



RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

# NEWSLETTER



Vol 62 No 2

Summer 2025

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*Dalek at Snatcher Pot*

*Photo Credit – Harry Cowan*

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## **Editor's Note**

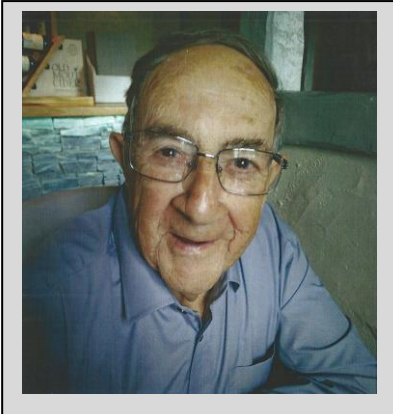
Welcome to your Summer edition of the RRCPC Newsletter. This edition starts with a tribute to Harry Bewes, an early member of RRCPC. Also in this Newsletter are numerous accounts from recent club trips and a couple blasts from the past. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter, particularly Dalek. It's been lovely to read these reports while recovering from a knee operation – They're definitely motivating me to build strength over the summer so that I can be back underground as soon as possible!

**Gwen Tawy**  
**Newsletter Editor**

## Club News

### Harry Bewes 20.06.28-15.12.24

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Harry Bewes.



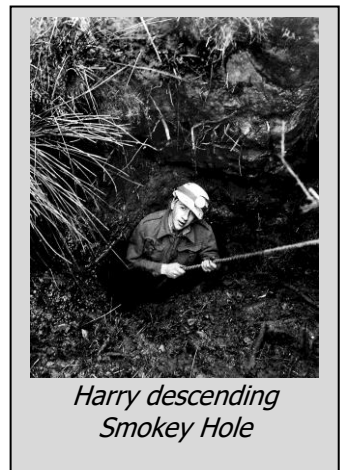
Harry was a very early member of the Red Rose, being active in the 1950's and 60's. He was the brother-in-law of Jim Eyre and also contributed his skills at tool making to help the club as they were changing over from rope ladders to the new Electron aluminium ones. Harry crafted several precision jigs to enable members to quickly make and drill the rungs and fit a solid aluminium plug in each end to fix the steel wire in place, in a later design this substituted by an araldite.

There is evidence in the club records that he was at that time awarded honorary membership for his work on the ladder making but I cannot find out why this was never acknowledged in later years. Sandra and I attended his funeral service and cremation in Lancaster and were able to provide some photographs of his time with the club for display.

*Extract from a letter to members. (Red Rose Newsletter Vol. 30 No.2 - 1993)*

*Dear Friends*

*First let me apologise for not writing this before to thank you for the newsletters etc. I'm afraid I have joined the Gunners for a while. Gunner do this and gunner do that and not getting anything done. Reading them I realised how much things have changed since I was an active member, the number of members is one example.*



*Harry descending Smokey Hole*

*I can remember Ron Bliss, Jim Eyre, Jim Newton, Wilf Taylor, Roland Johnson, Pete Kitchen, Ken Pollit, Bill Leyland and myself were the most we could muster for quite a while. We had others come and go, one from the Barrow area came and went on to become a Buddhist and wrote about the caves out East. Equipment, ours would have had you probably in stitches. A wetsuit, this was a dry suit going through a watery crawl. Harnesses were left for the horses and ladders were wooden rungs on rope with a good support on either side. On*

*using one with supports on one side of the rung only Jim Eyre told us to mind the first step, it was a big one. That was from about twenty foot down. We used to catch the bus from Ingleton or Kirkby Lonsdale and then walk with the 50-foot coils on our backs. We thought nothing of it at the time, I don't think much of it now either!*

*We became associated with Bullpot Farm In a rather funny way. Going up to do some hole in Easegill we travelled to Kirkby Lonsdale on the Saturday afternoon and walked up (after a few drinks) to Gale Garth which at that time was used only as a fodder store for the sheep. We decided to kip down for the night in the warm hay. We were woken Sunday morning by a giant with a pitchfork, Walter Pearson from Bullpot. Someone must have been a very persuasive talker as he became a good friend of the club. Eventually he allowed us to use the back room at Bullpot and picking us up in the Land Rover from Kirkby Lonsdale.*

