



RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



Vol 62 No 1

Spring 2025



One of the larger sections of Rollerball

Giles Barker Award Winner – Chris Hunter

Contents

Your 2024 Committee	2
Editor's Note	2
Club News	3
Remembering Pete	3
Boxing Day Walk 2024	7
RRCPC Photo Competition 2025	9
Trip Reports	16
Speleosisters+	16
The Festive Easegill Extravaganza	18
Link Pot to Serendipity & Easy Street	19
Blasts from the Past	21
Out Sleets Beck Pot Rescue	21
Penyghent Pot and Rescue	22
Vertical Aid Through My Ages!	23
Library Additions: December 2024 – February 2025	25

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2025! This edition starts with a tribute to Peter Llewellyn, former RRCPC President. Also in this Newsletter is a report from the annual Boxing Day Walk, followed by a showcase of the winning photos from this year's Photo Competition. Congratulations to all winners! As usual, this edition also includes articles from recent caving trips and blasts from the past. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter.

Gwen Tawy
Newsletter Editor

Club News

Remembering Pete

Peter Llewellyn 1946-2024

I owe a lot to Pete. He was instrumental in my joining the Red Rose, and without his help I would have struggled to get to the Dales. In 1970 I was sixteen, had just discovered and fallen in love with caving, but had no transport. I'd done Calf Holes and Whitewell Pot with the school caving club, and even been to Mendip – but I wanted more. Attending a talk given by the CRO in nearby Clitheroe, I was introduced to a bespectacled young man in a leather jacket who was lending a hand – “Pete might be able to help you,” they said.

Pete did help me. Because as it turned out, as I got to know him over many years, Pete rarely said no.



And so began regular trips to Bull Pot Farm. Pete would drive five miles in the wrong direction to pick me up from home, before turning back to drive the 45 miles to the Farm. At first, me and my gear were bundled into a Morris Minor, but there followed a succession of transport over the next few years as Pete indulged one of his passions - cars. The Mini Cooper was fast but unreliable. The Saab 99 definitely had the best heater. And the Triumph Vitesse was topless – which came in handy as we roared Mendip-wards at 80mph down the M6 with a 12ft larch tree in the back seat, destined for his parents' garden (he hailed from Devon). Pete always tried to coax the best performance from his steeds, and Saturday mornings were often spent with cylinder heads, valves and carburetors strewn about his living room floor. But we'd be on our way by lunchtime!

Pete on a club climbing holiday to Austria, early 1970s
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

Evidently, Pete and I stood out a little at the Farm – we both had ‘posh’ public school accents! We got a bit of ribbing from the locals, but it was all in good jest. We were also less portly than many club members, and this led to us being at the forefront of various exploits. As a consequence of my slender appearance in a wetsuit, Pete awarded me the soubriquet ‘the black matchstick.’ On my very first trip with the club, I was pushed to the front through a low bedding in Lancaster Hole, with Pete right behind, to pop my head out over a 40ft pitch into Aardvark Country. We had no tackle, so the party turned around and jubilantly headed to the exit, me at the back. I arrived on the bank of the master cave with no companions and no idea where I was in this huge cave. Somewhat fearfully I sat down to wait, switching off my lamp to conserve it. After what seemed an eternity, a light hove into view and Pete arrived to rescue me. In his best plumb voice he asked, slightly reprimandingly, “What are you doing sitting there?”

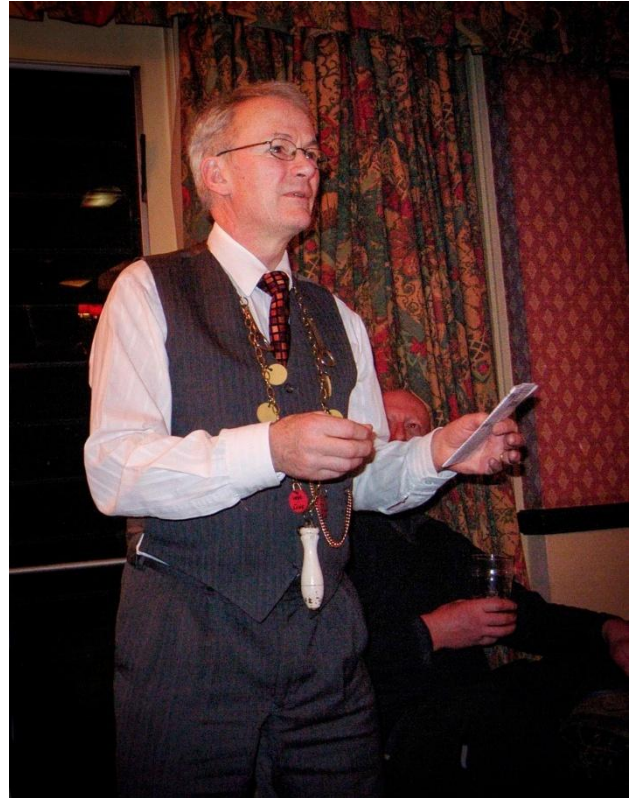
A few years later Pete was instrumental in the exploration of the Maracaibo inlet. Dressed in his shabby and half-patched wetsuit, he gave the name to the long straight rift that has to be thrutched along as he was heard to exclaim, again in his best plumb voice, “my bloody thighs!” He was a very good caver – adept, knowledgeable, he moved safely with ease and speed, never took undue risks, and always helped those less capable than himself. He didn’t suffer fools gladly and knew when a word was needed. But he was never ruffled or panicked, stayed composed in adversity, and his general air of equanimity and good humour endeared him to all.

