



Eldon Pothole Club
Newsletter

April – June 2009

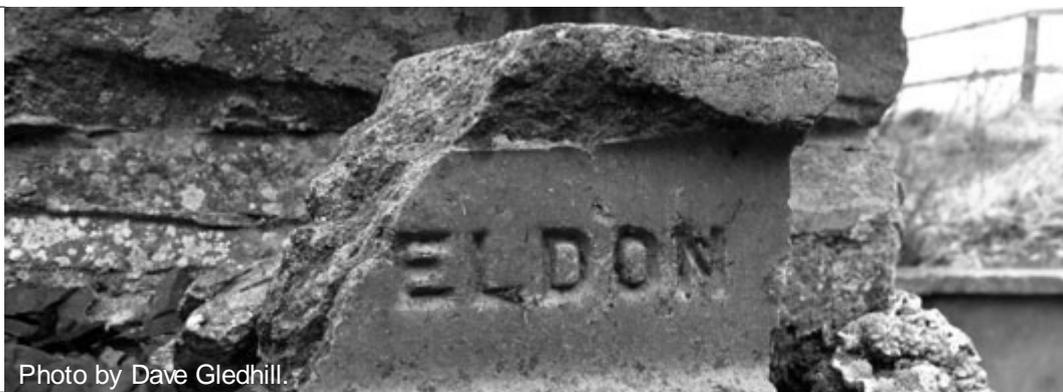


Photo by Dave Gledhill.

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Editor's Bit

This newsletter is probably one of the most varied in recent years. There's great accounts of the work that the Dangerous Brothers and associates are doing in Stoney dale; Barny and 'Grave Deadhill' report on recent digging and contorting sessions in EPC 10 – a small, wet and draughty cave in the Coume which has a surprise (usually in the shape of a moonmilk dam) round every awkward corner. There's some vertical horror-stories from Bradwell Moor where Dan and Bob Toogood continue to go where no right-thinking people have been since the miners decided the place was crumbling and got themselves out! Dave Cowley reports on a prolonged dig at one of the most-promising places in Bagshawe Cavern. There's sports trips in Derbyshire and Yorkshire and no end of other stuff. Keep it coming...

Jules Barrett.

New Full Members at the April AGM

The following cavers became full members of the club at the AGM in April:

Jim Alder, Bob Grimes, Jody Hibbert, Mark Harrison, Toni Murphy, Mark Noble, Wendy Noble, Jon Pemberton, Sam Pemberton, Leann Rennie, Andy Robotham, Tam Rennie, Col Walsh, Ernie White, James Wood. Nice one!

Projects

Dig in Moose's Revenge Report by Dave Cowley

Following the breakthrough of The Snakes Pyjamas dig in 2002 (see EPC Newsletter Spring 2003) easy access was established to the Full Moon Series enabling digging trips to be easily undertaken. Initially efforts were directed at Dead Ahead Dig, and then the end of Moose's Revenge (on line with, and approx 50m from Madame Guillotine in the Hollywood Bowl Series), digging the rift down the "pots" just before the end of the passage. After much effort, work on this project petered out as the then open Hollywood Bowl Series (Namread Sump had dropped), and then the Upper Streamway (and Sam's Dig) captured the team's attention.

In December 2004, Bog Bergmann and Dave Cowley were keen to get some progress going at Moose's Revenge again. Instead of digging in the



Chris Schofield in the dig. Photo by Dave Cowley.

rather uninspiring rift, they both thought a dig in the fill at the very end of the passage could bring results. At the end there is a small swirl chamber where the roof lowers quickly to meet a fill floor. Two trips to the dig had seen some fill removed, and a body sized hole made through a layer of calcite, the way on would be digging under the calcite layer. Hoping the rock roof above the calcite might raise, small holes were drilled into the calcite, no significant voids were detected. Several more trips were undertaken making a few metres progress until a lack of stacking saw the project fade from priority.

Interest in the project was rekindled in October 2008 with Chris Schofield joining the team. The first issue to be addressed was the lack of suitable stacking space. It was decided that the best option would be to fill in the second "pot" previously used as a hauling shaft from the rift below. Forward progress in the dig was soon being made gaining a metre or so each visit, there was still no sign of voids above the calcite layer. As the passage dipped the calcite ended and a solid rock roof was met, ending dreams of open passage above, but giving the team a definite route to follow.

Before long, the air quality at the dig face was becoming an issue, usually after an hour to an hour and a half of digging, Dave and Chris seemed to suffer more noticeably than Bog, and hence were allocated the "canary" role. Sam came up with the idea of installing a fan (from a computer, powered by battery) to pull air away from the end via a 3/4inch diameter plastic pipe. Although not providing a great amount of suction, it did have an effect at the end. On several occasions when the fan has been disconnected, the air has become worse within a short period of time. As progress has been made the effectiveness of the electric fan diminished, and it has now been replaced with a foot pump (li-lo type affair), that creates a better flow, assuming the pump operator stays on the ball of course!

The issue of stacking is an ever present problem, the second "pot" was filled quickly, rubble bags are now being packed with spoil and stacked until parts of the excavated passage can be backfilled. This is being delayed due to the air conditions, the larger the passage, the more space for air circulation, and a rapid exit if required.

Over the past six months progress has been good, advancing approximately 20 metres from the initial hole through the calcite layer (as of 17th March 09). There are several theories of how far remains to go, the main thing is to keep digging.



Bog moving spoil. Photo by Dave Cowley.

Earth Leakage Dig

Report by Dan Hibberts

After hearing various tales about Ghost Rift and its potential to find new cave I thought it was time for a visit. We did the usual round trip in Giants, which was a bit sporty with the snowmelt travelling down the Crabwalk. We put on our SRT kits and jumared up the fixed rope into Ghost Rift, which seemed in good condition. At the top of the pitch I realised that Ghost Rift is an inlet and much bigger than I expected. The passage heads north mirroring the passage below (the Windpipe) until it gradually becomes flat-out and at the end suddenly travels upwards into a very dangerous choke. At the top of the choke is a collapse, which looked perched and ready to drop. We came up with a plan to sort it, which involved loads of scaffolding and men to carry it in.

After talking to Mark Noble he explained the chamber above the choke that had been found in 1990 is a very interesting lead. The passage at one end of the chamber headed west away from the Crabwalk with an undescended pitch at the end. But sadly the choke had collapsed before they had a chance for further investigation. Returning a few days later with loads of scaffolding and heavy bags to carry in, the Pemberton brothers, James Wood, Nigel Strong and Bob Toogood we seemed to have a pretty good team. But still even with six men there was loads of stuff left over to carry. Luckily just as we had got ready cars started to pull up full of cavers. I explained to them that they were just going to have to carry scaffolding for us and they just agreed without too much fuss! Dragging scaffolding and heavy bags full of clips through the Windpipe is not much fun and the brother's Grim went all the way in and out with scaffolding twice! Setting about stabilising the choke went pretty well the immediate boulder that needed support was easily dealt with, a kind of fence was constructed to arrest any rock big enough to block the way in. So all that required sorting now was the rock looming above the scaffold, which needed completely removing. A hole was soon drilled in the side of the rock so it could get dealt with. But it did not go according to plan. It was supposed to come down and bring all the rubble down with it, but it broke in two and rather stubbornly stayed put. This made it really difficult to deal with as it looked as though you would only have to sneeze on it and you would be entombed in the boulder choke. The problem was what to do next? We needed something with a bit of a kick to it. Returning a couple of days later with a solution we set about removing the boulder, which after lighting the blue touch paper and retiring to a safe distance the boulder had decided to co-operate. The

draught seemed to have doubled which was very enticing but there were still a lot of big loose rocks hanging about. Poking them with a scaffold bar and hiding around the corner until the rumbling stopped seemed to be the way to go on, a bit scary though especially when things you didn't poke come down for a visit. A joint decision was made between Jody and I that things would need a bit of time to settle and our nerves would need a bit of time to recover. I had begun to realise why Mark and his team had abandoned such a promising lead and why nobody else had attempted to gain entry to such a promising part of the Giants Oxlow system.

We returned the following evening with more supplies and a good team for removing some of the rubble that had accumulated in the crawl. When we arrived we found that there had been a big collapse as I had hoped. In the collapse a big hole had appeared with blackness and an echo. It had started to get exciting but you still would not have been able to get in until a bit of work had been completed. Loads of boulders were thrown down the hole where Pete Pollard was waiting to drag them back out of the crawl. We reached a point where you could have climbed through but there was one more rock that we needed to remove to make it safe. We poked it with a scaff tube and it came rumbling down blocking the way up, as it was too big to fit down the hole. A decision was made that we would leave this rock in the way to stop perspective pirates getting in until we came back. We headed to the Wanted Inn for a pint and discuss the next step.

