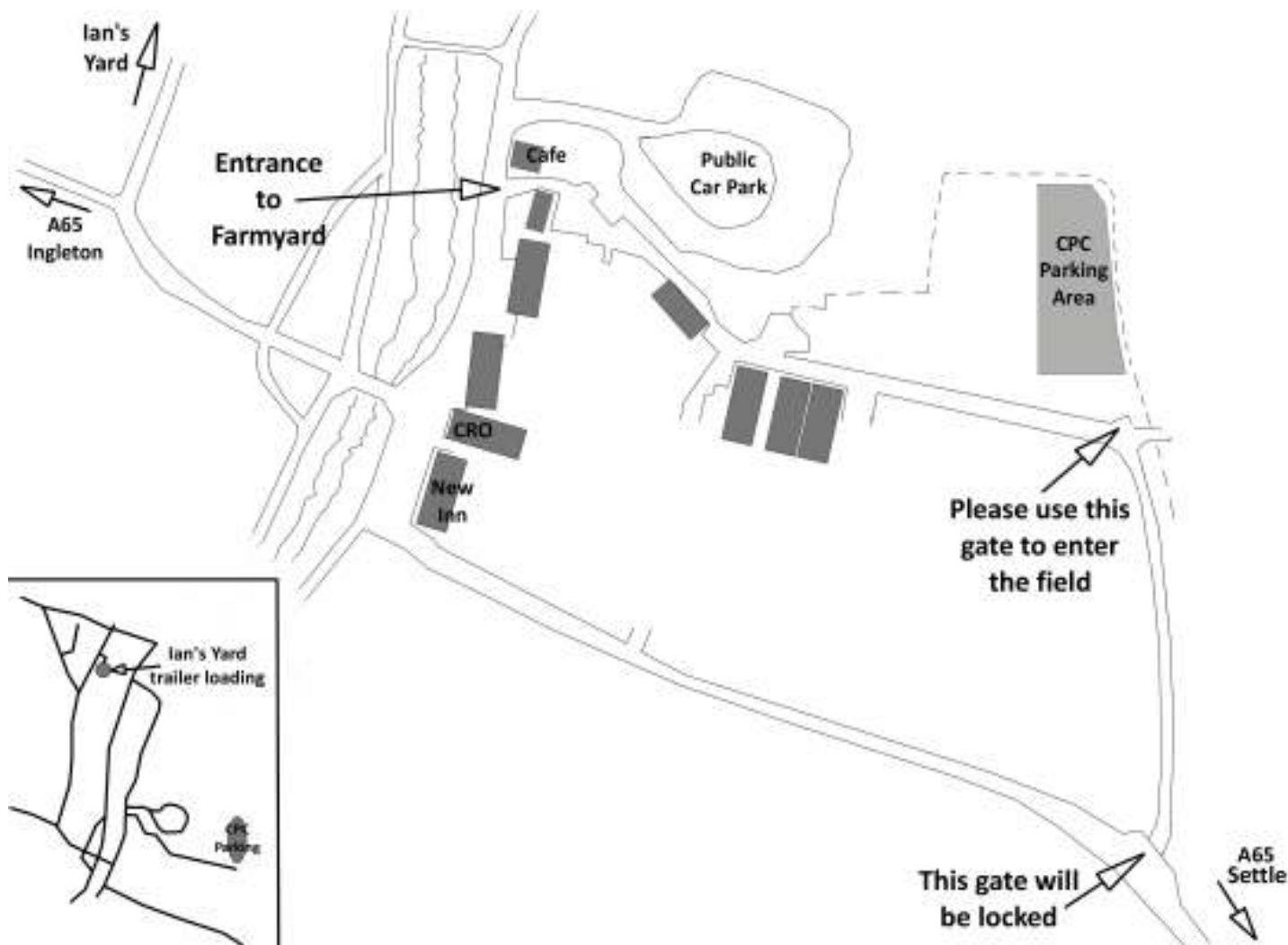
Guest camping is permitted if arranged in advance – please contact one of the people listed above for more details.

Natural England gives us consent to operate the winch meet on what is part of a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), therefore we must follow the guidelines they set in order to protect the ground and watercourses. Please be particularly careful with pollutants such as lubricants, fuel oil and paraffin. Each trailer will be equipped with spade to repair any ruts that might appear – please help repair the fell should this occur. We are required to limit the number of tents on the fell before tackling weekend: no more than 2-3 tents, and no earlier than Wednesday 1st August.

The usual parking in the field has been organised again this year; access is only via the track in between the Café and home barn (see map on next page). Drive past the farm buildings on to the concrete roadway and enter the field through the gate on the left at the end of the road as shown on the map. There will be no access to the field from the gate on the main road or the first gate opposite the farm building (the ground can be very soft here). We pay for the use of this field, so please use it. Leave the rest of the village parking for its inhabitants and visiting public!

Paul McWhinney (on behalf of the GG organising team)

◀ **Bearing repaired, tractor! – Pete Jones, Spirit of Gaping Gill, 2017 Dinner Awards.**



Trailer Time Table

Please note the schedule below may vary depending on weather, breakdowns and other unforeseen circumstances.

Tackling Weekend

Thursday 2nd August

A team is needed to help load the trailer at the club premises at Horton, finish Friday morning with all the GG kit.

Friday 3rd August

This trailer will leave Horton by 9:30 Friday to go to Clapham.

Tractors leave Ian's yard 10:30 – heavy engineering and personal gear.

Saturday 4th August

Tractors leave Ian's yard at 10:30 – personal gear/refreshments

Main Meet

Friday 10th August

Tractor / or quad leave Ian's yard at 10:30 – personal gear

Saturday 11th August

Tractor / or quad leave Ian's yard at 10:30 – personal gear

Saturday 18th August

One tractor to GG 10:00 for hauling engineering.

Three tractors from GG 12:00 onwards (Approx)

- 1) heavy engineering straight to Horton – team required
- 2) gantry to Flatts Barn – team required

Sunday 19th August

Morning – GG to Flatts and return GG (if not achieved previous day)

GG to Clapham two / three trailers – 12:00 personal gear

Further runs as needed to clear the fell.

"Dolomite Descent" ►
— Jenny Smith

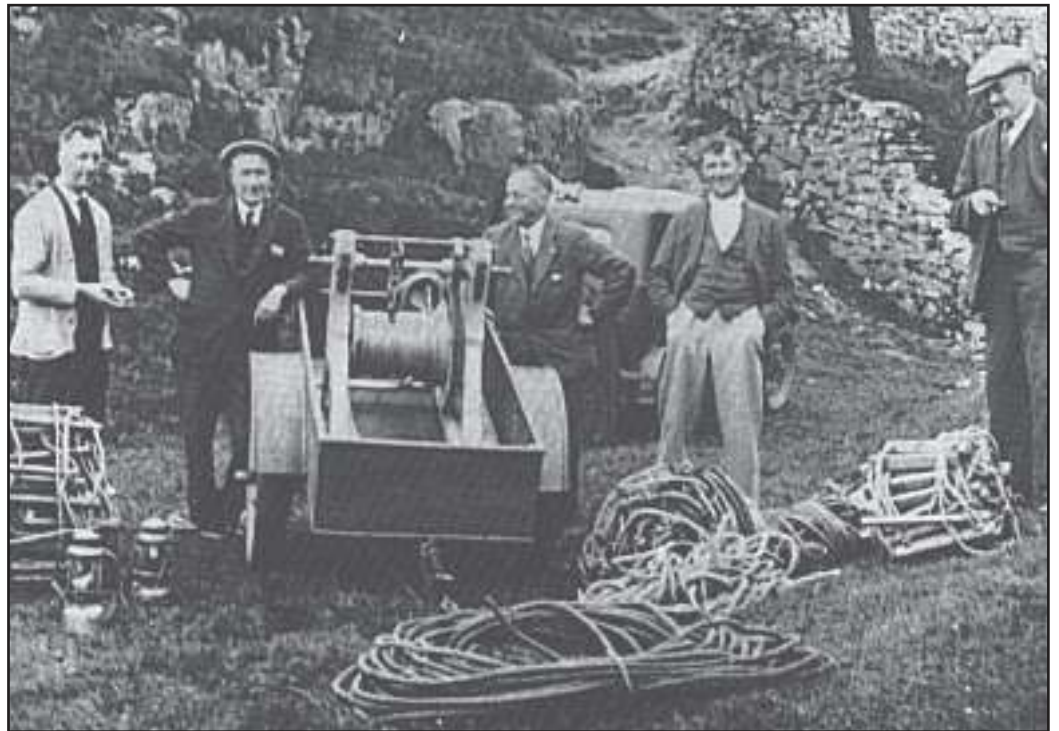
Men of Kent Trophy,
2017 Dinner Awards.



Development of the F. T. (Eric) Bancroft and Northern Cavern and Fell Club Winches at Alum Pot and Gaping Gill – An Unfolding Story

The story begins at Alum Pot, a popular adventure venue for cyclists and cavers in the late 1920's and early 1930's. The activities of three groups who regularly visited the system over this period are especially well documented. The first, a group of friends (all members of the Haworth Ramblers Club) from Denholme near Keighley were led by Frederick T. (Eric) Bancroft and his father Hugh V. Bancroft. The group's photographer, Harry E. Whitaker recorded their activities in a series of lantern slides and formal photo albums now in the CPC archives. The second group, many of whom were members of both the Accrington Cycling Club and the recently formed Northern Cavern and Fell Club (NCFC) included amongst their number

Cliff Downham (later of the YRC) and two brothers, John (Jack) and Frank King. Jack King was the groups



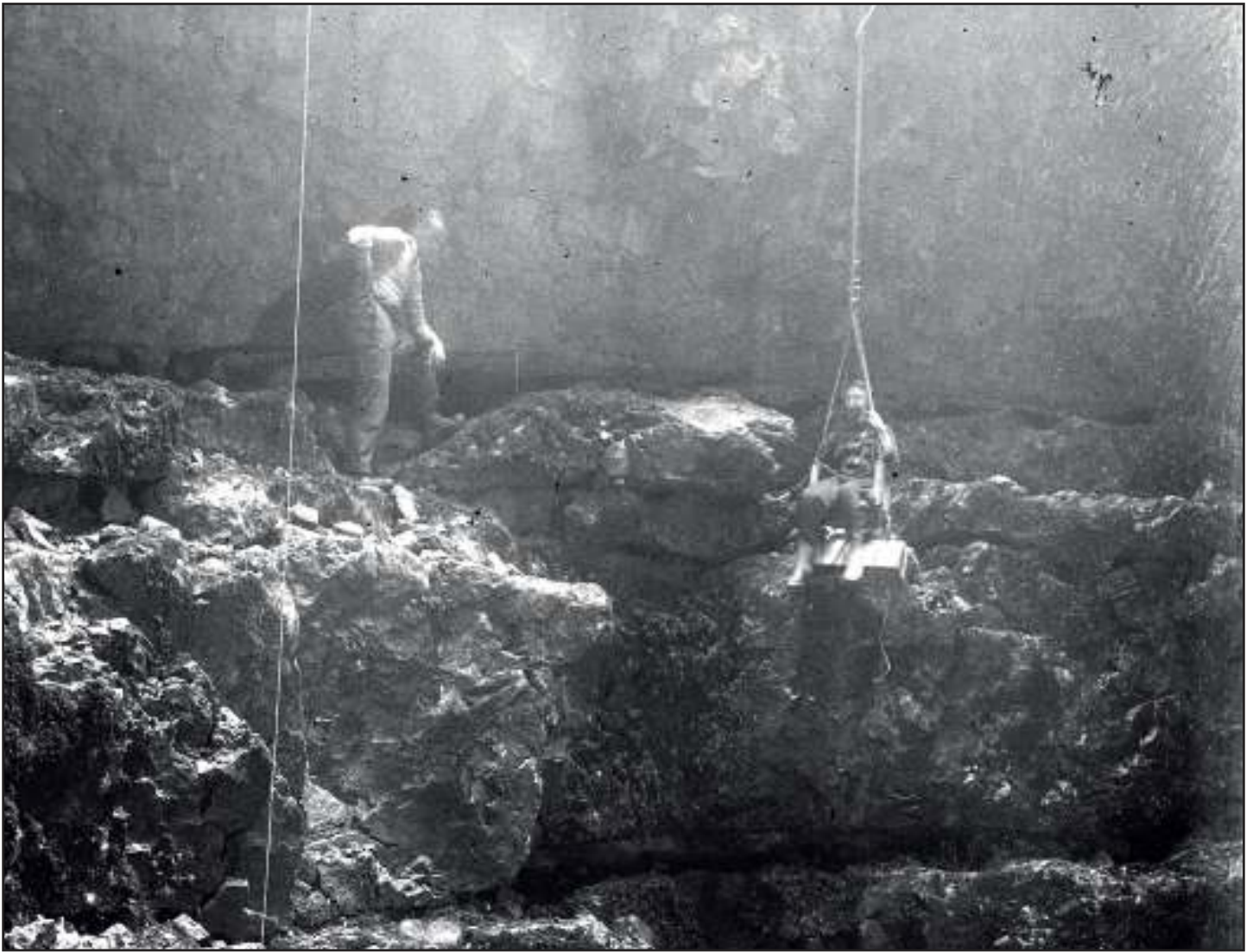
accomplished photographer. A third group, members of the Gritstone Club led by Reg Hainsworth shared a common ambition with Bancroft and the NCFC; that of descending the problematic wet pitch known to connect Diccan with Alum Pot.

A review of the literature [1] suggests that Eric Bancroft constructed a petrol-powered winch to assist in his efforts to make the Diccan-Alum link, and a photo (fig 1) is used in support of this view. The device depicted in the picture is a simple timber framed hand wound windlass of such construction that it required a trailer to carry it to Alum Pot. Even given the undoubted hardy nature of those involved it seems unlikely that they could have manhandled this down Diccan to a position where it could be operated at the top of the big pitch. That it was intended for use on Alum's daylight shaft seems much more plausible and like several generations of CPC members have

▲ Fig. 1. The Bancroft hand windlass at Alum Pot (photo: CPC Archives).

◀ Fig. 2. The Bancroft powered winch at Alum Pot; Eric Bancroft on left, Hugh Bancroft in bowler hat (photo reproduced with permission from NCFC archive items held at the British Caving Library, date & photographer unknown).





▲ Fig. 3. Bosun's chair descent of Alum Pot (photo: CPC Archive, Harry E. Whitaker Collection, image Gneg-173).

discovered, hand winding an ascending person suspended from such a windlass would be hard work.