And at times he was standout funny. The phenomenon of streaking had gripped the nation during the late 1970s and early 80s, and the Red Rose were not going to miss out. Streaking through Dent was the objective, and although we planned to do it after dark, we still felt it was terribly daring. Drop-off and pick-up cars were arranged and on the appointed evening a team of ‘streakers’ doffed off and raced naked through the cobbled streets of the village. Safely at the pick-up vehicle, someone said “Where’s Pete?” We turned to look down the cobbled street to see Pete, stark bollock naked, walking insouciantly through the village wielding a black umbrella and wearing a bowler hat. “What’s the rush?” he scoffed, grinning widely at the hurriedly re-dressed softies.

Pete joined various overseas trips including caving and peak bashing in Austria and an eventful expedition to the Taurus mountains in Turkey.

Beyond the fun and games, Pete put a lot of serious work into the club. For many years through the 70s he was the club secretary, and at meetings he proved an excellent counterpoint to some of the more strident voices on the committee, adroitly steering the club towards consensus decisions over membership and club hut matters.

Pete was trained as a land agent, and when, in the late 1990s early 2000s, the club hit a roadblock with the landowner over its tenancy of Bull Pot Farm, he was very much the point man in negotiations to secure the club's future. Not to put too fine a point on it, without his efforts we might very likely not have a base at Bull Pot Farm today.



Pete as President with his chain of office
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

Fittingly, Pete served as club president from 2005-2011.

During the late 1970s Pete met Gillian and they married in 1983, making home together first at Waddington near Clitheroe, and then moving to Hincaster in 1997, where Pete's interests turned to renovating vintage cars and beekeeping. In 2017 they moved to Scotland and set about renovating a cottage on the shores of Morvern, facing the Isle of Mull. Pete took a great interest in restoring and crewing the 'skiff' rowing boats native to the locality.

I was fortunate to visit them in the summer of 2021, whilst sea kayaking in the area. Covid was still lingering around, something Pete's health at the time would have been very vulnerable too. But we were welcomed to their home with beautiful views across to Mull and the outer isles. We sat in the garden and had tea and biccies, and I cautiously raised the question of my perished hatch cover and did Pete have anything to mend it with? He duly disappeared with it to his shed, and half an hour later returned with a leakproof repair. As I knew him as a man who never said no, it seemed opportune to ask him also to look at the windscreen wiper we'd broken - he fixed that, too! Always willing to help, from the first day I met him.

Courteous and obliging, accomplished in what he did, and thoughtful towards others, Pete was also great company, humorous with a wicked undercurrent of mischief. A fine caver but also a true gentleman, even in only bowler hat and umbrella.

Vale Pete.

Hugh St Lawrence



Boxing Day Walk
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Boxing Day Walk 2024

I could only hope for good weather when trying out the route for the traditional Boxing Day Walk as at this time of year its always potluck. The thick mist we encountered was a first, but it didn't put off participants as 20 members and friends turned up to test their navigational skills.

We set off along Giggleswick Scar and to Kinsey Cave, which was the first cave we explored, several others visited were only like rock shelters. Along the scar and then down into the small hamlet of Stackhouses, most of the houses here are seventeenth century and architecturally very interesting. On to the bank of the River Ribble with plenty of water flowing, an inspection of the fish/eel ladders followed before continuing upstream, where the going got us into lots of sticky and boot clinging mud but with the promise of lunch at the Stainforth Falls (too late in the year for salmon leaping).



Stainforth Falls
Photo Credit: Andy Hall



Graffiti in Dead Man's Cave
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Fortified by turkey sandwiches and mince pies we climbed the hill towards Feizor, then turning left up a limestone scar and to the Celtic Wall, which is a mystery. It is five foot wide and sixty-five foot in length and five foot high (Wainwright) the stones in it are immense, so whoever built it and for what purpose nobody knows.