Bob Toogood and I returned the next day ready to move the boulder and finish stabilising the choke. The rock that was in the way was soon dealt with only to be replaced by another avalanche of rocks and mud. It seemed to be never-ending but you could see a big black space behind the blockage, Bob explained he had not long before he had to go. Bob left while I just finished sorting this final block, when it had been removed I could see a route through the boulders into the chamber above. I just hoped it did not collapse before we came back.

Returning Saturday morning with plenty of help Dave Ottewell, Sam Townsend, John Pemberton and Nigel Strong I told the guys we might be able to crawl in if it had not collapsed. On arrival at the choke Sam went first for a look and was not convinced that it was safe enough to travel through, so I had a look and also decided it wasn't a good idea. We tried to poke some of the looming boulders with a long pole but nothing moved, Sam had another look and just for a second I was relieved as I thought Sam would go for it which meant I wouldn't have to. But Sam pointed out he had kids, and I hadn't which was a fair point so I had to go for it!

Not long after going through I realised that it might not be as easy to get back. Then suddenly it all collapsed and I couldn't see a way out so I thought it was about time I had a look around the very smart chamber that I had got myself entombed in. Sam asked what had trapped me and on inspection there only seemed to be one rock that needed removing, he soon Hilti capped it and the way through was cleared. Next we got all the scaffolding passed through the choke and while most people were looking around admiring the chamber I stabilised the choke. Apart from a little more work that needed doing and a decent survey we had got through in just over a week and finally after 19 years we have a safe way into Earth Leakage chamber.

Turncliff Swallet

Report by Dan Hibberts

Turncliff Swallet is one of the swallets above the reservoir on Stanley Moor. Mike Salt had mentioned that it could be a productive dig as a way on could be seen through boulders that could be capped. Short of something to do Clive Levy and I went for a look, as the book had described a 6-foot drop between boulders into a bedding cave blocked by a boulder, I would have said it was more of a boulder choke. The said block that was in the way, had two shot holes drilled in it maybe from a previous attempt that someone had made at removing it. The way on did look promising so we set about removing the block, which was bigger than it looked. Behind the block was a flat out on your side squeeze between boulders that also needed a bit of enlargement but this enabled us to see there was a flat out crawl that needed digging to gain entry and a good draught. Clive shouted me up as loads of official looking men wearing day-glow yellow jackets had arrived on the scene wondering what we were doing. We explained that we were cave diggers from the Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club. They were interested in what we were doing but explained that their boss would probably not be as interested because this is a very sensitive area that belonged to the Mines Research.

Returning a few weeks later we found that some spiteful person had filled in our hole, not that it would be too difficult to gain entry again if permission was granted. This would be a very interesting dig if access could be gained.

Part of Kittycross Cavern?

Report by Dan Hibberts

Recently Bob Toogood and I have been investigating some of the lead mines around Bradwell. I remembered descending a mine in the bottom of the quarry opposite the spa washing plant a few years ago. I believed the mine to be unexplored and thought it needed further investigation.

The draught had been incredible the last time I was there and it seemed today was no exception. Dave Ottewell, Jody Hibbert, Bob Toogood and I went to investigate. At the bottom of the quarry in the mineral vein there is a small hand-picked level descending to the head of a climbing shaft. The top of the climbing shaft is very loose but the main part of the shaft is well built and fairly stable. At the bottom of the shaft is a worked-out vein that is mainly filled. On the opposite wall

is a hand-picked opening which goes through into a large worked-out rift. This is where you notice the draught which is extremely cold. At this point you descend the 2nd pitch which is vertical for about 5 meters landing on a steep unstable slope. At the bottom of the slope is another pitch, which needs great care while descending. I think at one point I might have said that I could not believe I was stupid enough to come down here twice! This pitch is about 20 metres deep with stacked deads resting on timber directly above. We needed to kick down all the dodge hanging death and let things settle.

A trip was planned the following week, Bob had managed to get hold of some ex-army smoke bomb's which we thought would indicate if there was another entrance in the quarry below...

There was no sign of any red smoke, which made the place even more fascinating. We got set up with more rope, a drill and some bolts we also took the spare smoke bomb to trace the draught at the bottom. Descending the final pitch did not seem to have been made any less dangerous but at least we no longer had deads directly above the pitch. At the bottom of the pitch the rift goes back under the slope and pitch with suspect timbers holding up 20 meters of precariously stacked deads. This extends about 40 metres to a filled-in shaft with a natural passage on the left stacked to the roof with deads.

The opposite direction is another steep slope to the head of another very unstable pitch this is where the draught appears to flow. We decided to traverse over the top to find a safer way down. At this point we began to realise the seriousness of our surroundings, we had also run out of rope! There is a possible traverse over a big drop which looks like it might continue through a load of deads if you had the bottle to climb it. I remembered that we still had a smoke bomb and thought it might be a good idea to see where the draught went. Bob did not think it would be a very good idea while we were in there! He was right everything went red and you could not see a thing, which I explained to Bob was maybe not such a bad thing. Leaving the place tackled up for another trip we made for the exit planning to come back with more rope.

A few days later Jody and I returned with more rope and bolts. Returning to the point we had visited the previous week the rope was soon rigged for a free hanging pitch, which is about 15 meters deep landing on a steep slope. At the bottom of the slope there is a small climb about 2 metres up onto a false floor. Lying on the floor on top of a rock on the false floor is a plug and feather. At this point is another steep slope which goes under a load of collapsed deads into a small but extremely dangerous chamber. You can look up a hauling shaft, which appeared to be taking most of the draught and probably connects with the traverse higher up. A decision was reached that it was too dodge to do any more pushing but there is scope to find more of the same...

What a frightening place!

The Stoney Middleton diaries...

Reports by Jon Pemberton

10th December 2008 - Dig hunting in the Dynamite series

Cavers: Jams Wood, Jon Pemberton & Sam "Dervish" Pemberton (EPC)

We went for a quick trip down Flower pot to have a gander at a few question mark areas in the Dynamite series. Whilst waiting for Dervish I had a quick look up a very tight rift which Jams had previously climbed up only to get stuck... this was back in the spring of 2008. When Dervish finally popped his head up into the bottom of Falls chamber I shouted him up to come and have a look at the base of the rift choked with a humongous boulder although you could see down a crack for 2 metres before hitting the floor.

15th December 2008 - Reconnaissance trip

Cavers: Jams Wood & Jon Pemberton (EPC)

Jams was keen to have a look and after digging and hour plus in the Eff chamber at the bottom of Flower pot, digging a hole in the floor for about a metre we eventually got around to having a look at the choke in the north of Falls chamber. The moving of some large rocks gave us a viewing space into a rift dropping 2 metres down choked at the bottom, a metre wide at its best and 2 metres long.

17th December 2008 - Pushing trip

Cavers: Jams Wood & Jon Pemberton (EPC)

Armed with pushing equipment, the capping of a jammed rock resulted in Jams pushing down into the rift only to find the continuation of the rift headed north to a further choke at floor level. A tight viewing space could be entered at the most northerly point of the rift. A continuation could be seen heading down through boulders emitting a slight draught.

22nd December 2008 - Pushing trip

Cavers: Jams Wood, Jon Pemberton & Dervish (EPC)

After losing the lump hammer through the choke the only equipment we had was the rock around us. By capping down and removing a metre or so of rock we finally managed to find a star shaped hole in the solid floor, only to be choked downwards by more rock. We had now dropped around 4 metres from the top of the rift. Through the ever continuing choke a tight continuation could be seen for about 3 metres. We had already predicted that our choke was heading close beyond Porth crawl. Whilst Dervish was still capping Jams and I made our way to the other side to see if we could connect the two passages. Jams decided against coming through Porth Crawl and waited at the start. As soon as I got

through I could hear dervish banging away. I followed the noise up the tight rift and straight to clog passage where we gained the vocal connection. Although after trying the visual and failed miserably I headed back towards Porth crawl only to hear some massive banging of blocks behind me. By the time we had got back to Dervish his hands were in agony and the final bang had emptied the choke forcing the blocks to the floor of the tight rift although spoil was moving constantly around us and dropping down. We left it here this evening and retreated to the Miners.

23rd December 2008 - Pushing trip

Cavers: Jon Pemberton & Dervish (EPC)

Dervish and I had decided to go and check out how much more stuff had actually fallen into the tight rift. To our surprise not very much! Dervish entered first only to find the floor choked and tight! You could see down into a large rift towards the north but the only way on was about 2 inches wide. I had a quick poke but it seemed awkward and without a third man we could achieve nothing!