*Things improved as we slowly changed over to electron ladders, very light compared to rope and taking less space. As for lights, very technical, a 4.5V battery with two screw terminals wrapped in insulation tape and wired to the front piece of a cycle lamp fastened to your helmet by one and a half inch of elastic! The deluxe versions had a switch. Carbide lamps along with cold water were only used to help stop bodies sticking in tight passages (the threat usually being enough). Ron Bliss had a big impact on the photography side although it took time, five minutes for the photo and half an hour for the smoke to clear. I still have quite a few of Ron's B/W photos, mostly about forty years old but still good.*

*I probably will not get the chance to meet any of you as I had three heart attacks in four days last year shortly after being made redundant for the third time. Since I was greedy, not being satisfied with one attack, they've advised me not to drive, so I rely on my family when it comes to trips out, or the bus. May I take this opportunity to give my regards to all members and I hope the club carries on going from strength to strength.*

*Yours, Harry Bewes*

**Mel Wilkinson**

## ***Trip Reports***

### ***Grey Wife***

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**Bob Bialek, Harry Cowan, Nat Dalton, Sarah Parker**

A few of us went down Grey Wife Hole whilst another team (Lara Bartleet, Rachel Turnbull and Hannah Walker) attempted to fit down the Newby Moss pot. Team Grey Wife consisted of Sarah, Dalek, Harry and myself. Despite having an entrance location and map on a phone, we spent an hour looking for the entrance with it being particularly well camouflaged as the grass had grown over the manhole cover.

Harry (who has a particularly large chest) turned around in Cable Passage, a bit before the first pitch as he was struggling to get his chest through a tighter bit of meandering rift. Dalek, Sarah and I continued down past the first pitch, across Paradox Pond (where getting wet could not be avoided!) and along some varied caving to Jim's traverse. After a very brief look and an even briefer discussion we decided not to traverse the loose and then blank looking traverse.

We headed out and met Lara and Rachel, who had been trying to slot themselves into Newby Moss for over an hour. I plodded out by myself (feeling a bit sorry for myself as my chest was playing up; sad lungs are sad), whilst Dalek and Sarah came up the rear. At the pitch head getting off, Sarah provided a loop of cord so that Dalek could get that extra leg support to push off/launch himself off the rope.

After Dalek had got off the pitch and dekitted, he found himself trying to force himself through the lowest narrow bit, once round that bend where Harry had presumably turned back to go out! After much suffering and panting he realised that the way on out was about 3 feet higher up! By then, the girls had all got up and were on my tail towards the entrance!

Sarah offered to help place Dalek's foot onto a buttress by the narrow bit in the entrance climb so that he could launch himself upwards to get out. He succeeded in doing it by himself in the end.

Got out to find that Harry hadn't been sat idly in the sun, and he'd been furtling around where the stream sinks.

***Nat Dalton***

## ***Forest of Bowland***

**22<sup>nd</sup> February 2025**

**Rowan Cleet, Nat Dalton, Charlotte Hebditch, Philip Withnall**

Team keen (to explore a trio of caves on the Forest of Bowland) consisted of me, Phil, Rowan and Charlotte. As Phil wrote up some excellent descriptions, presumably soon to be on the CNCC website I won't go into extensive detail here.

We began with Whitewell Pot on Phil's logic that we should start with the best and end with the worst. The entrance is very well engineered, with an initial pitch met immediately after the entrance tube. The rest of the cave was quite interesting, with several stop and think moments on the way in. Char turned around after I abandoned her in the flat-out crawl (sorry) that felt intimidating on the way in but was far more pleasant on the way out. After the flat-out crawl is a bit more passage (some quite large!) before the cave eventually closes down.

Tl:dr some excellent rigging off naturals and an impressively engineered entrance. A lot of interest packed into a short trip; 7/10.

Whitewell Cave is a lovely entrance in a small deciduous copse of trees. Unfortunately, the rest of the cave doesn't live up to its entrance and consists largely of loose boulders with plastic sacks seemingly holding it all together. Some more stop and think moments included the initial squeeze (surrounded by mobile cobbles) and short crawl/squeeze to an improbable ~2 m drop.

Rowan summed this cave up well for me "I don't mind tight, I don't mind loose, but at the same time is a bit much". On the way out a climb tried to eject me by collapsing. All in all, a slightly draining cave; 5/10.

