



RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

# NEWSLETTER



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*Giles Barker Award Winner – Oliver Devenport*

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## **Your 2026 Committee**

**President:** Sam Lieberman  
[president@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:president@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Chairman:** Steve Gray  
[chair@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:chair@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Secretary:** Gwen Tawy  
[secretary@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Membership Sec:** Rachael Pajak  
[membership@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:membership@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Treasurer:** Dinny Davies  
[treasurer@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@rrcpc.org.uk)

**News-Sheet Editor:** Ray Duffy  
[news@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:news@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Newsletter Editor:** Gwen Tawy  
[newsletter@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@rrcpc.org.uk)

**HQ Warden:** Christopher Holt  
[hutwarden@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:hutwarden@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Booking Secretary:** Alice Shackley  
[bookings@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:bookings@rrcpc.org.uk)

**HQ Engineer:** Philip Withnall  
[engineer@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:engineer@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Librarian:** Sandra Wilkinson  
[librarian@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:librarian@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Web Site Administrator:**  
Dinny Davies  
[website@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:website@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Conservation Officer:**  
Olly Devenport  
[conservation@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:conservation@rrcpc.org.uk)

**C.N.C.C. representative and  
Ease Gill Project Officer:**  
Sam Lieberman  
[cnc@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:cnc@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Tackle Master:**  
Toby Speight  
[tackle@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:tackle@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Meets & Permits Co-Ordinator:**  
Chris Curry

[meets@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:meets@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Training Officer:** David Brown  
[training@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:training@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Journal Editor:** Mike Appleton  
[journal@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:journal@rrcpc.org.uk)

**Social Secretary:** Lucy Hyde  
[social@rrcpc.org.uk](mailto:social@rrcpc.org.uk)

## **Editor's Note**

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2026! This edition includes several recent trip reports, including one from faraway Tasmania. There's also an account from Meghalaya's 2026 expedition to get us excited about summer expeditions. Also in this edition are updates from Club digs, and some entertaining blasts from the past from Dalek.

As this is the first Newsletter of the year, this edition also showcases the winning photos from this year's Photo Competition. You will see that this year's featured a new category titled 'Biospeleology', so please keep this in mind for future competitions. Congratulations to all winners of this year's competition!

Apologies for the long wait since our last publication; I appreciate some of you were expecting a Newsletter in February, but I am currently so busy with work (and the secretary role) that I can only commit time to our newsletters on my annual leave. The next one will hopefully come out in August, but I am happy to accept material for it any time.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter, and to Rob Watson for volunteering to co-edit this edition.

**Gwen Tawy & Rob Watson**  
**Newsletter Editors**

## **Club News**

### **Michael Bateson 10.08.33 – 25.12.25**

It with sadness that we report the death of Michael Bateson, a former Honorary Secretary of the club in the 1960's who passed away on Christmas Day after a short illness, at the age of 92.

On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January, Mel and I attended Michael's funeral in Lancaster. We don't think many current members will have known Michael, who was one of the early explorers of Lancaster Hole and Ease Gill, together with other early members like Jim Eyre, Tom Sykes, Ron Bliss, Bill Leyland and Wilf Taylor.

In the mid-sixties he and Tom Sykes together, negotiated the first agreement with the late Col. Bowring for the Red Rose to occupy Bullpot Farm at what we think was a rent of £1 per week. He was also involved with the survey of the known system at that time, and his son Anthony tells us he still has what he called the Submarine Compass, a large torch with a compass attached on its head which was what was used to survey the passages. We told him that the original measuring chain used in the survey is now mounted in a display box in the rear lounge of the farm. We talked about old times with Anthony who said he will – when he finally sorts things out, let us have some reminders he has of the club's history.

Below is an article written by Michael for our Newsletter.

#### ***Sandra Wilkinson***

*From: Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club - Newsletter Vol. 2 No. 2 - Summer 1964*

#### **MAGETOMETER POT: (11<sup>th</sup> June 1964)**

With a promise of a fine day the Red Rose made its way to Neals Ing Farm on Fountains Fell to tackle Magnetometer Pot. After a most cordial reception and after the usual preliminaries of eating and getting changed Ron set off with the first party whilst the rest of us waited for Jim Newton who was playing football (Jims side lost).

After a short walk up Fornah Gill we arrived at the conning tower entrance of Magnetometer to find that the first party had descended so we quickly set off with Les in the lead. According to P U, the pitch is 25' but our 36' ladder only just reached the bottom of this pitch. The only difficulty encountered was where the drum lined shaft breaks into natural shaft, as the pitch narrows at this point. Ray and I were the last two to enter the pot, but we soon caught up with the rest of the party. The way down presented a choice between climbing down through a hole in the floor or taking a crawl. Some confusion followed after taking the crawl as to whether the way was up or down but after finding that up led out, we went down. This leads to the Well pitch which as the name suggests leads to a pool at the bottom. It was easily climbed over and then the crawl began. As we had a rather large party which always seemed to stop in a pool of water the requests for those ahead to get a move on were varied with the degree of discomfort that one was in. We then came to a T junction and the party led by Jim

turned left and eventually came to a halt. Lol, Jim Newton and I then attacked the right which proved to be the right way. The wet crawls followed with water 6"-1' deep. Eventually the roof rose sufficiently for us to walk but then the water deepens and eventually reaches the roof. We made our way forward by dodging some large rock pendants hanging from the roof to a dry crawl which is a hands and knees affair with a gravelly bottom. Everyone then visited the Styx rising and the long sandy slope with a small pool at the bottom is very impressive considering that the water comes up the passage with sufficient force to move the sand and pebbles. Some nice formations are seen in the next passage, and the floor was deeply eroded with various sized bore holes. The pitch to Caton Hall is reached by traversing because of the narrowness of the passage. Ron took some photographs and then the party set off out to be met at the surface to grey skies and a threat of rain.

### **Michael Bateson**

P. S. To those who forgot. Knee pads and suits are a must in this pot.

## **Boxing Day Walk 2025**

### **26<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Jim Davies, Andy Hall, Pete Hall, Bob Johnston, Roz Johnston, Sam Lieberman, Carol Makin, Steve Round and Louise, Malcolm Starkings, Robert Stevenson, Helen Titchmarsh, Sandra Wilkinson and Mel Wilkinson**

*Others joining for the meal: Sarah, Matthew and Eleanor Hall, Alan and Mavis Speight, Luggie.*

A big thank you to Andy Hall, who like a knight in shining armour transported Carol – she of the pothole incident of the shredded tyre was stranded in Clitheroe, and also to Pete Hall who was initially Andy's passenger who came to Clapham on his bike instead. He said, "Not a problem I enjoyed it". As we gathered in Clapham an unexpected guest – Bob Stevenson arrived!

And so, to the walk, as the young fit people set off and it was soon obvious that I would be leading from the rear. Before we reached the Norbers we were also joined by Jim Davies, and then it was playtime on the erratic boulders, photos taken and boulders scaled in a glorious blue sky – there was much posing.

As we all climbed the top stile, we were met by a freezing easterly wind which swept us all along. The leaders at this point decided that a sheltered place in the sun was the best place to stop for lunch. Turkey sandwiches and home-made



Sam Lieberman Summiting one of the Norber Boulders  
Photo credit: Mel Wilkinson

mince pies were passed around – thanks Jim. Reaching the cairn with its brilliant views of Penyghent and the limestone scars of Moughton Scars we all gathered in this very Klondike spot for the traditional group photo but didn't stop long and began our descent to Trow Gill and on towards Ingleborough Cave.

Here, Mel and Sam photographed the little elf house but some of the group had already headed off up the hill towards Clapdale Farm but most of us walked the Nature Trail past the lake – as for this day we didn't have to pay – hurrah!!

Back in Clapham village nobody needed direction to the pub, and when I arrived the Red Rose were doing what they do best – drinking beer. Alan and Mavis arrived with Luggie for the meal and finally the rest of the Hall family arrived. Special mention here to Sarah (Hall) who had been swimming in Morecambe Bay earlier in the day raising money for cancer research charity. Jim Davis had brought Helen to the pub and Tim and Heather Eastwood bobbed in for a chat.

Thanks to all who came on this traditional Red Rose Meet; it's been taking part now for the best part of 60 years. I only hope my hips are fixed before the next one.

**Sandra Wilkinson**



Long Scar Cairn Group photo  
Photo credit: Sam Lieberman

## **RRCPC Photo Competition 2026**

**14<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

This year's photo competition was judged by Chris Hunter, who won last year's Giles Barker Award. A good range of photographs were submitted, and quite a number were picked as favourites in the member's vote. The Giles Barker Award, which is awarded by public vote, went to Olly Devenport this year for his photo titled 'Cow Pot' (see cover). Congratulations to Olly, and to all other category winners.