Bancroft did however assemble a petrol-powered winch. This photo (fig 2) clearly shows the modified timber windlass with its associated engine secured to the ground with stakes adjacent to the Alum Pot shaft. Closer inspection reveals that the motive power was supplied by the remains of an NUT motorcycle (Newcastle-upon-Tyne Motor Co. Ltd.). These machines were produced between 1921 and 1933 and the model used here is their 500 c.c. V Twin Touring Model P, priced at 145 Guineas in 1921. The entire cycle frame and running gear, minus the front forks and the rear wheel appears to have been used without further modification. On the original cycle a 3 speed Sturmey Archer gearbox provided the kick start and clutch mechanisms and final drive via a leather belt to the rear wheel. Here the belt rim from the original rear wheel appears to have been attached to the windlass pinion shaft, thus marrying the two units together. Braking on the descent appears to have been via a hand operated band brake acting on the inside of the cable drum.

Fortunately here we can enlist the help of John Bancroft, Eric's son, now living in Nova Scotia, Canada – John tells us that his father was "not much interested in engineering" and that the machine was more likely to have been constructed by Eric's father, Hugh. V. Bancroft; who he describes as an "inventor".

An undated Whitaker glass negative (fig 3) shows the business end suspended to the north of and somewhat above The Bridge in Alum Pot. The "chair" appears to be of substantial timber construction, hung from the cable shackle by four chains. It is not clear if this descent was facilitated by the hand windlass or the powered version, but judging by the huge box carried as baggage under the chair we might conclude it was powered. We currently have nothing to show how the cable surface pulley was suspended over the shaft or how far the passenger could expect to descend, but contemporary photographs show that the two beams spanning the shaft in the 1880's had disappeared by this time.

For whatever reason Eric Bancroft tired of Alum Pot and the literature tells us that he donated his winch to the Northern Cavern and Fell Club for use at Gaping Gill [1].

At this point in the story we are fortunate to be able to enlist the help of Robin King, the son of Frank King, founding and long time member of the NCFC. Robin, now living near Lanark in Scotland has his father's diaries from the period which provide a real insight into the doings of the NCFC. Like most aspiring young caving clubs of the period the big prize was Gaping Gill and the NCFC held their first meet there at Easter 1931. Cliff Downham's account of the meet [2] tells of the endless struggle with heavy rope ladders in the Main Shaft, a camp in West Chamber and of filling the Main Chamber with dense smoke from a coal brazier! ▶

They, like the CPC at much the same time must have realised they needed a winch.

On the 10th January 1932 Frank King records in his diary (fig 4) "Stayed at Wharfe. Went to view the windlass and bought lot, windlass, motor & trailer £8. Went to Long Preston for tea 1 Shilling".

Apparently the NCFC bought the winch paraphernalia from Bancroft for £8 (when a good evening meal cost a Shilling!). This must have been a considerable financial burden on the club, but they appear to have pressed their asset into service almost immediately with Frank King recording in his diary for 12th–13th March 1932 that this was a weekend open meet at Alum Pot with a lot of campers. "Winch and motor worked A1. 54 visitors paid to go down".

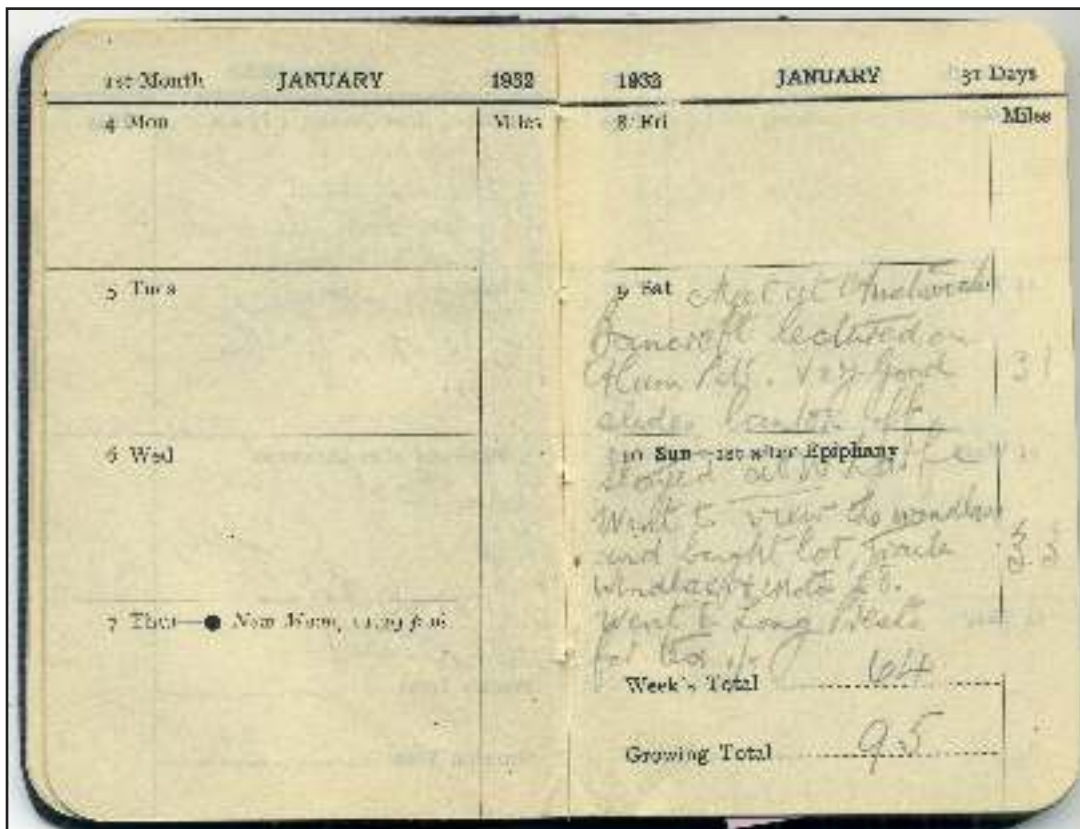
Frank's next winch related diary entry is for the 4th December 1932 in which he records "Pulled winch etc. down for sending to Newcastle". We can only speculate as to the precise meaning of this cryptic note – was the engine/gearbox unit being returned to the manufacturer for a service/repair or was there another reason? Significantly, Jack King was an experienced engineer then working in Newcastle [3], perhaps he was somehow involved in making the more substantial changes needed if the machine was to operate successfully at Gaping Gill.

This was clearly their intention and an article in the Nelson Leader [4] suggesting that "visitors would be lowered into the hole if they could afford the 10 Shillings fee" prompted Cliff Downham (NCFC Secretary) to publish a further note on 10th February 1933 stating that while the club would be operating at Gaping Gill over the Easter holiday, descents were limited and would be by invitation only.

The NCFC were at Gaping Gill over the Easter period 14th–16th April 1933 and back at Alum Pot on 6th–7th May 1933. Frank King records the use of the winch on both occasions. On the latter occasion he notes "Rained all night, campers all over the place. 25 visitors – 50 Shillings, sale of petrol 1/6".

The next confirmed sighting of the winch, so to speak, is on the weekend of 13th–14th October 1933 when Eli Simpson photographs Cliff Downham and Reg Hainsworth at a joint NCFC / Gritstone Club Gaping Gill Meet.

The machine in fig 5 on which are painted the words "The Northern..." bears no resemblance to the Heath-Robinson affair employed by Bancroft at Alum Pot, but clearly shares



▲ Fig. 4. Frank King's diary records the NCFC purchase of the Bancroft winch.

many common parts, including the V twin motorcycle engine and cable drum (fig 6). The machine is of a very compact skid mounted design with the old cycle controls clustered at the rear driving position. The leather belt drive has been replaced with a chain but regrettably other internal workings; particularly the brake system remain a mystery as all the known images of the machine do not give us a clear view.

A substantial transformation had taken place between January 1932 and October 1933, made by persons with some mechanical know-how. Was it Jack King, with his engineering connections or persons closer to home? Bancroft and the NCFC shared a common association with Reg Hainsworth a garage owner from Ingleton who would have certainly possessed the necessary workshop and mechanical skills. For the time being this part of our story must remain conjecture.

The NCFC 1934 Record tells that the winch was "hailed up from Clapdale and fixed in position" on the weekend prior to Easter and was presided over by "chief engineer (John) Dawson". The machine shed some teeth from a drive cog but was quickly repaired – perhaps hinting at a local source of parts. Dawson gets a further mention for his troubles in NCFC Log Book 1935. 4th–5th May 1935 "J. Dawson amputated a finger tip on the winch."

Eric Bancroft, his father and Harry Whitaker from the "Denholme Group" are all recorded in the 1934 NCFC membership list, with Eric remaining a prominent member until at least 1945 but apparently having little further to do with winching activities. While details from NCFC sources become scarce following WW2 Eli Simpson provides us with continuing photographic evidence via his albums with images of the winch in operation at BSA Gaping Gill meets in 1946 and 1957 [5]. An article covering the BSA GG meet appeared

in the Yorkshire Observer on the 10th June 1946 and is accompanied by photos of the NCFC winch and the newly constructed all metal BSA gantry – but that's another story. The writer gives us some insight into the performance of the winch on this occasion and the fortitude of the attending BSA members. "The 500cc motor had gone out of service and sixteen persons had to be raised to the surface by hand winding, including two visitors who still thought it well worth the 10 Shilling fee charge for non-members". Notably the CPC were still charging 10 Shillings when I made my first descent as a guest in 1968. Who was responsible for the maintenance and storage of the winch over such an extended period and what happened to it on the eventual decline of the NCFC and BSA remains uncertain.

With this in mind may I request anyone with further information about or photos of the Bancroft/NCFC winch to contact the CPC Honorary Librarian and help to further this fascinating chapter in the history of Gaping Gill winch meets.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions to this article made by John Bancroft and Robin King; for their enthusiasm and the use of their personal NCFC related material. Thanks also to Mary Wilde at the British Caving Library, for diligently searching the NCFC holdings and the staff at the British Geological Survey for providing scans of the Eli Simpson Gaping Gill images.

Dave Allanach

References

- [1] Craven SA, *Frederick Thomas "Eric" Bancroft at Alum and Diccan Pots 1928 – 1931*. CPC Record **87**, 23-25 (2007).
- [2] Downham C, *The Descent of Gaping Ghyll, Easter 1931*, p3 Northern Cavern and Fell Club Logbook (1931).
- [3] Robin King, personal communication.
- [4] Nelson Leader, "With the Wheelers", 27th January 1933.
- [5] Eli Simpson Album – BCRA/101/Y/A/6 photo Nos. 1188 and 1454 respectively.

Copyright Acknowledgement:

Permit Number CP18/036 – Images from the Eli Simpson collection, held at British Geological Survey, Courtesy of the British Cave Research Association.

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/archives/eliSimpson/home.html>

► Fig. 6. NCFC winch with covers off – BSA Gaping Gill meet 1946 (photo CPC Archive, Burnley-Hooper Collection, image B-H_021).



▲ Fig. 5. C. Downham and R. Hainsworth with the NCFC winch at Gaping Gill, October 1933 (Eli Simpson Album – BCRA/101Y/A/1 photo No.9; reproduced with permission from the Eli Simpson collection – see Copyright Acknowledgment left).



Hydrological Hide and Seek (and a Few Surprises) Around Ribblehead

These notes summarise a number of observations made, on and off, over a long period. Some of what follows has been published elsewhere in various places (notably Cave Diving Group Newsletters) but it was felt that a few notes, drawing all these snippets together, might be useful to anyone doing exploratory work in the Ribblehead area.

As soon as you've turned along the road from Ribblehead junction, in the direction of Horton, there's a stream just to the left. The water in this stream emerges from "**Ribblehead Rising**" immediately below the road at the T junction (The ultimate source of this water is believed to be the blocked sink of the stream originating from the Runscar / Thistle system, augmented by the sink of water rising at Batty Cave near the Station Inn.) What the Northern Caves guide describes as Batty Green Cave (nearby) is probably a window into this shallow (probably underwater) cave system feeding Ribblehead Rising, of no great interest.

In normal weather, by the time you've got into 3rd or 4th gear (heading for Horton), most of the stream on your left has sunk again, mainly into **Football Cave** (SD768792) but also into various other sinks (one of which was investigated by Richard Gibson and friends a few years ago but proved impenetrable). A glance at Cambridge University Caving Club's 1977 journal will reveal a very useful diagram of the underground hydrology around Ribblehead, as then known. (This diagram can be viewed on the www.cavemaps.org website, where it's listed under the miscellaneous surveys at the bottom of the Ribblehead section.) It shows that the water sinking into Football Cave reappears a short distance away at "**Batty Beck Rising**" (which is just over the wall on the left, at SD 769791, slightly nearer to Horton).

Many years ago I went for a look at Batty Beck Rising, finding it completely static. On the same day there was plenty of water sinking into Football Cave. The Cambridge lads had tested Football Cave properly but this must have been in wet conditions when Batty Beck Rising was flowing. Clearly there had to be another resurgence elsewhere. After a lot of walking around I eventually found a previously unrecorded resurgence down at Goat Close, on the flood plain of the infant Ribble, about half a kilometre from Football Cave and a lot lower. This "**Goat Close Rising**" (SD774791) takes the form of a 1.5 m deep pool with a substantial flow emerging. As with many other Ribblesdale risings, the water is welling up through alluvium. I dived here but confirmed there was no easy way into the underwater passage which must feed it. Adrian Hall and I later tested the Football Cave stream and got a good positive result at Goat Close Rising. Thus there is a significant cave system here, waiting to be found.

Football Cave ends at a downstream sump which was first dived by Ian Plant in 1976. He followed a low bedding plane obstructed by rocks for 4.5 m but never went back; in those days there were plenty of open underwater leads which didn't require digging. Adrian Hall dived here in 2000, reaching a point 6 m from base. However, a serious lowering of the roof deterred any further attempts. More recently Andy Hall and Alex Fletcher (both Red Rose members) ran a line survey in to the Football Cave sump, finding it is perched 3.1 m above

the water level at Batty Beck Rising. So there must be airspace passage in the short distance between these two caves.

In late May this year I needed to go somewhere to test a new diving wetsuit. The potential at Football Cave was still niggling at my brain, so I went there to test the suit and have a look at the end. Adrian was right, it is very low. But by kicking some rocks aside I was able to feel a continuation which is the height of my foot. (Later measurement of my size 10 welly showed it to be 30 cm from toe to heel, so this continuation must be passable – albeit with streamlined diving gear.) The weather broke down after this visit and this remains unfinished business.

On the above visit, a strong inlet immediately inside the entrance was emitting cold water. The flow was greater than anything flowing on the surface that day, the nearby sinks being warm due to the May heatwave and very dry conditions. It may be that this cold inlet stream originates from sinks up dip on Park Fell; anyone doing hydrological work in the Park Fell area of Ingleborough in future should bear this in mind.