8th January 2009 - Digging trip

Cavers: Jams Wood & Jon Pemberton (EPC)

We decided to take a kibble in for the task of retrieving spoil from the base of the tight rift. Jams and I managed to retrieve on load before deeming it too awkward with only two people... gave up and went to the Eldon meet.

11th February 2009 – BREAKTHROUGH! THE CODEINE CONNECTION, Dynamite Series, Carlswark Cavern

Report by Jon Pemberton

Cavers: Dave Brown, Andy (SUSS), Jon Pemberton (EPC)

I had been caving with these SUSS guys a few times before and they were keen to start a new dig for Wednesday nights (digging night.) I had taken them to end of Picnic Passage at the end of 2008 and thought that they would never return. To be honest it was bloody horrible squalid conditions! Dave contacted me asking for some information on whether the Eldon boys were active in the far reaches. Jams and myself had really lost interest in the Porth Crawl bypass having been let down by our fellow Dervish and requiring three people to remove spoil the calculations just didn't work out. I told Dave the situation with the bypass and how efficient the connection would be with regards to digging in Picnic Passage. They had a quick reconnaissance trip and were eager to get the job done! We had an eventful trip down P8 on 10/02/2009 where we agreed to start the next evening.

We met up in Eyam village at 6:50pm as the lay-by opposite Flower Pot had temporarily been classed as out of order? I had already rigged the entrance when I arrived at the informed meeting time of 6:15pm! After kitting up and chasing around Eyam square trying to find each other we made our way down the dale to the Flower Pot shaft. Dave descended the shaft first followed by Andy. I entered the system last casually hanging the excess ladder in situ. We had to de-rig a horrible Eldon digging rope from the entrance previously used by an un-named club for a quick departure from the Dynamite series. I met Dave and Andy at the bottom of Falls Chamber discussing how we would remove spoil without the use of a pulley or krab. A bit of quick thinking resulted in a bowline tied through the anchor big enough to haul rope through. The first line up started with me at the dig face in the tight rift, Dave guiding the rope in the chamber above and Andy in Falls chamber (North extension) hauling spoil.

Whilst pushing the chamber above the tight rift a few considerable sized boulders had fallen down only to be buried by more spoil so first things first we had to chain the boulders out from the bypass and into Falls chamber. Once the boulders had been removed it was time to haul out a few buckets, only the length of time taken for each bucket to be emptied persuaded the digger to carelessly dispose of the more spoil from the dig by launching it through the continuation of the tight rift only to block up the squeeze in Clog passage beyond Porth crawl! After digging down for a foot or so the rift was still too tight to push to the north and below the rift was closing up fast. A low bedding had appeared striking east to west. West soon closed up although east seemed to be larger and continued for another 6 inches or so after being visually out of sight. A bit more digging downwards confirmed the closure of the rift below but the bedding to the east had now turned into two phreatic tubes. A smaller right tube stretching for a metre half full of clay and a larger left tube approx. 20-25 inches in diameter which seemed to oxbow left towards the cross rift at the start of Clog passage, appearing to drop right into the continuation of the rift beyond our dig! I shouted up with the news and Dave was keen to get stuck in. We all swapped places and Dave attempted to push the dig feet first. A big flake had to be jammed into the tight rift to enable more space for persuasion. Andy and I swapped places in the chamber above trying our best not to knock anything down the rift but it still happened. Decisions were made and instead of using the hauling method we would just throw spoil down the rift into Clog Passage and as always worry about it when it happens. Dave started mumbling and arguing below. He came back out of the tube and did what can only be described as a vertical push up but it still wasn't going. The idea came about to push the right tube feet first and once so far in duck your head under into the left tube. More mumbling and arguing came from below disrupted only by a massive crash as the flake had dropped through the tight rift blocking off any exit from Porth Crawl shortly followed by, "Yeah it just U-bends around the corner to where we want to be!" We shouted back, "Nice...go on then, push it!" more grovelling was heard from below then we got a faint response, "Yeah I'm through, are you coming Jon?" "Hell yeah!!" I shouted and quickly climbed past Andy in the extension chamber dropped down into the tight rift and tried entering feet first thinking it'll be easy. A horrible few minutes were spent in the left tube with my knees forced the wrong way. I backed up and asked Dave for the secret manoeuvre forced my legs in the right

tube and ducked under into the left. The boots had to come off. Several spins later I was stuck at the end of the tube thinking I need some serious help. I finally managed to get both arms out of the tube and another spin I was climbing down rubble and dead ends to Clog Passage!

Andy climbed down next asking how it was. I didn't lie it was a bastard to say the least and terribly awkward. Yes we finally managed to bypass Porth Crawl with something shorter and more awkward. I climbed down to Dave who was digging our way back into the rest of the cave thanks to our strategic digging technique. By his point we were laughing our heads off from how awkward it actually was and relieved to get through! Andy was having a right struggle trying to enter the tube another way. To cut along story short he got stuck and badly maimed his knees in the vicious U-bend and started shouting at us laughing at him... this didn't help. Dave made his way up to help him out but Andy refused on this occasion and slowly backed out.

We decided to head out via Porth Crawl after Andy's episode it sounded hard thus completing a small, awkward round trip of the Dynamite Series. We stumbled out of Flower Pot all aching to death and retreated to the Miners. Dave thought up the name after having a nasty sledging incident on the Monday he resorted to taking Codeine, me falling down P8 entrance the night before didn't help... with Andy bending his knees the wrong way in the tube the name just suited it.

Straw Inlet Dig, Dynamite Series, Carlswark Cavern

Report by Jon Pemberton

After much discussion, on Wednesday 18th February Jams, Dave Brown and I entered the Dynamite Series to enlarge the very tight newly discovered Codeine Connection. Little was actually removed due to the tightness of the passage although a desperate pinch was enough to make the connection less awkward. After an hour of graft we took on our recce' trip of the far reaches, Jams made his first attempt to push through the Codeine Connection but failed after a few attempts and made his way back to sleep in the car. Dave and I made our way along Clog Passage towards Buckley's dig. We managed to get about 70m+ along picnic passage before terminating due to the passage being way too tight for us!! Quote, "trying to push forward by only using your chest muscles is pretty damn hard, caterpillar like." On retreating I stopped to gain some stretch at Straw Inlet, an upwards sloping passage heading north. Jams had been up once before to report it was pretty hard going and the passage contained some actual white formations at the end. I stopped for a sec to notice an encouraging draught heading out from the inlet. As soon as Dave reached the cross rift I made my way up to the end. Once up the passage turned into a crawl with a nasty pinch through chert over a calcite floor. The passage then turned NE and again more tightness up a muddy/boulder slope in a tube to what appeared to be a collapse with a view of small boulders and voids beyond. The draught was very encouraging here, much better than the horrible remoteness at the end of picnic passage. Dave had a quick look and it was decided that this would be our next dynamite dig. We made a quick exit to find Jams had been asleep for a good hour and a half!

The following Monday saw Dave, Dervish and I back to start the dig. Dervish struggled to get through the Codeine Connection but with help from gravity he got through. 10 minutes and we were at the dig face, armed with trusty trenching tool digging commenced. We started cutting back the bank stacking the spoil in a small cross rift close to the dig which filled up quick. With very little space you soon lost your breath whilst digging even with the strong draught. With insufficient stacking space we required drag trays to carry on so we made our way out. The Codeine Connection took another victim in the form of Dervish who was way too scared to exit using the bypass, Porth Crawl seemed "easy." We were back again on the Wednesday in numbers but effort was concentrated into stabilising the unsafe drop into Clog Passage.

The first Wednesday in March was the next effort, consisting of Dave, Andy Chapman and I. We took in 3 perfectly sized drag trays for the dig. Gallon oil containers cut in half, just the right size to fit through the passage. Dave started the dig whilst I dug out the calcite floor to make a nice flat out crawl to overtake the cherty squeeze, Andy trailed at the back stacking the spoil. We all swapped around and after much cutting away at the bank we could now see up into a space a metre high continuing out of sight but more digging was required for a better view or even still a push through. We left on a high and in time for hydration at the miners.

Wednesday 11th March was the breakthrough to the supposed inlet. I started at the dig face and pushed on removing a few head sized boulders, Dave passing back trays through the squeeze and Andy gladly stacked the spoil in what seemed spacious passage. I managed to eventually squeeze up through on my back kicking off the back wall with both arms at my sized, what a bad position? I found myself looking up an aven about 1m ½ high, 1m ½ long and at its largest 1m wide. Joy! I backed out and told them the good news. Dave made his way up, a bit more digging and he was up into the aven enough to check out any potential ways on. At the top where the roof seemed to end impenetrable feeder tubes passed east to west. The draught was located to the muddy/boulder although digging was hard and stacking space was running out.