### ***UK Underground***

***1<sup>st</sup> – Cow Pot by Olly Devenport (see cover)***



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Gavel Pot  
by Sam Lieberman



**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Illusion Pot  
by Rachael Pajak

**UK Above Ground**



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Sunset, Attermire  
by Sam Lieberman



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
A Grand Day Out  
by Hugh St Lawrence



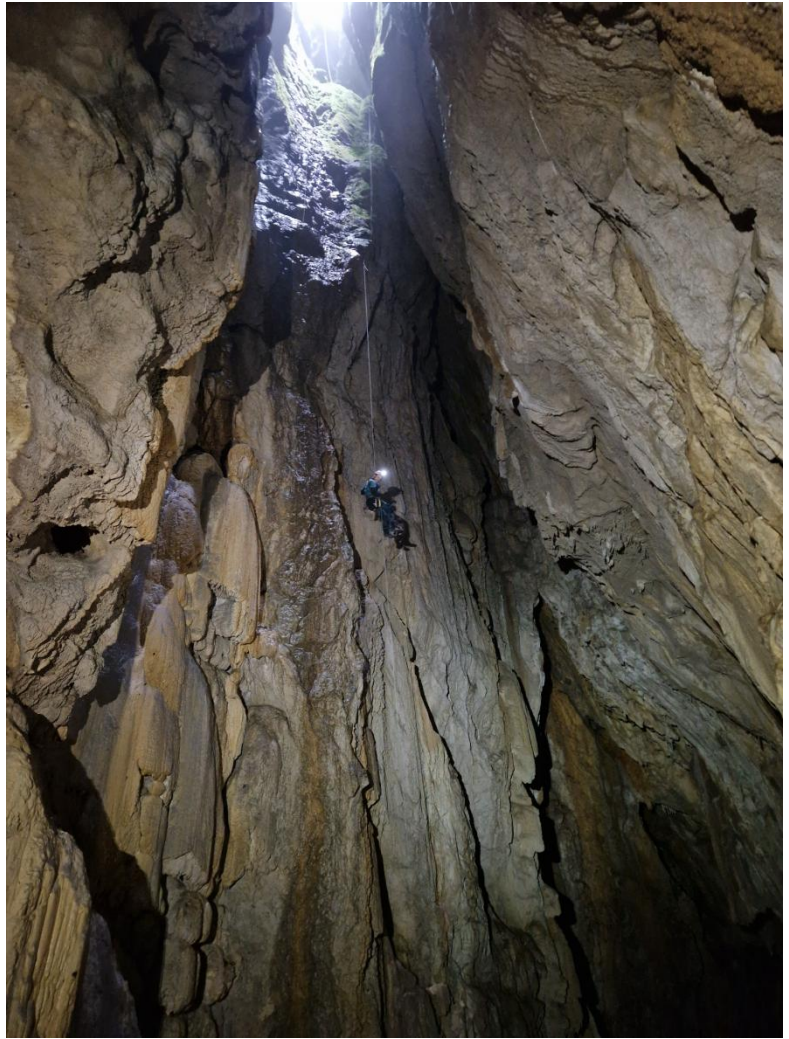
**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Easegill above Cow Dub  
by Sam Lieberman

***Abroad Underground***



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Waipu Caves  
by Sandra Beattie

**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Gouffre de Bexanka  
by Sarah Parker



**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Marble Cave, Chile  
by Rachael Pajak

**Abroad Above Ground**



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Glacier  
by Olly Devenport



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Morning Mist  
By Sandra Beattie



**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Frosted Cairn  
by Sam Lieberman

***Pocket Camera***



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Glasfurds, Gavel Pot  
by Sam Lieberman



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
A Little Silhouette of a Man  
by Mark Stubbs

**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Jubilee Cave, Attermire  
by Andy Hall



**Humorous**



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Pumpkin Pants  
by Rachael Pajak

**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Breaking the Ice  
by Sam Lieberman



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Club President needs a Lift  
by Andy Hall



**Biospeleology**



**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Cave Wetas, Aranui  
by Johnny Baker

**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Dry Rot, Inchindown  
by Sam Lieberman



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Glow Worms, Waipu  
by Johnny Baker

For a better view of the winning photos, please visit our website:  
<https://rrcpc.org.uk/2026/03/10/photo-competition-winners-2026/>

## **Trip Reports - UK**

### **Wizard's Chasm**

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

**Rowan Cleet & Philip Withnall**

In celebration of the new Wicked film, Rowan and Phil ventured off, following the Yellow Brick road to see the Wizard. The weather was blowing a hoolie and as we rolled through Langcliffe, it became clear we were not in Kansas anymore.

We wandered past Victoria Cave on our way up and failed to see any scarecrows, cowardly lions or tin men. Obviously, that was disappointing. Phil came a cropper to an enormous pile of cow dung - which did offer some light relief from this though.

The information about Wizard's Chasm was limited to a couple trip reports and a write-up in Descent, the caving community's premier publication. Unfortunately, we utilised very little of the information available, as it was - in my case - immediately forgotten after reading. The only thing that did stick was (a) that our jammers may fail on the way out, due to the thickness of the mud (b) the rope lengths were approximates.

We found the entrance with ease. The cave has an initial free climb down, call it four metres. Phil rigged the stemple (old road sign pole - the wicked witch's broomstick) with a sling for aid on the way up.

A little crawl led to the first pitch, predictably the rope I had brought was just short. Future cavers should bring a 13m rope, not a 9m... Needless to say, there was some effort required to defy gravity.

We had a little explore of this first level, Phil trying to find the way on in a tight muddy rift. I had slipped in the shower some week's earlier and deployed this information effectively as a brilliant excuse not to follow.

This lead didn't go and we turned on our tails and headed for the next pitch. We had taken a 15m rope. Phil did some more magic with the rigging. With some chanting, curses, hexes and a couple slings we were able to make the 15m rope work for an 18m pitch.

Now we were at the bottom and set about exploring every inch of Oz in our search for some red sparkling shoes. Our first port of call, almost by accident was the Blue Room. As to be expected, very pretty but the lack of red shoes simply pushed us on!

We continued our search, poking around every nook until we found a crawl-space stream way, which when followed led us to the chamber to the second pitch. Clearly the Wizard had rearranged the cave upon our descent.

By which time, my shoulder was hurting a little from thrutching through deep mud. After clicking my wellies together and in my best Julie Garland uttering that there was no place like home, we were soon on the surface (via a brief stop at a shonky looking electron ladder and evidence of a munchkin dig). Jammers didn't struggle on the way out; you can take off all your gear before the muddy bits.

We exited the cave and met some friendly York Uni student cavers, who were exploring the various caverns around Victoria cave after their Christmas dinner the night before.

We got changed and due to the rain, were instantly turned into steam.

Overall, I'm going to put Wizard's Chasm as an 8/10 on the enthusi-o-meter. The cave seemed fine as a wet weather option, wonderful formations throughout. New bolts which looked almost brand new and excitement around every corner in the words of Ariana and Cynthia, Wizard's Chasm for good.

No Toto, hold the line.

**Rowan Cleet**

## ***New Year at Bullpot Farm***

**29<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026**

**Dinny Davies, Toby Speight, Gwen Tawy, Rob Watson**

After a quiet Christmas with my family, I'd had plenty of time to recharge my social battery, so was somewhat ready for a buzzing New Year at the Farm. Although I was looking forward to seeing everyone, I was probably more excited about caving, which I had avoided for much of 2025 due to a knee injury.

Dinny and I arrived in the middle of the day on 29<sup>th</sup> December to an unusually quiet Farm; unlike previous years the weather was good, and everyone seemed to be underground! We quickly settled on a straightforward trip in and out of Wretched Rabbit (Spiral Stairs) – a traditional start to a stay at Bullpot Farm. I can't remember anything interesting from this trip, so it must have gone smoothly!

The following day, we were joined by Rob Watson, who has been promised a trip down AKA Hole by Dinny. We had a long walk to the entrance, but the weather was thankfully dry. We negotiated several of the initial pitches with ease, but the going then got tough, and I found myself doubting my ability to reverse some of the strenuous climbs and corners that involved contorting my body into awkward shapes to negotiate. I found it mildly disconcerting that progress was difficult, given that we were on the way down and therefore not working against gravity, and after a few hesitations on awkward bends I decided to call it a day. Annoyingly, my fear of running out of energy on the way out was unwarranted, as I found climbing out much less strenuous than I had imagined. Having said that, the CNCC description is definitely correct that this is a 'taxing entrance' into Ireby II.

After failing to get to Ireby II via AKA Hole on 30<sup>th</sup> December, Dinny and I decided to visit it the following day via the more traditional route (Ireby Fell Cavern). We rigged the Shadow Route for a change. We had previously attempted this with Sarah Parker a couple years ago but ended up at the bottom of Bell by mistake. The rest of the pitches passed quickly, and we were soon stomping down Duke Street. When we reached the in-situ rope into Duke Street II, we prusiked up it and committed ourselves to 10-15 minutes of crawling. At the end of the crawl, we climbed down into the canyon, which thankfully wasn't as deep as we'd feared. Now thoroughly wet, we made our way down Duke Street II, looking for more in-situ ropes that would take us up to Jupiter Cavern. We followed our noses here, somehow ending up in the correct place without much thinking. This was my first visit to Jupiter Cavern, and I was impressed by its size. We tried to work out where AKA Hole would connect but didn't succeed – It seems we'll have to go back to AKA Hole someday to solve this mystery!

On my final day of caving, I chose Toby as my caving partner. We hadn't caved together for a while, even though we both dislike the same things underground and therefore end up on very pleasant trips together. On this day, we decided to return to the Magic Roundabout, which neither of us had visited in years. Amazingly, it seemed that all the things I remembered, Toby had forgotten and vice versa, so together we formed one competent caver. Lancaster Hole was already rigged, and we had no trouble 'getting on' the roundabout. Toby had completely forgotten the rebelay in Arson Shaft, but it had been etched on mind as it had been one of (if not *the*) first free-hanging rebelays I had ever done. It had been such an epic that Hugh Penney suggested that he might need to come up on the same rope to rescue me. I eventually untangled myself and made it to the top safely. Thankfully, there were no hiccups like that on this day, although we did ponder which way to go at the top of the traverse above Arson Shaft (we chose the correct way). The rest of the trip went smoothly, and it was nice to be back somewhere I hadn't visited in so long – My caving memory is so poor that it was pretty much like being somewhere I had never visited before. I had even forgotten Aquarius Pitch in its entirety! After a pleasant journey, we popped out just upstream of Stake Pot, which we then climbed out of to retrace our steps back to Lancaster Hole.

All-in-all, a great few days of caving with lots of the usual beer-fuelled shenanigans at night, including RRCC favourites - drain caving and fire wine.

***Gwen Tawy***

***Finding ever more stupid ways to leave the cave: A two part tale***

**Winter 2025**

**Dinny Davies, Ian Walker, Rob Watson**

I must admit that my psyche for caving reached new lows last year. I can only remember going underground four times, and of these only recall two specific trips (OFD3 and Curtain Pot - both really quite good caves). The reasons for my lethargy are manifold, but chief among them is that running, cycling and climbing are largely much more pleasant ways to spend time in the summer months. This is empirically true.