Hell Hole was another pretty entrance betrayed by the character of the cave beyond. This cave consists of four pitches of varying pleasantness. The first is a lovely drop into a shady shakehole, the second down a disintegrating oil drum that you could see daylight around the outside along with the viewing windows allowing you to see the loose fill that the disintegrating mm thick drum was holding back. The third pitch has a tight pitch head that is deceptively easy on the way down. Whilst the fourth pitch drops to a tight squeeze and drop beyond (which we did not do).

Rowan and Charlotte were sensible and did not come beyond the bottom of the second pitch. On the way out, upwards progress on the third pitch required me to use Phil as a human step ladder as I got myself thoroughly wedged. Phil was worryingly quiet (as ever...) on the same pitch but effortlessly styled out getting between the rope and the wall. This trip didn't really offer any reward for its challenge; 5/10.

Overall, a good day out with pleasant company but I'm not in a rush to return! Whitewell Pot was interesting, but I suspect it might be some time before I revisit the others!

***Nat Dalton***

## ***Magnetometer Pot***

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Lara Bartleet, Bob Bialek, Rowan Cleet, Nat Dalton, Sioned Haughton, Lucy Hyde, Philip Withnall**

A Magnificent trip on this lovely clear day. The kind farmer of Neals Ing let us change in his yard for a small fee of £1 each. It was a nice walk alongside the valley to the entrance hole drum. There were 2 Rawl Bolt Hangers in place for our rope. Steps were *in situ*, protruding from the drums that were useful on our return. Opening out into the cave and chamber. A narrow climb down boulders and into a chamber and small passages. A squeeze into a tiny chamber and an awkward climb down a muddy rope provided more sport. A traverse over a drop got us into the start of The Wet Crawl at a double bend. There were flat out bits and in elbow deep water, which proved rather refreshing for me as I was over-heating in my furry suit. The bedding crawls finally finished in a low chamber and then it was the horrible hands and knees crawl for some minutes over cobbles and shingle. Horrible 'cos the cobbles dug right through my knee pads, and I had to slowly pick my way over them!

Finally, we got to The River Styx and climb out of this low series. Some well decorated roof pendants with thigh/chest deep wading was quite an enjoyable contrast to the previous purgatory. Everyone was now in better spirits for the climbs, traverses and walking passages to Caton Hall pitch. The girls got down first on the *in situ* muddy rope. The hang was from a slanting traverse line to near the underside of a huge block. A narrow descent between walls led to a reelay that opened out into the chamber proper.

All of us had a discussion on whether to progress further or not into the lower reaches. Only the girls decided to take a cursory look but were soon back and following on the heels of me and Rowan. I was glad that I carried in my SRT bag as it would be a toil with all the paraphernalia sticking out from me in the awkward passages to come. Even Rowan thought so, and even offered to take my bag for me to the entrance pitch. Nat and Phil waited for all of us by the River. As we progressed, I dreaded the cobbly crawl but took my time while the girls were singing songs to ward away the passing of time. I was glad to glide again over the mainly smooth bedrock in the water filled beddings that offered relief and further cooling for my tortured body! Phil had got up the hand lined climb and now it was my turn. It was narrow slippery and quite awkward. The top part necessitating a move that required me to assume a horizontal position with tentative placings for my knees and feet to pull through a keyhole opening to gain the solid floor. The interesting climbs up to the entrance pitch proved less tiring but still required some thought in the execution.

Phil, now wanted to remove some debris that had fallen in, so fashioned some loops to a long beam to remove it after the last one had cleared the entrance hole. Lucy took charge as she decided to haul it up to the drum lined entrance while she climbed out (using the footholds) and the lads finally pulled it up. Sioned also took out a flat metal disc, presumably being that of the entrance lid, from many years ago. A great trip, as far as we got to, and well recommended for the sport.

***Dalek***

## ***Magnetometer Pot***

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Lara Bartleet, Bob Bialek, Rowan Cleet, Nat Dalton, Sioned Haughton, Lucy Hyde, Philip Withnall**

A week of good weather meant no worries about water level in Magnetometer Pot for this club trip, though that didn't stop at least three rounds of discussion over whether to wear furies or wetsuits. In the end there was roughly a 50/50 split, with everyone ultimately being happy about their choice of clothing.