Batty Beck Rising is a potential way into this unexplored Football Cave to Goat Close Rising system, as we now know the former acts as a high level flood resurgence for it. I went for a look umpteen years ago with diving gear but found Batty Beck Rising consisted merely of a rift which was choked just underwater. (This confirmed the findings of CUCC divers Rob Shackleton and Julin Griffiths, who first investigated it.) More recently Clifford White (who farms that field) kindly gave us permission to do a digging project there. This was mainly led by Alex Fletcher but several of us from the Northern Section of the Cave Diving Group (CDG) have been involved. We lowered the boulder and gravel floor and entered an underwater bedding plane from the far end of the rift, heading up valley. This became low after a few metres but just ahead there is a rift dropping to lower level. We've yet to get to this rift but, if it can be descended, it may lead into the main down valley passage heading for Goat Close Rising. It needs further work but we'll get round to it at some stage.

The 1977 Cambridge University Caving Club (CUCC) hydrological map (mentioned above) also shows the water resurging from Middle Scar Cave (SD770796), which sinks again into Middle Scar Hole No.1 in the same massive shakehole, flows to Conduit Spring Cave (SD769795). The latter is beside the main road from Ribblehead T junction in the direction of Hawes. I visited both on a moderately wet day several years ago; there was a massive stream sinking in the Middle Scar Cave shakehole but hardly anything was resurging at Conduit Spring. In fact the nearby **Middle Scar Hole No.2** (SD770796) drops into a short section of the streamway coming from the sink at Middle Scar Cave but clearly it must flow elsewhere from there, not to Conduit Spring.

I went to look at the downstream route in Middle Scar Hole No.2 a few years ago but it was completely choked, not far in from the entrance. It took quite a lot of effort over two

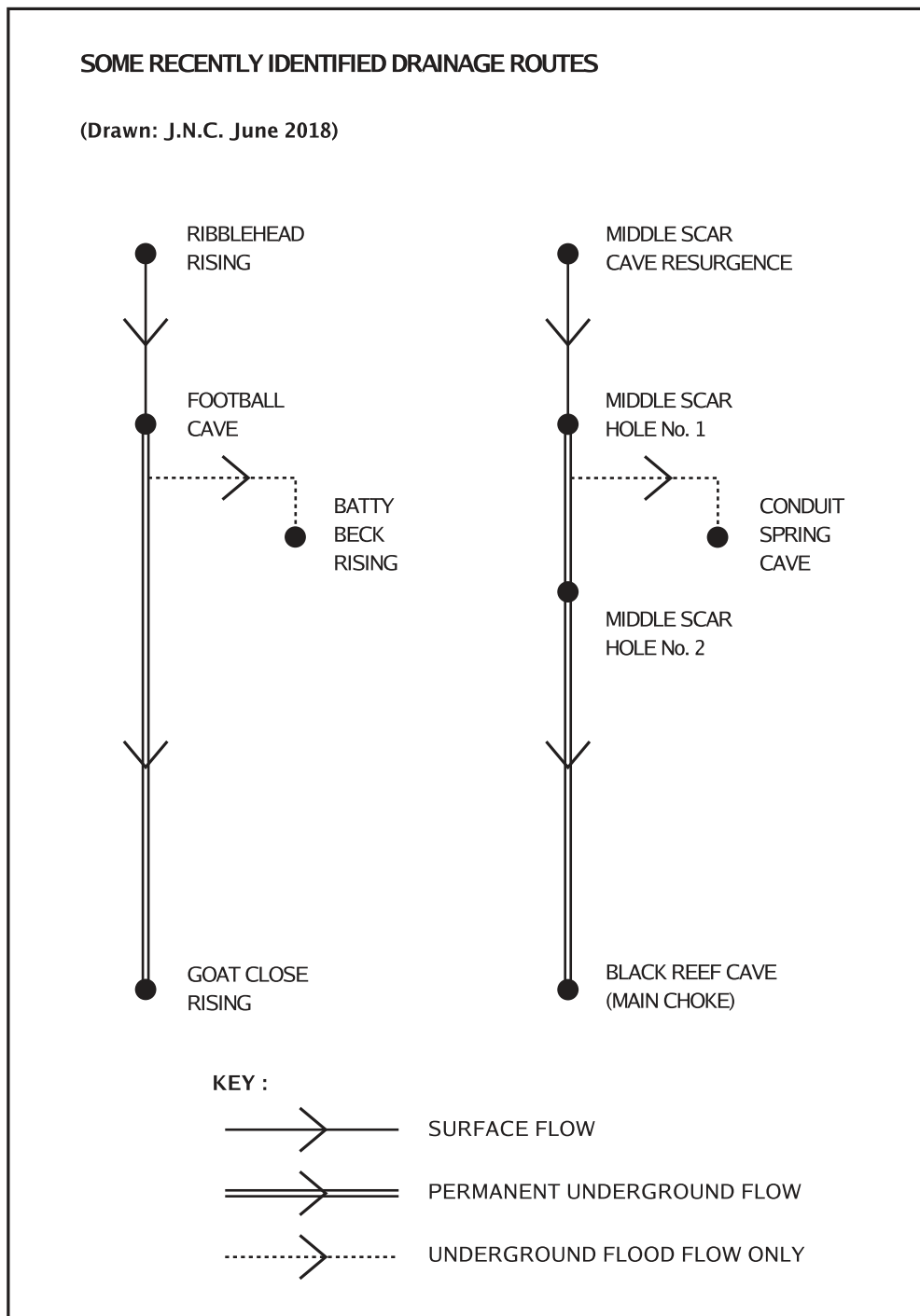
visits to re-enter the final downstream section, which I think was first explored by members of the Gritstone Club. It takes the form of a low and very wide bedding plane, with very little airspace. I've had a couple of goes at trying to make progress there by crowbarring up pebbles and cobbles which are cemented down by a thick layer of a soft black fibrous manganese deposit. It's a difficult place to work and it's pretty cold, even when wearing Steve Pickersgill's old membrane drysuit (yes Steve, it's still in action!). I hope to pursue this in future but only in very dry conditions.

The black deposit strongly hinted that the destination of this water might be **Black Reef Cave** (SD775794). I discussed this with Phil Murphy and he organised a dye test in 2014. There was a convincing positive in the main stream which emerges from the choke at the end of the main passage in Black Reef Cave but not from the main inlet, which originates from Green

Slack Cave (SD774800). (A report on this work, by Phil Murphy and Dave Hodgson, can be found in CPC Record 124, page 28). This has therefore confirmed the existence of a second cave system awaiting discovery in the Ribblehead area, between the Middle Scar complex and Black Reef Cave.

The above shows the value of careful observation of stream flows, which often proves conventional wisdom to be flawed. We have other sites on the hit list in the Ribblehead area, associated with other established drainage routes; these have yet to reach the stage where they're worth reporting on. However, it is clear that this very well known caving area is far from played out and still has many secrets to reveal to those willing to put in a bit of effort.

John Cordingley



Jingling Pot (Kingsdale) – First Descent in 1897

In October 2017 the Mohole meet was diverted to Jingling Pot due to excessive water levels [CPC Record 129, 19 (2017)]. On this occasion I spotted some very carefully executed graffiti on the far right hand wall of the rift at the bottom, past the scaffolded dig site – initials and a date '1897'. Curiously, Northern Caves records Jingling Pot as 'Explored 1926, YRC' so something didn't fit!

It turned out that Steven Craven, researching the YRC archives and related material, had already turned up evidence that a descent was in fact made on June 20th, 1897 by T. S. Booth, S. W. Cuttriss, W. Parsons, C. A. Scriven, T. Somers, J. W. Swithinbank, and H. Woodhouse [see S. A. Craven, YRC Journal 12(6), 32-45 (1996)]. In an email exchange Steven told me this descent is recorded in (1) the Bradford Observer of 10th July 1897 (p7); and (2) an undated MS by Samuel W. Cuttriss found in the YRC library which is now kept at its Lowstern cottage near Clapham.



▲ Initials in Jingling Pot (photo: PBW).

The \$64,000 question was – did the initials in the cave match with the YRC party of 1897? It was not until the 2018 summer BBQ that I found an opportunity to check this out. Forgoing the pleasures of Club Pot (Sell Gill), I made a solo trip armed with camera and tripod and a decent light. The recovered photographic evidence (shown left) indeed suggests the underground party comprised at least Booth (TB), Parsons (WP), Swithinbank (JWS) and Cuttriss (SWC). Whether this means only these four made the actual descent, with the balance providing surface support, obviously cannot be answered here! It seems clear however the first known complete descent of Jingling Pot in West Kingsdale was indeed made by the YRC in June 1897, almost contemporaneous with the much better known descent of the neighbouring Rowten Pot on July 4th of that same year [J. W. Swithinbank, YRC Journal 1(4) 316-324 (1902)].

Patrick Warren

Significant Caving Events Fifty Years Ago

Half a century ago, that is 1968, was a memorable year. French students were rioting in an attempt to bring down their government; English students were occupying University Administrations in an attempt to change how they were run. At my University I used the occupation as an excuse to go caving for a week, including my first descent of Gaping Gill. But it was also a significant year in the history of British Caving and not just because of the Craven's discovery of Birks Fell, a wonderful cave. There was also the discovery of Smelt Mill Beck, one of the best Northern Dales caves, by the Moldywarps and major extensions to Gaping Gill by Bradford Pothole Club (BPC) and University of Leeds Speleological Association (ULSA). On Mendip the major flood washed away the historic 40ft pitch in Swildons whilst on the political front the National Caving Association was formed. Whernside Manor was established as a caver training centre by the Boy Scouts Association and the Cave Research Group held their first cave hydrology symposium, which was one of the reasons I did my PhD on that topic.

Late in 1967 London University Caving Club (LUCC) were making an intensive attack on Far East Passage in Gaping Gill seeking to make extensions. One of the digs, through a choked rift previously visited by Alan Brook (ULSA), led to a chamber with a further crawl to what became known as

"The Font". Wet conditions had prevented the LUCC from passing through this limited air space pool. ULSA were meanwhile trying to push Car Pot (CPC discovery) and link it to GG. They reached the top of a 25ft shaft with a strong draught which, from the available surveys, they thought must come from Hensler's Master Cave or Far East Passage. On 2 June a large group of ULSA members descended GG via Stream Passage Pot and Bar Pot and after meeting up at Mud Hall split into two groups. One group went to see if they could find the link to Car via Far East whilst the other group were looking at all the possibilities in Hensler's. The latter group finally had a look up the iron ladder just before Hensler's sump. On the left was a silted up crawl with no draught, to the right Dave Brook found a solid looking calcite choke which on closer inspection revealed a two inch wide, half an inch high gap with a powerful draught and the apparent sound of a stream. As the gap was enlarged so the draught and the roaring of the stream increased, however the calcite was very hard and more tools were needed.

Meanwhile four other ULSA members had managed to pass The Font and entered the impressive 200 foot long Straw Gallery and continued as far as a large aven before they decided to call it a day as their lights were beginning to fade. Little did they know that the passage had been entered for

the first time only a few hours earlier by the BPC. The BPC had heard several stories over the years about possible but indeterminate extensions in Far East Passage and so when their winch meet was on they decided to give the area a good scan. They eventually found the boulder choke which had been dug and passed by LUCC and went through the canal and quickly reached what is now The Font. Five minutes work on loose lumps in the roof with a hammer and chisel gave Ged Benn a triangular hole with six inches of air space. He slid into the pool with his mouth in the triangular gap and moved forward to the slope at the other end, which led to a letter-box slot 2 inches high but a yard wide and draughting strongly. Ged spent about 10 minutes digging before he was too cold and exchanged places with Alan Brittain. After about 30 minutes of digging Alan shouted that he was through and was joined by the others. After some time exploring dead ends, what is now Anagram Crawl was located and followed to Rhubarb Corner. It was noted that the passage continued but lights were fading and it was decided to call it a day – it was a 10 hour trip! Because of the unfinished exploration the discovery had to be kept quiet, whilst the explorers recovered and the lamps were recharged. However on the Sunday evening John Greene came back to the GG camp and reported that whilst he had been down at the Flying Horseshoes (very much one of the cavers' pubs in the 60s) he had overheard ULSA members discussing an extension they had made in Far East Passage. It was decided that BPC members needed to get back down to explore as soon as possible before anyone else could. Vehicles were parked at the bottom of Long Lane and Clapdale track to prevent vehicular access and the ladders were removed from the top pitch of Bar and top two pitches of Disappointment. Eventually, at 3am Ged, John, Alan and Dick Glover were winched down. Dick went part way whilst the others pushed on as far as Farrer Hall investigating as many side passages as possible. Whilst the team were making their way out they met the Brook brothers (ULSA) on their way in through Far East Passage and some Imperial College Cavers on their way in at Mud Hall. The Brook Brothers continued in and surveyed 2300 feet of new passage but left all the side passages to be further investigated by the BPC.

Whilst this was going on a second ULSA team had managed to enlarge "The Blowhole" to 8 by 18 inches and the sound of the stream ceased; it had been solely due to the draught. However they needed a longer chisel and set out to leave via Disappointment, only to find the top two pitches were de-laddered so they had to come back down and exit via Bar which they had laddered on their way in. Dave Brook called in at the Blowhole on his way out and managed to get far enough in to see the spacious passage beyond, but couldn't get through. He and Alan set out via Disappointment and found that by now the BPC had re-laddered the top two pitches so they could de-rig the cave! A week later the Blowhole was enlarged enough for Paul Everett to get through and find Echo Aven. With only one ladder they couldn't get down so Roger Sutcliffe went back to Disappointment and removed the ladder off the fourth pitch before climbing back down. Echo Aven pitch was descended and the area at the bottom explored although the duck into Southgate wasn't found until the next day. This was pushed together with Nevada Passage, the Cross Rifts and Mountain Hall.

All in all the two discoveries totalled almost 2 miles of passage and GG was later extended still further with the discovery of Far Waters.

July 1968 saw one of the largest floods ever seen on Mendip with approximately 6 inches of rain in just over 6 hours on Blackdown. Normal stream resurgence flow at Cheddar is 0.94 cumecs, this rose to 10.52 cumecs; for Wookey Hole the same figures are 0.79 and 6.36 cumecs. At many of the sinks it was estimated that stream levels were three times as high as normal. There was major damage to several roads and some spectacular changes in the caves. The most outstanding example was the washing away of the sediment causing the 40 foot pitch which had seriously slowed exploration. As a result of this the pitch has now been replaced by the Water Rift. Those who know the cave will appreciate the fact that Sump 1 backed up as far as Tratman's Temple whilst the water at the head of the 20ft pitch was approximately 17 feet deep. At Manor Farm a 50 foot shaft appeared and there was a collapse (now infilled) opening the top end of GB Cavern to the surface. The water in GB also backed up enough to overflow through the ladder dig extension.