So far so boring; almost every long-term caver has experienced this malaise at some stage in their life. However, even though impending climate collapse is gradually replacing 'winter' with a 'monsoon' season in the UK, we still do have lengthy periods of sustained cold, dark misery. During winter, especially recent ones when it rains for weeks on end, crags like Stanage become a sodden scratch across foreboding skies where the wind rattles your very bones; not necessarily conducive to great fun in the outdoors. During these times, underground spaces are often much warmer than 'outside', and if chosen carefully can be much drier as well. And thus, it was that after seeing a thread on UKCaving about filming an ascent of GG Rider (the free climbing route out of Gaping Gill) I was hit by a desire to free climb out of some caves.

### **Part 1**

I started with one that I suspected I could do without needing to try too hard: Shuttleworth Pot. On the day, I was just getting over the flu and was in two minds about an attempt (what if it was cold and wet), but Dinny kindly agreed to hold my ropes (whilst wearing an incredible number of layers) and the sun was nearly shining so we packed some bags and trudged off across the windswept fell, over and up the steep flanks of the beck. Dinny rigged the pot for SRT while I fettled the climbing rack.

Once at the bottom of the main pitch, I realised that it was much wetter than I had anticipated, with a significant flow down much of the main pitch. Furthermore, the slab seemed much steeper than I felt it should be, invoking a deep sense of trepidation welling up from the pit of my stomach as the rope inched gradually through my descender. However, I had cockily decided not to pack any jammers, and didn't fancy using my prussiks to ascend the pitch, so I decided to embrace the silliness, found a suboptimal belay for Dinny at the edge of that annoying muddy slope at the bottom (this proceeded to ping off while I was on the climb, which upset Dinny more than me), and set off.

I suffered a full body soaking nearly immediately, water pouring down my arms inside my waterproof. This failed to detract from the quality of the pitch, however, which was really quite pleasant climbing overall. The rock was largely very solid, the gear, though quite spaced, felt sufficiently trustworthy and numerous to prevent death, and the angle was considerably more gentle than it seemed when looking on the route from above. In large part, I stuck close to the SRT route after the first few metres, after starting slightly to the right.

There was a bit of a thrutch needed to get over onto the ledge at the pitch head. The transition from face climbing to a slippery 3D limestone grapple should have been comfortable ground for a caver, but it was actually where I felt least secure. I reflected that this was the kind of thing they would have climbed in the 20's and 30's, wearing hobnailed boots and a flat cap with a chunky manila fibre rope lashed around their waist - think Jock Nimlin, Claud Frankland, Graham Balcombe or Mabel Barker. Theirs was a pioneering age in the exploration of the outdoors in the UK (underground as well as in the mountains of course), where nearly everything was unknown, with little comfort against the elements offered by very rudimentary equipment and far more severe consequences if your movement erred while on a rock face.

Reaching the top of the main pitch was a good feeling; I would recommend this climb to others looking for something offbeat to do underground which pushes you a bit but overall doesn't feel too out there. The grade is probably around HS or MVS (we are next to the Lakes

after all); I wasn't expecting to suggest grades for these underground climbs, but since this route actually feels worth climbing, I thought indicating one might encourage others to give it a try? Dinny prussiked up the SRT rope while stripping the gear and we both scrambled out and back to the Christmas meal at the Farm.



Rob and Dinny before (Left) and after (Right) the climb  
Photo credit: Rob Watson

## Part 2

The next climb I attempted was a few weeks later, over the New Year period. I had in mind the entrance shaft of Lancaster Hole as a good contender for a decent climb; I thought it would be doable in one pitch, dry, and formed of solid rock. Ian Walker accompanied me this time and we had a relaxed start to allow all other groups to descend the pot before embarking on our wee adventure.

An inspection of the route from the base suggested that tackling the initial bulge just to the right (looking up) of the SRT hang would be best, followed by a traverse left following a prominent crack beneath the roof (which would hopefully offer some solid gear) before getting established in the main groove which the SRT route follows to the floor. Again, things seemed much wetter than I had imagined they would be; spray engulfed my field of vision and reduced me to squinting between the water droplets accumulating on my glasses after climbing only a few metres. Quite soon, a stray foot placement prized off a pretty sizable chunk of the wall which hit the floor with a dead clunk; fortunately, Ian had the good sense to be standing off to the side.

On reaching the point where I had imagined I would step left, pull over the bulge and into the main groove, it became apparent that the rock at the base of the groove was also not very solid and that some strenuous pulls on dubious, overhanging rock would be needed to reach the sanctuary of gear in the crack and a big crank up onto the face, where the rock became a far more reassuring shade of pale limestone grey rather than the rotten looking brown slime colour which formed most of the lower wall.

At the time, the 'steep pull' option had very much lost its appeal and my gear at this point was not the most inspiring, so I decided a fall wouldn't be much fun. A different option presented itself, however: persevering with the 'rotten brown' rock up the parallel groove I was already in line with (the one forming the water course). By this point I couldn't really get much wetter and preferred the idea of being on my feet rather than my arms, so I pressed on this way,

tentatively bridging past some snappy knarl and tenuous nodules to reach a vertical crack to my left. I placed a bomber medium-large wire deep in the crack, the first piece of gear on the whole route which I would have been totally happy to whip on.

Up to this point, the climb had been a much more intense experience than I had anticipated. It felt as I imagined the leap would have been if those climbers of the 1920s had found themselves on routes climbed in the 1950s by geniuses such as Joe Brown or perhaps Robin Smith, who still climbed with really quite awful gear, in all weather, while stepping up the physicality and commitment several notches. We don't know how good we've got it with our modern technology.

As a case in point, my nut in the vertical crack reset my confidence, and I decided to commit. I ran out the gear past some of the most challenging moves and tenuous rock on the route so far before the angle eased and I found myself in a person-sized niche where the water entered the shaft. This was full of loose blocks, but at the back I was able to find a decent dry crack in the roof, which I stuffed a couple of cams into. I then tried to traverse left again towards the SRT line to continue the pitch, across a sloping, muddy ledge.

However, it seemed that this could lead to the ropes catching on some of the loose rock, which would then pull the choss off and onto Ian's head as he seconded me, so I decided to make an intermediate belay in the niche. My pre-judgment of what this climb would involve (one pitch, dry, solid rock) had thus proved to be entirely inaccurate.

Ian then followed me up, putting in a truly solid effort given he was wearing approach shoes while I was in rock boots. 'Fuckin hell Rob, that was ballsy' he commented as he pulled into the niche while grinning away.

The final pitch to the surface was a much more relaxed affair, not least because there were P-bolts to be clipped! Some might claim my choice to use these to be an ethical compromise; I really don't care. Although I had been quite saturated for the duration of the route, on reaching the surface the previous night's alcohol caught up with me and I felt incredibly dehydrated. Fortunately, Ian raced up the last pitch and Hannah and Lara had arrived to descend the pitch and kindly sorted out the gear we'd left at the bottom, tying it to the rope for it to be pulled up.

Overall, I would struggle to recommend my experience in Lancaster Hole to others looking to climb out of caves, or at least certainly not others who like me could do with a few more pull ups and a few less pints - I'm sure it would be a breeze for lots of people. That said, the experience hasn't completely put me off and I'm considering where I'd like to try next. I think the Cow Pot route out of Fall Pot would be a good adventure, as would Bar Pot main shaft and maybe Boxhead? The potential for new and ever-more outrageous experiences is pretty untapped from what I can gather, though it does seem that Spring has well and truly arrived now, so I doubt I will be back on with this project until Autumn. If you're up for joining and have sufficient warm clothes and psyche (or even route suggestions), I think I'll be in need of some company as I doubt Dinny or Ian are interested in another round...

**Rob Watson**

## ***Tatham Wife Club Trip***

**17<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Mike Butcher (ULSA), Nat Dalton, Oliver Devenport, Lucy Hyde, Dave Ottewell, Rachael Pajak, Sarah Parker, Alice Shackley**

A good number had turned out for the Club trip, so the first step was to decide who was doing what. Nat and Sarah agreed to rig, and I opted to join their group seeing as we'd arrived in the same car. Alice also joined us, probably because she knew that choosing the other group would mean she would have to help Mike carry his dive bottles.

After agreeing on the plan, we slowly trudged up the hill, occasionally looking back down at the other group in the parking area to feel smug at how far we had walked and how small they looked. This feeling was short-lived, as they somehow caught us up (!). Finding the entrance didn't prove too difficult and we (the rigging group) made haste to get underground as soon as we arrived. We told the other group to hang around in the rain for a while, as punishment for humiliating us with their ambush on the hill.

It was very wet and cold underground, so efficiency was important. After a couple pitches, Mike snuck up behind Alice and I. Seeing our surprised faces, he explained that he got bored waiting on the surface, not realising that the reason we were surprised was because he had his wetsuit wide-open and not because he'd caught us up. We couldn't comprehend how he could be so hot as we shivered at the pitch-head. Somehow, I suddenly adopted a dive bottle, which turned out to be a bit of a pain on an awkward deviation below.

Having fuffed a lot on this pitch trying and failing to reach the deviation and being repeatedly pulled under the waterfall by the weight of the dive bottle, I had lost sight of Alice. This isn't usually a problem, but on this day my light was turning off every time I bumped my head (I did have a backup, but I was saving it for a *real emergency*). Thankfully, Mike soon caught me up and we continued together for a while. Eventually, I was reunited with Alice, and I could also see Nat and Sarah rigging ahead. I was cold by this point and fairly certain I didn't want to fully submerge myself in the duck below The Ramp. Nevertheless, I agreed to continue until the duck and then decide.

When we reached the duck, I knew by looking at it that I definitely didn't want to go through that day. Alice kindly agreed to exit the cave with me. As we reached the bottom of The Ramp again, we were reunited with the other group. We picked up Rachael on our way out, who also decided that now was a good time to leave. Nat and Sarah rigged the final pitch, then made a speedy exit, catching up with us just as we were climbing out of the entrance.

