



RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



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Spring 2022



Winner of Giles Barker Award 2023

Photo: 'NASA Speleonauts' by Alice Shackley

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023! While the wet winter weather may have put a halt to many recent caving plans, it seems that there remain plenty of reports to publish. This Newsletter dives straight into reports from recent club events and showcases the winning photographs from our annual photography competition. As usual, it was an event enjoyed by all involved. Congratulations to all winners, especially Alice Shackley, who was awarded the Giles Barker Award for her photograph titled 'NASA Speleonauts'.

In addition to some recent trip reports and updates on local digs, this Newsletter includes a couple of historic reports from Dalek's underground adventures. I am sure you will all enjoy reading these as much as I did.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter. Let this be the beginning of a great year underground!

Gwen Tawy
Newsletter Editor

News

RRCPC AGM

The Red Rose A.G.M will be held on Saturday March 4th at 5:00pm at Bull Pot Farm.

Afterwards we are having a wake in memory of Andy MacDonald and Jim Newton. There will be free food around 7:30pm. Please come if you can. Let us know if you want food so we can plan. If you do want food, please remember to let us know of any dietary requirements. Please contact the Social Secretary, Alice Shackley, if you would like food and if you have any dietary requirements.

RRCPC Library Keys

We are now offering library keys to Members who would like to have access the books and journals held in the library. If you would like to apply for a key, please contact the librarian, Sandra Wilkinson. There will be a validation process, where you will be shown how to sign books out and back into the library. It is important we continue to care for our library, as many of the books are valuable and some are irreplaceable.

Bullpot Farm Jobs List

We have recently emailed all Members a list of jobs that can be done by anyone visiting the Farm. We hope you will read this list and help out where possible to reduce the workload on the few people that help run the club. A copy of the list is available at the Farm too. The full list will also be published in the next news-sheet (March 2023).

BCA Cards

If you have paid your BCA membership through RRCPC, your card is now ready for collection in the Reading Room.

A Eulogy to Jim Newton

Publishes here is the eulogy to Jim Newton read to those gathered to celebrate his life as he made his last trip.

The large number of cavers here today are a testament to Jim's popularity and the deep respect in which he is held in the caving world.

He was first introduced to caves as a result of a geography field trip while at Morecambe Grammar School and he joined the Morecambe Rock and Pot Club.

Dunald Mill Hole, near Nether Kellett, was his first cave. He invited his youngest sister, Edith, to come and take a look too and she arrived in her kilt and T-bar shoes, ready for exploration.

He joined the Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club in the late 1950s where he became a central pillar, participating in and leading trips, in the UK and overseas. He joined a caving expedition to India in 1970, travelling in a former Preston Corporation double-decker bus. It was a magnificent journey passing through, what are now some of the most dangerous hotspots of the world. If you haven't read the full story, you should. Copies are available from Hazel.

His caving career came perilously close to ending in February 1982 in a cataclysmic rock fall in Lost Pot. He was extracted by a CRO team at considerable personal risk to the rescuers. After a long period of recovery, he returned to caving. We owe a great debt to all those involved in his rescue.

Jim claimed he was not a leader, but he was. He led by example. Caving trips with Jim usually went smoothly. Any mishap was quickly resolved under a hail of friendly banter. Jim was also an underground Cave Rescue warden and was on the call-out list for many years.

He was a keen and competitive photographer, always wanting to win the annual club competition and would cunningly discourage others from taking a camera on trips.

He was a keen explorer too. Jim found the infamous Aquamud sump which yielded new passage after crawling through thick, gloopy chocolate. He was also active on the surface. Casterton Fell is peppered with Jim's digs.

Jim introduced a lovely lady to Bullpot Farm and became a truly happily married man. A honeymoon was planned, but with a difference. How on earth did Jim sell the idea to Jackie of taking nine cavers, along with one of his new daughters, on a honeymoon to a cave called Pinargozu in Turkey?

During some serious armchair caving, Jim told me what he enjoyed most was the camaraderie, spectacular sights and the clink of electron ladder against rock. He believed the underground world was to be enjoyed, explored and preserved. At the end of a satisfying day, his only wish was for a few pints with the lads and a chat about the next big find.

As the vicissitudes of old age crept up on him, he spent many hours rearranging his photos in no particular order. His favourite underground photo was of his lovely wife, Jackie, trying to keep her hair dry when squeezing through a duck in Dowber Gill cave.

Thanks to his friends, he was able to enjoy a descent of Gaping Ghyll during a winch meet. He also enjoyed a reunion with the surviving members of the India trip and a successful book launch. He will now be trying to sell copies to St Peter.