Navigation was pretty straightforward, apart from one hiccup early on where Phil, Nat and Dalek crawled straight past the C5 descent rope to the traverse across Well Pitch and ended up in a dusty t-shape crawl which brought us out part-way down the pitch. Oops.

Once reunited, the group crawled, stooped and crab walked along the Wet Crawl, the Dry Crawl, and then the Styx. Dalek grumbled somewhat about his knee, then his other knee, then his hip — but this didn't stop him moving at some pace.

We all enjoyed the interesting milled holes in Easy Street and Holes Junction, and soon enough we arrived at the top of the pitch to Caton Hall, where there was a chonky rope *in situ*.

At the bottom of the pitch, Nat tried in vain to get the rest of us to eat his soggy jelly babies, while Lucy, Lara and Sioned pondered whether to carry on exploring beneath Caton Hall. The rest of us left them to go ahead and do that, and headed out.

Nat and I got to Holes Junction and waited for Rowan and Dalek to catch up. After quite a long time, just when we were starting to think about getting worried, they turned up — along with Lucy, Lara and Sioned, who had thought better of mincing themselves on the sharp passage beneath Caton Hall. Rowan's foot loop had snapped on the way up from Caton Hall, giving him a fright and meaning he did the rest of the pitch as a series of pull-ups.

Reunited, we all headed out, with navigation on the way out being more straightforward than the way in. We spent a while hauling out some rubbish from the chamber below the entrance pitch, then headed back to the cars in the afternoon spring light.

***Lara Bartleet***

## ***Out Sleets Beck Pot***

**13<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Bob Bialek, Rowan Cleet, Nat Dalton, Charlotte Hebditch, Sarah Parker**

Well, since this was my all-time favourite short caving trip, it just had to come round and be done again with a new set of people in another caving club! The weather today was much cooler than yesterday's, blisteringly hot and sunny. It was cool due to the wind. Thanks must also go to Rowan and Charlotte for going to The Farm to pick me and my caving stuff up, as I would surely have had to cycle there and back again!!

A long walk on a bridle track past 2 gates and a climb over a stream gate followed by a 55m descent to the entrance hole. A short slither down and climb led to stooping and a further climb down to a crawl. A sharp left-hand bend and narrow rift climbs (strenuous on the return journey) to the 1st pitch. This was 12 foot and only Nat and Rowan free-climbed it on the way back.

The rift, High Street, continued to the 2nd Cascade pitch. Nat rigged it from the right wall and round the very exposed corner using 6 P-hangers. A deviation was required and dropped down a lovely wide shaft. Here I would have a little trouble on my return as I wasn't quite familiar with my 'Pantin' rig. Immediately out of this through a pool was a low passage that bent right and required a slither down to the streamway in a low bedding, Low Street. Soon, it opened up again to reach the 3rd Deluge pitch, now quite tame due to the draught conditions that we were having. Still, Sarah used the P hangers that took you round the very exposed drop to a free hang that passed a single rebelay. I have to say that due to feelings deep down inside I asked everyone to hurry up and move on down the passage, as I had noticed a distinct bowel movement coming on! With this weight off my mind, I now continued down the easy walking passage of Easy Street to greet everyone near the canal.

This had deep water and a flounder for me in my furry/oversuit! Everyone else had wetsuits/oversuits on. Round a corner was the dreaded awkward squeeze and duck. Not so bad today as the water levels were low and everyone managed to get through by lifting their legs up and going horizontal fairly quickly. I was first coming back and let my legs drop, doing it more or less vertically.

From here on the cave just got better and better! Lots of walking with climbing and scrambling for about 1000 feet got one to Bridge Chamber where a climb over or under got to the start of Shatter Passage. Here, the character of the pot changed to cracked and friable rock with muddy walls that required traverses (some quite narrow) and climbs up and down. At a climb up over a big block on a corner, the others were found dithering on how to go on! I was at the back and told Nat (at the front), who was trying his best to squeeze up a crack, that the way on was indeed on our right in the water and into lots of bedding planes. This was called See-saw Passage as we had to constantly go from crawling to walking in short stretches to reach the end to where the bedding closes down. It was 2pm. It would now take us another 3 hours to get out.