We wandered in the mist across the fell – no paths! to locate Dead Man's Cave which was investigated by most, Andy Hall showing us the historic graffiti inside the cave. Then back to the cars, still in mist, and to the Helwith Bridge Inn for food and drinks and the social get together which is what these walks are all about.



Members enjoying the Boxing Day walk
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Thanks everyone for coming and hope to see you all again next year.

Sandra Wilkinson

Note: Next morning on the radio, I heard Bay Rescue were called out three times to escort lost dog walkers off the mist covered St. Annes beach.

RRCPC Photo Competition 2025

27th January 2024

This year's photo competition was judged by Bill Nix, who won last year's Giles Barker Award. It was a quieter year compared to the last few, so there were fewer entries than usual and less competition for those of us who entered! Despite the small number of entries, Bill took his time to carefully review and rank each photo. The Giles Barker Award, which is awarded by public vote, went to Chris Hunter this year for his photo titled 'One of the larger sections of Rollerball' (see cover). Congratulations to Chris, and to all other category winners.

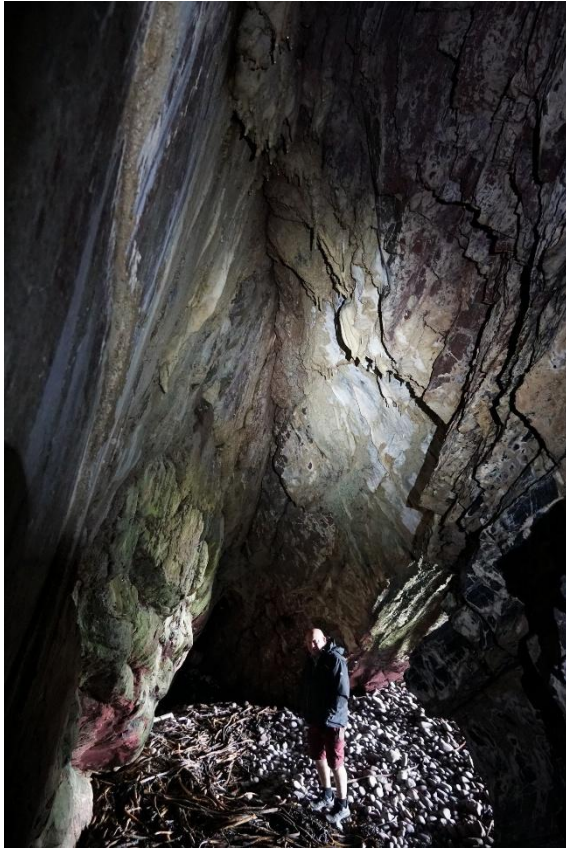
For a better view of the winning photos, please visit our website:
<https://rrcpc.org.uk/2025/01/31/photo-competition-winners-2025/>.

UK Underground



1st

View out of Sea Cave
by Sam Lieberman



2nd
Sea Cave interior
by Sam Lieberman



3rd
Lancaster Hole Entrance
by Darren Quayle

UK Above Ground



1st
One Man and Sulven
by Gwen Tawy



2nd
Fell Road Sunset
by Chris Hunter



3rd
Langcliffe Sunset
by Sam Lieberman

Abroad Underground



1st

Cueva Cayuela
by Chris Hunter



2nd

Cueva del Molino
by Chris Hunter



3rd
Cueva Coventosa
by Chris Hunter

Abroad Above Ground



1st
Colours of Mount Etna
by Gwen Tawy

Pocket Camera

1st – One of the larger sections of Rollerball by Chris Hunter (see cover).



2nd
Dead Man's Cave
by Sam Lieberman



3rd
Bar Pot
by Gwen Tawy

Humorous



1st
Sparks fly as Farm Animals gather for Annual Meeting
by Gwen Tawy



2nd - Left
I love my axe
by Sam Lieberman
3rd - Above
Feeding time at the zoo
by Dinny Davies

Trip Reports

Speleosisters+

23-24th November 2024

Becka Lawson, Sarah Parker, Alice Shackley, Gwen Tawy

As the weekend loomed, our eyes were glued on the forecast. At the start of the week, the predictions were poor and there were murmurs in the organisers' WhatsApp group about potentially cancelling the event. But, as the weekend drew nearer, the forecast improved and we breathed a sigh of relief that everything could go ahead as planned.

As Sarah and I drove to the Farm on Friday evening, our phones pinged every couple minutes. Messages were coming in from people who had arrived around 6pm and found that their cars were unable to make it up the icy lane. Nadia and I seemed to be the only two cars arriving with snow chains, but we were both hours away. As Sarah and I made our way North, we received regular updates from the WhatsApp group on the progress that was being made. As people arrived, they abandoned their cars to join the effort to painstakingly grit the road. Nadia and I happened to arrive about 10 minutes apart around 10pm, by which time Ann Trusson (NPC/ULSA) had made it to the Farm in her Land Rover. After Ann returned, Nadia and I put our snow chains on and slowly made our way along the icy road.