He participated in a whirlwind of activities as his 90th birthday approached and was lauded by the famous caving filmmaker, Sid Perou. A video of Jim's Lost Pot accident and rescue was created, closely followed by a tribute video. Watching these gave Jim a lot of pleasure.

Following his departure on the last great trip, many tributes were received from cavers far and wide:

He was one of northern caving's greats.

- A wonderful person to know.
- Full of boundless enthusiasm.
- Bull Pot Farm will never be quite the same.
- He was affable, always asking what we had been up to as we wandered past the Farm.
- He was a friendly chap with a huge knowledge of caving and digging.
- He will be sorely missed.

Jim's favourite quote came from Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

Thus, we say goodbye to an old friend, a special person who enriched all our lives, an iconic elder of the Red Rose club and a legend of the caving world.

God bless you, Jim.

Dave Creedy on behalf of all Jim's caving friends

Boxing Day Walk 2022

26th December 2022

Andy Hall, Pete Hall and family – Eleanor, Matthew and friend Darius, Bob and Roz Johnston, Emma Key, Sam Lieberman, Carol Makin, Bill Nix, Carmel Ramwell, Steve Round, Beardy, and Sandra and Mel Wilkinson

Twenty Red Rose members had signed up for this year's walk, but sadly Yassen had contracted Covid when he arrived in England from America so he and his wife could not join us.

Our first stop was the Dry Rigg Quarry viewpoint where Andy Hall explained the geology of this massive site. Then up and over the fellside, across the Austwick road and on to a farm lane that brought us to the start of the uphill climb in Oxenber and Feizor Woods.



Boxing Day Walk

Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Through the woods and on to Pot Scar Fell, now in the sunshine - it had hailed on us in the woods. On reaching the first wall we stopped for lunch, again in the sunshine. When we reached the ridge, the wind was now blowing a hooli, so with no dallying we headed for the narrow contouring path which leads to Smearsett Summit (363m).

The obligatory photo was taken by Sam Lieberman before we headed off down, to walk the valley back to the woods and then the Pennine bridleway, which led us back to the cars.

Distance covered 6.45 miles with an ascent of 951 feet. - by Carol's Strava!

It was lovely to see everybody and catch up - a nice social event, whilst doing a good walk.

On then to the Helwith Bridge Inn for beer, food and a chat.

Hope to see you all next year.



Group Photo

Photo Credit: Sam Lieberman

Sandra Wilkinson

RRCPC Photographic Competition

14th January 2023

This year's event was well attended with a varied collection of photographs, many of a high standard. It was good to see a number of new people entering the event and some new placed or winning photographs. Thank you to Bill Nix for judging, and congratulations to Alice Shackley for winning this year's Giles Barker Award.

UK Below Ground



© chris hunter

1st

Left: Glasfords' Chamber, Gavel Pot by Chris Jones

3rd

Below: Adele Ward in Hagg Gill Pot

2nd

Below: Hugh St Lawrence Under Barbondale by Paul Swire



UK Above Ground



1st

Above: Pen-y-ghent Reflections by Sam Lieberman



2nd

Left: Wineglass, Ease Gill Kirk by Sandra Beattie



3rd

Above: North Pennine Winter Day by Al Cook

Abroad Underground

1st

Di Arthurs Somewhere in
Spain by Paul Swire



2nd

Lisa Wootton, Mazo Chico,
Cantabria, Spain by Paul
Swire



3rd

Julia Arce Saez, A Spanish
Forest by Paul Swire



Abroad Above Ground

1st

Top Camp View, Loser
Plateau, Austria by Gwen
Tawy



2nd

Fallen Log by Sam Lieberman



3rd

Echidna by Johnny Baker



Humorous

1st

How to Keep Toby Quiet by
Gwen Tawy



2nd

Is that Safe? by Sam
Lieberman



3rd

Old Ruins by Sam
Lieberman



Pocket Underground

1st Place and Giles Barker Award Winner for best overall photo – NASA Speleonauts by Alice Shackley (see front cover).

According to Alice: *This photo was taken in Marble Steps on The Ninety with only a Duo for lighting. My team consisted of Nathan Walker, Ann Barber, Sarah Parker and myself, who are all ULSA members and whose initials spell NASA. On our way out of the cave I suggested taking photos on this pitch as it's such a straight hang. I have a new phone which is waterproof, and it's been a great way of taking quick snaps and providing a rigging guide or description underground.*

With a vague plan in place, I went up the pitch first and waited at the top whilst Ann got on the rope. When she was part way up, I shouted for Sarah to light from below whilst Ann and I turned our lights off. I had to direct Sarah to move around at the bottom so her light was behind Ann and not to the side which, unbeknownst to me, moved Sarah directly into the drips. The sacrifices we made for art. First photos were rubbish and I made Ann prusik up higher and told Sarah she could wait a bit. Only a bit more faff later and this photo was achieved. Thank you to my ULSA team for their patience. It was a big surprise win and I'm very grateful.