The sun was setting as we walked back to the car and there was a lovely golden glow on the hillside. Nat, Sarah and Alice returned to the Farm after changing, and I agreed to stay with Rachael in Dave's car until the others got back. The other group emerged some time later, cold but excited after hearing of Mike's successful dive.

***Gwen Tawy***

## **Mainline Terminus Café and the Ease Gill Table Traverse**

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Buck Blake, Lucy Hyde & Hannah Urquhart-Greaves**

Ok, picture this: you've been caving maybe once or twice before, and your club's managed to convince you to come to an exciting event they call 'NCHECC'. After a wonderful evening of chatting, partying, and certainly a lot more drinking than you can remember through your splitting headache, you've somehow found yourself on a Lancs-County trip with no less than eleven other cavers. And yet, not a single one appears to actually know the way to Stop Pot. You've been looking for it for hours. You have no description. You were cold even before you entered the cave, the wind chilling you to the bone whilst you sat in the customary Lancs traffic jam. You've only just realised you forgot to pocket your titan bars.

In those desperate moments, if you had one wish, what would you wish for?

That's exactly the question that led to Mainline Terminus Cafe! I honestly can't remember who first suggested the idea, but somehow, we got it in our heads that the best way to prevent, or at least alleviate, the traditional NCHECC Lancs-County rescue was to set up a stall in Mainline Terminus. The plan was to have a table and a gas stove, and serve passers-by tea and flapjacks, along with laminated descriptions and even Lucy's wonderful Ease Gill buffs (if they brought cash!).

On Saturday morning of NCHECC 2026, after the appropriate level of faff, the three of us had assembled our gear and were ready to set off, with only a lone Darren drum fobbed off on another group. Between us we had four tackle sacks (one of Lucy's was just a hip bag, but I think Hannah's monstrous bag made up for that), one briefcase-style gas stove, and one perfectly-sized folding camp table (she's called Tabitha).

The walk across the fell was lovely, actually. The weather was surprisingly nice! We'd decided to approach from the Stop Pot side, and had decided that Trident in County was probably the easiest option given that all the others involved tighter and windier bits of passage. However, when we arrived at the entrance to County, we found it surrounded by other cavers waiting to head down. We were therefore forced to resort to our plan B: Wretched Rabbit Spiral Staircase. Though it didn't sound particularly



The set-up at Mainline Terminus  
Photo credit: Buck Blake

convenient, it's shorter than the traditional route, and folding tables are quite rift-shaped!

Tabitha fit just fine through the entrance tube, and with a bit of coordination we quickly had her down the climbs and were passing her down the hole into Spiral Staircase. Some delicate manoeuvring was required to keep everything out of the trickle of water coming down next to us, but it didn't cause any problems. What was more concerning was the large group of cavers who met us at the top of the hole as we ferried the last of the bags down. Concerned we'd be holding them up, we redoubled our efforts and hurried into the small stooping passages. We needn't have worried, however. By the time Hannah and I made it down the hole, Lucy had already disappeared far off down the passage, and Tabitha along with her. Very efficient table-carrying! Actually, the biggest impediment to our progress through this section of cave was Hannah's monstrous tackle sack, and even that did impressively little to slow her down.

With only a little cursing, we soon found ourselves at the bottom of the climb, and had a short break to bask in our success. The hardest parts were all out the way! It was then we heard sounds coming from ahead, at the bottom of Green and Smelly Passage. Friends! In fact, the very same friends who'd volunteered to bring our Darren drum full of tea and sugar in with them! We tried convincing them to help us a little more with our carry, and somehow succeeded. Both Tabitha and the stove were taken from our hands, and we made very speedy progress past Holbeck Junction and up Stop Pot.

At this point, I think it's important for me to say that I'd expected our stall to be a rather quiet posting. I'd envisioned an early setup, just the three of us, then lots and lots of waiting as cavers slowly trickled by. NCHECC, it turns out, had other things in store.



Underground Twister  
Photo credit: Buck Blake

Upon arriving at Mainline Terminus, we were greeted by hoards. I so wish I'd counted, there must have been at least fifteen or twenty people there. Now feeling like we should've been a little more punctual, we quickly set about preparing the stall, wrapping it in fairy lights, and unpacking the camping stove. Meanwhile, the second camp landmark was also being constructed. We'd brought a tent! Having predicted long quiet stretches between passing groups, a nice warm place to cosy up and maybe watch a movie seemed a very good idea. However, as soon as we

got the stove burning, I realised a critical mistake: I'd forgotten to pack the kettle!!! Luckily both Lucy and Hannah brought mess tins, so we just filled one with water and used the other as a lid, which worked beautifully.

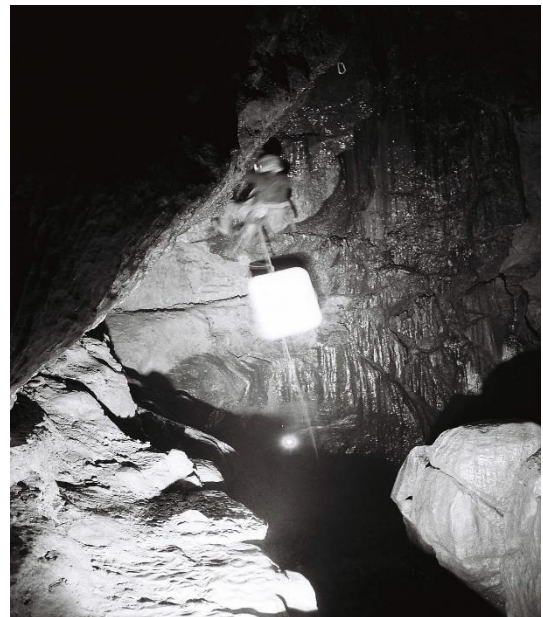
We had some excellent singing as the first cups of tea were served, and the first flapjacks and rice crispy squares were gobbled down, including classics like Barrett's Privateers and Caver's Complaint. Hannah and I changed into our business attire, the speaker was set up, and Zac's

Twister mat brought out. We enjoyed much food, drink, and merriment, (including expedition-style noodles, and even a delicious scone or two), and even sold a buff, before the crowds slowly trickled away to continue their trips.

The next hour or two was much quieter: cozy chatting and cuddling in the tent interspersed with the occasional visiting caving group. Eventually, however, it was time to forsake camping for NCHECC disco, so after packing up the stall and tent, and combing the place for any litter, we finally had to confront the big decision that had been looming above us all day: which way to exit?

We could go back the way we came, but that sounded quite boring. County also didn't sound particularly interesting, though I was quite tempted to try introducing Tabitha to the Manchester Bypass. But in the back of our minds, I think we all knew the prospect of taking her all the way out of Lancs was far too tempting to pass up. We had a lighter carry on the way out, since the last group to pass by had kindly volunteered to take the stove and Darren drum (thanks Dinny and Chi!), and we were feeling pretty good about our Tabitha-carrying abilities, so we decided to firm it and began the trek outwards.

The stomping went by rather quickly, with highlights being sliding Tabitha through the Minarets, and boulder hopping by fairylight. I nervously watched Hannah taking Tabitha over Scylla and Charybdis, thinking about how I hadn't really detailed to my parents the risks their table would be experiencing when I borrowed her. My concern was of course unnecessary, and Tabitha made it across with ease. Hannah took Tabitha up Steak Pot, where we sat for a while singing, and I played some tin whistle. Then it was the home stretch, and a few minutes later we were sat at the bottom of Lancs. Hannah headed up first, and whilst Lucy figured out how to attach Tabitha to herself with a sling, another group showed up behind us. It was Christopher, Isaac, and Alex, and they had Isaac's camera! This led to an excellent photo of Lucy prussiking up Lancs with Tabitha swinging beneath her. There were only a few minor collisions with the wall on the way up. And Tabitha fit fine through the entrance tube, thank God. We'd been trying our best not to think about that.



Lucy and Tabitha  
Photo credit: Isaac

And then we were all out! Amazingly, on our excellent, stupid mission to provide some whimsy to the cavers passing through Mainline Terminus, everything worked out perfectly. Thank you so much to everyone who helped with planning, carrying, setup, and takedown, and a huge thank you to everyone who came along too! And thank you to Tabitha for putting up with us and only disintegrating a little bit <3

### ***Buck Blake***

P.S It's a damn good thing no one did get lost looking for Stop Pot this year, because I forgot to pack the descriptions!

## **Heron Pot**

**30<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Olly Devenport, Rachael Pajak, Osian (MUSC), Morgan (MUSC), Rhys (MUSC)**

Today started as a clusterfuck...

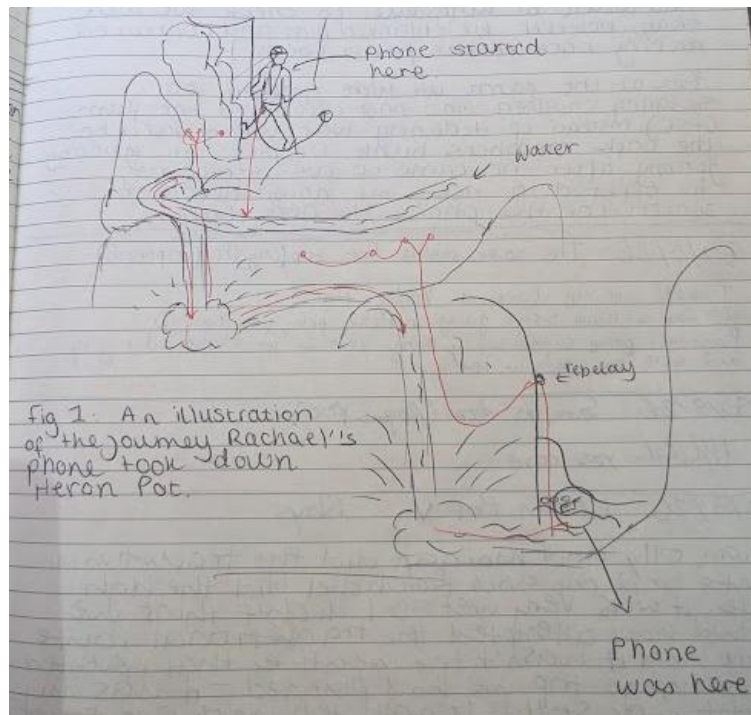
We were meant to leave Manchester at 10am with kit and foot. We did not leave Manchester until 12:20pm. We had planned to go to Heron Pot, a cave which can be enjoyed in 'moderately wet' weather.