Finally we have the formation of the National Caving Association. There had been several attempts prior to 1968 to form a national caving body in Britain. The first was the British Speleological Association formed in 1935 but many cavers and clubs fell out with this organisation after the war. These included the founders of the Cave Research Group which specialised in research and cave science. The Cave Diving Group was also formed in 1946. Later still the Regional Caving Councils were founded to assist with access problems in the various regions. The British Cave Rescue Council was founded in 1967 to provide a united front for the various rescue organisations. With all these national bodies the Government (specifically the Sports Council) didn't know who represented cavers in general so a national federation was devised which incorporated all these bodies and clubs into one national body which could then apply for government funding. Thus began the National Caving Association (NCA) which later was replaced by the British Caving Association.

As the title said, 1968 was an important and memorable year in British caving for so many reasons.

Ric Halliwell

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Joint CPC and BPC Meet – 7th April 2018

CPC: James Archer, Glenn Costin (co-ordinator), Lawrence Farndell, John Helm, Dave Jones, Adrian Pilling
BPC: Terry Devaney, John Duxbury, Fay Hartley, Chuck Holder, Hazel Raison, Bob Riley

Yet again, a close eye was on the forecast in the days leading up to the meet. The weather in Craven the previous week had been very unsettled and the forecast for the Saturday was terrible. We met at Brackenbottom in light rain, final forecast was sought and the decision was made to abandon the planned Simpson/Swinsto exchange. Our back up plan was for the respective groups to rig the weather dependable Jingling and Bull pot (Bull pot does react to high water levels but a swifter exit can be made). The Bradford Pothole Club (BPC) had a novice in their group therefore they elected to rig both routes in Jingling.

We headed up to Bull pot and swift progress was made to the bottom of the 4th pitch. It was decided not to rig the final pitch as we anticipated the other lot not wanting to descend (we were correct). Several of us went for a look at the fossil series at the bottom of the 4th pitch...and then headed out. A couple of our group decided they'd had their caving fix and left the rest of us to meet up with Terry's team over at Jingling. As promised, both routes were rigged so a couple of us zipped down the direct route and the rest down lateral cleft. At the bottom, Fay was still rigging the final pitch while

the new Bradford member was slowly making her way up the lateral cleft...crossing over with James and co at the big balcony. One of the Bradford members had taken a huge LED flood lamp to the bottom. This fully illuminated the shaft meaning we could all enjoy the descent bathed in bright light...though I suspect their novice found this very unnerving. The rest of the CPC team went to the very bottom (dig) while the rest of us made our way out. The true bottoming team de-rigged. Back on the surface, a select few from BPC went over to Bull Pot to complete the days trips and de-rig our ropes.

We were all invited back to the Dump (ie Brackenbottom) for cake and coffee but due to the lateness of the day only I took up their offer.

It was agreed by both clubs, the idea of an interclub meet was a good one. It was a shame the scheduled exchange did not go ahead as this impacted the dynamic of the meet. However, it's been suggested to reschedule the meet later in the year. Notification will be going out via the Record, social media and email.

Glenn Costin

Mongo Gill (the return match) – 7th April 2018

Jeff Croston (BPC), Malcolm Hughes (BPC), Dave Matthews (BPC), Ian Piercy (first caving trip), Dave Ramsden (CPC, guest), Pete Sykes (BPC)

Meanwhile, on the same day as the above ...

The plan this time was a through trip from Shockle Shaft to North Shaft. Across the moors to Shockle Shaft, rain clouds in the distance. Jeff rigged Shockle for SRT and Pete went down first. Malcolm set a cracking pace across to North Shaft with me trying to keep up. Water flowing freely in the stream along the way. Would it be wet below? Shaft laddered and lifelined and back we trotted to Shockle to find Ian being kitted out and instructed for his first SRT descent, a 20 metre shaft with a ledge part way down. Dave M. despatched next, me to follow onto a small sloping slippery landing where Jeff was already attaching the tackle sacks to the rope for hauling up at the end. A short slide down a muddy tube, feet-first, led to a more spacious area where we re-grouped ready to begin the through trip. In retrospect this must be one of the most under-rated, under-used, through trips around. A very small number of permits have been issued in the last year. Ok, it's not the Dales, big shafts, echoing caverns or raging streamways, although apparently the lower Upstream Passage is something not to be undertaken in wet weather. It's smaller scale, almost homely but has lots of varied going,

a mix of natural caverns and old mine workings, together with some very nice decorations. Definitely worth a visit or two.

We didn't descend to the stream level in view of the amount of rain in the previous few days and left it for a future visit. We went straight to Ladder Cavern where a climb up a short metal ladder with a rope with foot loops for the rest of the climb was passed without issue by the more experienced, whilst "combined tactics" were appreciated by one of the party. Many thanks, Dave and Pete! We travelled on by way of 1792 Cavern, New Cavern, and Judson's Cavern and eventually arrived at JJ Cavern, along the way passing through a hands and knees crawl in a mine passage where the roof seemed to be supported on very worrying timber props. We were careful to avoid even the slightest contact and quickly reached the safer territory beyond. Now at JJ Cavern, we had finally arrived at what seems to be the most talked-about feature of the entire route. It's not the many and varied decorations, nor the deep mud (which doesn't feature anywhere we visited on this occasion) It's not the low crawls, yes, there are some of those. Everyone talks about the Duck. It's famous, or should it be notorious? Ok, so Pete's the biggest, he's not worried and can obviously pass this without difficulty, so.....It starts as a fairly tight, low, not exactly smooth rocky crawl. If you slide in from the left it's not even

very wet. It then descends into a sort of trench half (?) filled with water before the height increases enough to raise your head, see where you're going and climb up out of the water, which, as you would expect, is not the temperature of bathwater. The depth is such that your oversuit fills with water down the neck all the way to your boots and which definitely goes past the parts that other beers cannot reach, or whatever it was the advert used to say. Ultimately all the experienced men flowed through with grace and style that was a joy to behold and skill to aspire to. But at this moment only Jeff had reached the other side. Ian, new to the game, got jammed in the dry bit. It's not that he's particularly bulky or lacking in agility but he managed to get an arm jammed under him, tried to remove his helmet at one point and couldn't move. Forward or back. Well, there's always a way. Pete provided a sling. Malcolm did something closely resembling "birthing" a calf (ask Abby!) using Ian's left leg and Ian, now mercifully released from his predicament, accepted the necessity to briefly not be able to see where he was going and went back through without (much) difficulty including the inescapable baptism in the font. There should always be variety on every caving trip.....

So, everyone was safely through and in familiar territory for me as this was where we turned round on our previous trip. Now we enjoyed again the low crawls, the fine decorations and a little more water than the last visit, in Caverns 324 and 358. We were looking for the entrance to Freezeland and had actually walked past it when Malcolm called us back. It's easy to see when you turn round, being at a slight angle to the main passage and effectively behind you. To begin with, it's a lovely high, narrow walking passage, round a right-angle bend and into a small chamber where the way forward is...a very low, what could accurately be described as "tightish", crawl on a dry, sandy floor with the odd pebble or two. It's not "take your helmet off" tight but if my memory is correct once you enter it, you are committed to facing sideways right through and I'm pretty certain you couldn't

turn round until the far end. Not a long crawl but absolutely flat-out. I should add that at this point, to be scrupulously accurate, only three members of the party had opted to visit this part of the system. There was some "discussion" later, at the surface, as to whether prior knowledge was involved in the decision making by those who headed straight back to daylight.....

We went on from the crawl into more roomy passage, some small climbs and descents, past one nicely-decorated area at just below roof level, as far as the chamber at the end of the North passage, where there was a dig at the top of the slope, very tight passage (we didn't try it), and a short lower one which hadn't progressed very far. I wonder just how recent these are. Does anyone know about this? As the others were supposedly waiting for us (they actually opted for out and to derig Shockle with Jeff waiting at North Shaft to lifeline us out on the ladder) we didn't visit the South passage or the mine workings and headed out to the bottom of North Shaft and back to the surface after about 4 hours underground. Now it was raining but we quickly derigged and went back to the carpark where Malcolm and Ian were already changed and sitting in the car. A good effort particularly by Ian as a first-timer who will have hopefully got the taste for underground exploration and will become in due course a fully-committed caver. Special thanks to the BPC squad, Jeff, Malcolm, Dave and Pete for navigation and timely assistance along the way whenever required and .of course, for the invitation to join them.. A great trip from start to finish with a great team.

There's still more to do down there. Anyone fancy a return visit to Freezeland. Don't all rush forward at once, you know it's got to be completed! This time with a copy of the survey. Wonder who left the set of wheels down there? CPC?

Dave Ramsden

Lancaster Hole – 14th April 2018

Wretched Rabbit through trip: Emma Akam, Kevin Gannon, Dave Jones, Toby Knights, Eugenia Kukova (AKA Jane), Neville Lucas, Patrick Warren

Lancaster Hole in and out: Mike Ashmore, Glenn Costin, John Forder (co-ordinator), Miranda Forder, John Helm, Paul McWhinney, Simon Parker, Mick Potts

This is just a brief report. I'd got there quite early and stuck my head around the door of the Farm, only to narrowly avoid being handed a paint-brush (it was a Red Rose working weekend). By the 'official' kick-off time, quite a large number of people had turned up so we self-organised into two teams: a through trip to Wretched Rabbit, and an in-and-out trip in Lancaster Hole itself.

Although on the surface it had seemed quite dry, water levels in the main drain were very sporting. I could only vaguely remember the way through the choke to Oxbow Corner. For reference there is a tricky-looking rope climb on the left, but

the easier alternative is to push further into the choke for about 5m, then look for a gap on the right which after a body length turns left again to follow the passage wall upstream (the true left wall facing downstream). Crawling over the boulders leads through a couple of smallish chambers to emerge at the foot of the slope in the large passage just downstream of Oxbow Corner. The way on from here is back up the slope, then turn left onto an obviously well-travelled roof-level bedding plane, that leads after a couple of very short crawls into Oakes Cavern.

We paused for a photographic session in the Minarets (see front cover), then took the standard exit via Stop Pot and Four Ways Chamber to drop into the Wretched Rabbit streamway. From here, much fun was had, on the various climbs!

Patrick Warren

Heron Pot – 15th April 2018

Mike Ashmore, Andy Brennand, Sophie Garrad (guest), John Helm, Dave Jones, Ben Marston (guest), Paul McWhinney, Ross Parkinson (guest), Dave Ramsden, Dave Shepherd, James Smith, Jenni Smith, John Webb (co-ordinator), Alice Wheeler (guest)

2017's annual foray to my favourite Dales hole was abandoned at the first pitch due to very high water levels, but with a preceding dry week the omens looked good for a successful through trip....and so it transpired with all fourteen having fun in the wriggly entrance series, main canyon, and spray-lashed pitches of 6m and 9m. At least two of the group went up and over the first pitch to descend the alternative SRT shaft of approx. 20m. All were impressed with the "secret" alcove of pristine flowstone near the downstream crawl and all also had to succumb to Mr McWhinney's "exit photo-stop" as they each negotiated the damp lower entrance wriggle, a

bit like having your photo taken as you grimace on the theme park log-flume!

All out by 1:30pm, but I then seemed to spend nearly 2 hours detackling the ladder route, only to find the SRT route still rigged. However, it transpired that James had agreed to de-rig and the hold-up was not of his making but in him having to wait for ICCC to descend first to clear the rigging area. Many thanks to James for the assistance and to Dave Shepherd and Paul for taking the tackle back to Horton so I could get away for my trip to the sunshine.

See you next year at Yordas lay-by.

John Webb

Ingleborough Cave / Beck Head Stream Cave – 28th April 2018 'New heights of gloom, cold, misery and despondency'

Glenn Costin (co-ordinator), John Helm, Eugenia (Jane) Kulkova, Dave Jones, Toby Knight, Andrew Lister, Neville Lucas, Mick Potts, Dave Ramsden

When UK classic through trips are discussed, Swinsto, Simpson pot, Dow to 'Provie' or the Easegill traverse immediately spring to mind. However nothing in the UK trumps that day in 1983 when Geoff Yeadon and Geoff Crossley abseiled down GG Main shaft and emerged from Ingleborough Cave, while Julian Griffiths and Jim Abbott traversed the other direction...finally linking these two classic caves. At the time this exchange was a huge achievement and still considered a world class adventure in the truest sense and testament to all involved. The through trip has only been carried out a couple of times since.

For anyone who has been to Gaping Gill and ventured beyond the Blowhole, a trip into the back end of Ingleborough cave gives the mere mortal caver a chance to experience both ends of the system. However like the back end of GG, Ingleborough cave does not give up its secrets easily. There is nothing particularly difficult with regards to the physical caving but some areas are intimidating with several passages containing deep cold water, full immersion sections with minimal airspace, flat out crawling through silt and sand and very dark, oppressive limestone. These sections are juxtaposed at each end of the system with its fabulous show cave entrance series and after the gloom, cold, misery and despondency of the Giants hall bedding plane, the Far Eastern Bedding Plane (FEBP) and the infamous 'Wallows', you can enjoy the beautiful Inauguration series. This is soon short lived with the cold swim in Terminal lake and the end of the 'dry' cave'.

So, with yet another close eye on the weather Saturday morning dawned fine and clear with a good forecast. Despite

my 'up front and honest' selling of the trip, 9 eager members made our way up to the entrance. It was good to note that other than Nev, who had been in the cave years ago, none of the assembled group had been in before despite a couple being Gaping Gill veterans.

Having been re briefed by the management, we made rapid progress through the show cave and into Cellar Gallery. At the second Gothic arch, it was time to investigate both routes into the Giants hall bedding plane. The first route via Giants hall was completely choked with the hand line disappearing into a silt blockage (complete with a discarded entrenching tool slung to one side) However, the route that follows the telephone line was silt free and we were soon slithering into the gloom and our first meeting of the Gaping Gill water. This passage is black..and I mean black as the hobs of hell! Due to the width of the bedding plane, the streamway playfully ripples with water from GG but that does not detract from the fact this place floods..horrendously! There are duckboards in place to ease the passing of flat out crawling. These were originally installed for Victorian 'adventure' tourists. Soon you come to the first major junction with the stream continuing to Lake Avernus/Pluto where the sumped passages continue to become Beck Head Stream Cave (BHSC). This was to be explored later. Our next challenge was the FEBP. A 300m flat out crawl across lightly rippled limestone interspersed by the infamously pervasive sand and silt. Nothing can be said about this passage other than its unrelenting belly crawling for 20mins. Relief was eventually had in a small cramped chamber that heralds the start of the Near Wallows. This is the real crux of the trip and great fun for the water babies..but terrifying for the hydrophobe. The passage is a huge bedding plane about a metre high..filled almost to the roof with water. The real issue here is navigating across the wallows due to its width and finding the exit. Dave



▲ Ingleborough Cave team (photo: Glenn Costin).

and I plunged headlong in and it wasn't long before I was flipping on my back and kissing the roof. At this point, I declared it was sumped. However, Andrew had spotted my error and advised I needed to be further over to the left...I found the dive line and was soon heading for the sound of the small cataract on the other side. The far wallows are a slightly different affair as its more of a hands and knees crawl/float..against the full flow which is quite difficult as the passage narrows. The final 20ft or so contains the final sting as the roof lowers again to within 5 inches of the water.