We came to the conclusion that if we were to carry on, digging out the floor, following the draught would be the way forward although you wouldn't say that whilst you were down there.

The Dynamite Boulder Choke

Report by Jon Pemberton

Another project we had in the pipeline was a boulder choke at the end of the largish (for Stoney) tube heading west over the top of Porth Crawl. When the Dynamite Series was pushed in the '70s the choke was considered to be near enough an impossible dig due to the tight nature of the Dynamite Series and the length of cave getting to the dig face with equipment from Eyam Dale Shaft. This was second to Picnic Passage on our priority list after completing Flower Pot (see EPC newsletter 2008_04) and the Porth Crawl bypass, (Codeine Connection.)

The choke appears to be the upwards continuation of the roof of Prospect Chamber directly above Porth Crawl. We had looked at the choke a few times on some recce trips beyond Porth Crawl but were worried if we started to tamper, what affect this would have on the lower choke and our only entrance out!

Dave Brown and I started the dig on the 28th April armed with a metre crowbar and trenching tool we started attacking the choke as it was completely run in with boulders of varying sizes and loads of dry fill. After removing a few largish boulders which we weren't amazingly prepared for, we started to notice an encouraging inwards draught which had us hooked. We were back two days later eager to remove more boulders. Having removed some of the lower section, our method of digging consisted of us hiding in the tube whilst poking and levering boulders in what appeared to be a void between more large boulders heading upwards from our safe tube. Large rocks we now beginning to drop down at break neck speed so every time it collapsed we had to cut the floor under the choke back until there was enough room for anything that fell from the choke to land nicely at the bottom void without rolling down the tube. At the end of the night we were left with a massive tilting boulder which we couldn't justify leaving for next time. Dave lightly poked the rock to see how jammed it was and to his surprise the whole bloody thing collapsed!

We managed to drag Dan Hibberts away from other projects to have a quick gander on the Saturday. Dan and I went through the Connection while Jams bitched out and dragged Bob Toogood through Porth Crawl but failed to get through due to "The Fear!" He retreated, Toogood followed and they made an exit. Dan started attacking the choke sniggering, "Ooooh, you know what this reminds me of...Earth Leakage." He continued to laugh to himself. "I've found the key. Get that boulder down and it'll all come down!" Haha, it was all very amusing. We decided that we needed some stronger persuasion and got out.

Dave and I decided that we needed a larger poking device. On 7th May he managed to drag Andy Chapman down through the connection with a 1.8m crowbar, fan-bloody-tastic! Back on the 12th, Dave, 'ard Sam Pemberton and I started to attack the choke at a safe distance with the new crowbar. After removing a load of fill which was now turning into sloppy grot being only about -20m below surface. The key stone was knocked out of place creating a collapse in the void leaving a slab bridge resting on hopes and dreams, which seemed pretty damn jammed. That was the one time which we did not leave it collapsed! Dave and I were back on the Friday and it was pissing it down with rain. Thinking to ourselves, well what else could we be doing hey? One of the large boulders had dropped down since our previous session, luckily armed with Jams' drill we hastily proceeded to break up the rock only to realise it was much larger than we had imagined.

The 19th saw us back at the dig. We managed to haul the rock with an old rope (plus three of us attached) just far enough down the passage to a pinch where it wouldn't budge. Dave and I returned on the 21st to cap the rock which was pretty easy going. After clearing out the floor below the void we collapsed the choke again crashing down another large boulder which required further capping. The following Tuesday massive efforts went into removing loads of rocks and spoil; our biggest effort to date. At the end of the session beyond the tube you could follow the back wall up through the choke to what looked like solid roof at a height of 4 metres. By this point every boulder that dropped from the choke created a very unpleasant rumble somewhere behind our void (Death Chamber) at times the rumble seemed to be coming from a very high space indicating that the choke was very large and a lot more work was required. Things were grim.

5th June saw Jams' first trip through the Codeine Connection after loads of, "Jon, I can't do it! My legs are too long!" 10 minutes of boredom and he was through. We were even accompanied by the first female through the connection possibly the only female beyond Porth Crawl Andy's bird Sally. Again a fair amount of effort went in to removing loads of spoil slop. Was a good laugh for 3 hours whilst taking the piss out of 'ard Sam Pemberton.

"Sam's so fat...."

8th June was a very strange evening. Dave, 'ard Sam Pemberton and I had been removing some more liquid goo ready for a boulder-removing fest when we seemed to encounter a jam in the now collapsed Death Chamber. After it had been deemed that it wouldn't drop I spent a good 10 minutes levering out a dominant piece in the Russian roulette jenga we had going on. It rumbled down with a massive collapse losing everything we had pursued over the last month or so, it literally looked like we had not been there. We all sat quiet perched in the tube whilst a loud noise of what sounded like flowing water was echoing beyond the choke. We all started to worry, questioning ourselves, had we hit the drains? "Oh my god! I think we should get out." knowing that the flat out back to connection would be pretty damn hard if water started to flow! After 5 minutes the sound started to fade away. Removing a few more rocks left us with a view up through boulders to a small void of darkness. A strange night that left us on a high!

11th June saw Dave, Andy, 'ard Sam Pemberton and I all ready for the breakthrough! Dave and Sam started to stack deads further back in the tube whilst I attacked the choke assisted by Andy. Shortly, rocks started to easily slide out creating a larger void which was now nearly pushable. A few more rocks were removed and we were through. Andy

Climbed up through the choke first and entered a large cross rift and most definitely the upward continuation of Prospect Chamber. The chamber stretched across to the right up a very steep boulder slope which immediately directed your eyes to the roof consisting of massive hanging death! All of us agreed that it was really dodgy and wished to spend as little time as possible up there. At the far end of the chamber at level with the top of the boulder slope there appeared to be stacking although none of us wanted to go for a closer inspection. The draught disappeared through the roof.

I dragged Jams to show him the new find and accompanied by Digging FM we started to enlarge the entrance and clear the place up. Bored I started to attack the boulder slope on the left and dead ahead hoping that the tube may continue and after cutting the slope down a couple of metres some sizeable rocks dropped so we went to the pub.

We left the choke for a week and returned for our last effort of smoke testing the draught heading up through the boulder roof and possibly a connection towards Fireset. After an hours worth of digging a void heading back up through the choke to about 1.5 metres indicated the massive slabs from the back wall had dropped creating a massive collapse thus blocking entry to the chamber now named Death as thinking back it was massively unstable up there.

Ivy green too tight. (Too much of a bastard more like!)

Report by Jon Pemberton

After a good few sessions dragging a drill and digging tools to the end of Ivy Green I have vowed never to return... well not until it 'goes' from the other end! The 450m return flat out crawl is pretty easy going unless you're dragging crap.

The final choke consists of a roof fall in a metre cross rift choked with a large stalagmite boss where passage can be seen continuing beyond. Previous digging attempts of the choke were made during the mid '70s by Noble and co. which included three of them pissing in the final cross rift due to lack of light and no water for their carbides. Anyway, hammering away at the stal boss with lump hammer and chisel got nowhere so the team retreated to pursue other digs.

First of all we made entry into the final, final cross rift easier with some very awkward capping followed by a good floor beating session. Now with easy access you could get a good view of the continuation beyond the stal choke by shoving your helmet behind it and gaining sight at floor level. The passage continued for a foot with a couple inches of air space before slowly rising before hitting a flowstone bank about a metre or so away. (Similar to the two flowstone banks at the squeezes in the known cave) But with no view ahead.

By deception of having 'the digging head' on we foolishly dragged the drill back to the end and after another good look and no drilling we decided that, "too much of a bastard" was pretty damn accurate. We did note there was the very slightest inwards draught present whilst capping with 'smog' not bagging up.

As for what's beyond the calcite choke; the end of Ivy Green, Picnic Passage (Dynamite series) and draughty silted tube at the bottom of Eyam Dale House Cave are all heading towards the same place a large section of blank limestone, so there's good potential for a largish breakthrough. Although with regards to Ivy Green you'd either need to take a large section of roof out for a metre or so or break up the heavily calcited floor but beyond there's no guarantee that it's not flowstoned to the roof!

A lot of thought and a bolted route later, we still haven't got nowhere!