The plan was to dump the gear we had in our cars at the Farm then return down the lane to ferry everyone else up. As I was dumping the food in the Visitors' Kitchen, I heard a scream. Someone had found a slug feasting on a dead mouse. "I think this falls within your responsibilities as a Red Rose Committee member" someone said. So, off I went to find something to move the mouse to a more suitable place; ideally, somewhere where we weren't going to be preparing food. Once I'd dealt with the mouse, I made my way back down the lane to find that most people who needed a lift had jumped in with Nadia or Ann, so I only ended up with one passenger.

Back at the Farm, the atmosphere was merry as we reflected on the evening's events and shared ideas about what trips we might want to do the following day. It didn't end up being a late one, as everyone was so tired from the long night – particularly those who had been gritting for 4 hours!

The wind was fierce overnight, so I didn't sleep very well. At 7:30am, I was gently woken up by Sioned, who herself had been woken by the fire alarm. She had worked out that it was going off because the Farm has lost power. Bleary-eyed, we tried to figure out how to get it to shut up. After a couple tries, I decided it was best to find the instructions for it so that we didn't end up changing any important settings by accident. Even with the instructions in hand, it took us a while to find the magic combination. But finally, silence.

We made plans for the day over breakfast. Given the atrocious weather, nobody was keen on anything too severe and there was certainly no wish to drive to another caving area after the previous night's ordeal. I suggested a simple trip into the Graveyard Series from

Lancaster Hole and out Cow Pot. Another group was planning Cow to County, a third Wretched to Lancaster, and a final trip in and out of County. All trips sounded sensible at the time.

Becka and Alice decided to come with me on my trip, and as we walked over to Lancaster Hole, we remarked at the vast amounts of water on the surface. As I peered down the entrance, I could tell it wasn't going to be the most comfortable descent. Amazingly, I had the forethought to bring a cag with me. I'm not sure how much extra protection this gave me, as the whole ordeal was rather unpleasant.

Once down safely, we made our way towards the Graveyard Series. There is one pitch to negotiate to get into the series. Although I was familiar with this pitch, I was surprised to find water pouring in from all directions at the pitch-head. "I thought it would be dry!" I shouted to the others. After another drenching, we were finally into drier passage. As we explored, I tried my best to remember the route to Skittle Alley. My memory failed me, and after a few tries we decided to return to Bridge Hall. As we entered Fall Pot, we bumped into the Cow group. Perfect timing!

"I wouldn't go out Cow!" shouted Elaine Oliver over the thundering water. After a quick conversation, we decided it was safest to retrace our steps and exit via Lancaster Hole, while Elaine's group pressed onwards to County. Becka volunteered to brave the pitch first and Alice went second, while I hunkered down in my cag. When my turn came, I prussiked as fast as possible up the pitch. It was utterly relentless. By the time I reached the rebelay at the ledge, I thought there would be some relief – not so. It turns out that changing over with practically no slight of the rope isn't fun. I hauled my way sloppily up the concrete pipe (much to Becka's horror), desperate to reach the surface. Once I'd composed myself, Becka confided in me that she was somewhat relieved to have endured such misery on the pitch as she was initially worried we'd been a bit soft to turn down Cow. The prussik out changed her mind!

Back at the Farm, it seemed that our epic was not unique. Interestingly, the only team who had really enjoyed themselves were Sarah and Piper Cusmano (GUPA), who'd traversed from Wretched to Lancs. As we swapped stories, it became clear that Sunday's trip choices were limited, given that everyone had left some rope or tat in the cave they had visited on Saturday in their haste to leave. Sarah and I agreed to derig Cow.

The water levels were manageable by Sunday, but I was very surprised to see scum lining the entire crawl between the narrow tube after the entrance pitch and the head of pitches into Fall Pot. I was very relieved we hadn't attempted to come out this way on Saturday. After an efficient derig, I found myself relieved once again when wriggling out of the drippy tube, as this had been a waterslide with a torrent of water on Saturday. Again, thank goodness we didn't have to battle with this on our way out on Saturday.

Despite the foul weather and spicy caving (and driving!) conditions, the weekend was somehow a success. No call outs or injuries, thanks to good decision-making and teamwork underground.

Gwen Tawy

The Festive Easegill Extravaganza

14th December 2024

Dave Creedy, Lucy Hyde, Aila Taylor

The Festive Easegill Extravaganza organised and rigged by Nat Dalton sounded exciting, yet ambition far exceeded my energy capacity. The day before the great treasure hunt, I re-read the instructions and noticed that SRT kit was required. Many years have passed since I last swung around on a rope. Quickly, I cobbled a rig together using prehistoric kit although my aging brain had little recollection of how to use the stuff.