Phew! It was finally time to enjoy the pretties and spectacular passages of the Inauguration series. I will admit to always feeling a little uneasy beyond the wallows as I know only a small shower up at GG is enough to sump off the Wallows..However, there is the escape route but even then there are passages beyond that have the potential to become impassable..Anyway, shove the thought to one side and enjoy the fine formations that I'm glad to say are relatively untouched.

Photos taken, quick swim in terminal lake and it was about turn to retrace our steps. Returning through the near wallows reveals another practical joke to be had...finding your way to the entrance without the sound of water to guide you..Thankfully I spotted a flake where the line is tied so made a bee line for that. By this time, Jane was very cold. The others were spread out in the passage so I passed word back that I would accompany her out while the rest enjoyed a splash in Lave Avernus and Pluto. Back in the show cave, we kept to our word, had a quick bath in the Styx, resisted hugging the tourist and managed not to heckle the guides. Out in the sun, I grabbed a hot drink to try and encourage some heat into my corpse like hands as our next venue was BHSC.

Jane had decided she'd enough cold water immersion fun for one day so headed back. I waited for the others to emerge and immediately, John dived into the awkward entrance to

BHSC. After a little bit of cobble removal, we were granted access via the tight, feet first crawl into the streamway.

BHSC streamway would be absolutely belting..if it was 18inches taller. As it is, it's a bloody awful stoop for anyone of normal proportions. The floor is full of deep pools that are perfect for cracking shins. However, it is quite a fun cave and Broadbent falls towards the upstream end are quite impressive. A short round trip can be had at the end once you pass the sumped rift that connects to Lake Pluto.

All that was left now was to head out and bask in the afternoon sunlight, try and restore some warmth into our bitterly cold bodies and provide titillating entertainment to the passing throngs on their way off the mountain.

Most folk rounded the day off with a beverage of choice in the very busy reading rooms.

Despite the esoteric nature of this trip, it's a fantastic place to visit and judging by the smiles on certain members faces, I think all enjoyed the meet...Having said that, I've been told that Dave R still keeps smiling even when he's up to his neck in a mucky dig!

Thanks to all who came on yet another successful club meet.

Glenn Costin

Meregill Hole – 12th May 2018

Keith Chatterton (Australian Visitor), Toby Knights, Andrew Lister (co-ordinator), Dave Ramsden, John Webb

I'm still a relative newbie to SRT, I've got the kit, practiced at the Yorkshire Subterranean Society (YSS) training facility down at Helwith Bridge and have been on a handful of trips with basic ascending and descending with the odd easy re-belay. I felt confident, knew the theory and trusted my kit, I felt I was ready for something a bit more technical.

The walk up to Meregill was glorious, the sun was hot (far too hot in a furry), and it had been dry with very little rain for the past week. As we had hoped the Mere entrance was dry, so dry in fact it was hard to believe a 15m deep 'lake' normally fills this space. No sign of it today.

We abseiled the first 20 m pitch easily to the bottom and followed the dive line through a dry crawl into the cave proper. The technical SRT began almost immediately with Andrew rigging the route. We had to climb 2 m up into a smooth rift traverse, which soon became bottomless, using a mixture of bracing, wedging and direct aid onto the rope to make progress. This led to the second pitch, which passed smoothly with one re-belay.

We followed the water downstream, until we had to climb up into the roof and then along a slightly cramped traverse to the third pitch head. The third pitch was more technical and felt quite exposed, but the feeling of descending into the darkness in such a big space (the great hall) was exhilarating. There was a point where two ropes were tied together, I knew how to pass a knot, but it immediately struck me there was no loop to clip with my cowstail. I was relieved as I quickly realised the rope had run out exactly at the start of a short traverse, so passing the knot on descent was not required.

A scramble down stream through some cascades and pools lead us to the fourth pitch. This was about 40 m deep with a

couple of re-belays, one of which was a free-hang from a natural limestone thread. Once at the bottom, the view up the shaft with head torches illuminating it was awesome. The limestone was clean washed and shaped into flutings. The last pitch went easily, ending on the edge of a deep pool. I managed to traverse around the right-hand side avoiding the water and keeping dry, some members however weren't quite as lucky!

We were now at the bottom and followed the main drain past a small waterfall bringing water in from black shiver. We continued until the floor started to rise, and the passage started to turn into a crawl. Keith headed on a bit further, whilst the rest of us stopped for a rest.

All we had to do now was ascend all the ropes and de-rig it. Keith offered to de-rig, and I helped carry the rope. The first couple of pitches were straight forward. The third pitch onwards, I was carrying the de-rigged rope, which being totally saturated weighed a tonne. Ascending with all the extra weight is certainly a new experience. The final sting in the tail was the smooth traverse, which was particularly awkward with the added weight.

When I finally popped my head above the last pitch, I was greeted by John, Dave and Andrew (in his flowery pink onesie) and "What did you think to that then? You'll never believe what time it is!" It was 6pm, we had been down there for more than 7 hours.

It was brilliant, and I can't wait for the next trip.

Toby Knights

Cottage Working Weekend – 19th-20th May 2018

Dave Allanach, Dave Barker, Andy Brennand, Gordon Coldwell, Bob Cross, Rob Dove, John Forder, Miranda Forder, Pat Halliwell, Ric Halliwell, M Hamilton, Liz Hornby, Helen Jones, Mark Jones, Tracey Jones, Alan Pedlar, Terry Shipley, John Webb (co-ordinator), Carol Whalley, John Whalley

Once again they came in their droves to the year's first Cottage Working Weekend, and the weather gods favoured my "paint friendly" date choice of moving it to later in the year.

I was worn out making sure everyone was gainfully employed again....whilst others fixed roofs, mortared steps into place, plastered, filled/sanded and painted (well I like the new "bright" porch...not sure Dulux mixed it right though!) doors and walls, stained inside and out, shovelled coal, weeded

and strimmed, cleaned out waste traps and gulleys (uggghh!), honed kitchens and bathrooms, mopped floors, washed windows, bleached mildew, and moved projectors. Meanwhile the galley slaves were kept confined to Riverside kitchen to prepare another gastronomic delight for the throng on Saturday evening, which was held "al fresco" behind Bridgend on a balmy sunny evening, with very few midges to annoy us!!

I think it was a good idea to move the date to sunnier times, which I may do next year as well. Many, many thanks to all who came and worked so hard over a great weekend. Not sure we now have that much to do in October??

John Webb

Toby Knights, Dave Ramsden

Emma, Toby & I were planning to visit Pan Hole at Bingley St. Ives on Tuesday night. Recce'd it to find the entrance and save time on the night, printed the survey. Monday night, Toby emailed. I knew what was coming in an instant before I read it. It's from Toby and titled "Sleets Gill". So Emma can't come because of work, how about Sleets Gill? We can recce it or see how far we get. The weather has been good, is good, there is no prospect of rain today. It's a sound idea: his logic is impeccable. So I emailed my agreement, copied out the route description in the "Black Book", read the entries in Northern Caves Volume 1 and Pennine Underground 1965, packed my bag ready and got off to sleep.

The sun was shining again in the morning after it broke through the clouds, but we had a delayed start until early afternoon waiting for a damaged car to be collected and taken for repair. A quick drive up to Littondale, the car parked at the bend in the road below the cave and we were changed and up the hill to the entrance. Didn't wait about for anything, straight down the steeply-sloping passage, first with some headroom but lower down flat on our backs in a controlled slide over the scree into a small chamber and then a larger one. The 100 foot rope referred to in Pennine Underground didn't make much sense at this point but everything became clear later.

We crawled down to a junction and visited the famous "Wharfedale Sink" or where it should have been (and if it had been, would have likely brought about our return to daylight) but it wasn't there. Only a dive line left high & dry & a very small amount of water further into the passage. We were in luck and moved on into the Main Gallery. This is never an easy walk. The passage is large, very impressive. The floor less so. Whether it's slippery mud banks, rocks, gour pools, sharp edges, meandering streams, you can never relax. And it's only when you take a break, stop looking at the ground and your feet that you see the decorations. The passage isn't packed with them, it's positively not Curry Inlet, but there are impressive, sizeable formations in rather sombre shades. Nothing sparkling white down here and much evidence of mud-plastered walls. This place must be very unpleasant in flood...

Inevitably, the passage ends in a boulder choke but you retrace your steps a few metres and prepare yourself for what you may well find to be the transformation of the cave. If football really is a game of two halves, this place must have the edge. You thought it wasn't exactly happy with your intrusion? Then climb down the hole you just walked past and didn't even notice. Down about two metres at the most, an easy scramble and discover the other side of Sleets Gill Cave. From this point on we were on an entirely different footing because this is where the crawling really begins and where we found the water that had been hiding from us. Rocky crawling is replaced by rocky crawling in water. Active streams and canals on the way to Hydrophobia Passage. But first we'd turned away from a crawl to Hyperthermia Passage.

And again further on, it wouldn't leave us alone but we weren't going to get involved with Hyperthermia on this visit. Youtube didn't exactly sell it to us...

We followed the route forwards towards Hydrophobia Passage through a series of junctions, low crawling in running water, repeatedly stopping to check with the notes from 'Not for the Faint Hearted' (NFTFH) [can't praise these too highly – absolutely faultless; we didn't carry a survey and didn't need one...many thanks, Mike Cooper!] and eventually found ourselves in the very low, unavoidably-wet, flat out crawl which is Hydrophobia Passage. The rocky floor below the beautifully clear water is very fractured and sharp, increasingly pocketed to some depth and by the time we reached the end of Hydrophobia we were beginning to question our decision to leave the wetsuits in the car. We squatted in the water at a slightly higher-roofed junction and quickly decided that this was our limit for today. A few photographs were taken and then the painful crawl back was begun. At least we were now travelling with the flow of water and not against it! The journey back to the level above seemed quicker but this was relative: it would be near impossible to move quickly along these passages, which in itself is a sobering thought. Back up the climb and into the Main Gallery, time to stop and look at the formations. This cave never lets you off easily. You couldn't relax. But what a system! We were under no illusions; we probably did less than three quarters of the full journey to the final sump and barely looked at Hyperthermia Passage.

The sting in the tail was the climb out. Now I understood the reference to the hundred foot rope! Loose scree just about on the angle of repose and in one area the roof right on your back. After 50 metres of scrabbling we were back at the top. We would never claim this to be even close to a tick in the Black Book, just a taster. Toby and I are still very much "learning our trade" and have a long way to go, a few years I would think. We'll go back with our wetsuits. Today was truly awesome and part of a steep learning curve for us. Many thanks to Toby for having the idea to go, and for being a perfect companion on an unforgettable trip down a very uncompromising cave. Today we were lucky with the weather. I can't imagine what it would be like down there if there was a significant amount of rain. Or even just average rain on an unpredictable timescale. You can see the signs. Mud-coated walls, water scoured rocks, marks of flow. The whole system, particularly the lower level has a peculiar feel to it. Not intimidating exactly but...

At one point on the way in we heard a strange gurgling sound coming from under the rocky floor. We debated whether water was coming up from below or what the implications might be. The noise continued. Finally relaxing a little (but only a little) in the sure knowledge that the weather was going through a stable period we moved on, downwards. But were still really no wiser. It's that kind of cave.

Dave Ramsden

Grey Wife Hole – 2nd June 2018

Tony Credland (co-ordinator), John Helm, Dave Jones, Dave Ramsden

This nearly wasn't a caving meet. For the first hour we played follow the Boss-man up hill and down dale in the thick mist. He had a compass [partially deceased], but gave it to the Voluntary Meet Co-ordinator (VMC), which would have been a good move had he not then ignored the resultant directions ☺. To be fair, he did have good plan, it's just that the 'wall' he was aiming to use as a hand-line and attack point turned out to be a pencil line drawn on the map some decades ago! Well, anyone can make that mistake, without specs ☺. Anyway, we did eventually stagger into Hurnell Moss shake hole which we all recognised. Pity that Grey Wife required so little rope: the 36m total we were carrying wouldn't have got us very far in Hurnell Moss! Still, it was a useful land mark and it was only a modest amount of time later we found GWH. Though it must be said that without prior knowledge the actual entrance was so well hidden under grass that we could have missed it completely. Clearly no one had been in the cave since my short recce last year. This was borne out at the first bedding plane squeeze, only a minute into the cave. Whilst not as blocked as last year, when I spent an hour digging it out, it still needed a little excavation to get through. After this it was straight forward, though restrictive, caving along the narrow [very narrow in parts] twisting stream way.

Just before the first pitch we were confronted with what I had named The Neck Brace Squeeze on account of the method I had used to by-pass it before. A slip would have resulted in a neck-break, so quite nasty. Today I had forgotten my pads, left at home along with assorted other essential items [like a fully functioning compass, neo socks, gloves etc]. Up until now the lack of knee pads hadn't been an issue, but when I tried to approach the Neck Brace, a meter or so off the deck, it necessitated the use of knees on small ledges. Boy, did that hurt my shins! So I backed off, thinking that I wasn't going to manage it. Then I heard Dave say something about a report he had read involving slotting through horizontally about a metre and a half up. [Clearly he should have been the VMC as he was so well prepared.] I recalled I'd briefly investigated this very move last year but had rejected it as a bit of a wing and a prayer move, especially for a solo caver. This time I had some good support so immediately I changed tactics and was through with only a little bit of huff and puff.

Now we had a bit of space [relative] for all of 2m before another squeeze saw us at the pitch head. Well, me and John H: too small for additional bodies, and we had to get SRT kit on, whilst avoiding tipping down the pitch. Stepping into the harness whilst looking down a c12m free fall certainly makes you concentrate.

We were presented with a typical Black Book of Death pitch head; not straight forward, with some dead spits, and bolted for ladders, not SRT. Despite being classic Y hang territory both bolts were on the same wall, and gave rope rub. But



▲ Entrance (photos: John Helm).

there was an in-situ ladder, more of which later. We briefly considered using the ladder, but hey, it was a ladder, and we 'ate ladders, especially ones that have been in place for years. So it was roped down, and I placed a deviation to try and take some of the rub off, and then John adjusted the hang at the top to ease it a bit more. But it was still there, and not helpful as events were to transpire.

The landing was wet: in the sump pool [Paradox Pool], but not a terminal sump, not even a duck today, after so much dry weather. John soon joined me and we had a conflag and look-see at the pool traverse. The good book claims that you can bridge on underwater ledges, thus avoiding a swim. This is partly true. You can indeed use ledges for the first part, but they run out.....and you have to swim. Well, we did anyway. But it was mercifully short, and brought us to the second big space, a modest aven.