EPC 10 (Gouffre des Optimistes)

It was nearly big enough to get a name and now it has one

Report by Barny

After the last bit of digging with Jules down EPC 10 or the "Gouffre des Optimistes" as we opted to call it, I returned with Dave in January to break through the next 'etroiture'. Dave succeeded in lowering the mondmilch floor sufficiently to squeeze through into a slightly larger place. This involved working flat out in the icy water but zee sexy French pontoniere method does help you to keep dry but you have to remember to bring a puncture repair kit if your toe nails and the passage walls are as gnarly as this ones' are. The venturi effect at the tightest point produced a draught that would have put out the best of acetylene lamps but it had no effect on the Stens. A tight corkscrew bend negotiated by a full 360 crocodile death roll took us into a small chamber where the passage continued down a short series of cataracts to end in a rift a metre or so long that again barred progress. (The Armitage Shanks series). Manic hammering allowed us to see round the corner but wasn't enough to



Dressing up in the latex fetishist outfit.

allow us to get through. I returned there on the last day of my leave with Sylvestre and Philippe from the local club and we used a bit of chemical persuasion on the rift. Unfortunately as the dets had been forgotten and remembered earlier in the day we were running late we could not get back in after the fumes had dispersed to see whether we had done enough damage to get through.

After five weeks of time passing slowly whilst at work in Libya finally ended and I met up with Dave again ready to do further battle. A lot of snow made even accessing the parking difficult but undaunted we dug out the entrance and proceeded to the rift that had stopped previous progress. It was passed with ease and the way on continued relatively easily down more small steps until yet another mondmilch constriction was reached. Dave, as usual, set about it with

enthusiasm and dropped out into a small pot where the way on took on a completely different character. A few contortions and a series of cascades led us to another constriction beyond which was a 'vast' open space and from what we could guess a reasonably sized pitch. Thwacking with the lump hammer and lowering the floor with the screw fix shovel nearly got us through but it was not to be that day. Our next visit included Sylvestre and Philippe again, loaded with drills and bang we made our way down to our last stopper but without any more work we all passed through. We must have been knackered the previous time! Sure enough it was a big space but not as vast as we had imagined and there was a pitch but only about 15m. At the foot of the rope the water disappeared into a slot.

The End.

Or at least till Digger Dave gets stuck in there and set to work on the sides. It looks like mondmilch again and may enlarge enough to get through. There appears to be an increase in size after a couple of metres. It carries on down vertically for as far as we can see which is what we want but the snow melt made it too unpleasant to continue. A job for the summer?

We have started the survey of the 'Optimistes', so far we must be down around 80m-100m with a horizontal of 150m or so. We have given the thing a name now and we continue to be Opteemeestic. Now with nothing further to be done in the above we turned our attention to the other find I had made with Jules back last year...EPC 19 (see page XXXX)

January 2009 - Round Part One Report by Grave Deadhill

Cavers: Martin 'Barny' Barnicott & Grave Deadhill

A continuation - in two parts...

Snow-shoes would have been a good idea. Or skis, they would probably have been a good idea too. But not wellies, definitely not wellies...

The need to put snow chains on the Toyota 4X4 pick-up (R.I.P) to get to the car park should have given us a clue as to what lay ahead. After 40 minutes of ambling Wenceslas-like through the forest, wellies full of snow, we arrived at the snow-bound entrance to EPC 10. We'd dropped some gear off the previous day whilst on a prospecting walk and this was now nicely frozen and ready to put on.

The entrance is a small depression which you enter feet first, to slide down the snug slope, the snow from above spilling down to go down your neck as you pull the tackle bag behind you. (The entrance series has been described by Barny in an earlier article, so I will dispense with the niceties here.)

After the first two short pitches, it was harnesses off and launch headlong into the series of crawls and squeezes in which Jules became slightly chilly some months earlier. Each of the squeezes was flat-out whilst lying in water and invariably round a 90° bend. The last of these squeezes was particularly committing, leading headlong into a small chamber in



"Dave, as usual set about it with enthusiasm..." Photo by Barny.



EPC 10 'Base Camp' complete with classic Eldon cigarette pose. Photo by Grave Deadhill

which you could kneel upright, but required being waist-deep in water. This was the end-point of the previous forays into the cave.

The way onwards was through a low narrow opening at the far end (2m) of the small chamber, way too small to allow anyone through. Closer inspection revealed that the floor was made of moonmilk. Let digging commence...

Although bailing the pool was semi-successful, it kept filling up from behind and the moonmilk dam made reduction of the water level rather difficult. The only way to dig was to lie flat out in the water, arms at full stretch, whilst the floor was slowly hammered, scraped and generally abused into submission. Just for added interest, a freezing cold howling wind (not draught) belted past on its way further into the cave.

As the floor level was dropped and the passage made wider, it became easier to bail more water. The passage could now be seen to take another 90° bend to the left. As the water disappeared round the corner, it could be heard falling into a pool some way further in. This then repeated itself a little way further in again. Finally, a series of cascades could be heard, with echoing gurgles and splashes continuing away into the far distance for many minutes. The sound was very reminiscent of the sound of an old toilet cistern refilling, and so the 'Armitage Shanks' series was born (sort of).

Progress continued for a further 2-3 hours until it was possible to squeeze a full body length into the continuing passage and almost halfway round the corner. Ahead were tantalising glimpses of the passage enlarging, but progress was halted by a protrusion of rock and the fact that we were both absolutely freezing. Returning back to the pitches was made considerably easier due to the fact that Barny had been able to enlarge some of the squeezes and also lower the water levels in the pools that you need to crawl through to get to this point. A hasty exit was made and the snowy steps retraced uphill through the deep snow back to the car. Snow-shoes would have been good.

Next day saw us return, armed with the 24v Hilti, the intention being to stitch a series of small holes in the rock and then set to work with the lump hammer. This time it was Barny's turn to lie in the water. Although some widening was achieved, the rock did not want to yield sufficiently. Fortunately, we then noticed that what we had taken to be a solid rock floor was in fact just a raised rib and that the floor by the constriction was in fact more moonmilk. Hammering & chiselling ensued. After a good hour, again freezing cold from the wind, the double bends were passed and a slightly larger bit of passage was gained. This passage continued for around 1.5m and then went into a 180° bend. This is a most satisfying bit of caving, as the bed requires some yoga-like moves to overcome, with the best method so far involving a head first, flat out clockwise corkscrew motion, so you come out of the bend upside down. Luckily the passage enlarges slightly here so that you can right yourself before sliding head first down a 60° calcite/moonmilk slope. Avoiding the pool at the bottom, you emerge in (for this cave so far) a reasonable sized chamber approx 3m diameter, in which you can sit comfortably to watch the antics of the next person attempting the slope down.

Barny took the lead for the next section, an easy scramble down over a moonmilk cascade that narrowed into a rift. Removing yet another moonmilk dam allowed another slide/squeeze down to the beginning of a tight horizontal rift passage approx 1m high. Again, the floor was moonmilk with around a foot of water. Excavations revealed that the rift was around 2.5m long before it turned 90° right, again.

Being in possession of wisdom beyond his years, Barny let me have a look at the excavation of the rift so far. Not being in possession of the same degree of wisdom, I proceeded to try and pass through the rift by the only viable route.



Unfortunately this involved lying left side down, flat out in the water. A very tight thrutching session allowed me to get as far as the bend. To see round it involved pulling myself up the wall and peering over a nick in the rock wall. It was still too tight, so 10 minutes with the lump hammer allowed for a better look-see. There was a small moonmilk dam (again) but beyond this, the passage looked much bigger. It was impossible to pass round the corner at the end of the rift, but by judicious stretching and the use of quaint Anglo-Saxon digging terminology, it was possible to reach around the corner and attack the dam with the shovel. The released water could be heard to fall for around a metre or so before gurgling off into the far distance. What was needed now was a complex system of levers and pulleys to enable the rift to be widened. A retreat was made to plan for the widening to proceed.

To be continued....

February 2009 - Part Deux Report by Grave Deadhill

Cavers: Barny & Dave (with a little help from the locals).

It's de ja vu all over again. Look at those idiots with snow-shoes!

The drive up to the car park had been much easier this time around. The snowline was much higher and the tarmac was dry. Unfortunately, the way to EPC 10 was still covered in snow and this time much deeper and wetter than before. Every other step resulted in us sinking in, either knee or thigh deep.

Since I'd last been out here, Barny and two of the local stalwarts (Sylvestre & Felix) had revisited the tight rift that was preventing progress. Persuasion had been applied to the constriction, but it was not yet known if this had been successful. The fumes at the time prevented re-entry and it had been too cold and wet to wait for things to clear. Where is the draught when you need it?