© chris hunter

2nd
Snug by Chris Hunter

3rd

Right: Lord's Passage, Hazeltop Cave on day of original exploration by Andy Hall

Below: A much-appreciated blast from the past featuring Jim Newton, Ron Bliss and Ray Duffy by Dave Creedy



In Search of Fat Arse Squeeze

5th November 2022

Dinny Davies, Martin Green, Jack Overhill, Toby Speight, Gwen Tawy, Phil Withnall

We were all looking for a short trip so that we could be back at the Farm before the Bonfire celebrations started. Unsurprisingly we ended up defaulting to the old favourite – County Pot. We walked towards the entrance in the drizzling rain. Underground, we split into two groups: one taking the trade route towards Battle of Britain, and the other group going to the same place via the Snake. After regrouping, we decided to mix the teams up and split up once more. Toby, Jack, and I crawled down Lower Pierce's Passage to the second County pitch. We met the rest at the bottom of the pitch, and walked towards Ignorance is Bliss together. Here, Martin and Phil decided to turn around, while the rest of us made our way through the Iggy Bliss bedding plane into the Trident streamway again. Dinny and I sent Jack and Toby down a right-hand fork to look at a stal boss they hadn't seen before, while we continued down the left-hand fork and awkward traverse towards Fat Arse Squeeze. Dinny had a go at the squeeze after making his way across an awkward traverse but failed to fit through. As we weren't sure that what we were looking at was Fat Arse Squeeze, Dinny built a temporary cairn at the squeeze and we wandered to the other end of the squeeze, which can be accessed from Brown and Smelly Chamber. The cairn was found and we called it a day.

Gwen Tawy

Low Douk

12th November 2022

Dinny Davies, Gwen Tawy

It was a sunny but cold day, and after a lazy morning we arrived at the cave later than usual. Unsure of which entrance to use, we eventually settled on the Original Entrance, contrary to the original plan. I was surprised by how narrow and steep the dug entrance was. Just as I was getting comfortable with letting gravity do the job, we reached an awkward climb, which led to a lovely twisting canyon. After another downclimb, we crossed the top of the streamway, reaching a large chamber. We followed our noses here, searching for where the NCC entrance connects, but we failed to find it. Giving up, we returned to the streamway, following our noses downstream. Here, the passage became progressively narrower. Dinny particularly enjoyed it when I got stuck on an awkward and narrow corner (after he slipped through effortlessly). He pleaded with me to take my SRT kit off and accept defeat. I eventually agreed this was sensible and left my kit on a nearby ledge. After more twisting and turning, we reached another impressive chamber. Around the corner was a climb down to the sump which was so awkward I decided not to attempt it. On our return we tried again to find the connection with the NCC entrance, but only found a couple of sumped passages. The light was fading when we emerged from the Original Entrance, but as we were in no rush to return to the Farm, we had a look at what we now suspected to be the top of the NCC entrance. Dinny traversed over the 6m pitch while I looked on in horror. This did not look easy. After a few minutes we decided it was best for me to stay above ground. I waited for Dinny for longer than I had anticipated, but he eventually emerged looking relieved to be back. It was apparently even more awkward beyond the traverse, so I was very relieved I had stayed behind!

Gwen Tawy

Juniper Gulf

3rd December 2022

Martin Green, Dave Loeffler, Adam Thompson and Philip Withnall

Because of the good weather, there were a lot of people interested in the club trip to Juniper Gulf, a cave we don't often plan to visit because it's more than a few minutes' walk from the car. There were enough people interested that two teams could be formed: one to rig the cave on Saturday, and the other to derig on Sunday. Martin G, Dave L, Adam T and me (Phil W) were the rigging team. After a relaxed breakfast in Inglesport, we drove to Crummack Lane, changed, and headed up the hill. Through a combination of Martin's hazy memory, a bit of map-reading and a bit more guesswork, we found Juniper Gulf and Adam started rigging.

With water levels really low, all the rope we brought for the high-level cascades traverse was unnecessary. We left it behind so it could enjoy the clear skies and fresh air while we headed underground.

Alternating riggers along all the interesting, but at times tedious, traverses, there was ongoing debate about whether we'd reached the 'Bad Step' yet, with seemingly every other bodylength in the traverse being considered bad. When we did reach the Bad Step, though, there was unanimous agreement that it was definitely Bad and required a little thought. While the rest of us were thinking about it, Adam rigged on through and was gone round the corner before we'd realised.