We arrived at Kingsdale, when I received an email to say the British Association of Psychopharmacology will sponsor me to go to a conference in Japan this summer. Sadly, God does not like me to be excited for too long.

Pretending we had all the time in the world, we bumbled over to Yordas and had a peak at the waterfall before getting suited for Heron Pot. We finally got to the entrance of Heron at 4:20pm, about 4.5 hours later than initially planned.

Rhys and I planned to do the high traverse, whereas Osian and Olly and Morgan would do the traditional route. The cave was rather splashy and we were rather slow, with each party eventually deciding to abort mission.

As I was coming down the chimney, I didn't realise my oversuit was open and my phone stored in a case Toby bought at the RRCPC auction for 50p unfortunately fell down and was sucked into the waterfall.



Rachael's phone in Heron Pot  
Drawing credit: Rachael Pajak

Very disheartened, we caved our way out of the cave to the sun setting at 8pm.

Johnny, who was concerned about our welfare as he thought we were underground at 12:30pm had driven to Kingsdale to check we were okay. However, we blanked him and continued driving back to the Farm (oops).

Back at the Farm, we were greeted by swearing children who had colonised the Farm (FSC). Instead of declaring war we resided to the back members' bunk. Despite me ignoring Johnny after he came to pre-rescue us, he offered to take me down Heron to search for the phone the next day.

**Rachael Pajak**

## ***Heron Pot – Part 2***

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

**Johnny Baker & Rachael Pajak**

I'm starting to get a reputation for being rescued, being sh\*t at rigging, and relying on others to relocate my possessions. Johnny, on this trip got all three Pajak dyspraxic clusterfucking.

We went back to Heron, rather sceptical we would be able to relocate my phone. We checked the resurgence and nothing was there. We went back to the entrance and feeling slightly optimistic that the water was slightly lower.

At the bottom of the first pitch, I waterboarded myself searching for my phone in the rocks, realising how unlikely my phone will be retrieved. I then went to rig the second pitch; the first free-hanging rebelay I have ever rigged! For this, I slightly over-descended and had missed the bolt, but managed to get my long cowstail in. I then managed to make a figure-eight on a bight, but found the loop above the knot and was too long, and when I went to take off the descender, I forgot to take my hand-jammer off resulting in my jammer travelling out of reach as my descender was taken off the upper rope.

Johnny called down to me to put my short cowstail in the bolt so that I could take my jammer off – success! I then put my hand jammer back in to take my short cowstail out of the bolt, and again put it too high that once my short was out, the hand jammer was again out of reach – bugger!

Johnny had enough of my fruit machine of mistakes and came down the end of the first pitch rope to assist me, casually lowering my hand jammer, so I could carry down to the bottom. As Johnny prepared to descend on my rigging, I had a cold swim in the waterfall searching for my phone – again, no luck. Once we got to the bottom, we had turned to follow the water and there, washed up, was the phone – unsmashed with 16% battery!

***Rachael Pajak***

## **Trip Reports - Abroad**

### **Genghis Khan Cave and Lynds Cave**

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Mike Butcher (ULSA), Jeremy Douglas-Bill (Tasmanian Caver), Stephen Jacobs (Tasmanian Caver), Cathie Plowman (Tasmanian Caver), Alice Shackley, Nick Willson (Tasmanian Caver)**

I'm currently on a 2.5-month trip away travelling, and have had the recent joy of caving in Tasmania.

The first cave, Genghis Khan, was very dry and warm. We began by descending a rope for a couple of metres, then manoeuvring around a spider's web containing a very large spider (these can live up to 40 years here!). Mike and Jeremy both commented that it was for catching cavers. After that we dropped down another hole and popped out into dry passage. The passages gradually became larger, and before long we reached a particularly pretty section with lots of helictites. As we continued, the formations became more and more spectacular. I spent a lot of time taking photos, impressed by types of formation I've never seen before.



Stunning formations in Tasmania  
Photo credit: Alice Shackley

We paused at a small, beautifully decorated dead end to take more photos (and find the actual route / way on), then continued on a short loop. This involved crawling up a slab to a boulder chamber which we crossed to get back to our starting point, with a boot-wash section part way along.

Afterwards we had a nice lunch — complete with political chat — at King Solomon's cave picnic spot. Then we drove to the parking area for Lynn's Cave and walked through the bush and down to the river, the same one visible from the Mersey Bridge. At this point I changed into a wetsuit, which thankfully fit very well. It had been kindly lent to me by Steve. We crossed the river, which came above my waist up into nips territory, and then made our way to the entrance. Both caves had gated entrances requiring permits and keys.

The initial section of Lynds Cave was slightly lower and went into the water, but we managed to avoid getting too damp. We traversed around a pool and climbed up a waterfall surrounded by dark rock. I was amazed at how

clear the water was — crystal clear, without any of the peat staining we get in the Yorkshire Dales. The passage was pleasant, but it quickly became obvious that we were moving among large blocks and calcite that had fallen from above, with a much larger passage and ceiling overhead.

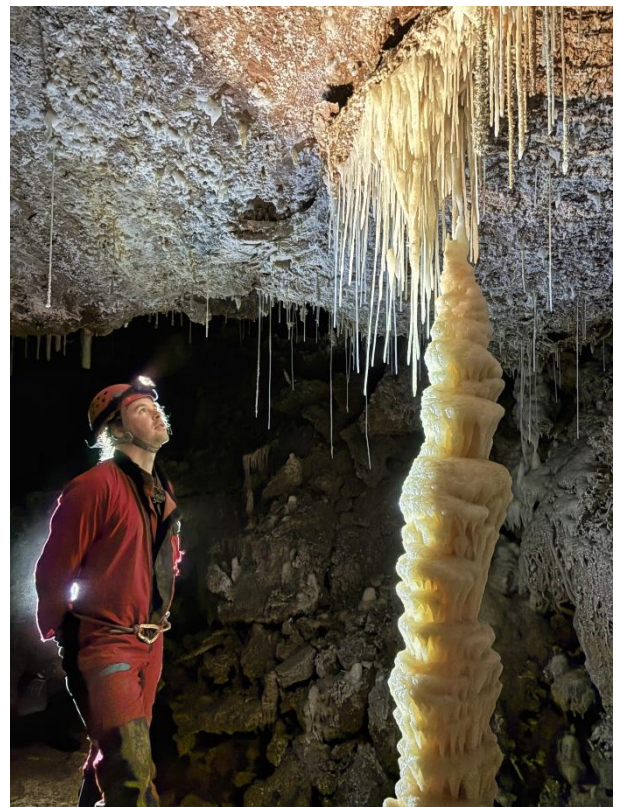
After a few more climbs over pools, we emerged into the main passage. Behind us was another high-level entrance with daylight shining in, which looked very pretty but also had bars on to prevent people accessing the cave. We continued onwards following the upstream passage. Throughout the cave there were incredible decorations, including evidence of earthquakes: large pieces of calcite had broken away from the walls, only for more calcite to form over the fractures. One such cracked piece had been observed both before and after the 1997 Mole Creek earthquake.

We also found a wobbly straw that was vibrating or “blowing” in what I assumed was a draught, although the air around it was completely still. We managed to get a video of it, which was very impressive — even better than the Tasmanian devil scat Steve had spotted on the walk in.

Continuing upstream, we came across a “calcite graveyard” where huge blocks had split into pieces, revealing banded layers of calcite. It looked like a pile of bones — unlike anything I’ve seen before, and incredibly striking.

Eventually we reached a large white column/boss/stalagmite surrounded by flowstone. The passage continued beyond but was blocked by the flowstone. The route involved climbing up a specific section used for navigation only. At the top the passage continues with pretty formations and surprises like cave pearls. Beyond that point we looked ahead but didn’t continue, as it leads to a boulder choke with lots of pretties before it.

I slowed the group down quite a bit by taking so many photos, but everyone was very courteous and indulged me. Even better, the Tassie cavers are very few and so said they would very much appreciate helping surveying should we wish to join them in the future, something I certainly wouldn't mind.



Mike admiring a column  
Photo credit: Alice Shackley

**Alice Shackley**

## ***Expedition Reports***

### ***Meghalaya 2026***

#### **February 2026**

February 2026 saw four RRCPC members meet 6,321 miles from the Farm in Meghalaya, India. Becka Lawson and Sioned Haughton were already out there the day that Bill Nix and I arrived. This was my first caving expedition beyond Austria or Spain, and the first time I'd been to Asia. From my brief introduction with Simon Brooks, the expedition leader, at the bar at Hidden Earth 2025, I was beyond excited. Sioned was getting weekly phone calls, my GP was being hounded for vaccines, and Becka was receiving 20 questions every time we met. She is an incredibly patient person.

My first day saw a trip with Becka, Sioned and Joxz, setting off in search for Zong Khur, an intriguing pothole, 140m and the deepest in the region. After a jolting drive, which would almost certainly empty a bowl of jelly carried on the passenger's knee, we set off from Mualian, following GPS waypoints and Joxz's memory from 5 years ago. The way took us down narrow paths in steeply descending fields thick with broom crops, farmed by the locals. The path was dry and winding, and the crops almost head-height, providing precious shade from the belting sun from time to time. After 2.5 hours of stomping with 100m of rope on my back, we skirted a river and entered taller forest. Here, moss covered trees, a meter in diameter, shot out of the ground, vines hung down like the Jungle Book, and soon, impressive limestone pillars began to emerge. The environment was like nothing I had ever seen, and I was blown away on first seeing Zong Khur. A shake hole, 25m x 18m across, gaped into a single 142m deep shaft. Looking down, my heart raced. Here, deep in the jungle, we felt so remote and sounds of creaking and falling bamboo were the only sounds to interrupt the bird song... and Becka's excited impatience.