We shot off down the pitches and through the now not so tight squeezes. Arriving at the point we had reached the previous month, we found the floor littered with sizeable chunks of rock and a clear way on. Two minutes work with the spade on what was left of the dam wall allowed an easy slide forward and over the lip and down the 1.5m drop. The passage was now wider and you could also stand upright – hooray. Progress could only continue by crawling down through a small window at floor level, dropping feet first down a tube into a small chamber, knee deep in water, held in place by.....a moonmilk dam.

Being quite an expert on this type of thing by now, the moonmilk blockage was removed in around half an hour. Unfortunately to do this required sitting waste deep in water to enable clearance of the moonmilk all the way round the 90° bend (do you see a pattern emerging here?).

A feet first squeeze round the bend dropped down 2m into another chamber, knee deep in water, with the way on through a small window at floor level etc. etc....

Another tight 90° bend under a flake brought us out into a horizontal low passage, with a helictite – result. Around 10m of flat out crawling came to a tight drop down through a short rift, followed by another step down into a reasonably sized steeply descending passage. No moonmilk, no 90° bends, the nature of the beast had changed. The cave was opening up, passages enlarging and a strong draught still blew; we were away now...

Another couple of drops down the rift brought us at another constriction and the return of more moonmilk dams.

The rift continued but appeared too tight to pass. Hammering a couple of lumps off the wall allowed a feet first squeeze through to allow a flat out lying position to be assumed in the water, held in place by a sodding moonmilk dam. More sideways thrutching in the water allowed me to turn round and stand up again. The rift turned (have a guess at what angle, go on, I bet you can't) to the left and again appeared to close in to a small gap around 8 inch diameter (I've included a bit of imperial measurement here in order to avoid alienating our older readers).

Pass the spade, the moonmilk will soon be removed and progress will continue.

Clang. Ouch. That will be solid rock then and not moonmilk.

Scraping out everything that was not solid and braying everything else that was, enabled us to crane our necks around the corner and see a lot of blackness. It echoed a lot too. Water could be heard falling, not trickling. It had to be a pitch. We tried all ways to get through the hole, but all were in vain. We retreated back out to bask in the glow of the day's outcome and freeze our nuts off on the trek through the snow back to the car.

We'd previously agreed that if we'd found any pitches etc. that we would go and get the locals who had helped so far. The



Barny contemplating the digging to come.
Photo by Grave Deadhill.

next morning found us over at Sylvestre's house, watching him drink numerous coffees and eating various pastries, in what I felt could have been a tactic to delay going back to the cold, tight, wetness that is an Eldon dig (To put it in context, Sylvestre and Felix had been on a trip the previous day that required them to explore the system paddling through the cave in dinghies).

Back at the sharp end again, Sylvestre showed little evidence of the recent pastry intake and shot straight through the constriction with little more than a Gallic shrug. Once through, the lump hammer was summoned and he duly proceeded to remove the offending protrusion to allow the rest of us to follow.

Puit - Dix metres.

The squeeze emerged at the top of a 45° moonmilk slope downwards for around 4m to the lip of a 10m pitch. The far wall was around 5m away and was around 10m wide. Spot on. A bolt was duly placed and backed up to a natural thread. Barny was the only one to have brought his harness into this section of the cave so he took the honours. The pitch landed on the floor of an oval chamber (dimensions as previous). The water was entering at the top of the pitch and landing on the heavily flowstone/moonmilk covered floor, whereupon it disappeared down a very tight rift running across the full width of the chamber floor. There was no way down through the rift, which could be seen to drop around 5-6 metres more. In the wall of the chamber was a small hole in solid rock, way too small to enter. The draught that had been following us until this point, decided to head off through this hole at a great rate of knots, rather than follow the water down the rift.

Once Barny was back up at the pitch head, I borrowed his kit for a quick look-see. The rift was certainly too tight, but after a few minutes with the hammer, it was found that a lot of what looked like solid rock was in fact yet more moonmilk. Some slight progress was made in the downward direction, but as it was directly under the waterfall, was impossible to attempt a dig at the time.

What's next?

A return is most definitely on the cards at some stage. A good size hammer and bar, or perhaps a pick, should allow reasonable progress to be made. The main problem (apart from carrying the kit down to the dig) is the water. It would have to be done when (if?) the water stops. Apart from driving you insane from the noise, you also freeze to death quite quickly. Taking it in turns to dig is even worse as you rapidly cool of once you've done your stint.

Any volunteers?

Bit at the end.

Whilst digging in the further reaches, we had a rather 'uncomfortable' moment. I was flat out, head down, wedged in a squeeze digging away, when Barny said he could hear the sound of water coming nearer and nearer from further back up the cave. The sound of water was indeed becoming louder and was obviously following the route we had taken through the squeezes to get here. It wasn't raining outside, although thinking about it, it was rather mild and there was a lot of snowmelt potential. Reverse out, quickly. Very quickly. No increasing draught, so not a flood pulse then, hopefully. Still, that water was coming nearer and nearer.

It turned out that all the pools we had cleared on the way in had refilled and were now overflowing. Although the volume of water was only minimal, the sound of the numerous cascades all starting in unison, exacerbated by the echoing nature of the passages, made for a very unsettling few minutes.

EPC 19

Report by Barny

We nearly didn't get there as there were so many holes evident burnt through the snowy warm air that Dave was a bit like a dog with too many lampposts. We dropped down the superb entrance pitch into the chamber but on the way in I noticed, about 10m up from the bottom of the pitch a small slot that was sucking all the air into it. It was a window into a parallel pot that went deeper than the one we were in. We carried on though to the bottom and passed under the bridge to the point where another entrance joins (free climbable). This had been discovered way back in 1987 but had since been lost. We spent a bit of time with the hammer and chisel making more progress in an hour than the previous party had with a couple of charges judging by the bang wire we found on the cobbles. This is



Barny prospecting in The Coume in winter. Photo by Dave Gledhill

draughting out quite strongly and is worthy of a bit more effort. On the way out though we started bashing away at the window but it wasn't going to give in to the hammer and would require a cap or two. After Dave's departure, a week of skiing and a quick trip back to the UK for me, where I went with Bob T and Dave to Molluscan Hall in Easegill, I got back to work on the 'lucarne' and after a few days of hammering, using a few Hilti Caps (my first go on my own after Jules' Master Class in their deployment last year) plus an attempt at making my own snappers from shot gun cartridges that just went thwup and blew out the wadding, need some help here Dan. I had it big enough to get through. Cowardice prevented me from dropping all the way in as apart from Dave and Jules nobody knows the location and they were unlikely to pop over and hoik me out if I couldn't get back. It is getting to be quite a habit but my last Sunday of leave saw me back there with Philippe, Sylvestre and Clemence with a petrol powered drill and a bit of cordite. Sylvestre popped through the window but we enhanced its size a bit more before Philippe and I followed. At floor level the rift is too tight to pass but just below the level of the window we could make 20m or so of progress before reaching a pitch head. A way on that continues at the bottom could be seen but lack of rope prevented us getting there to check this out. Hibernating bats also stopped us using any more bang that day though they didn't seem to put out by the earlier charge that allowed us access to their winter room. Once again I am at work waiting to get back and see.....



Barny descending the entrance pitch of EPC 19
Photo by Dave Gledhill

April 2009 - Extensions in Boggies Bit – Waterfall Hole

Report by Jon Pemberton

Having spoken to Mark Noble and John Beck who've dug in there loads in the past I'm still not 100% sure we were in the right place. Pretty damn confusing!

But here it goes...

Waterfall entrance inc. Wardwins Crawl is rank! Clive Hockenhull still says it to this day that it was bloody horrible to push through when they found the water backing into the bedding, removed flood debris and first entered the system in 1959. If we moan about the entrance we get called a bunch of puffs from the original diggers who used to do it in boiler suits all the time only to soak up all the water and still get a mega digging session out of it. Unless you want to try bail the water out with your helmet? Whilst it's on your head? Then its helmet off tackle! So you're pushing your helmet through plus a ladder and trenching tool and trying to stay dry at the same time in the mankiest water ever! When disturbed stenches something rotten! We've always said that it's last known remaining capture point of the plague!

If you weren't psyched up for it, it was definitely grim!

Id been to the top of Hockenhull's Rift once before at the end of last year eager for a look down only to have been bitched on by Jams & Dervish who shouted that they weren't coming from the other side of Wardwin's Crawl.