Eager explorers gathering outside the Farm were issued with laminated County Pot maps and allocated to groups. I was foisted onto two joyous ladies, Lucy and Aila.

A fun trip ensued following route clues, tasty snacks and *vin chaud* with the lovely people that constitute the Red Rose. I didn't complete much of the maze but nevertheless enjoyed the time underground. The climb out of Oxford Circus on the return was a struggle; it is twice the height it used to be. Without the superhuman assistance of Dinny Davies and Todd Rye I would still be there. I am now working on a simple aid. My SRT lash-up was untested and far from perfect but it worked after some coaching. Dinny patiently supervised my efforts on the first pitch and ensured my survival but was not impressed with the apparatus and recommended committal to a museum.

I met the designer of the treasure hunt and his family on the walk back over the Fell, had a pleasant chat and thanked him.

Such events are a great way to learn more about a complex cave system and what a challenge the Trident Series must have been for the surveyors. I would like to undertake further, gently paced, exploration of the area. Thanks to all who organised the event and participated in it.

Dave Creedy

Link Pot to Serendipity & Easy Street

29th December 2024

Dalek, Anthony Day, Paul Fox, Serena Povia, Toby Speight

This was to prove to be another memorable day for some, well, one in particular, if not for the trip itself but the finish that had a sting in its tail!

Waiting for the usual suspects to get themselves ready to leave the Farm, while waiting for Serena left us all in a jovial mood.

Down the entrance at about midday, we found the slot and climb up into the passages that led to The Serendipity series of passages. Mixed going of walking, stooping and crawling led us to Canyon Passage where we had to traverse along some ledges and negotiate the handlines and roped access climb up into Tiger's Inlet. More stooping and crawling led to Cairn Junction where we regrouped at a chamber that had stalactites on the ceiling that looked like teeth and is known as Death Row. Then, for good measure we had a choice of crawls. One being Molten Mars Bar Crawl. When we realised that we were going up the wrong one we backtracked to the chamber and followed a side crawl, going off from the initial crawl. A short flat-out bit, and soon we arrived at the low roofed passage above The Serendipity series of pitches.

Anthony rigged the pitches (and later derigged them). The 1st pitch was a short dry one. The next one was a traverse (using 4 P bolts) to a very exposed Y-hang that proved awkward getting off later on. The deviation, about 15' down was ok, and the pitch descended quite close to the water making it quite splashy as one reached the bottom. A walk and short descent on the last, 3rd drop got one to the edge of a pool. Here we all dekked as there were only several hundreds of metres of lovely walking passage strewn with boulder ruckles along the way (to make it more interesting, still). Eventually the passage lowered and with sections of cobbly crawling alternating with sandy crawling towards the end by the sumpy passage. Toby, Anthony and I were the only ones to get there, presumably the others had grown fed up of the interminable crawling.

3pm and we set off back out. I was growing noticeably more tired now and was glad of the respite from the crawling which gave me some renewed strength when walking. Not far from the pitches was another side passage that enticed some of us to have a look! This was aptly named Cobble Crawl. At a point not far from the main passage we had had enough.

Toby got up the pitches first and left a tape loop for us to stand in if we needed it to aid getting off. It was beneficial to me as I couldn't get off from the Y-hang due to my top jammer being weighted down by my weight on the tape loop. Finally extricating myself I waited for Serena. Apparently, she had no problem passing the Y-hang without the aid of the foot stirrup loop. After a long wait for all of us to regroup at the top then the business of getting out began. We all took turns in manhandling the large tackle bag to the entrance. Some of us struggled more than others though. Since Toby was the most efficient (in moving) than the rest of us he willingly volunteered to take the bag to the front and wait for us! I took his kit to help in any other way.

At the entrance in Hylton Hall it was about 6pm. Now I knew that this pitch was going to prove difficult for me, and I anticipated that I would have a little more difficulty than one might normally have; but I didn't see what was coming! After Toby, Paul and Serena had got out and Toby and Serena had gone back to The Farm, it was my turn to go up. I was quite concerned in pulling in my chest tape quite tight to aid the smooth running of the rope through my chest jammer. This wasn't so. Each time I stood up there would be rope slack, and I'd have to do the prussik step again, holding the rope below, and trapping the rope as best I could with my feet. It was this state of events that caused my distraction at the most crucial moment, when I had to slightly pendulum to my right when the shaft began to narrow! I missed that opportunity to get/stay in the wider bit, but I didn't realise it. I kept on going up, the walls seemed to get ever closer and tighter.