At the final pitch, we decided to split into two pairs, with Dave and me going down to the bottom first, taking a quick look round, then coming back up and heading out of the cave while the other two went down. That should minimise the time spent waiting for people to go up and down the big pitch.

What a nice pitch it is! I was expecting not much at the bottom, but actually the streamway at its foot is really pleasant (I guess because the water was so low) and nice to explore. 10 minutes of exploring later, Dave and I headed back up, and started on out of the cave. On our way out, we left a present for Sunday's team: a twist-lock karabiner on the final tackle sack, which seems to twist the wrong way and thoroughly confused everyone. So much so, that apparently Team Sunday cut the donkey's dick and left the krab in the cave. Surprise! I hope they enjoyed it.

Not having to carry the bastard red tacklesack with us through all the traverses, Dave and I made speedy time out of the cave and managed to walk back to the car with the last of the light. What then followed was the inevitable long period of waiting for the other two and wondering if they were overdue yet. As is traditional, we had just started to formulate a plan for heading back onto the moor and searching for them, when they turned up having had a lovely time. Good timing.

Phil Withnall

New Year at the Farm

This year was the busiest New Year I have experienced at the Farm. While it was overwhelming at times, it provided a great opportunity to catch up with friends and go caving with different people. My energy levels were low when I arrived, having battled a bad flu over Christmas, but I had promised Sam Walker (a prospective member) that I would take her somewhere on that day. I was very relieved when she said she'd be happy with a jaunt to Great Douk and Sunset. Dinny Davies and David Loeffler joined us; also keen for an easier day out. It was a bitterly cold day, and I was glad to get out of the cold wind when we eventually reached Great Douk. The cave was much wetter than the last time I had been, and I was dreading the wet flat-out crawl at the end. It was as miserable as expected. After some persuading on the surface, I agreed to visit Sunset with Dinny and David, while Sam returned to her van to warm up. Although I made it underground, I turned around at the first climb, as we didn't have a rope. Dinny and David caught me up on the walk back, and after a swift change in the wind we were greeted by hot water bottles and crisps in Sam's van.

I was feeling a bit more adventurous the following day, so agreed to visit Gavel Pot with Dinny, Nat Dalton, Hannah Collings, Sarah Parker (ULSA), and Kieran O'Malley (ULSA). Dinny, Nat and I were the rigging team, so we set off first. As we were changing, I realised I had left my SRT kit at the Farm! Bashfully, I admitted to the others that I would have to return to the Farm but promised them I would catch up. By the time I had returned, the derigging team had arrived and were getting changed. I quickly got my caving gear together and stomped off to the entrance to catch the other two. I had never been to the bottom of Gavel before, so I spent quite a bit of time following my nose and looking out for rope. Thankfully, it was straightforward, so I didn't get lost. Nat was rigging one of the final pitches when I arrived; it looked rather awkward, but I could tell Dinny was enjoying it – especially when Nat got wet. We bumped into the derigging group after ascending the last pitch (good timing!). They had just come from Glasfords. We told them that was our next destination, and asked them kindly not to derig on us. I wasn't concerned about this being a possibility until I realised how extensive Glasfords is – It appeared to go on and on and on. Despite the nagging feeling that we were being derigged on, it was well worth the visit.

Cow Pot was the destination on New Year's Eve. It was a popular option, with 6 of us on the trip: Dinny, Alice Smith (ULSA), Lyds Leather (NUCC), Sioned Haughton (Wessex), and Andrew Atkinson (Wessex). The route that had been rigged was not one I usually take, so I was quite surprised by some of the rigging (A later inspection of the rigging guide showed that it had been rigged correctly; it's just awkward!). When we had all reached Fall Pot, we slipped through the boulders into the streamway. As I had suspected, water levels were quite high, so I decided to turn around after 5 minutes. Although I expected the rest to continue to Stake Pot in the streamway, everyone agreed it was best to use the high-level route that day. Our mission was then to find the Subway. We found it by taking a right after Stake Pot, towards Thirsty Junction. The Subway was on the left-hand side after the junction, and it looked very unappealing. I had a go first, but quickly realised the passage was very narrow and sloping downwards quite steeply into a pool. I decided it was best not to push on in case I would be unable to worm myself out of it backwards. A few others in the group had a go too, but we all agreed it was too small. We abandoned our plans, and instead visited Equinox Hall. On the return, Dinny, Sioned and Andrew went to have a look at the 88ft Pitch while the rest of us made our way back to Stake Pot. We bumped into DUSA at the top of Stake Pot, who were looking for Cape Kennedy. After giving them some vague directions, we continued to Fall Pot, now reunited with the other three. Lyds and I agreed to derig as a team, singing and dancing at the bottom of Fall Pot to keep warm while the others prusiked out. Thankfully the prusiking and derigging quickly warmed us up. Our trip was extended by 15 minutes near the open pot, when I told Lyds to climb up an awkward squeeze that didn't go anywhere. Turns out Alice also made this mistake, but I did feel guilty about making Lyds spend 15 minutes pushing herself into something that didn't exist!