Zong Khur had previously been explored in 2020, and at 192m deep, it was India's 7th longest cave. The cave continued for 1km horizontally and the exploration had been left incomplete. We were here to re-bolt and push the cave further. Sioned set about on the first day, bolting and rigging down to about -80m, before we made the long journey back in the dark to the pick up point, including 300m vertical ascent. The second day we made much quicker progress to Zong Khur, only about 30 minutes walk from the road. I resumed the bolting and descended into darkness. The shaft continued to bell out, and the walls got further away from me. The walls were clearly clean-washed every monsoon season and fell away at around 20 degrees of the vertical. My helmet light barely hit the far wall, whose dark limestone gobbled up all of the light greedily. It made it hard to establish way was directly down and it gave the shaft a psychedelic feeling. Looking up, this thin oval of blue and green glistened and dried leaves gently glided past me like snowflakes. At the bottom, I called rope free and Becka and Sioned joined me. The chamber was filled with large blocks, the size of transit vans and piles of dried leaves.

As an aside, on the first night at camp I had solicited some advice on the local wildlife from Meghalaya veteran, Bill Nix and nature enthusiast, Chris Scaife. This, plus my over-active



Sioned on a pitch in Zong Khur  
Photo credit: Rachel Turnbull

imagination now considered every pile of leaves a potential viper's nest, and meant I took great pains to avoid all leaves for the entirety of the trip, resulting in some silly traverses and using a big bamboo stick to clear sterile paths in dense jungle. Nonetheless, I was not bitten by a snake.

At the bottom, we set off for a little explore and to enjoy some time out of the harnesses. Sioned set off in stooping passage, effortlessly traversing over pools, which I found to my surprise were filled with about 15 white fish! Long and slender like crayons, they darted about in response to our presence, and my eyes caught sight of glowey white cray fish, who lingered at the edges of the pool. Then, the much slower-moving, bigger white fish, the size of slippers, came to investigate us. I was amazed, but Sioned, who had been caving for the last week in Assam, was well used to this. Although the expedition uncovered a new species a couple of years ago, these cave fish were two a penny in this part of the world, especially in Zong Khur where the vertical access keeps hungry locals out.

My attention on the third day was stolen by Bamboo Hell Hole (so named for the approach), or Krem Wah Dngiem, the entrance to which has been re-found the day before. It was last explored in 2023, a short pitch series in sandstone that sloped down to a third pitch. Here it was recorded that the sandstone was so loose and crumbly, the way on was suicidal. A ballsy team of Chris Scaife, Boi Boi, Reetika, Pankaj and Bill Nix set off to rig as far as far as the previous exploration. Reetika had travelled 7 hours across India to join the expedition, and she explained that the four weeks

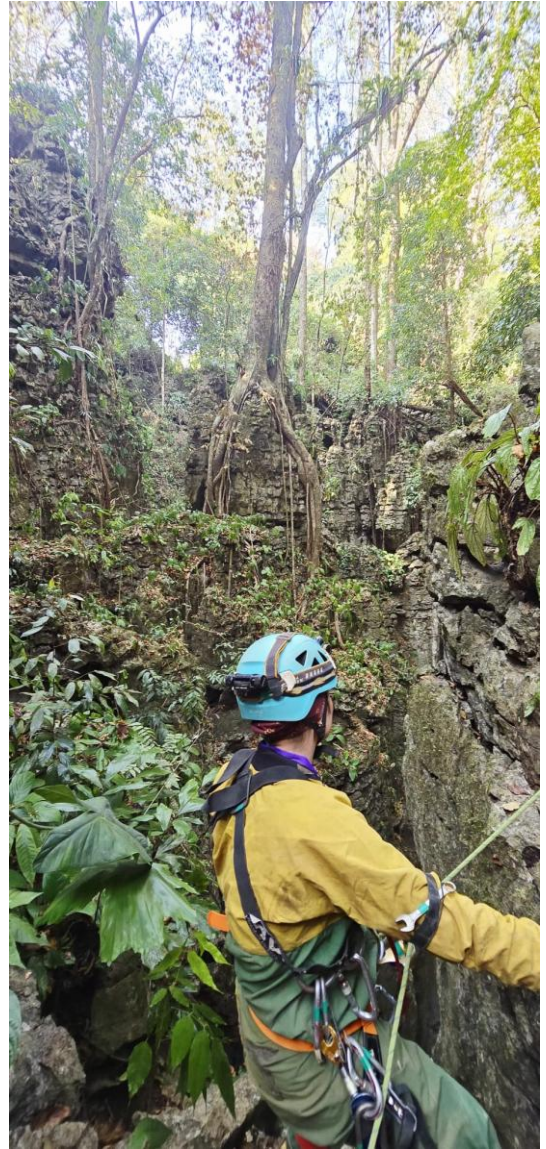
she's in Meghalaya is the only time she gets to cave. Pankaj was joining for the first time, and local to Meghalaya. This was amongst his first times doing SRT in a cave.

I'd never caved in sandstone before, and from my first steps at the bottom of the first pitch, I could see why. I landed cautiously on a slope of sand, bamboo, the dreaded dried leaves, and sandstone boulders. Despite my caution, a van-load of material started to hurtle down the slope and to the top of the next pitch, where Chris hung bolting the way on. Fairly alarmed, we pulled everyone out of the cave and set about for the rest of the day, trying to garden and relandscape, in such a way that it made imminent death less likely and the route to the cave less acrobatic. Chris and Boi Boi made it to the bottom of the third pitch, and in virgin passage, stomped along tall, dry horizontal passage for around 200m. As so often happens, the sandy

floor rose to meet the dry walls in a smooth, unsatisfying end of the passage. Or so they thought. A small gap took an enormous draught, and the pair resolved to return to dig their way through.

On the fourth day, Chris and Boi Boi employed Jozx and I to survey the new passage whilst they began digging. Bill also came to take photos of the new finds. One of my personal goals for the expedition was to improve my surveying, and Jozx is one of the world's finest. I feel very lucky to have had such an experienced, thoughtful teacher who is also a great time. We set out to survey about 300m, and Bill followed behind taking photos of the unusual icing-topped stumpy stals.

An hour later, we were interrupted by Chris and Boi Boi. Boi Boi made half-efforts to look disappointed, but the exhilaration was radiating from them both. The sandy dig had broken out into big, stomping river passage, leading both upstream and downstream. We rapidly surveyed down to the river and tossed instruments to the side, marvelling in the great underground river. I spent much of the rest of the expedition in Krem Wah Dngiem. Whether it was wading through water-filled upstream passage to the bottom of 20m waterfalls, grovelling about in muddy meanders, climbing over calcite dams or peering through a fossil forest of calcite, this cave stole much of my attention. Bill was spoilt for choice with exceptional features to photograph which will no doubt grace photo salons soon. Almost all of the expedition members visited and contributed to Wah



Sioned bolting Zong Khur  
Photo credit: Rachel Turnbull

Dngiem's exploration, whether bolt-climbing, rigging ladders or filming, and it was pushed to the bitter end, following every trickle of water for human-sized passage. Ultimately it ended, and our Meghalayan romance with Krem Wah Dngiem was over after 3.5 glorious kilometres.

The expedition has made three of my best ever caving trips and I experienced many things for the first time ever. I am fairly hooked, and will return to Meghalaya as soon as I can (if they will have me).

Preparation that really helped:

- I'd caved a lot before going so felt fairly fit.
- I'd overcome my intolerance to eggs and reintroduced them to my diet after 7 years. This was very helpful as almost every day I ate at least two eggs. One notable day featured 5.
- Becka sent me a packing list which included lots of things I wouldn't have thought of, like sandwich bags.

Things that went particularly badly:

- On transit, a bottle of deet spilled and started eating my rucksack and plastic contents. The worst casualty was my waterproof phone case. I got by with the aforementioned sandwich bags and loans from kind expedition members.
- Whilst gardening a pitch which a particularly sketchy rig one day, I lifted a boulder and uncovered a massive huntsman spider. I yelled and the spider took off, but Becka and Simon believed I was hurtling down the pitch.

### ***Rachel Turnbull***

P.S. Look out for Reetika's film at Hidden Earth, on old and new surveying techniques and filmed exclusively in Meghalaya.



Simon and Becka on a bamboo wire bridge  
Photo credit: Rachel Turnbull



Caving in Tasmania  
Photo credit: Alice Shackley

## ***Digging Reports***

### ***Not Far Now***

It seemed oh so easy, Rollerball was right above the Precambrian Series so should drop straight into it. Well, that was the idea eight years ago in 2018. In 2019 we had help from the club with a bit push to clear some of the passage, the 'Big Dig', when over twenty people helped in October and then it was left to us brave or 'stupid' few to battle onward.

We forced our way along Inurear Passage, a sloping tight rift, passing a couple of awkward obstacles, then dropped down a capped pit to The Birth Canal, a rusty coloured slop monster. Then we plopped down Jim's Pot and forced our way along the Lower Birth Canal and dropped into The Font, where all the rusty poo had collected, deep joy! The poo had to be removed to the surface in Darren Drums. After even more capping we descended The Christening Pitch and lo and behold a place where we could stand up at last, Samori Passage.



Chris near the end  
Photo credit: Ray Duffy

This was obviously our redemption as at the point of entry it was 13 metres high, however, although quite long and high for most of its length, it's also sloping at such an uncomfortable angle that proceeding along it involves leaning against the wall all the way and only a body width wide further along, not easily progressed. We tried digging down where the water flowed, The Pissoir, but that was far too difficult, and we then tried near the very end of the passage and produced Pissoir Deux. This landed us in the streamway of the aptly named Dead Cat Passage, thanks to Schrodinger our passage either went or didn't.