An uneventful journey out except for the very narrow climbs from the 1st pitch. Nat thought that there must be another way out, but I reassured him that this was it! The thrutchy climbs requiring hand jams and ankle trapping moves took it out of me. My wrists, hands and fingers felt numb and useless as time went on! Not to mention my sore knees (mainly the crawly entrance bits), neck and shoulders (on every trip depending on how much climbing is involved). Still, it rates as a superb and excellent caving trip, as everyone agreed.

**Dalek**

## ***Bull Pot of the Witches***

**26<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Bob Bialek, Harry Cowan**

Since Snatcher Pot was a no-go due to it being full of dead sheep carcasses, we decided to drive back to do Bullpot Farm to save the day.

It was about 4pm when we got back and had a snack and a hot drink. Harry had been down it several times just recently while I hadn't been down it for decades! The weather was bone dry over the last month and just about anything was possible in the streamways.

Harry had brought his own ropes, so this saved more time in choosing the rigging gear. The 2 pitches were quickly despatched and off we went downstream to the sump. Going through several low bits to reach right into the sump pool following the line. Going back, we squeezed into muddy passages to drop down into other side passages, canals and ducks. Much crawling for me over banks of shingle, stones and cobbles led to dry bouldery climbs and passages. Avens and unusual pyramidal sculpted silted formations were seen in several places.

After much digressing in many side passages and making circuit loops to the upstream sump, we decided to call it a day. Or did we!? It was 8:40pm, and we were at The Pitches when Harry suggested that we could do a quick round trip doing the loop of the Gour Chambers! Taking our SRT kit we prussiked up a very slippery and exposed 60ft handline to gain an awkward slanting squeeze to reach The Gour Chambers.

Now I didn't have to worry about getting to here by the very slippery and awkward squeeze up that I'd failed to do 2 weeks ago. Poking my head into another calcited squeeze to see a wall of flowstone by standing on Harry's shoulder. Going back down now was OK, but there were two awkward climbs to go back up, and the second one was very slippery indeed and tight at the top! Harry had to pull me up!

Now both of us were tired going up the long climbs to reach the open pot. Harry made sure that I got up the entrance climbs, then he rushed back down to derig the pitches. Exhausted, battered and bruised, I made it back to The Farm just ahead of our call out time of 10pm with 2 minutes to spare. The reception wasn't good. I was told to go back if Harry didn't show up in the next hour. He did. Mark Shinwell and Martin Greene had just set off to the hole when Harry arrived at 10:52! We were given the remaining soup, tiny pizza buns and baps with

fruit. Harry stayed a while, but he had to go back home to go back to work, so it was a long day out for him.

Well, what more could I ask of a day like this? It was an all-encompassing and varied trip with everything thrown in. Pitches, walking, crawling, climbing, squeezes, and wading in water.

***Dalek***

## ***Notts II; Alternative to Aquamole Pot***

**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025**

**Bob Bialek, Rowan Cleet, Charlotte Hebditch**

As no one was interested in Aquamole, I was glad to do Notts 2.

Rowan Cleet and Charlotte Hebditch offered to take me there on this fine and very dry day. The long entrance drop and climb were as I remembered them. Scaffolding, breeze blocks and 10 short aluminium ladders reached the floor and rift passage descended steeply over more scaffolding. This opened out over a roped climb or a descent in the rift passage to a chamber. Stooping and climbing over jammed rocks took us to The Main Drain. A tall and roomy rift passage wound its way towards a large chamber and final sump, now bone dry after weeks of drought.

Rowan had stayed back and climbed a rope ladder to check out a passage. Charlotte and I ventured into the wide bedding and stony crawl to see how far we could go to reach the sump. With it getting lower my knees were taking more strain, so I decided to go back. All of us then made a long brisk walk upstream and eventually after passing several dangling ropes we reached a much wider section. The water was deeper in places but wasn't any bother, as we were moving quickly. I remembered that a large inlet on our left was coming up called Curry Inlet. Here, some 15 years ago Bill Sherrington and Lionel Rice had accompanied me on several digging trips. Passing many fine large stals and draperies we reached a muddy passage. I was surprised to see that it had gone further, up a very slippery climb and into a chamber.

Returning, we continued upstream for a while longer until we reached the canal. I knew that it would only get to neck deep in places but could traverse part of it to avoid the worst of it. Rowan seemed surprised that I found a climb out on the left to reach a lot more passage. I knew that there was a hole that once I could have jumped across, but now I had to rely on a fixed line to go down and up. From the description I think it was Prospector Pot.