Gwen Tawy

Rollerball – The Saga Continues



Sam Capping Pissoir Deux (photo: Chris)

Having given up on The Pissoir, halfway along Samoru Passage, we're now concentrating our effort on Pissoir Deux...This little pee-hole is just beyond the pretty stalls near the end. It was hard work at the start of another awkward downward slanting pit but it draughts outward and there's the sound of running water, deja vu! Unfortunately, there's only work for two people, one capping and one removing spoil so we're having to rotate the team members of Ray Duffy, Sam Lieberman and Chris Hunter or one person is freezing their proverbials off. This hole looks remarkably similar to the one that Johnny Braindead is capping at the bottom of Casterton Pot a mere 10 metres away, possibly?

Ray Duffy

Sam Capping Pissoir Deux
Photo Credit: Chris Hunter

Other Digging News

With a spurious smoke test between Rollerball and Casterton Pot earlier in 2022, we started looking for possible connection sites at both ends of the caves. Work in Rollerball had been reduced to one going lead, whereas the Casterton end had at least three possibilities. In order to facilitate further work in Casterton Pot Sam and I decided to re-open the old entrance, thus avoiding the annoying first pitch. Several large boulders were removed (one causing serious damage to my foot), and a beautiful dry-stone wall was constructed, thanks to Sam, with entry then gained to the bottom of the old first pitch. The chamber above The Joy Ride was stabilised by us and Chris, allowing easier access to Guillotine Pot and the on-going dig above it. We're just waiting for favourable conditions to do a definitive smoke test to check which of the leads we are to commit our efforts and hopefully join the two caves and maybe even Aygill if we're lucky?

Ray Duffy

Sam in Casterton Pot
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy



Five Fools to Fools Paradise: A Gingling Hole Epic

13th December 1981

Robert Bialek, Tom Clifford (Cabin Boy), Adrian Laycock (Gimmer), John Parrington, Gary Sparks

Six weeks previously, I had managed to gather together at least 20 cavers, but due to wet weather the meet was cancelled. It wasn't clearly stated when it was brought forward & at short notice & without any indication to those who had come for it beforehand. Apologies to those cavers.

What I'd planned on doing over 2 days by 2 different routes was quelled. It was now only to be a trip to Fools Paradise for Five of us.

Gusting slightly, it was a cold walk up. Once down below we rapidly heated up & descended quickly to what I thought was the third pitch. There were no signs of a secure belay & so I traversed back & laddered what looked like a blind shaft, at first. With 30 ft of ladder it still swung freely 5ft off the floor. Getting off wasn't easy! "Tom, try a longer belay & rig it 5ft lower if you can," I shouted up. There was no effective belay but Tom's skill at rigging saved the day. A quick look round Stal Chamber & down through a chimney & crawl to Fools Paradise. All went well until we returned to the entrance pitch. It wasn't just Adrian's lack of self-lining (over overhangs), getting stuck & even The Frozen Rope that set things back somewhat as, on reflection later on, I found that we would still have been stuck inside a Blizzard even if we came out 2 hours earlier!

It was dark, freezing & blowing sleet at gale force level by the time all of us had surfaced at about 5.30 pm. What I thought was the way back to The Shooting Box – only some 300 yards away made for the biggest mistake in my life so far & also theirs! For we came to a fence in white out conditions & followed it with me cursing all the time. Speech was drowned out by the wind noise & at one point I shouted that I'd made a mistake & decided that we should go over it, to hit the track that was further on & to our left. It wasn't to be! We'd gone too far up, already & none of us wanted to turn back. Tom & I decided we should fan out & keep in 'LIGHT' contact with the next man. This proved impractical due to the wind blowing sleet into our faces as we looked sideways onto each other. Regrouping by the fence & following it to its end (at least it went in the general direction, or so I thought) to reach a wall. Tom said go uphill & I said go downhill! I felt greatly uneasy about Tom's directions & looking back, on a map, it proved that it would have taken us into the region of Littondale! The downhill route brought us to a gate. "Which way now" they all exclaimed. I tried to keep my composure but it proved difficult when your fingers are frozen & people, like me, were blue in the face! I declared, to follow this path; it turning out to be nothing of a path at all, as it degenerated into nothingness! So, Tom & I agreed to keep close to the wall going downhill all the time. We both assumed, by going downhill that we should either hit one of the large farms, the road or the village if we went too far. Another rickety fence loomed up, like the one close to the road. I proclaimed "Hey chaps, I bet you owt that this is the one close by the road." All eyes strained, but we only saw another wall, 20ft or so away. This time it brought new life into our tired & frozen limbs. Struggling over it; we stumbled onto what we thought was a track. Telegraph Poles came up & so we followed them on. Then Tom made the miraculous discovery of The Road! He'd accidentally stubbed his foot on a grate! Whooping for joy we