From this comfortable aven it was back to very narrow twisting canyon, then lots of crawling. Have I mentioned that I didn't have knee pads? Oh, I have? Well, anticipating that I was going to be slow I headed off and left John to advise the others about the pool. They were not yet in evidence, having to negotiate the tight approach to the pitch head and don SRT kit, both of which were slow processes.

So I had half an hour or so of 'solo' caving at my own pace. Discounting the knee pain, it was very nice caving, with some surprisingly good formations, even sporting conservation tape at one point, and nothing overly tight or technical. I imagine that under normal conditions it would be a tad wetter than the current drought levels we were enjoying. We had it damp in places rather than wet.

Arriving at Jim's Traverse in the next aven was a mixed blessing. It was good to get off my knees and take a breather,

but the climb and traverse looked quite nasty. I had brought a 20m dynamic rope for this, as suggested in the Black Book. Odd that one wall of the chamber was so rotten, whilst the other was very solid. A line of bolts for an aid climb would have been nice :) Anyway, just as I was contemplating getting into my bivvi sack to ward off the creeping cold, the others arrived.

There was much muttering, and phrases like 'this has the feel of the end of the cave' and 'Oh, yes, this is a good ending' and 'I'm just about at my limit' preceded the rebellion.....which I wasn't minded to resist. But I knew that there was more to do, so I left my climbing rope tucked away, thus ensuring that I'd return to finish the job, sometime soon. [Any volunteers?]

I brought up the rear on the return, fearing that I'd slow folk down with my fragile knees. This proved to be the case as they gradually put distance between me and their back marker. I knew that the swim and pitch would slow things down, especially as they had to put kit back on again before the ascent, so I was happy to amble. By the time I'd followed Wee Dave through Paradox Pool we were all reunited.

The Boss-man and Big Dave headed off and I elected to derig. This was the last we saw of the two big guys, who paused briefly at the constricted pitch head, making good use of the bonus ladder-foot hold. Sometime later Wee Dave and I were engrossed in a shouted conversation about constricted pitch heads and choice of route through them. It became a bit of a strain, all the shouting, so I elected to join him. We then had a cosy chat about how it was that SRT kit adds unaccustomed girth and how not having cat's whiskers made for difficulties judging gaps and spaces, and how alluring a bigger space looks when it is beyond a tight part of the cave. It was quite a jolly conversation, though a bit one sided as Dave was having difficulty breathing. I climbed a bit higher and we could then talk about vectors and angle of pull, and stuff like that, with a small but significant demonstration to round off the discussion. Some upward progress was made, then Dave decided to switch the conversation to other matters. You know how it is: when this happens it catches you unaware, and you have to jig about in your mind, wondering what the hell is going on, and how is this new topic relevant to the current situation. Were you being impolite, not paying attention? What did you miss? Why is Dave now talking about his recent acquisition, a Freino karabiner? And why has upward progressed ceased anyway. And why is Dave standing on my head, again?

Well, it transpired that the little spur braking clip thingy of the Freino isn't like me at all: it doesn't 'ate ladders' it has a great affinity for them. So much so that it feels obliged to attach itself to ladder wires whenever in close proximity. And on this pitch head, everything was in close proximity. Including me and Dave's lower appendages, which were thrashing about, accompanied by what I now knew to be relevant and very pertinent language. But nothing to embarrass the Vicar, such is the gent in the gentleman.



▲ Entrance crawl.

Suddenly we were on our way again, not upwards but blessedly sideways, along the traverse line. For one move only. Look, you just couldn't make this up, right? We were soon killing time, now in a comfortable position, everyone able to breath, my hand now released from behind the ladder rung where it has been trapped against the cave wall. [This had caused a little ill feeling towards my companion and fellow caver, until I belatedly realised that it was my own foot, and therefore weight, on a lower rung that was doing the damage. Derrr....]. This time we chatted about tackle sack karabiners, and where best to attach them to the harness, and aren't they just bloody clever and follow the rules by clipping both loops of the bunny-ears hang? Even without being told to?

Mercifully this chat was short lived and I was then able to gain the last bit of height, to the section of 9mm that we had been swinging about on for the past half hour. The bit that was rubbing due to the silly bolt positions. I had been eyeing this, from time to time, glimpsed through Dave's legs, and later bits of assorted SRT kit. It was fine, if just a little furry. The tackle master can relax: it was my own string.

The return through the Neck-brace Squeeze, now better described as the Nose-dive Squeeze went smoothly for me, but Dave, naturally, chose to go the way he had come in, ie at stream level. For some reason he didn't fit on the way out, even without his SRT kit. Either he had a big lunch, or plate tectonics were at play, or the marginal slope uphill was enough to swing the balance. In any event he had to back off and come through the dive instead. We then had a gambol along the stream way to the bedding plane crawl which did seem tighter on the way out, and then we only had the climbs to do. The first is under cut and subsequently quite strenuous. I cheated last year, being on my own, by building a pyramid of rocks to stand on. I did the same again, but these collapsed on me before I could get up and out. So we had a conversation about the value and venerable history of combined tactics which seemed to solve the issue. For me at least. This left Wee Dave on his own beneath the undercut. Whoops, we seem to have done that in the wrong order! I suggested ▶

that I could come down again and boost Dave up a bit, and then he could do the same for me.....but Dave soon spotted the flaw in this plan.....like PTO written on both sides of a piece of paper he said. The rope and a dangling foot loop provided the necessary degree of cunning and support, almost thwarted by my choice of foot-brace for the body belay. The chosen rock moved down-cave just as Dave moved up, but ne'er the twain shall meet, thanks to his nimble dodging, though quite how he managed this on a foot loop in a constriction I'm not too sure.

With fresh air in our nostrils and daylight filtering down we only had one last awkward bit to do, which proved straight forward only after I faced the right way. Hint; it's the other way ☺.

Back on the surface we were reunited with the others, who looked very cold and a bit unhappy at their hour long wait. It can't have been too bad though because apparently John had been asleep and snoring, and Big Dave had contemplated returning underground to find us, but had decided that the bedding crawl was just too much hassle for the expected returns.

It was still misty, and calls were made for the compass. The Boss led off and we straggled along behind, encountering ghostly abandoned assorted luggage along the way. It was quite a puzzle until it dawned on us that it was flotsam and jetsam from the Bradford GG trailer run. This perked up our spirits no end, and we [that's the Royal 'we' I'm ashamed to say] carried the booty off the hill for later delivery to The Dump, in exchange for liquid thanks.

Thanks for the small, but perfectly formed, team who made the day one to remember. Grey Wife Hole will have to go on the meets list next year, if I haven't been back meantime to sort the rigging and put my dynamic rope to good use. I also have unfinished business with Jean Pot, with the CPC jimmy still languishing at the dig face.....team thin required again for that last pitch. You have been warned ☺.

Tony Credland

The Apprentice's Tale ...

This is no way an attempt to write a meet report. I'm certain that Tony will do that to the exemplary standard with which he lead the meet. I'm not sure whether my effort will be cathartic or confessional: probably somewhere between the two.

I should have listened more carefully as I struggled with the awkward pitch head on the way in. I would probably have heard it whisper "I will have you on the way out". And it did.

I have to say that most of the cave is tight, not extremely tight but enough for it to be an issue. I know that there are much, much harder (and longer) stretches in other caves and that they are lying in wait for their turn to be on the Meets Calendar. All credit to Dave J.(who is a "big lad") At one point he thought his trip was over but pushed on through somehow.

So, all safely down the pitch, we briefly enjoyed the cool embrace of Paradox Pond. It's not really a pond but more a low, flooded passage. It can be skilfully shoulder-jammed and bridged in places but not entirely waded. The bottom cannot be plumbed. In the absence of such skills, you inevitably get more than a little wet. We travelled on to pay our respects to Jim's Traverse. Looked at it briefly, decided that it was not for today and set off back. The cave isn't vastly decorated but there are a couple of taped off areas, some nice straws and in an alcove on one side a truly spectacular formation. I digress. Soon we were back at the Pond, quickly through and at the bottom of the pitch putting on our SRT kit ready for the prusik back up. John went first and then Dave J. So it was me next and everything started well, swinging out over the Pond with assistance on the rope from Tony and up through the deviation to the Y-hang. Which is where my problems began.

The pitch head is tight and the way off it is up higher, above the anchor. Foolishly imagining that I could get through at the level of the Y-hang, I found myself firmly wedged, on cowstails, one to the left anchor, one to the traverse line and off the rope. I had one foot on a convenient (I thought) ladder to one side which someone had considerably left hanging there. My bodyweight was on the anchor via the cowstail. "Why can't I lift myself up?" I asked myself. The horrible truth became obvious when I reached down to investigate. My Stop was jammed against my abdomen but seemed to have a mind of its own. My inverted Freino had clipped itself upward onto the top rung of the ladder and resolutely would not be parted from it. Neither up or down was, at this moment, apparently a possibility. By this time Tony had come up the rope and was below me. Although he couldn't see what the problem was he offered sensible advice and we tried various subterfuges to trick the pitch head into releasing me, footloops and shifts of body position within the very limited range of movement possible; virtually nothing. Mercifully, after many attempts, I managed to prise the Freino off the ladder, moved up it to the wider space above and reached the safety of the cosy niche adjacent where SRT kit can be put on or, in this case, taken off. This, it seems, took a very long time, I am told.

I apologise to the "front men" who were waiting patiently by the entrance. I understand John was able to catch up on some lost sleep as I wrestled with my problem below. I also offer my sincere thanks to TC who brought a great sense of calm and technical expertise to the whole incident. Our return to daylight was trouble-free and relatively painless. For me this was a powerful learning experience, revealing one or two personal shortcomings and the necessity to be able to sit calmly at a pitch head and resolve a problem essentially of my own making. We will return to Grey Wife Hole to complete unfinished business. And I've always claimed never to make the same mistake twice....I suspect the pitch head is waiting to ambush me again, but I'll still go back and get it right. It's a super cave. Probably no-one goes there. The entrance cover was concealed by a mound of dead grass but once down the scaffolded climb it never really lets up. Go and take a look. I'm sure you'll find it as unforgettable as I did.

Dave Ramsden

Goyden Pot – 10th June 2018

James Archer, Mike Ashmore, Andy Brennand, John Helm, Dave Jones (co-ordinator), Karen Lane, Mark Lane (guest), Andy Meadley, Matt Nuttall, Ben Nuttall (guest), Hannah Nuttall (guest), Dave Ramsden, Andy Wilson, Oscar Wilson (guest),

Due to campaigning via email and social media for volunteers for my first trip as 'coordinator', I certainly wasn't disappointed with the turn out. I later found out the 4 separate trips were made to the reservoir to check the water levels, with each one being conducted oblivious to the other visits so we were well covered on that front.

A brief walk from the cars saw us through the entrance and in to the large main streamway. A quick visit to the sump and we made our way through the aptly named Labyrinth series and towards the Twenty-foot pitch. With flood debris deposited throughout the system it is certainly obvious that the whole system is capable of flooding catastrophically. Placing this thought in the back of our minds, we made our way down the 20-foot pitch, an optional handline ensured everyone made it down without any mishaps. Making our way through the New Stream sump and the bottom end of

the system. A brief swing over the sump on a knotted rope saw us into a bedding plane and back towards Labyrinth passage to complete the bottom of the figure of 8 route.

Plenty of crawling followed as we made our way through Pyridine Passage. I managed to forget the waist deep pool on the way through which came as a bit of surprise. After traversing across Deep well, it was a relatively straight forward trip towards the main streamway entrance.

Back in the entrance streamway, the pleasantness of the weather outside was too tempting for most people, but 3 of us went back down stream for the alternatively exit via Church pot.

A thoroughly enjoyable trip with great company. Special credit should be given to the three children who made it all the way through, with the youngest only being 8. There were some features that were quite intimidating.

Dave Jones

▼ Goyden Pot (photo: Dave Jones)



Caves of Great Whernside (Fossil Pot) – 16th June 2018

Tony Credley, John Helm, Dave Jones, Matthew Nuttall, Mick Potts, Andy Wilson, Andy Wilson

The planned trip to Langcliffe Pot had to be abandoned due to an uncertain weather forecast. We did however decide to stay (almost) under the same hill. Thanks to information provided by the Warrens we were headed for Fossil Pot.

According to my 1975 guidebook this was going to be a short trip at 11m but things have changed since then and it is now extended to 3 pitches and varied passages in all directions.

I think we covered all of it although there are a few un-concluded vertical leads to pursue and of course more digging potential.

A worthwhile trip with a couple of squeezes to keep it interesting and even a duck at the end, which was a low puddle of sludge on the day.

Andy Wilson



▼ Fossil Pot entrance (photos: John Helm)

▲ Crinoids in Fossil Pot



Lake District Meet – 22nd - 24th June 2018

Bob Cross, John & Miranda Forder, John Helm & Bev, Dave Hoggarth, Pete & Tracey Jones with Helen and Mark, Dave Kaye, Dave King, Steve Kirk, Mick Potts with Natalia and Nathan, Robert Scott (co-ordinator)

It was warm, very warm. Is the Lake District meant to be this warm?

Saturday: Despite some dodgy navigation through woods at Fickle Crag, Bob Cross, Steve Kirk, Mick Potts with Natalia and Nathan, and Robert Scott managed to get to the top of Harter Fell via Grassguards. After locating Maiden Castle by a "bit more to the right" navigation, a descent to Birks and the river was achieved followed by an amble back through the fields to camp. Mr & Mrs Forder with Dave King together with John and Bev went on the Eskdale equivalent of the European Rail-pass stopping off at bleak tarns and Roman

ruins. The Jones family and Dave Kaye visited the second archaeological dig at the long houses before allegedly visiting Seathwaite Tarn for a swim for which no evidence has been provided. Meanwhile, Mr Hoggarth wisely sat in the shade probably devouring Wittgenstein's Tractatus or some other worthy tome.

On Saturday night, we managed to squeeze ourselves, albeit already occupied, on to Harpic's favourite table at the Newfield Inn without the use of the CPC's secret weapon. Result!

Sunday: It was hot. The Lake District isn't meant to be like this. Shed loads of rain – yes, but unremitting heat – no. Mick took his kids for a swim in the river. It was a lot colder than the air temperature so a paddle was appropriate instead. Pete took his kids for a swim in the river. It was a lot colder than the air temperature so a paddle was appropriate instead. John & Miranda, together with Dave King & Bob Cross, went for a swim in Seathwaite Tarn, as did John & Bev allegedly. So you cannot fool any of the children any of the time but adults – a pushover.

Thank you for those who were there. It was a very enjoyable meet.

Robert Scott

◀ Wild swimming (photos: John Helm)

▼ Harter Fell from Seathwaite tarn



Conservation Report

Well now, I seem to have got myself landed with conservation officer. I checked with Chas if I needed to be aware of anything and he mentioned Sell Gill. I also talked to Andrew Hinde at Natural England and he gave me the Cave Conservation Handbook to read over Christmas and New Year. Happy Christmas everyone! So, the definition of a cave conserved is "preserved and kept from harm, decay or loss". So, we have a tall order to be responsible for if we want to continue caving, and for our future generations to do the same.