James Rhodes and I had a trip down one Friday towards the end of March. It was bloody pissing it down. We questioned our stupidity as the bus went past only wearing (a) Rab jacket on the top road out to Foolow. We found our way into Chandra's Series which we thought was pretty damn interesting, "Mud Chamber" quite large, loads 'a holes heading off through the boulder floor and obviously sumped to the roof in the lower part. In the corner a clean washed climb led down through a loose boulder slope to another climb to a sizeable space between what can surely be more giant boulders. a tight rift lead off to the left and straight on gaps through boulders could be followed to a tight vertical drop from below water could be heard clearly topped with an old rusty anchor. I shouted up to James to come down for a look but he wasn't having any of it safely up in the Mud Chamber. I tried down-climbing the drop feeling for foot holds but with no vision of below I quickly decided against it and backed out.

Dave Brown and I were down again the following week. Fixed on his memory of Co-operation Aven and the squeeze through anything approach we had a quick look everywhere, Westy's Bit, Chandra's Series, Jim's Bit and Co-operation Aven where Dave got well and truly lost having pushed into a very high place in the choke with four holes in the floor not remembering which way he'd climbed up! Fun times. Whilst in Chandra's Series I took him to the clear washed climb and mentioned the drop that needs laddering, we agreed to return shortly.

On Saturday 4th April we laddered the pitch which dropped at an angle of about 60 degrees on sharp rock which finally dropped to a total depth of 8m. This landed you in a horrible rift, each side closed up but not completely. Left dipped down a mud slope to a static pool of water, very hard to get out of. Right the rift closed to a couple of inches wide but through

the rift water could be heard flowing immensely!! Still not tested to where its location is in the known cave but almost certain a “known” part of the system i.e. not below the deepest part at the bottom of EPS Aven where the stream from the waterfall sinks into boulders and mud.

The floor of the rift was lined with the thickest stickiest mud piled up at one side at the bottom of the ladder obviously from previous digging attempts. At the line of the mud floor a bedding line stretched across the rift which was closed at all but one point. You could just about make out a stretch of passage through the crawl which emitted an encouraging draught. We made a quick attempt to dig out the mud floor to get a better look to the point where you could lean on your head in a hole in the floor looking upside and up into this short stretch of water worn passage. Freezing from the draught we departed knowing we'd catch James plus guest on the way out, who were meant to come and join us on a sort of, spur of the moment type of thing. All that was said was once in the cave make loud noises! We were going to scare James mate with the likes of “mud men” but were soon encountered by voices thus stopped us in our tracks. Guttered! Could've imagined it now covered in mud shrieking!!! James dropping everything and doing one screaming and running for his life while his mate stood there stumped!

Anyway...

Back again for an evening dig accompanied with Dave's recently purchased trenching tool, mine still in Dynamite Series somewhere. We laddered down into Boggies Bit and quickly started digging away at the floor stacking under the ladder. We were quickly body length in the passage which was tight and heading uphill. It required digging out in front of you pushing spoil to your side, kicking it down behind you whilst the other chucks it up the bank under the ladder at a synchronised pace so that the digger didn't en-tomb themselves.

We pushed as soon as it was big enough to grasp hold of something. this involved the person in the inclined passage gaining leverage from the accompanied diggers back whilst sat down in the pot freezing there arse off! The passage forked, left was soon too tight with a maze of mud coated solids heading left and upwards. Right continued up to an eyehole that seemed to be heading more towards the right beyond and looked larger (heading towards the sound of the water hopefully.) The only thing that stopped us was a head-sized boulder in the floor that required digging out. We left it there that night having managed a 3 hour session the climb out of Boggies Bit was taxing. Climbing back out of Boggies Bit is the most awkward part, it involves one person up at the anchor ready to de-rig and pull up the ladder on the incline whilst the other hangs on the pitch un-snagging until the bottom of the ladder reaches their hands. If not the ladder gets caught and the sharp rocks with ease. Still it's a right bastard climbing the last 3 metres!

Dave, James and I returned on Thursday 23rd April to remove the rock, show James the dig with the most important reason to retrieve Dave's trenching tool meaning we wouldn't have to go back down again! We were all not in the mood to drop Waterfall Hole. On discussion we had all thought about backing down but were all hoping somebody else would've done it first. Nearly had a quick “Oh no... my lights not working”, from Dave but it fixed itself which was a twat! At the top of Boggies Bit James was mumbling hell to himself wishing he hadn't come down with us – oh well. Dave started digging kicking down loads mud whilst I threw it up to James. James not being in the mood stopped all communication and slowed his actions only for the mud to be thrown at him sticking to his over suit. Dave chucked the boulder down and thrashed his way forward into what was not described as an aven that you could stand up in. At the far right end an impenetrable inlet was found in the roof with no ways on, terminating the dig – Oh joy! I took a quick look whilst James declined for some reason?

We made our way out with the trenching tool overwhelmed with the newly discovered 5+ metres of grot we had discovered. One place to tick off in there. Our plan was to try gain voice connection with the stream passage through the tight rift but nobody wishes to join us down there. From the survey it appears to lie above Jim's bit, but it's a very complex 3D place.

Or a Dervish has described it, “eerie.”

Trip Reports

6th January 2009 - The Fireset Shaft, Stoney Middleton

Report by Jon Pemberton

Cavers: Jon Pemberton (EPC), Sam “Dervish” Pemberton (EPC)

After postponing this trip from the 25th of December we eventually got around to descending the shaft thirteen days later on a freezing Tuesday 'eve. Midway through December I had contacted John Beck who had kindly sent me the written article (Bill Whitehouse) and survey (J.S.Beck, N.J.D.Butcher) from when the “Fireset Shaft” had been excavated in 1982.

We had decided to drop the shaft on SRT, unknown of when the last person had been down there and how stable it would be on ladders. (The 50ft deep shaft consists of two solid walls leaving the other two stacked ginged to the bottom.) Dervish and I had found the capped entrance on the 25th December on an above surface exploration of the area. The entrance lies in a hollow directly across from Flower pot, above the lay-by on the opposite side of the road. We had to clear four inches of leaves and scree but upon opening the lid a howling draught emitted from the shaft and it was bloody

warm for Christmas day!

After heating up above the shaft on the Tuesday evening Jams rigged using a metre long scaff bar backed up to a nearby tree. Our 19m rope only just reached the bottom of the finely re-stacked shaft (EEG). Jams descended first followed by myself then Dervish with the classic, "HEADS UP!" Followed by, "it weren't me!?" – Yeah right! A short side-step at the bottom of the shaft lands you with a 4m climb into a stope (careful not to touch the stacked stuff on your right.) Left leads over rubble for 10m to a dig in the floor deemed too tight. Right drops underneath the stacked deads and gives access to a very narrow level with soot coated walls, which has been driven by the old method of firesetting i.e. without the use of explosives (one of the very few examples where evidence of this method still exists in Derbyshire.) The level ascends for a tight few metres and ends in a crawl underneath stacked deads to a cross rift with an internal 20ft deep shaft. A climb down using rotting stemples leads you to the final dig with very restricted stacking space. The climb down passes three backfilled firesetting levels. The draught is meant to continue through the bottom of the shaft in a choke although we managed to lose it today in the final cross rift.



The entrance to Fireset shaft. Photo by the Dangerous Brothers.

We all managed to ascend the entrance shaft without knocking the scaff bar down on top of us. Overall the trip only took us about an hour but it's very interesting to us anyway with the final dig being only 50ft away and 10ft higher than Clog Passage in the Dynamite Series, beyond Porth Crawl. The continuation could possibly connect the two although the Fireset Shaft consists of many stacked deads and could easily move with little temptation. Although trying to push up the very narrow fireset level with SRT gear on is a pretty bad idea especially if you're "Dervish" size.

20th November 2008 – Perryfoot Shafts (Perryfoot car park manhole covers)

Report by Jon Pemberton

Shaft #1

Speaking to Mark Noble on numerous occasions after completing the Flower Pot shaft (Carlswark Cavern) he pointed us in the direction of three manhole covers which lay within the car park at Perryfoot. Now normally James and I are pretty dedicated towards digging solemnly in Stoney but this potential lead sounded too good not to push! John Beck had been informed about the three shafts leading into mine workings but shaft #1 (closest to the car park entrance) had previously been used as a tip containing items such as bottles, old sandals and general rubbish. John knowing Mark was keen into his bottle digging informed him about the three shafts and possibility of finding something significant. Mark descended the three shafts a few weeks prior to our visit for a closer inspection. Once down he noticed about a metre or two up from the mine level floor was a passage going off leading upwards to a chamber with more workings and straight on into natural passage heading close under the road. The end of the passage soon terminated in a boulder choke but a way on could be seen into a continuation of the passage but the best way on wasn't clear. Mark also descended the other two shafts which lay about a metre apart and connect close to the bottom through a small 5-6 foot level. Mark noted that the bottom of the 2nd shaft was completely sumped unsure of how deep and that the bottom of the 3rd shaft was completely choked with sediment and boulders through which voids can be seen.