nearly all died of shock when, 2 mins later we found the car just where we had left it; 7 -8 hours earlier. Drifts had formed & once underway in the Mini Van we'd have to stop every 100 yards or so to dig the wheels out of the snow. The rubber floor mats came in handy for this task. Eventually, reaching a farm building, Sannet Hall to be exact. Here we were made most welcome with steaming hot cups of tea & buns, & ham & chips. Also, we had a change into dry & baggy fitting clothes as we'd all gotten changed at The Dump into our wetsuits (me & John) & fleecies/oversuits. The clothes remained there in the changing room. Snuggled up by The Huge Fire we eventually turned in for the night. Assistance was called for, but The CRO couldn't make it up the hill from Stainforth.

Up at 7a.m. Monday morning & the weather was still & settled. A bowl of Porridge inside us & off we went to dig the Mini Van out again. This time using 2 spades & with the help of 2 guys – forced to camp inside their vehicle just 200 yards away on the other side of a huge drift! A snow plough found it too tough, but a snow blower came along & cleared the road for us to get to the main road, & The Dump by lunch time. We got changed into our own clothes & back to Bradford, almost exactly 24 hours since leaving there. I think this trip turned out to be an epic to beat all epics.

Robert Bialek (Dalek)

Pollnagollum: County Fermanagh BPC/CPC/IRISH Trip

30th-31st December 1987

Robert Bialek, Dave Cockfield (Parrot), John Davies, Pat Mulligan

At The QUBCC club hut at Black Lion, the rain was lashing it down at about 11a.m. Everyone was shambling around until 1p.m. I asked Ray McGarry & Liam Clancy on what the prospects were of doing anything at all. Going through a short list of about a dozen caves & pots it was generally agreed that only one - Pollnagollum, was just about the only one that we could do. It was said to be a NON-FLOODER; but surely; is any wet cave?! Novices were taken down time & again, like on any KMC trip.

Parrot decided to come along only at the last minute. Nick(?) showed us the way to the entrance. Once there I realised I'd forgotten my wetsuit long johns & so I went back to the cottage to get changed there. Was I getting soft in my old age (32), or sensible? Anyway, Nick kindly drove me over to the roadside entrance again, where the others patiently waited, in Pat's car.

Parrot was already down, grovelling around the boulder choke by the entrance. We all climbed down & almost immediately met the river. Unknown to us all, but at that moment the river had already started rising!

Swimming along with the aid of a fixed line for about 100 feet until we could wade past a low arch. Walking stream passage got us down to a magnificent large chamber about 40 feet high & 30 feet wide. We climbed up a sandbank & a muddy slope that was strewn with boulders & blocks. Then we regained The River by passing through the chamber at its lowest side. Wading

again, to reach another bypass/climb up over huge fallen blocks to gain a much cleaner, & prettier chamber, floored by gours, stals & flowstone.

The impressive climb down again, reached the river, flowing in a fury through a trench– like passage. Stepping down cautiously & lowering myself into it, I thought this river would just about be as sporting as it could get!! While the others watched, I moved along by pulling myself on the left-hand wall. I promised I'd be back soon, just taking a quick shifty to the end. Here the current was so strong that it was just possible for me to continue. Where the passage widened & the rapids became prominent, I had to cross because the handholds disappeared & I didn't like the way the water was trying to force itself (& me) under the left-hand wall. Here, progress was made by leaning against the flow, jamming my feet carefully, in turn, against large boulders & moving one hand at a time. Crossing like this 3 times in all got me to a climb out & through a hole in boulders to a drop across a pool. Shortly after, the passage ended in an evil looking sump, along with cascades of water pissing in from the roof everywhere. The situation was indeed now serious, but I was in dire need of the toilet!!! Loitering, for some minutes I was shocked to find the levels on crossing the river had gone up enough to make life hell! Seeing only a single light in the distance I was glad that someone had stayed behind to see me back through.