Just around a corner was a crawl and passage to scaffolding that held back much 'hanging death'! Back over the hole and immediately right, was a very low crawl that Rowan just had to have a look in. I think this one was 'Passchendaele' from the description. Rowan was soon back.

Going along the passage now, either traversing or walking gained a junction. Right, went on at stooping height until it got low and Rowan did his bit to find the end. We couldn't hear him at all for quite a while and on his return he said that it got very low and wet and had to slide onto his back! This is where he got his 'chill' from and later said that he wanted to go on out.

Back at the junction, now taking the left turn (which was straight ahead now) we soon reached a balcony, over-looking the canal! There was a wide step across that could be done to a ledge and a slither down into the water, but I had other ideas.

Sliding sideways on my bum to a section that was lower down, that seemed possible to step across the canal, I reached a narrow ledge. A tentative finger hold, bold step and up to a sliding crawl. I had now bypassed the whole of the canal section! Voices were heard and two very keen BPC cavers were met. After much banter and exchange of news, we were on our way out.

A bold step across using arm/hand strength to steady oneself was no good for me. Climbing up the narrow rift to reach the top of the roped climb, I joined the other two. Now it was a case of follow your nose and look sideways to see where you should be climbing up next, when I missed a turn! Climbing up a hidden rift I realised that Rowan was somewhere else and sheepishly turned back to see what I had missed! The ladders and scaffolding seemed to go on for a very long time, by turns of direction at right angles each time one stepped off a ladder. Eventually a small trap door was reached to the exit.

This was to me, what saved the day. A quick and relatively easy trip that didn't require any tackle. About 3.5 hours.

### **Dalek**



Productive Working Weekend  
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

## ***Blasts from the Past***

### ***Ireby Fell Cavern: YSS Bus Meet***

#### **May 1977**

Here is my short account from my Caving Diary. This was my first ever trip after my Whernside Basic Potholing week-long course. It gave me a bad taste of what caving could be like in the hands of inexperienced leaders!!!

My dad gave me a lift to The Headrow in Leeds to meet the 52-seater coach by The Tam O' Shanter Pub at 09.00. Cost was £2 + 20p for my lamp/cap fee. I had my own wetsuit and other bits. Nearly a full Coach left Leeds to go to Masongill.

About half of us were walkers and the other half were 28 cavers. We split up into 3 groups. A tackling team, middle group and a detackling team. I was in the last group. My 2 biggest memories of the trip were:-

I banged my face and bled quite badly when returning from the sump. I'd turned my head round and not seen the rock or stal that was there.

Waiting by the bottom of the third pitch of Bell pitch I witnessed a right fiasco of sorts! A group of 3 girls with the boys/men were dressed in woollies, and I'm sure, in jeans!! The boyfriend of the one going up was in full wetsuit gear and she had to cuddle up to him to try to get warm on this very wet pitch! When it was her turn to go up, she was some 20ft up when her foot slipped through a rung and she fell over backwards. Hanging upside down, like a ragdoll, due to the slack in the rope not being held taught, she was there, screaming hysterically!!! The girls at the bottom were now also going hysterical in fear for the distraught girl! The lifeliner resumed his grip and got her up, but not without severe rebuke from his fellows at the top of the pitch. From now on there would be a team of 4 that would pull the rest of us out, like hauling sacks of potatoes to the top. It was no different for me, as were the others, as I was now, pulled up so fast and with vigour that my feet barely touched the rungs!! I think Garth Barstow was on this trip, but I don't remember any other names.

#### ***Dalek, 48 Years Later!***

## **Vercors: Grotte de Bury**

### **1983 & 1989**

Two Caving Trips, or rather 4, come to mind on this lesser known but extremely varied and long trip in The Vercors, only second to The Gouffre Berger, in my opinion. It's about 350m deep and 4 km long.

The 1983 one was a fiasco of sorts. Many began the trip, but we were let down at p6 due to lack of tackle. The BPC had organised the holiday and 8 of us ventured down. Namely, Dave & Thirza Hyde, John Parrington, Dave Getling, Russell Cox, Brian Rhodes, Adrian Laycock (Gimmer) and myself, Bob Bialek (Dalek). Adrian also felt unwell. So, on the following day, 5<sup>th</sup> August, we, that is Dave Hyde, John Parrington and me; along with two interested guys, Paul and Ian, succeeded in bottoming it in 15 hours.