A dye test from Casterton Pot took only 20 minutes to reach our 'lovely' streamway that's just not big enough in either height or width at any point. However, the water from Casterton Pot takes only one hour to reach the obviously named 'One Hour Inlet' in the Precambrian Series, so it seemed logical that this was the same water as in Dead Cat Passage.

If we'd known that the cave was going to keep egging us on like it has done, would we have continued after the Big Dig? Not on your life. Still, we can't give up now, we keep saying that it can't be far now but one look at the survey and you'll see that as soon as we've got close to a connection, the passage has done a complete 180 degree away from our goal, bas\*\*rd thing!!

***Ray Duffy (Sam Lieberman, Chris Hunter, and lots of others)***

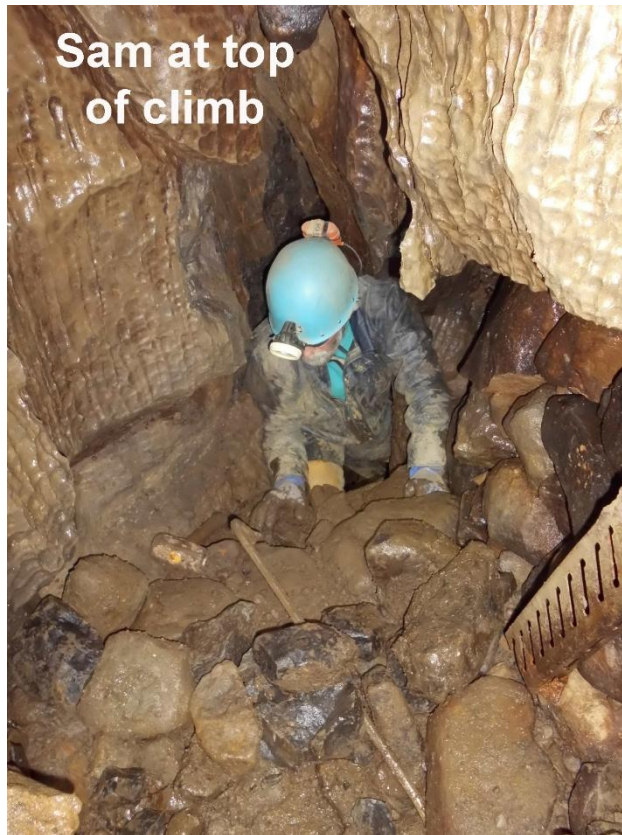


it up and as you pass Gale Garth leave it beside the hole and we'll use it in our terraces, thanks!

**Ray Duffy**



**Looking down  
the shaft**



**Sam at top  
of climb**

Progress in Gale Garth Pot  
Photo credit: Ray Duffy

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

### ***GG: Extravaganza Special – 85 Highlights***

It Happened, again! This time with a Vengeance!  
The Troubled Waters Connection,  
Stolen Beer Barrels by the Army,  
Stream Passage Pot & Juniper Gulf Rescues,  
BBC crew on Open Meet,  
7 entrances in one day &  
Most of all, a full week of excellent weather.

#### **18th May: Far Waters, Molephone Testing, Troubled Waters**

I tackled Bar Pot with Sharon Kelly, Vaughn Thomas, Shaun Lucas (Army) and Geoff Douglas. Rang up the Surface from Main Chamber to see if Busby and Crew had gone already. I ran to catch up with them on the other side of the Mud Hall slope. We got to Hallucination Aven inside 2 hours despite there being 8 of us and tackling of Echo Rift with a ladder and lifeline. A 110' line on this 60' pitch made things very awkward. A 120' rope and pulley, as close to the edge as possible would necessitate easier lifelining. Also, if someone could knock-off that nasty little flake of rock so that the ladder wouldn't constantly snag as one got above the projection, would have been a great help!

The Bogarts group of 5 left us to go on their wanderings to 'Radaghast's Revenge' for some pictures. I, Ian Wellock (Eeny Weeny) and Geoff Crossley (Busby) proceeded onwards and through the nasty looking little ducks into Hallucination Aven. Busby and the surface crew messed about for most of an hour with the Molephone equipment until satisfied that they could no-more.

Busby then said that "He'd be gone for no-more than 5 mins, into the sump. The longest part would be the kitting and dekitting of the diving gear!"

We were only slightly concerned of his departure when 10 – 15 mins had elapsed. Then, we were more worried still, after 30 mins, since we thought that he'd be cutting his safety margin of air left, on which to return. He'd taken just 2 mini bottles for this onerous task.

While we further contemplated what to do, we noticed, almost at once that the diving line had totally disappeared, leaving a murky pool in its wake. Taking it in turns to shine our headlamps through to help guide him back if he needed it. Approximately an hour after he'd left base, we decided to contact the surface for help. At first Ian and I weren't sure how to use the Molephone, as neither of us paid much attention once we'd gotten there. Anyhow, after trying various batteries we found one that gave us a signal and voice contact. It was decided on the surface that an immediate rescue was to be mounted.

Still, hoping that he'd make it we continued our vigil with our lamps underwater. At one point we detected a faint glow which persisted and some mins later the Aquanaut surfaced. He'd been gone for an hour and six minutes!

Apparently after diving 60' into the low and wide bedding he'd gotten to where Jim Abbott (Jimbo) had got to before, at an air-bell, 15' further, and he was into a passage somewhat like the size of The Northern Line passage, but with formations. After a quick look around, he'd decided to go back for the Molephone and tell us the news. The line had come free and he was left wondering whether to stay where he was and hope that they'd find him much later; or reel out his own line from the air-bell, acting as base and make his way out. We all know now what happened, but it took him 2 attempts from base to reach us!

Hence the name 'Troubled Waters' as the 'Far Waters Connection' came to be christened!

On the way out it was found that the Bogarts group also had a bit of bad luck. The choke into 'Radaghast's', also known as 'Bob Mackin's Delivery', had collapsed due to too much 'Banging' by Ian Watson (Wato), on a previous occasion and therefore prevented them from taking any photographs.

We got out on the winch at 7.30, after a long 9 hour stay underground.

### **25th May: Far Waters 2**

I abseiled down Jib (spent half hour rigging it with my Rawl Bolt and hangers but had to rely on the Club's as mine wouldn't fit!). Sharon Kelly and I met Dave and Thirza Hyde at Bar Pot, and took our time moving along. At Deep Well turn-off we turned right instead, and Dave showed us all of 'The Hall of the Mountain King'. This was a passage and chambers leading to a 300' high boulder slope. Met 4 MUSS & LUSS people adjoining Penny Arcade (the girl here, would be rescued from Stream Passage Pot the next day). Met John Cordingley about to make a Big Bang in Rivendell passage. Finally sat ourselves down in a dry part of The Northern Line to await the outcome of surveying in 'Troubled Waters'. A 4-way coms contact was now established between the surface, us, Troubled Waters, and Clapham Bottoms Pot's (Olympic Chamber) digging party. The Molephones had, at long last, revolutionised communications underground to surface and without them we'd not be doing 'fix's' underground and talking to one-another as if we were in the same room! The 2 divers, Geoff Crossley and Jim Abbott had found 800' of new passage, both upstream and downstream, and established a voice connection with the digging party in Olympic Chamber, above. The closest being 9' horizontally and 8' vertically below The Chamber.

Took the girls out and surprised myself by not putting a foot wrong! The rest of the Party of Howard Jones, Graham Proudlove, Busby, Jimbo and Dave caught us up at Echo Rift. Sharon had a lot of trouble in getting up the 60' ladder as it kept jamming onto a flake. Carried plenty of tackle out via Mud Henslers. Got up Jib, 8.00 – 8.20, still beating the long queue of 30 or so to exit! Time Underground: 8 hrs.

**Dalek**

## **White Sar Cave**

### **27<sup>th</sup> September 1986 – From BPC Logbook**

Me (Dalek) and a party of 15 WSG members went down today!

If you don't mind paying £3 for your caving (twice the show cave rate) then all well and good, but on principle! Anyway, we paid, and for our money they told us not to get lost, appoint a leader who had read the notes on liability for all of his party, and wished us a good trip – it had better be! All the while the mysterious man from Dent, wearing his Deer-stalker hat watched all the proceedings from afar.

Now once we'd swam across Long Stop Lake (we didn't stop long) we had virtually done the entrance series. Now the only real obstacle was Big Bertha, which necessitated a crawl under a large boulder, just in and above water level, which had stopped me the last time that I had done it due to the wet weather. There was an orange line to guide us through. In the Main Stream passage was another short swim, followed by ankle trapping and knee smashing milled potholes that required extra care to cross. These got deeper at a point where one could either jump across or stretch out a leg to gain the rim of one which was also the start of another. Some small ledges followed and eventually a choke was reached. This was easily passed and then more walking in deepening water led to a further short swim which passed The Sleepwalker Series Choke.

Running on ledges above the stream we dropped down to where a small greasy climb led up to a straw-ridden gallery. We looked at this on the way back. The going got lower and deeper as the passage widened out until we were almost crawling or dog paddling through a section of passage which had cross rifts in it. At one point it looked pretty final when one splinter group found a lowish looking duck, but this was easily bypassed further back until we came to a blank wall. Zig-zag going, at odds with rest of the passage until we came to sump one. It was probably about 4 to 6ft long with a slight undercut to negotiate! About half of us dived through it. The next one looked final as a diving line was seen. Once the novelty of passing sump one wore off, we almost had to queue to get back out. A short side passage on the left had been dug out and some members potted around here. Back at the straws grotto, were impressive straws 6 to 8ft long, pure white, in a tight bunch just out of sight from the main passage. It was awkward muddy chimneying to see them. Made my way out to what I thought was Sleepwalker Series, with 2 lads shivering like they were having a seizure! The water was cold and they had only wetsuit long johns covered by boiler suits. Missed the choke somehow and found myself back at Big Bertha. The lads opted for out while I ran back and bumped into the main convoy going out (or to see Battlefield Series).