Once on the far side I had to "claw" my way back, feet were out of depth & I was lying almost horizontal – a position that proved very tiring on the arms. Got to within 20 feet of John but the handholds gave out & I was on the wrong side! In desperation I tried climbing out, but the roof was only a few feet above. Now I was feeling totally isolated, terrified & benumbed; with at least a 7-foot gap which seemed impossible to cross. Before I knew it, I'd let go or something broke off. It happened so fast that in an instant I was washed along to the other side & being sucked under the ledge that John was standing on! Luckily, I was facing the right way & instinctively grabbed hold of anything that came to hand. Pulling myself up from underneath the ledge I felt that still yet, I might get sucked back under. Screaming at John to grab me; he saved me by pulling me out by my chin strap. Shaking violently, as much from fright as the cold, we climbed up & back down to re-enter the river again. This time it was John's turn to get swept away. I'd crossed by jumping in & ending up in a low eddy section, but I was too late to grab John as he sailed past at a terrific speed. Luckily, he grabbed onto something, & I rushed over to fish him out.

Still trembling uncontrollably, I walked with him along the dryish bits to reach the massive boulder-floored chamber, encountered near the entrance. John said the water level had come up about a foot in the half hour that he'd waited for me. Now we were stranded on the far side on a sandbank, watching the levels come up about an inch every 3 mins. Realising that our hopes of getting out were getting slimmer by the minute we saw that the arched passage was very low in airspace & as we forgot what lay beyond we resigned ourselves for a long stay here. Pat & Parrot must've gotten out. Time was now 15.15. We were on a muddy slope at the highest point about 20 feet above the river level & thought that this was as good a place to stay & sit it out. Though, for how long? A further 10 feet above us we noticed a black water mark. This filled me with horror as it reminded me of a certain party who had been swimming in water for a full 24 hours in The Holloch in Switzerland!!

So as this could be the worst possible scenario, we decided that we could sit it out on our high perch; with our backs to the wall & legs over the other in turn, we talked or rather, I did.

Running out of things to say & growing tired & bored we decided to doze off. Every so often we'd swap our positions when either of us got cold &/or "dead legged". Also, every hour & on the hour we'd take a running-on-the-spot session for 5 or more minutes. I think this was more of a morale booster than an exercise but achieved the same effect.

Time went by slowly & I kept a vigil on the water levels at these times. By 7p.m. it had risen 7 feet. By 8p.m. it had dropped a foot but then came back up again. By 10p.m. the levels were dropping fast & were lower than when we had arrived here, some 7 hours ago! We decided to wait a further hour to make sure. At 11p.m. we started wading across & under the arch & followed the far wall down, it being about chest deep. Two sets of light were seen 100 feet yonder. The last part involved wading across a 5-foot gap which was difficult for me; thigh deep & with a fierce current; yet impossible for John. Jumping across, he fell in, but got out ok.

Parrot & Pat had sat it out atop a boulder, just above the water levels. They were at the point just before the last obstacle - the low bit before the handline aid. Deciding to go back to their comfortable refuge as, 5 mins later, for the third time the water levels rose & we were again marooned. It seemed so savage, & so unfair. Moving up a 30-foot slope & muddy climb to reach muddy boulders where we now dozed in pairs. I was quick to take the initiative now as I grabbed Pat to keep me warm; especially since my bare behind was exposed due to wear & tear to my wetsuit! Spent about 2 to 3 hours of close cuddling like this until we dared to venture back down to check the stream level. Here, all 4 of us shared our heat as best we could; atop an awkwardly shaped boulder the 4 of us were so inextricably intertwined that if one moved, we all moved apart!

At 05.15 we heard shouts &, rushing down we saw lights playing onto the water at a hole, 2' high by 1' wide. Parrot moved off first, Pat, John then I. I grew frantic, expecting the levels to rise at any moment & trapping me. We found Kenny Grey sitting in a Dinghy with John hanging onto it on the far side. While Kenny pulled us along I & John steered the dinghy clear of the walls. At one point the Dinghy swung round & did get stuck in the narrowest bit. I manoeuvred it out. Met Ken Ferris at the far end who seemed surprised by our condition. Apparently, Parrot had taken Mick Ramsey out by carrying 2 tackle bags & showing him the way through the choke! Ken tried to show us the way but got us into a tight - looking chamber. I showed him the best way through!

There was one hell of a reception committee waiting outside for us. Not knowing who to turn as there were so many new faces, I found myself plied with soup & sandwiches (& offered Whisky) from many outstretched hands.