There was cause for concern as the two 'strangers' had come in their furry/oversuits and were suffering hypothermia, especially Ian. So, the tackle was left behind at the 4<sup>th</sup> 'Cyclops' pitch and would be derigged on the following day with Dave, Thirza, Russell, John and myself in a 2-hour trip. Now, as the sheer magnitude of the trip had taken hold of me, I was determined to come back and commit to a trip in one go with two pals.

1989 saw us, the BPC, doing a successful 'Dent de Crolls' Trou de Glaz to Guiers Mort trip. The stage was set and on the 15<sup>th</sup> August, three of us bottomed it in 12 hours. Mike Cooper and Sharon Kelly were my two buddies for this superb end to our expedition holiday.

From our camp site at Les Jarrands we had an early start at 6:45am. Sharon drove Mike and I up The Col de Romeyere and onto the back dirt road to gain the entrance at about 10am. Sharon had forgotten her gloves, so there was a delay while she went back for them.

A short section of shattered fossil passage led quickly to a narrow meandering streamway. Stal was blocking the way which necessitated climbing over it and climbing down p8, in a narrow rift. 200m further on was The Confluent pitch. A short pitch down a vertical stal flowstone leading to a pool. A sump was reached, and the way on was to climb 7m to a 10m flat out crawl which draughts strongly. This led to the 'Etroiture des Cyclopes', 6m of a descending narrow rift which is a foot wide at one point. A larger passage continues now with fewer blockages to deep water. A short free climbable pitch of 3m led us to 'Puits de Escarpolette', the one where we turned back 6 years previously due to a shortage of tackle.

The 60-footer descends down a wall of a large shaft. The next slippery climb, the 'Toboggan' led to The Piton pitch. Soon followed by the 'Puits de Tenebres', a free hang that dropped into a large boulder chamber. Mike rigged this from 2 traverse bolts on the right wall to a Y-hang to the bottom, with 10' to spare. It was 2:30pm and we eat and drank. Between us we now had 2 ladders and a BDH of food and gear. Shortly after the chamber, before the 'Laminoire' side passage, we arrived at a squeeze at stream level where we had to climb up further back on a very airy traverse. This was followed by 2 stal squeezes and an easy passage down to a flowstone take off for a 30' pitch, to reach a ledge 20' further down. Put a bolt in on right we got down a handline made from 2 cord lengths. The streamway was followed by climbs mainly

in the large chambers of The Grand Gallery. Pools and traverses over some deep pools and walking passage to the three 30' pitches. Only rigged one here to a bolt on the left using Sharon's tape sling. An exposed and airy traverse on the left (possibly a pitch) and a climb down on ledges underneath led to more crawling.

There were now more pools and steep climbs up and down to warrant even more up and down climbs. A low section in water was the way on as the traverse above was far too exposed. We bottomed it at 4:15pm.

Imprinting our names on the muddy walls 'BPC 83 & BPC 89', Sharon also drew a Dalek figure. A snack, then it was about 6pm when we arrived back at the Big Pitch. It was an hour later when we'd detackled to here. Mike did the honourable thing and carried Sharon's gear out. I still had 4 ropes to take out. At Cyclopes at 8:10pm. Mike got up first, with me stationed halfway along, for the pull and push up (using my shoulders) once I'd flattened out the bag and left it tied onto a tackle bag loop. All this to get past the squeeze en-route up this pitch. Mike then disappeared with 2 bags, and I free climbed the last 2 pitches.

Somehow, I'd gotten ahead of Sharon, who seemed to always be lifting her gear up onto ledges. Trying to free climb the next flowstone pitch (to the hole through it), I found that the tackle bag tried to pull me back down, as the rope grew taught. They kept behind me on the way to the first pitch, through the duck and climbs up. The last bolt out at 9:26pm and we still had several more climbs up and down to do. The entrance pool had disappeared! The right passage led to our exit. Now more dry climbs up and over rocks, a traverse on a ledge to make the exit up a climb by 9:51pm! The beer in the car went down particularly well once I'd managed to open the bottles using Molegrips! We got back for 10:30pm.

Nuff said.

### ***Dalek***



New to caving event 2025  
Photo Credit: Alice Shackley