After a number of prussik steps I realised that things were going badly for me. Trying to squeeze out to the right was too tight. Trying to see above me was difficult. I asked Paul, not too far from me at the surface, if the walls were getting further apart. He wasn't sure. I tried to reach my chest jammer to release the cam to reverse prussik down. No good. Next, I thought to release my foot loop so that I could squeeze up using my feet against the rocky walls. No good. Then I tried to get my foot loop back onto my foot. No good. Again, trying to squeeze sideways to my right. No good. Again and again I tried to lasso my foot, but my leg wouldn't bend enough to do it and my arm now began to ache with the effort of trying to move it to reach my top jammer, which I'd also previously released in my effort to climb up without it on the rope. I was Stuffed!

Unable to go up, down or sideways I was helpless in this vertical vice-like grip! I was almost panicking when the realisation hit me! I knew that there was only one course of action left to get me out of this mess. To cut the rope and let me drop down under gravity! I shouted up to Paul if he could cut it and I'd slide down to the wider bits and pause there to consider more options. He'd no knife, but Anthony below, had. Trouble was that I couldn't pull up the rope with my single usable hand! I told Paul that he'd better go back to get a penknife, and maybe a rope to retie onto with a hauling rig and pulley. It was now 7.30pm. Anthony told me so.

So, with me now stuck fast and my left leg going numb with pins and needles, and the right one soon to follow I shouted to Anthony to get under cover in his small bothy tent to keep warm while we endured the wait. It seemed like hours, yet was only 50 mins! I was worried about losing my leg to gangrene (i.e. when the circulation is cut off for so long the tissues die) and that my leg may have to be cut off!! Not only this, but I was worried about my shivering which had just begun and was intermittent at first, but I feared the worst.

Like I said, it was my right leg that now also began to go numb, but I could kick the walls to a slight extent in the belief that I could get some blood in there! As the minutes irresolutely ticked on, I grew more desperate about the long wait. If Paul didn't trip up and break his leg or have his light die on him, then he should be back inside half an hour. Then if he got some cavers together and they got their act together then they should make it back here inside the hour, i.e. 8.30pm.

It was 8.20pm, when I heard their voices. Three had come back to rescue me. Todd Rye, Ian Walker and someone with the initials JC! Jesus Christ I thought, Is this an omen? After some long moments the signal came down that they were going to drop me. I wanted them to hurry

up but of course they had to be sure and methodical. I was lowered down in short jerky movements, that once I'd passed the narrow bits I continued in jerky fashion and hit a rocky buttress in the middle of my backbone. Oh, shit I thought, I may now have a serious problem!

Once on the ground, I was a little wobbly. I could stand! My legs didn't buckle under me. I was told to dekit, leave my harness on and get inside the bothy tent while Anthony got up. When I got hauled up it was a great relief to be breathing fresh air again. It was 9pm and I was told to get going with Anthony as they'd catch up with us. All of us were back before 9.30pm, and as I slowly thawed back to life in the shower, I promised to get them all a pint. The CUCC cheered me on, and I told them how brilliant they all were.

Nuff said!

Dalek

Blasts from the Past

Out Sleets Beck Pot Rescue

11th February 1989

Here's a very short account of my involvement in this rescue. The Annual Dinner Do was on at Long Ashes near Threshfield. Many BPC were in fine form, as it was their duty! I was about to have my main course when the rowdy rabbles musings were abruptly interrupted by the bellowing cry of Watto's "Dalek, where are you?". I froze, gulped down what I had so far, and sheepishly replied, "Over here". "Drop what you're doing and get your kit. You're needed pronto", he continued. "What now? I've just started eating!", I countered.

So, with some resignation I slowly slinked off out to glaring eyes all around me! Now I still had my little mini, and Andy Jackson insisted on going over with me. So, riding shotgun like in a Western movie scene, reminiscent of the Coach Riding Days, I rustled up my trusty little steed and away we went, bouncing along the highways and byways of Littondale and Penyghent Gill to be greeted by The UWFRA team at the entrance to The Pot.

Sandbags were seen there aplenty and much activity in painstakingly trying to make the entrance as watertight as humanly possible. I was despatched with some food or other to get down as quickly as possible then get to the lads shivering somewhere, in a supposedly discreet corner. The three Pegasus lads were indeed, huddled together in an alcove somewhere below The Deluge Pitch, which as everyone knows is quite a draughty place due to the sheer volume of water going down. After re-rigging the pitch to make it more accessible to get back up I obviously ticked them off for their foolhardy actions and found out that they were in good spirits for making their way out. Later, I found that Sharon had come along as well and joined us at or near the entrance. It turned out to be a quick 1.5-hour rescue trip and all went well by 01.00.