Cave conservation does not just mean being careful not to damage stals, it includes geology, hydrology, sediments, speleothems, palaeontology, archaeology, biospeleology, mining, pollution, digging, development and vandalism. All these things affect caves, as well as cavers. Being a novice caver, an adventure group or the experienced caver.

The way of monitoring caves comes down to photographs and written accounts over time.

There is a Cave Conservation Code, easy simple., it's no good a witch saying the creed and not trying to live it. The witch creed is "Do what you will with harm to none", easy said but so hard to follow. Hopefully the Cave Conservation Code is easier to follow, but it needs thought. We are all responsible for our actions, and most of us really do care about the world beneath our feet.

1. Cave with care and within your abilities. The unknown is always tricky, but check with the meet leader and bow out on the day if you think your actions may risk damage.
2. Keep to marked routes....no sneaking past the red tape.
3. Avoid touching formations.
4. Disturb nothing whether living or geological.
5. Take nothing but photo's.
6. Do not pollute the cave, leave nothing behind.

Since I've been in post, so to say, there has been a few things going on and I'll mention what I know.

There have been trees planted at Ribblehead, opposite the Railway station by Natural England. The group have also planted more trees at Yordas, tidied up the wood and carried out a cave inspection. This site is also an SSSI site.

The metal corrugated sheets have been lifted from Foul Pot and a sturdy fence erected. The shaft is now open to light and it's hoped ferns will soon take hold. Work carried out by Cave Conservation.

There has been further work carried out on the GG track, and this is still ongoing.....For as long as we keep going up there!

There are task days open to us with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and I will continue to send dates of these as I get them. The Trust has now taken over Meal Bank Quarry at Ingleton, where there is another Hoffman Kiln.

Some of you who visit Runscar cave may notice the entrance is wider. Some stabilising work was done there on the entrance.

A plea from me and Andrew Hinde. Natural England have three herds of cows on Ingleborough, mainly Red Polls and Bluegreys. They are mainly seen by the public around Sulber Nick. If you are walking or caving in an area where the cattle are, and you see plastic bottles etc, please can you pick them up and dispose of them in a bin. I extracted a plastic bottle from a cows mouth recently, it could kill them.

Over the Sulber Nick area you will find lots of *Primula farinosa* and Orchids in early summer. This is down to Natural England taking the sheep off from here and letting cows graze.

▼ Working on the GG track (photos: Rowan Worsmann)



In May there was further work carried out on the GG track, both CPC and the Bradford turned out in good form. We were led by Andrew Hinde from Natural with the aid of the Polaris for ferrying the stone. Further work will be needed, but this is a testing time as the Bradford will hold their GG meet soon. We had fantastic weather which helped to lift our spirits. We used spoil from past Marilyn digs to fill in parts of the track to the left of the GG path. Folk had plenty of time to tell stories and reminisce. Steve Kirk well remembered some of the lumps of stone he hauled out of the ground many years ago. It's good to be reunited with old friends. ☺

The Bradford went up to GG in dry weather.....It's not fair I know. I had a look at the track and the work we did had stood up very well. ...but it was dry. It has highlighted the other areas that now need attention.

Going back to April a team of CPC members went into Stump Cross to do some conservation work. Ric and Pat Halliwell, Dave Ramsden, Rowan Worsman. We worked in the area where Geoff Workman has been digging for many years. These passages are now going to be open to other caving clubs, and certain formations needed to be protected. With pins and tape from Natural England the appropriate areas, like cave pearl pools and Lady Aster's Column, were located and taped off for protection. Rubbish was also removed.

The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust working day went ahead in mid May, and two sections of dry stone wall were repaired to keep stock out of Ashes Pasture. The pasture, which covers 20 hectares, is one of the most important in the country as a hay meadow, and for its diversity of flowers and plants. As an SSSI site and Special Area of Conservation due to its



▲ GG track: before and after

grasslands, it is grazed by cattle and sheep in autumn and winter. There are over 12 species of orchid, as well as the many plants. I have looked at this site many times, and it has a wealth of wild plants.

Since the end of the second world war, 97 per cent of England's hay meadows have been lost, according to an article from Yorkshire Post.

Some elves have carried out repair works in Mud Hall to the hand ropes and the traverse. Care I think is needed in going in, after the recent Earthquake in early June at Lowgill.

◀ Stump Cross clear up (photo: Ric Halliwell)



Rowan Worsmann



◀ Tree planting at Ribblehead

Library Additions for July 2018 Record

The Belfry Bulletin – the Journal of the Bristol Exploration Club Autumn 2017 No.563, Vol.61 No.4: Sardinia 2017; the BEC family (and beer); Huididero-Gato 2017 (Southern Spain); The Mendip Migration 2017; Thundergasm or "What I did on my summer holiday" – Dachstein expedition; photographing for "The Golden Age of Devon Caving".

CSS Newsletter Chelsea Spelæological Society Vol.59 Nos 10/11/12 Oct/Nov/Dec 2017: Croesor-Rhosydd; Llanberis Copper Mine East; Cwmorthin Mine; Central Avenue-Summertime (Agen Allwedd); Daren camp update; Llanelly Quarry Pot; Some Daren Sunday School history; Vol.60 Nos 1/2/3 Jan/Feb/Mar 2018: Nenthead Mines – Carr's Mine, Rampgill Mine, Capelcleugh Mine; Jill's Slither dig, Reservoir Hole; A trip to the end of Daren (more or less); Adventures in Prokofiev – Nyth Bran; More on the Sunday School.

The Grampian Speleological Group Bulletin Fifth series Vol.2 No.4 March 2018: Obituaries – Fraser Simpson; Library additions; first descent of Uamh Poll Eoghainn; No new cave at Unich; Kyrgyzstan 2017; Cave illustrations of Scotland; Little Rock and additional finds at Trinafour. For tomorrow's World; Uncabac - past, present and future.

Irish Speleology Journal of the Speleological Union of Ireland, No 23 2017 : selected account of Irish caves 1680-1893 – a collection of accounts of Irish caves made in the 17th 18th and 19th centuries – primarily excerpts from travelogues and geographical writings.

South Wales Caving Club Newsletter 133 April 2018: Cryogenic processes in OFD; First, catch your ladder; CRoW and cave access; Igloo and Aven de Bagpath; making caving videos and sharing experiences; Obit: John Lister; l'Herault, 2016; Cantabria 2016; UIS Conference, Australis 2017; Ario area.

Speleo – Czech Speleological Society Newsletter No.73 2018 In Czech

Speleologia Revista della Societa Speleologica Italiana No.78 February 2018: reports on exploration both in Italy and abroad, including Kirghizistan; Radon in caves. In Italian with English summaries of major articles.

Subterranea Croatica – Journal of the Speleoloski Klub "Ursus Spelaeus" Vol.15 No.23 2/2017: Expedition reports – biological, archaeological and speleological; A2 survey of Pecina Piskovica – longest Croatian cave in Flysch. In Croatian with English summaries of major articles.

Wessex Cave Club Journal 345 January 2018: Huatla resurgence Part 1; caving in Belgium; Wessex Elf Rescue Mission; training tower re-build; a weekend at OFD.

White Rose Pothole Club Newsletter Vol.37 Issue 1 – March 2018: Trip reports – Quaking Pot, Langcliffe Pot, Tatham Wife Hole, Long Churn/Alum, Nenthead, Bull Pot of the Witches, Pippikin, Hagg Beck Sink, Eldon Hole, Foss Gill Cave ; Free-diving adventures ; Projects.

William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Newsletter No.126 November 2017: Life in last Ice Age – Cresswell Crag; Bat dialects; Bat poop as a reliable source of climate change?; re-opening of Joint Mitnor Hole.

No.127 February 2018: Cracking the cave art code; New cave in Al Hamra, Oman; Cheddar Man – DNA shows early Briton had dark skin.

Purchases

Cave and Karst Science vol.45 No.1 April 2018: Dr Trevor Shaw, speleo-historian extraordinaire; Aquatic invertebrates of Ogof Draenen, South Wales; "Gulfs" at Greenhow, and a possible Irish example; Earliest time of karst cave formation; Ice caves in Greece.

Donations

From: Robert Scott — Descent No.260 Feb/March 2018: New finds in Leitrim; Down the deep pit; It's Mega: 25:468 Meghalaya 2017; Finding the Wonder Cave – Treak Cliff Cavern; Hidden Earth 2017; Draenan reflections; Bumbling in the dark – Tributes to Bryan 'Scoff' Schofield;

No.261 April/May 2018: A short walk in the Riesending, Germany; Finding the unexpected – Jrat's digging award; There's something down there... Rift Pot, Ireby Fell; Cave archaeology in Ireland; A landowner's descent – Fairy Holes, Weardale; The son of Longcliffe; A Golden Weekend at RGS.

Pat Halliwell

Book Review – Škocjanska Jama 1920-1940

Trevor Shaw continues his speleo-historical research in Slovenia. His latest book is the very well researched, well described and fully illustrated exploration of Škocjanska Jama during the interesting two decades between Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav rule when that part of the Balkans was transiently part of Italy. Despite the traumatic events of 1918 and 1939 the published and archival records of cave exploration have largely survived.

Dr. Shaw has carefully examined those records, including club archives and publications, by explorers, photographers, model makers, artists, postcard publishers and surveyors of German, Italian and Slovene nationalities. Despite the politics of the period there was little or no obstruction to the cave explorers.

Stephen Craven

Shaw T. R. *Škocjanska Jama 1920-1940* (Založba ZRC, Ljubljana, 2018).

Book Review – Cave Surveys from the Yorkshire Dales

This is a compilation of the results of some 40 years' worth of cave and mine surveying projects by Steve Warren, covering both the CPC and WRPC (White Rose) periods. The surveys have been completely redrawn, in colour, and the notation harmonised. All the major discoveries are shown in plan and often with multiple elevations, with passage detail and cross sections, including generous notes. Perhaps uniquely, each survey is accompanied by a diagram showing the geological context. The book as a whole has been universally praised, and you don't have to take just my word for this (obviously, I will be biased!); for example, John Cordingley says "Do include mention of the usefulness of those tiny additional diagrams which beautifully give a flavour of the local geology. They're so useful, without being overbearing for those who aren't interested in the geology. I've never seen this approach before and I think it's superb."

Now to the contents: there are 35 localities, ranging from the obscure **Raygill Fissure** in Lothersdale, to **Watch Hill Cave** in the Northern Pennines. The majority of sites are in Wharfedale, with a smaller number clustered around Gaping Gill. In Langstrothdale there is I think complete coverage of the significant amount of work done by the WRPC since the 1980s, including a highly detailed survey of **Hagg Gill Pot**.

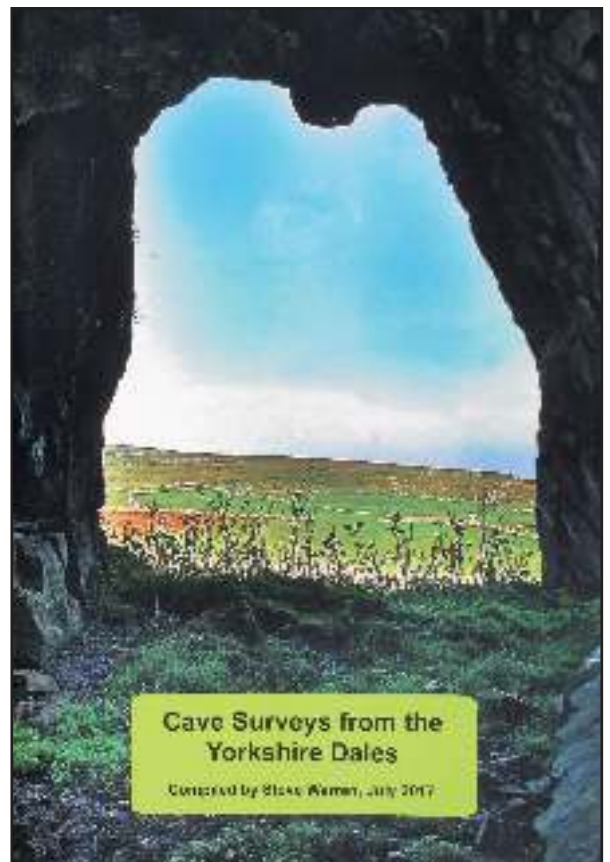
There are two caves which deserve special mention. The first of these is **Chapel Lodge Cave** which is set back from the main road up Wharfedale as one emerges from the woods at Long Ashes. This fills in a piece of the hydrogeological puzzle that includes Robin Hood's Cave just down the valley, but as usual raises just as many questions as answers.

The second is undoubtedly to my mind **Fossil Pot** (see meet report on p26). Originally an obscure shaft in the valley below Gill House, and first descended by the CPC in 1957, Fossil Pot was dramatically extended by the WRPC in 1999-2000 to enter a large and completely unexpected section of (misfit?) streamway which unfortunately sumps in both directions (although diggable at the upstream end). This has surely been the most significant but enigmatic discovery in the great catchment areas of Conistone and Grassington moors since the explorations of Langcliffe Pot in the 1970s. As a piece of the hydrogeological jigsaw puzzle, Fossil Pot is out on its own, and it raises many questions about the underground drainage routes of this vast area.

The very final page of the collection tantalises the reader with the 'Book of Dow', currently in preparation, to contain the complete survey of Dow Cave including the Caseker Gill extension, Dowbergill Passage in its entirety, and the oft-overlooked complexities of Providence Pot; along with hydrological, geological, and historical notes.

Patrick Warren

Warren, S. E. *Cave Surveys of the Yorkshire Dales* (2018) is available from the author and local caving shops (eg Inglesport).