Carried on with Dumbo in hand, climbing up the slippery boulder choke into Sleepwalker Series, following the bang wire all the way through. Suffice it to say I did not like it one bit. Muddy covered boulders which one either climbed up, through or crawled under, became exasperating at times when the line seemed to take an impossible route and we had to go elsewhere. Met Alan Taylor and Jill Innes coming back. Dumbo had already set off out as he was too slow, and would take his time. I met him at the climb down. I tried to locate Battlefield Series but had no time left. It was almost 4pm and I had to be back at work by 7pm to do a

12-hour shift. We'd spent over 5 hours underground though, but was it worth it? Perhaps not. It still is one of the finest stream passage caves in the country except maybe for OFD, which is much longer.

**Dalek**

## **Ogof Llyn Parc/Pool Parc Pot – North Wales**

### **4<sup>th</sup> October 1986 – From BPC Logbook An Account of Group B's Trip**

We were told that this was a winching down job on the entrance shaft, but no chair was supplied, so it was a necessary prerequisite to use a decent sit harness. As most of us hadn't brought one it was found that some scrounging/borrowing of one was essential.

To set the scene: An old CPC Winch was picked up by Bob (NWCC cave guide) by Land Rover and taken to the hole. Scaffolding, in the shape of an A frame was erected over the hole. This was a concrete capping, with a hole 2 to 3ft square covered with a metal plate (that had a small circular hole at one side) that was padlocked from underneath, which was difficult to open in the first place! Once the thing got operational it was essential that we gathered at the site in 3 groups of 9 (including one cave guide). The winch was slow, if only because the walls were 6ft apart and one didn't want to kick down any loose stones. It took about 5 mins to be lowered down the 300 ft of shored shaft and it was darned mighty uncomfortable as my sit harness was slightly out of adjustment and I ended up at a lop-sided angle. The 2 cowstails were tied to the top and bottom eyeholes of a ft long (6" diameter) cylindrical weight.

We landed on a platform of planks that covered a 25' deep pool. Walking off on a mine level amid some collapsed shoring to reach the top of 5 fixed iron ladders. Each was from 30' to 50' long. More mine level and down a slope into the main streamway, where my lamp failed and I suffered the rest of the trip in semi-darkness! Downstream over boulders to gain the loop route. We went left by B' Block and up a mighty long slope (reminiscent of entrance down into Sleets Gill) and into many chambers & passageways. One or two pretties here and there, an aven that had been bolted up to more passage, and muddy chambers where the going got claggy.

A roped climb up was the way on but, Tony, our cave guide wanted to show us 'The Dig'. It meant going through a large bedding passage that was almost full to the roof, in some places, with gravel and shingle! It was like swimming (breast-stroke style) up and down these slopes in a see-saw fashion that put some of us off from further progress. First there were 8 members, then 4, and finally 2 i.e. me and Geoff Banham. Soon it opened out into large muddy passage again. At the far end was a silted up hole, 'The Dig'. Tony told us that this had been 30' deep. Since the flood of August though, the whole character of the passages had changed. Holes appeared here and chamber levels opened up there, etc. Geoff and I had a quick look up the greasy climb, by 'The Dig' and we went out picking up bodies strewn along the way, and Group C, who had done the km of the loop route in reverse. The handline was awkward, therefore I rerigged it for the others. It quickly became obvious that the mud slopes the others came down on (like the far end of Sleets Gill) in a hurry, were going to prove taxing on the

way up. Some people slipped, some panicked, and others gave a helping hand from behind. The second slope was shorter yet was steeper. Mick (Smiley Riley) and I went up the 60 degree + slope and everyone else went up a different one, only after Frank Croll had cut steps in it. I took up the lead occasionally, only to find a blank wall of solid black ahead! I had to wait for Snake (Raymond Lee) and Smiley to catch up with me. In a crawl I bashed my knee against an irregularly shaped rock. Still, it didn't stop me, Geoff and Smiley from having a look at 'The Quarry'. A short length of passage, upstream from where we had come in (from the mine levels) to climb up through a boulder choke and into a massive collapsed chamber of GG sized proportions, but where slabs lay all around and some roof looked as if it was ready to fall in on you.

Back at the winch shaft, it was discovered that group A had all gone out. I tried jumping queue after Dave King but none of the others would have it. I fell into a dozy state on my feet. Finishing my last shift yesterday morning and now that I wasn't actively doing anything I felt sleepy! If my helmet didn't catch on the ceiling, I'm sure I would've toppled over. Group C caught us up, and after a long preamble it was my turn to go up. I was worried about my leg being taken off at the lip of the concrete section as someone else nearly had theirs torn off, (I was told) when it stuck fast and they carried on winching him up!

I noticed more mine levels on the way up, than I had before. I didn't spin at all on take-off but the slight curvature of the walls with the movement of the winch started up a gentle swaying action. The winch stopped 6' from the lip and I was told to reorientate myself to face a wall that I could not in fact do. So, with small jerky movements they got me up, with me watching my legs all the time.

This trip cost us £1 (God, isn't caving becoming more expensive just lately!) but was worth it for the novelty value alone. It took us 4 hours to cave and I spent 50 minutes waiting to be winched back up!

Group B: John Robbo, Frank Croll, Christine Rosser, Dave King, Raymond Lee, Geoff Banham, Mick Riley & of course me, Dalek, your ever luvin', cave dwellin' trog!

***Dalek***

P.S. Check the web page on 'Ogof Llyn Parc' for a picture of the winch setup and further info.

## Library Additions: November 2025 – April 2026

### Journals:

- Berliner Höhlenkundliche Berichte: Iran Cave Directory 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition. (2009)
- Black Rose Pothole Club: Journal No. 2 (*published as pdf 2024 - printed copy dated 2025*)
- British Cave Research Association: Cave & Karst Science - Vol 52 Nos. 2-3, (*Aug-Dec 2025*)  
 CREG Journal Issue 132-133, (*Sept/Dec 2025, March 2026*)  
 BCRA Review 2024.
- Cave Diving Group: Newsletter: No. 237-238, (*October 2025 - January 2026*)
- Cave Rescue Organisation: Rescue '25. Incidents attended during 2024.
- Chelsea Speleological Society: Newsletter Vol. 67 Nos. 7-9, 10-12, (*Jul - Dec 2025*)
- Craven Pothole Club: Record Nos. 159-160, (*July - Oct 2025*)
- Derbyshire Caving Association: Derbyshire Caver No. 100, (*Summer 2025*)
- Descent: No. 305-308, (*Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov, Dec/Jan, Feb/Mar, (2025-26)*).
- Grampian Speleological Group: Bulletin: Fifth Series, Vol. 5 No. 5, (*March 2026*)
- Grosvenor Caving Club: Issue 178, (*Sept 2016*)
- Mendip Caving Club: News Issue 391, (*October 2025*)
- Northern Boggarts: Newsletter Nos 9-10, 11, 13-30, 32-36, 39-53, 55-62, 66-70, 72, 74-82, 84-91, 93-96, 98-100, 102-107, 109, 111-115, 117-120, 122-123, 127, 129-131, 133, 139, 141, 144, 146, 149-150, 152-154, 156-157, 160, 162-166, 168, 202, 207, 216, (*1982-2009*)
- Northern Mines Research Society: Newsletter: Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2009*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2010*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2011*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2012*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2013*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2014*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov (*2015*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2016*), Feb, May, Aug, Nov, (*2017*), Aug, (*2018*), May, Aug, Nov, (*2019*), 1960-2020 – Sixty Years of your Society (*2020*), Nov, (*2020*)  
 Sixty years of the NMRS (*2020*),  
 Sixty years of the NMRS (*August 2020*), May, Aug, Nov, (*2021*), Feb, May, Aug (*2022*).
- Peak District Mines Historical Society: Newsletter: Nos. 137, 154, 155 (*2011-2015*)
- RRCPC: Newssheet: Nos. 404-410. (*Dec 2024 -Nov 2025*)
- Easegill Survey: Guide to Sheet 5. *Pippkin Pot, The Mistral and Link Pot* (*2025*)  
 Newsletter: Vol. 62 No. 2-4, (Bound) (*Summer-Winter 2025*)

Sheffield University Speleological Society: Swaledasle Expedition Report (2025)  
Societa Speleologica Italiana: Speleologia 91-92, Anno XLVI (Giugno, Dicembre 2025)  
Wessex Cave Club: Journal 367 -368, (August 2025 - January 2026)  
White Rose Pothole Club: Newsletter: Vol. 42 Issue 3, Vol. 43 Issue 1. (Nov. 25, Mar. 26)

**Separate Sheet Surveys:**

Crag Foot Mine, Warton Crag - Pete Ashmead Archive  
Lower Mine and South Level - Pete Ashmead Archive  
Easegill Caverns Survey Sheet 5 – Pippikin Pot, The Mistral and Link Pot (2025)

**Other Publications:**

Weardale – Above & Beneath *Ryder, Peter et al. (2025)*  
Pete Ashmead Archive: Additional photographs, + extracts.  
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu – The cave of the Black Spring, *Ed. Peter Collings-Wells 2025*  
Le Grotte Dei Monti Aurunci Vol 1. (2013)  
Monti Aurunci Occidentali - Ricerche speleologiche (2007-2009)  
Derbyshire Lead Mining – Through the Centuries *Kirkham, Nellie (1968)*  
Coniston Coppermines Rediscovered, Part III: *Fleming Peter (photocopy – part of)*  
Levers Water & Paddy End Area – showing important Mine features: (includes 8 surveys)

*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 current access arrangements and then issue the member with a key. They will then be able to view library material on site or log out any publication they either borrow or wish to browse in the Reading Room.*

*The library is an excellent reference facility, please respect it - but above all please use it.*

***When returning items, please place everything in the returns basket provided.  
Please do not replace back on the shelving.***

***Thank you***

***Sandra Wilkinson - Librarian: [m.wilkinson@btinternet.com](mailto:m.wilkinson@btinternet.com)***

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[www.rrcpc.org.uk/wordpress](http://www.rrcpc.org.uk/wordpress)

**NEWSLETTER Editor:** Gwenllian Tawy [news@rrcpc.com](mailto:news@rrcpc.com)