Dalek

Penyghent Pot and Rescue

25-26th September 1988

I was just recovering from a Wedding Do in Holywell Green and awoke on Andy and Bev's living room floor at 08.30 in Brighthouse. Drove over to Bernies for 10.00 and was contemplating eating breakfast when Pete Hall (LCCC) arrived with the Lost John's tackle from Saturday's trip. I booked it back in The Dump's (BPC) tackle store and decided there and then to give Pete a memorable trip down Penyghent Pot! I was constantly reminded by Pete Faulkner against this rash decision, based on the weather turning foul later on. I also broke the rule of 2 signatures for signing the tackle out which was to come up on a later Committee meeting about me! My reasoning was that since it took time for the water levels to rise to make life difficult then, Pete and I would be in and out of the pot before this occurred! Weather at my departure was cloudy.

It was 13.20 on our entry and the canal had 3" froth above what I thought was the normal level. I mentioned this to Pete, but we still went on down. By the 3rd pitch there was only a trickle of water over the edge. Rigged both the 3rd and 4th using a 180' rope, being just long enough. We free-climbed all the rest. Myers was from a spike of rock to a rebelay bolt. I did all the rigging. There was no need for a rope at Niagara as an old rope was already present, but we chimneyed down it and got to the sump with no problems. It was 15.40, so it had taken us 2 hours 20 minutes.

Now, we raced back, getting worried about some froth in the roof. At Myers Leap we were shocked to see the water as a spout from the top of the pitch! There was heavy splashing on my head and I lost my spanner from my string. We still managed to free-climb the rest but one was in heavy spray and the last one being a desperate chimney and out from under an over-hanging boulder to a pull up onto a ledge. Put a rope down for Pete from a stal and he used foot stirrups to aid his climb.

Now the next bit was Really Desperate!!! All vision was obscured now by heavy spray and water. It was difficult to see to don The SRT kit! It got even worse as, when I prussiked up to the undercut rebelay bolt, it was submerged, and I had to shield with my back to deflect the full force of water in order to remove it!! The next part or 3rd pitch hang started drier but was still very wet and I was in the middle of a vortex prussiking up in the centre of it all. Sometimes I'd partially free-climbed this pitch and was glad that it was rigged today. We derigged and had a look at the short 10' ladder pitch. It was hanging straight out, at right angles, so after lassoing it we thought better of it and decided to stay here! Left our tackle sack jammed in the rift, just above where we would spend the night.

Standing on a dry ledge, on the far side of the 3rd and shielded from the spray (but not the cold draught) by a wall-like partition we froze our nuts off in our wet wetsuits all night. I tried sitting/sleeping by the chasm close by, but it was too cold and too close to the 60' drop! Falling asleep (micro sleep) many times, only to be woken by the reflex of when legs buckled it jerked you awake! I was also very worried that when I did stop shivering for a time (maybe some minutes) that I would only have 2 hours left to live as I'd read somewhere that your body heat is diverted to your core and about 2 hours later you are pronounced 'Dead'! Talked (or

rather I did) to while away the time about many topics, until the early hours when either Pete got bored and didn't listen any more or when my voice grew hoarse due to my very dry throat. Occasionally switched on my (by now) dim light and checked out a trickle in front of my face. When it just dripped, later on at about 08.00 and the water levels were seen to be lower, yet still high, we made our move.

At 8.20 after Pete had fettled his carbide jet we moved off. Met Mick Numbwick, from Ingleton, between the 1st and 2nd pitches. It took me ages to get my gear on, tie bag off to prussik and go up because I was the last up with a dim light. Once up Mick gave me a Petzl Zoom and we set off (9.15). Met Budgie and 2 others later in the crawl. Dave Galivan was just by the climb out of the crawl and gave us chocs, nuts and raisins, Dextrosol tablets and sweetened coffee. We were out for 9.50, making for a 20-hour 30 mins trip/stay underground! Walked over by the Little Hull Pot track and driven to Brackenbottom Lane by a Police Landy. Rang Sharon, my friend and work colleague to say I'd be late for my 12-hour work shift that day! Showered and got a lot of Stick from PGF and Mick (MSFN). Ate, packed ropes and gear, and away by 1.30. Bradford and home for my works key locker at 3.15. Turned up at work for 3.30 (should've been there for 7am!). My Dad rang up and I was given more stick from Sharon Kelly (Lab Supervisor) and Simon Plimley (department manager) and told to go home. Went to see my Mum and told of the newspaper reporters harassing her, and once I'd got back home after seeing another friend, at 7.30 now, another reporter from T&A came for my interview. Of course, this was also broadcast on the 'Look North' TV spot at 6pm just to rub salt further into my wounds!

Enough said!

Dalek

Vertical Aid Through My Ages!