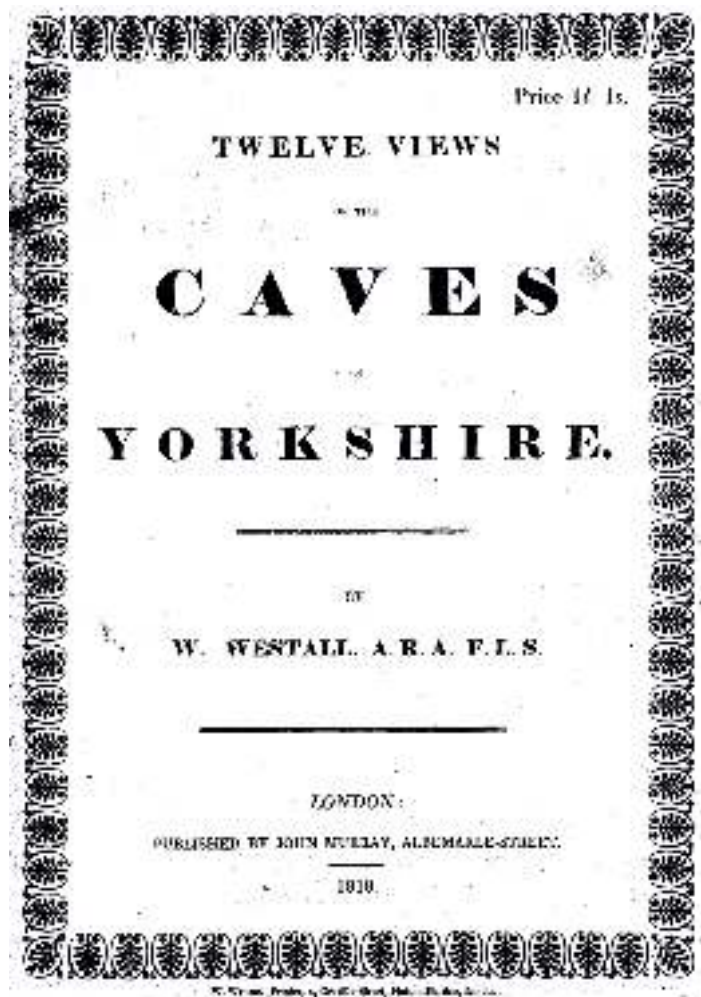


Twelve Views of the Caves of Yorkshire

A book by William Westall with this title was published by J Murray 200 years ago. It is quite rare because sadly many copies of the book were ripped apart and the engravings sold as separate mounted pictures. I bought a copy of the cheap 1 Guinea (£1.05) edition back in the mid-70s for £120 and there was one copy recently advertised on ebay for £700. There aren't really 12 views of caves because one engraving is of Ingleborough, one of Malham Cove and two are of Gordale. However the caving views are important because they are probably the first cave engravings of Yorkshire Caves to have been published. The caves which are drawn are Dovecote Gill Cave, 3 views of Yordas Cave, 3 views of Weathercoat Cave and 1 of Gatekirk Cave

William Westall was born in 1781 and was taught to paint by his older brother who also taught the young Queen Victoria. He married Adam Sedgwick's younger sister which may be why he drew the Yorkshire Caves (TR Shaw 1983). John Hutton's "Tour to the Caves" (1780) described the caves (apart from Dovecote Gill) and was the first real guidebook but didn't include any drawings of the caves. The small amount of text in Westall's publication states "this bed of calcareous rock is probably connected with that in Derbyshire, as the same kind of marine petrifications of animals, no longer known to exist, occur in both. It is called transition, or mountain limestone, and caves are found in the same kind of rock in various parts of the world. These caves are supposed to be formed by water forcing its way through natural fissures, and carrying the softer or broken parts of the rock with it, as streams are found invariably to run through them all."

The most interesting drawings are the three of Yordas Cave because the cave has changed considerably since they were drawn, indeed it changed dramatically just after the drawings were made. The amount of light in the second drawing confirms just how much larger the entrance used to be. The



three drawings are described by Westall as follows:

"*Entrance to Yordas Cave.* The peculiar character of this view is derived from the great masses of rock that hang from the roof, apparently loose, which combined with the deep gloom of the interior, usually occasion some degree of terror on the first visit to the cave. A few days after this view was drawn, in July 1817, a water-spout {nowadays called a torrential downpour} burst upon the mountain above, and the torrent occasioned by it forced down great stones and masses of earth, which have half filled the entrance of the cave. Its present appearance is consequently entirely different from this view, the top not being more than half the height represented here.

▲ Frontispiece
(all images: Ric Halliwell)

◀ Entrance to Yordas Cave

► **Inside of Yordas Cave,
looking towards the entrance**

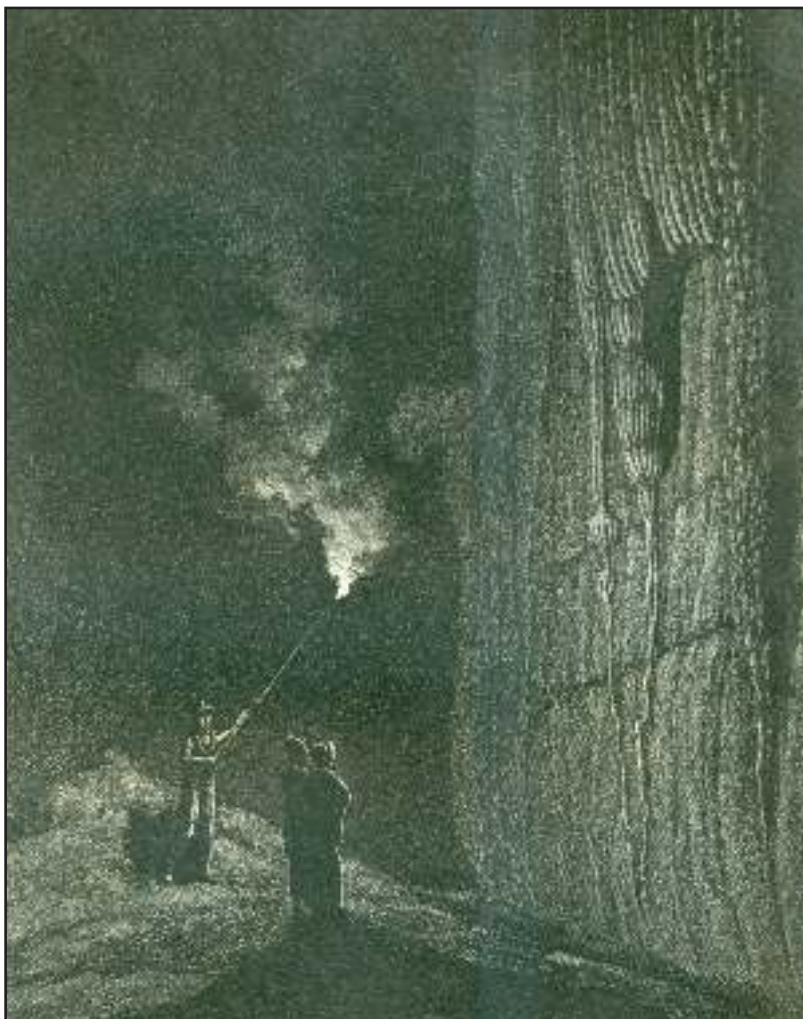
"*Inside of Yordas Cave, looking towards the entrance.* From the spot where this view was taken, on first entering the cave without torches, nothing can be seen for some time except a glimmering light at the entrance; but as the eye is familiarised with the state of darkness, the forms may be seen very distinctly. Since the flood in 1817 the effect, as represented in the plate is very much lessened, the stones forced into the cave nearly touching the rock that is pendent from the roof, thereby diminishing the light so much, that the forms can now scarcely be seen without torches. The stream which runs through the cave for sometime disappeared; but the guide, thinking this circumstance

diminished the interest of his show, with great labour cleared away the stones and sand from the gully above the cave, and the stream now runs in its original bed. The mass of rock that projects from the right side of the cave is composed entirely of stalactites; in some points of view it is like a stall in a cathedral, with gothic ornaments above.



"*Stalactites in Yordas Cave.* The curious forms on the side are excellent specimens of stalactites; one mass that projects beyond the rest is so extremely like the head of a gigantic animal, that it appears to be a work of art. Beyond, in a recess to the right, the sides are covered with these extraordinary petrifications in the greatest variety of forms."

Ric Halliwell



Hutton, J. *A Tour to the Caves in the Environs of Ingleborough and Settle*, 2nd Edition (Richardson & Urquhart, London, 1781).

Shaw, T. R. (1983) Introduction within AD Oldham's reproduction of the original Westall Publication.

Westall, W. *Twelve Views of the Caves in Yorkshire* (John Murray, London, 1818).

◀ **Stalactites in Yordas Cave**

Caving and Training

Do any cavers train specifically to enhance their abilities?

"If someone asked me what a human being ought to devote the maximum of his life to, I would answer: training. Train more than you sleep."

— Masutatsu Oyama (1923-1994)

At the risk of committing some form of blasphemy or a breach of good manners, I should like to ask the above question. Perhaps it would be more prudent to "keep my head down" but this is something which has been central to my life since the age of sixteen. Coming only recently to potholing and caving and from a background of sports where training is practiced daily, sometimes more than one session each day, and accepted as a necessary path to improved performance, I looked for something comparable in caving and found very little evidence. Marbach and Tourte in "Alpine Caving Techniques" devote six pages to the physiological aspects of caving including diet, one page to mental aspects and a scant two pages to the subject of training itself. Alan Warild in "Vertical" only runs to two paragraphs. There are some passing references in the club publication which commemorates the 1994 Berger trip but so far I have found little else. Yes, it would be productive to hang a ladder from the "Y-hang" above the attic stairs and use it regularly and systematically but surely there's more that could be done?

I suspect that few people after initially learning skills like SRT or rigging simply practice them underground and accept that, from that point, regular, or should I say frequent, caving is probably the best form of practice, ideally more than just weekend caving, and allowing for appropriate levels of recovery. But what, if anything, are cavers doing on a regular basis to improve overall fitness, strength, endurance, flexibility, agility, cold water acclimatisation, rock climbing ability, or even using something like apnoea training to improve their performance? I appreciate that caving and potholing are not "competitive" sports in the accepted sense

of the word although there are contests in Eastern Europe, for example, in some aspects of the skills involved and competition between clubs and individual cavers has been and probably always will be a feature of the sport. I simply mean to work towards making a higher level or more efficient caving possible. Many of us run, swim, train with weights or in the gym, or practice yoga but without any specific intention to enhance our ability underground but I'm talking here about deliberate structured work to do just that. Perhaps it's simply not in the spirit of potholing, which is good enough reason not to do it. But why have climbers tended to train, for example on indoor climbing walls, to work on specific strengths and flexibility and not potholers?

One of the most obvious characteristics of caving is that cavers tend to carry on with their activity much later in life than participants of many other sports, sometimes at a very high level. There are of course many reasons why people see certain sports as beyond their capabilities when they are older but could the apparent "longevity" of cavers perhaps be a consequence of not training (or possibly overtraining) bearing in mind the chronic injuries which seem inevitable in some sports? Simply to cave or pothole regularly even at a relatively easy level, if accidents can be avoided or minimised, will promote flexibility, strength, endurance, agility, co-ordination and possibly even make for better mental health.

Does anyone have any comments or ideas on this?

Dave Ramsden

Alpine Caving Techniques, Georges Marbach & Bernard Tourte (Speleo Projects Caving Publications International, First English Edition, 2002) ISBN 3-9088495-10-5

Vertical : A Technical Manual for Cavers, Alan Warild (Speleological Research Council Limited, 1988) ISBN 0-9589253-4-8

Cottage 50th Year Celebration

Amidst all the excitement of BBQs, Birks Fell Cave anniversary weekend planning, and a looming "earlier" than usual Gaping Gill, it has been brought to my attention that we have inadvertently forgotten that we have also this year been "resident" of Ivy Cottage and Riverside for 50 years. I believe that the cottages became ours at the end of May 1968, and therefore as we have passed by the date already, it was suggested at the June Committee Meeting that I organise a 50th Celebration party at the cottages later this year. The ideal solution would be to use the Cottage Working Weekend dates of 27th-28th October with a suitable amount of solid and liquid refreshments to toast the cottages. I have already spoken to Sandra Millman and it is likely that we may put on a meal in the Crown on Saturday 27th October, together with suitable other reminiscence activities.

I will therefore make the Working Weekend just a short cleaning event, so that members are not walking in and around rubble/dust or avoiding wet paint.

More to follow later by emails / facebook.....I will need numbers interested in a meal by early September. Watch this space!!

John Webb (Cottage Warden)

2018 Annual Dinner Accommodation

There is only limited accommodation at the Gamekeeper's Inn at Long Ashes – about 11 rooms and most of these are doubles (ie not twin beds). For those of you who would like to stay at the venue, they will charge us £100 for double rooms – quite pricey – but it does include breakfast (on their website some of these are £150 but tell them you are CPC to get the £100 deal). They will hold the rooms until **MID JULY**, after that they may let them to others. For room details etc, see the website below. There is also a 'Lodge' available on site, which will sleep 5 and will be a cheaper option (if filled). Anyway if you are interested in these accommodation options ring the Gamekeeper's Inn on 01756 752434, and say that it is for the CPC dinner.

They do not want tents on site, but they are happy for folk to stay overnight in campervans and other vehicles in the overflow carpark, and can provide breakfast (around £6) if required. Also there is a Caravan Club site at Long Ashes which you can contact on 01756 753340, although Steve and Barbara P say it books up rapidly.

There is, of course, plenty of Hotel, Pub, B&B, bunkhouse & camping accommodation within a mile or so in Threshfield & Grassington (some folk have already booked in the Foresters). Details are on the Grassington National Park Website given below, or ring them on 01756 751690.

Alan Pedlar

www.gamekeeperinn.co.uk

www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/visit-the-dales/essential-information/tourist-information/grassington-national-park-centre

Subs Due

Hi Folks,

Just a very quick reminder that the 2018/2019 membership fees are now due. The subscriptions now run from July to July. To iterate, the member fees are:-

£45 full membership (including BCA insurance);

£34 non caver or own insurance;

£10 Junior member.

Please pay via the usual channels however electronic bank transfer (BACS) is preferred.

Anyone sending cheques in the post to me, please let me know. I have re-direction from my previous address to my temporary residence and if I expect a CPC 'snail mail' I will know to look out for it. I will be advising of my new address when I'm in my permanent home. Thanks!

Glenn Costin

Meets list 2019/2020

Now I know what painting the Forth the bridge is like!

No sooner does the meets list go out, its soon back to badgering you lot to come up with suggestions, look at your diaries 18 months in advance and come up with a meets list that will appeal to young, old, novice, seasoned cavers and black book warriors alike. I think you will agree that so far all the meets have all been well attended..and most importantly enjoyed. This is all down to you lot who put time to one side and agree to coordinate not only the caving trips but the camping meets, the social meets and the working weekends...But alas, it's not enough. We now have to look at where we want to go in 2019/2020. I've already had a couple of suggestions and volunteers from some quarters including weekends away.

So, have a think where you want to visit and let me know if you are willing to arrange. Several folk have mooted a trip to foreign destinations next year..it would be great if we could pull this off. Also, with the new member base..and many now SRT savvy, a trip through the incredible Titan to Peak would be good and a return visit is long overdue (not a subtle hint implying I want to do it again of course).

Anyhow, get yer thinking caps on and let me know. As usual, we want a good sprinkling of camping meets, social trips and digging meets in addition to the wonderful and varied caving trips....remember, it's the 90th anniversary of the club next year so think of those CPC discoveries we could visit....I shall be coming knocking in the next few months.

Glenn Costin