Going back to the Cottage was a fiasco! Pat's sister drove us over, missed the turn, reversed back, followed by 2 more cars. Suddenly, a car coming our way forced us all to stop. A trailer was unhitched & we all squeezed past it! It was Pat's Mum & Dad!

Everyone swapped drinks & everything was downed in half an hour flat, according to Liam. We were so "High" that I couldn't get off until 09.00. Pat was the only one who came out of it at all badly. Due to a circulation problem & a tightish fitting wetsuit restricting her blood flow, she had gotten swollen hands. I slept in until 1pm that New Year's Eve.

Then it was nothing but Pub, Pub, Pub thereafter. The Pub games were quite brilliant. I wished that they had things like that over here. It was a REAL CAVER'S Pub. A separate lounge bar was assigned to us & free trays of sandwiches were put on (for 2 nights). The Landlord also let us WRECK the place as well! At The Bush Bar, in Balcoo. Games played included Bottle Walking, Stool Passing (The Solid Kind), Hand-Stand Walking, Sit-Up/Knee Walking, Climbing up/round/through stools & chairs. I managed to demolish a stool when I got wedged underneath, 10 people holding it down. Something had to give & it wasn't about to be me!!! The legs came apart & I don't know if they ever got 'em back together again. John climbed out of the car window onto the roof rack on our way back! And so, it went on, day passed to night & eventually we got to bed.

Robert Bialek (Dalek)

NPC Dinner Report

In the interests of maintaining good relations with our poorer cousins at the N.P.C. I attended their winter dinner at the Plough in Wigglesworth as Red Rose guest. Got soaked cycling over there and the pub's changed a lot since I was last there, but at least I managed to keep my clothes on this time (ask the B.P.C!). Food was good and a fine talk by Adele Ward on explorations at Fairy Holes, that's great work being done up there. Also, some interesting extensions being made in Wharfedale just by going that bit further up the miserable crawl or through the boulder choke proves that there's cave to be found just by going to some of those more out of the way places. Didn't manage to get a lift off anyone but the moonlit cycle home was much more pleasant than the ride over in the rain.

Sam Lieberman



Hugh St Lawrence in Casterton Pot
Photo Credit: Colin Jones



Removing dangerous tree from Bullpot of the Witches
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Library Additions: December 2022 – February 2023

Journals:

BCRA: CREG: Journal: Issue 120. (*December 2022*)
Transactions: Vol. 49 No. 3. (*December 2022*)
Bristol Exploration Club: Belfry Bulletin Nos. 582. (*Autumn 2022*)
Chelsea Speleological Society: Newsletter Vol. 64 Nos. 7-9 & 10-12 (*July-Dec 2022*)
Descent: No. 289-290. (*December 2022/January 2023 & February/March 2023*)
Federation Francaise de Speleologie: Spelunca. 1980 No. 1 (*incl. supplement Special No.3*)
Mendip Caving Group: Bulletin No. 3 (*Feb 1989*)
News/Newsletter: Nos. 167, 169, 173-175, 178-179, 181-182, 192, 200, 203, 206, 208, 214,-215, 223, (*1983-1992*)
RRCPC: Newsletter: Vol. 59 No. 3 (*November 2022*).
Shepton Mallet Caving Club: Journal: Series 4 No. 1 (*June 1966*)
Speleologia: N. 86 (*September 2022*)
Wessex Cave Club: Journal Vol 36 No. 358 (*November 2022*)
Westminster Speleological Group: Bulletin Vol. 7 No. 7 (*February 1972*)
White Rose Pothole Club: Newsletter: Vol. 39 Nos. 1-3 (*2022*)

Other Publications:

Lechuguilla Cave , Discoveries in Spendor. *Max Wisshak and Hazel A. Barton (2022)*
Somerset Underground Vol. 3 Central and South Mendip *Traviner, R. M. (2022)*
Hohlen Und Karst – Steirischer Warscheneckstock Geyer, Ernest et al (*Dezember 2021*)
Caves in the Totes Gebirge, Austria (In German with English Abstracts)
Caves of Southern Ireland (Uni. Bristol S.S.) (*2022*)
New Zealand Karst - A voyage across limestone landscapes into the subterranean realm of caves (*2020*)

Sheet Surveys:

Ogof Dydd Byraf (LUPC/CPG 1970)
White Scar Cave - Sleepwater Series (*ULSA 1970*)
New Goydon Pot (*CPC 1956*)
Marble Sink and Pot (*ULSA 1964-5*)

Stop Press:

Changes for easier access to the library for members coming soon!! Details are being finalised – until then Members wishing to use the library should contact any committee member who holds a key. Then, log any publication you either borrow or browse in situ. The library is an excellent reference facility, please respect it - but above all please use it.

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