I started caving in 1968 when ladders were king. But the consequence of failure of a hemp cored wire was a grim reminder that lifelines were essential and that ladder and belay construction method and materials needed to be revisited. The Red Rose tackle master, Jim Newton, organized the replacement of all our suspect equipment.

Ladders were belayed to natural features. Multiple independent belays were sometimes used where the cave design fell short of suitably convincing attachment points. Initially, life lining was conducted by a caver perched at the edge of a pitch feeding the rope around their body - sometimes around their shoulders. Not all belaying positions were secure and, what now seems obvious, the concept of belaying the belayer was belatedly introduced.

The last man down was belayed from the pitch base using a pulley or, for a short pitch, a carabiner. There were attempts at self-lining to reduce the amount of rope to be carried. The

chunky rope didn't lend itself to abseil so a friction device of doubtful benefit using crabs was sometimes used. A prussik loop was the chosen device for self-lifeline ascents.

Because the ladder was the primary vertical aid, the likelihood of a fall was considered low. On big, noisy wet pitches, communication was difficult and it was not always easy to determine on ascents if the lifeline had reached the bottom or when someone had started climbing. The typical shouted commands were 'line down,' 'take in' (slack) and 'up up' to ascend. On surface shafts such as Lancaster Hole, enthusiastic Red Rose hauling parties often dragged members up the entrance pitch so fast that keeping to the rungs was a challenge and resting never an option. I found the clink of ladders a pleasantly satisfying sound, almost as satisfying as sitting at the top of a pitch, neatly coiling a ladder while reflecting on the trip.

Looking back, ladder and ropework seemed quite hazardous; although the teamwork on which all trips depended meant that correct decisions on belay placement and lifeline position were invariably made, albeit sometimes after noisy debate!

Not to be a Luddite, I followed fashion in the 1980s and built an SRT rig with which I enjoyed multiple trips including Nettle Pot and Eldon hole in Derbyshire as well as Alum direct using static Bluewater. Dangling on string had its attractions but never felt as secure or as rapid on ascents as a ladder.

Then, holes and bolts started to appear at the head of pitches. To the purists it was sacrilege. However, the benefit was prevention of ever deepening friction marks on speleothems and rock. In earlier years, cavers were apprenticed to experienced club stalwarts to learn the trade. More recent newcomers often had neither the time nor the inclination to follow the old ways and wanted an accelerated start. Formal training, technical evolution and increasing numbers of cavers meant a greater emphasis on safety.

Nowadays rock bolting is standard, SRT is the default vertical aid and the kit is relatively lightweight, ropes are stronger and pitch 'rigging' is almost an art form in itself, providing more alternatives to descend pitches in greater safety (out of the water, for example). Teamwork is still essential to transport ropes and belays etc., but SRT demands a useful level of competence and self-reliance, such that there are fewer 'passengers' in today's caving groups. No bad thing. Nevertheless, ladders still have a place for short pitches and scaling. For senior cavers, the additional benefit of a ladder is the facility for dynamic assistance from a lifeline during ascent.

Dave Creedy

Library Additions: December 2024 – February 2025

Journals:

British Cave Research Association: Cave & Karst Science - Vol 51 No. 3 (*December 2024*)
Cave Diving Group: Newsletter: No. 234. (*Jan 2025*)
Council for the Northern Caving Community: Northern Caving - Issue 16 (*December 2024*)
Chelsea Speleological Society: Newsletter Vol. 66 Nos. 7-9, 10-12 (*Jul-Dec 2024*)
Descent: Nos. 301-302. (*December 2024 – March 2025*).
RRCPC: Newsheet: Nos. 404-405. (*Dec 2024-Jan 2025*)
Newsletter: Vol. 61 No. 3 (*Winter 2024*)
RRCPC Exploration Group: - U.S.S.R. Pamirs Expedition 1990/91.
- Reports, Correspondence, Surveys etc.
Speleologia: No. 90 Anno XLV (*Dicembre 2024*)
White Rose Pothole Club: Newsletter: Vol 42 Issue 1 (*Jan 2025*)

Other Publications:

Caves of Majorca: Speleo Gonzalez
Descente-Canyon.com: Descriptions of Several (*13*) Canyons in Mallorca.
Covota De Sa Pen A Rotja - Mallorca: (*Pamphlet*) Description and Survey.
Mountains, Caves and Canyons of Mallorca: Draft Manuscript - *Dave Elliot*
Caves and Canyons of Mallorca: Draft Manuscript - *Dave Elliot*.
Adventures Underground, Tales of Cave exploration I the Yorkshire Dales:
David Haigh & John Cordingley (2024)

*Changes to enable easier access to the club library are now in place:
Members wishing access to the library room should contact the librarian direct, who will brief
them on access arrangements and then issue the member with a key. They will then be able
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Sandra Wilkinson - Librarian: m.wilkinson@btinternet.com