After a bit of a discussion in the Miners we set a date for the following Thursday setting aside a couple of hours for a quick digging session aiming to push through the choke in the 1st shaft. We picked Mark up from Eyam at 1:00pm then hastily drove to Perryfoot eager to start demolishing the choke in Shaft #1. We kitted up in the car park and proceeded to remove the manhole cover from Shaft #1. The safest belay point was the anti-roll-bar of James' car which was inched forward covering a quarter of the entrance avoiding any rub points for the ladder. I descended the shaft first armed with a trenching tool while receiving a lashing off Mark on how I'm rubbish at climbing ladders! Once on the rubbish filled ledge a metre or so from the bottom I crawled on following the natural passage trying to avoid the boulder slope abruptly turning left crawling on my side over a few slabs to the face of the boulder choke. I waited at the face of the choke lying on my side until Mark arrived for some suggestions. He pointed me to where he had previously looked through to see the continuation of the passage. Digging of the choke soon turned into, "I think I can fit through that!?" James had finally reached the choke with the rest of the digging equipment only to see my feet hanging out through the choke. After a bit of head first downwards pushing I was through into a chamber about 2 metres long, 1 metre wide and about 1 ½ metres high. The wall which made the choke looked pretty dodgy but the rest was fairly solid. All I could hear through the choke was Mark mumbling, "Bloody hell...He's just dropped straight through!" After recomposing myself I noticed the way on, a

flat out sandy tube heading off on the left hand side of the chamber. 5 feet into the tube a large rock blocked the way ahead. I tried for about five or six times to pass above the rock helmet off and everything but it wasn't happening. Whilst attempting the push I noticed that the tube continued for a couple of feet beyond the rock to a bowl with no definitive way forward. After reporting back James pushed his way through the choke into the chamber accompanied by the trenching tool. Whilst James made attempts to push the tube I slowly exited out through the choke. Mark made his way down at the base off the shaft into the mine workings to see if he could see a continuation of the extensions or get a vocal connection. Five minutes later James shouted, "Jon? I'm through!" He had managed to push past to rock by un-zipping his oversuit and undersuit. Once through the way forward was found. A continuation of the sandy tube, although it appeared to have been going off to the right just out of sight it actually turned off to the left at a right angle. The tube continued for 2 metres to reach the current limit of the dig a sandy tube 2/3's full of sandy/silt filled sediment. Peering through the airspace the tube continued for some distance straight ahead. James slowly made his way back to the breakthrough point having to dig his way back out of the sandy tube to pass the rock blocking his exit. Once out I had a quick poke around up the boulder slope to find a few stemples whilst trying to avoid much movement preventing anything falling below my feet. We made our way to the surface and replaced the manhole cover.

Shafts #2 & #3

Back on the surface we decided that due to the circumstances we ought to take a nosey down shaft #3. We belayed the ladder to a nearby tree. Mark descended the shaft followed by myself then James. James continued to the bottom of the shaft to the choke whilst Mark entered the small level through to Shaft #2 and I perched over the top of the shaft to watch work commence. The four walls in Shaft #3 were solid leaving only one stacked close up to the top leaving a ledge in between for more stacking. James spent a good part of 20 minutes digging the choke at the bottom carefully stacking a few large rocks on the ledge terminating his session a very large boulder which he was certain we wouldn't retrieve out of the choke. As spoil started to be removed from around the boulder a void appeared at the bottom of the wall opposite the wall stacked with deads. Once James was out the lower part of the shaft I made my way into the connecting level with Mark whilst James and I switched places. 10 minutes into my struggling and awkwardness I managed to retrieve the boulder from the bottom of the choke and place it near my feet. The void had now opened to 10 inches in which you could now kick your feet in only to shortly hit the back wall. Mark was next to attack the choke making some fast impressive stacking of the deads. After an hour or so of joint digging we decided to call it a day having run out of fairly decent stacking space and the shaft getting deeper proving harder to remove spoil. We terminated our digging session at about 3½ - 4½ metres below the connecting level in Shaft #3.

On surface we talked about the use of a hauling method (pulley system) to remove spoil and dump it within Shaft #2. We talked about a couple of hours worth of digging with a team of three following the stacking might eventually get you into a continuation of the mine level by just following down the deads. We noted that although Shafts #2 & #3 connect through the short level it appears that they do not connect below. Our reasons for this theory are that about 2 metres below the connecting level Shaft #2 sumps whilst Shaft #3 has been dug to present reach of the choke about 3½ - 4½ metres below the level with no water in sight.

Following a discussion with Martyn Grayson (TSG) who is keen on the Perryfoot area and has also been pushing these shafts has asked that nobody carry out work in Shaft #2 & #3 until Shaft #2 has been dived to view its potential.

11th and 12th May 2009 – DCRO Call-out, Old Mill Close Mine, Wensley Report by Jules Barrett

I'd been climbing near Buxton after work on Monday evening and was knackered owing to not enough sleep the previous evening. With this in mind I was treating myself to fish and chips followed by bed. Anyway, I'm stood in the queue waiting to get served and the phone rings – there's a shout at Old Mill Close Mine, Wensley. I'd never been there before, didn't even know anything about it so this would be an interesting evening. Wrote down a grid reference and had to forget the fish and chips but headed home to get kit and drove over towards Matlock. Arriving in the area at about 9.00 p.m. a police car directed us into a field. Got kitted up and went over to the shaft top. A caver who knew the mine well had slipped from a traverse above a rift and fallen about 4m to the bottom – damaging her arm. Her two friends had both exited to raise the alarm sensibly taping the route on the way out. From the outset it was obvious that this was going to be a protracted and involved rescue. The surface shaft got rigged with the quadpod and the first team (including Tom the caving medic) descended. Once the first couple of teams were in I descended the shaft with a walkie-talkie to see if walkie-talkie communication could be established between the shaft bottom and top. In fact the walkie talkies didn't work so a Heyphone was lowered and rigged up. That worked a treat and before long we had good comms in the shaft. Dave Harley and another caver from SUSS came to join me and handing the Heyphone over to Jen Plunkett we headed on into the system carrying rigging kit including drill and anchors, other hardware and a load of short ropes. The route had been well-taped by one of the first teams in so we made good progress. The route to the casualty site was quite awkward involving lots of short scrambles, some constricted bits and short climbs up and down fixed iron ladders. As we moved through the cave we left rope at the various pitches for later rigging. After half an hour's caving or so we arrived at the casualty site where the casualty was being assisted out of the rift. Now that we were familiar with the route we went back and started the rigging. Whilst rigging the second lower Dave Ottewell came past with some kit and we pulled him into the rigging team. A team of four worked well as one pair could be bolting whilst the others were thinking through the rigging for the next pitch etc. Meanwhile many more cavers were involved in assisting the casualty through the awkward sections

of passage, short traverses and crawls. As the hours wore on rescuers started to get tired and were replaced by fresh cavers who had been called out in the early hours. Several Eldon members were rudely awoken and turned out to help. By 5 a.m. the rigging was finished and we were hauled to surface by a large team who did a superb job. On the surface Big Jim kindly lent me some clean gloves. After some food and drink I headed back into the mine and arrived at the second pitch just in time for the lower. The casualty was lowered down there with assistance from a caver on an SRT rope. The third pitch involved a longer free-hanging lower but the casualty being in a harness rather than a stretcher simplified things greatly. The last pitch required a short haul up and eventually the casualty was hauled up the entrance shaft.

With the casualty safely on surface and off to hospital about twenty very tired rescuers stood in an orderly queue waiting to be hauled to surface. Arrived on surface at about 9:00 a.m. and after changing went to a cafe in Cromford for breakfast.

13th May 2009 - Fatigue Pot **Report by Jon Pemberton**

Cavers: Jon Pemberton (EPC) and Andy Chapman (SUSS)

Well having Jams wretch at us the last time we attempted Fatigue Pot due to the foul stench, a year later we popped back for another look. Andy and I had been talking about a recce trip to the digs for a while now as it sounds an, oh so interesting place. After the rank walk up to the entrance to find the lid already removed we 'manned up', Andy pushed the entrance crawl feet first.

I shouted, "Andy, what are you doing?"

"I don't want my face ripped off by a badger."

"Haha!"

After the 9m crawl we reached the top of Coral Rift (8m pitch, easily free-climbable.) at the bottom of the rift we first attempted to push the continuation under the entrance. A tight squeeze leads to more tightness, traversing along the rift on your side with an impenetrable 5m drop below you (even more fun trying to pass each other!) The other end of the rift drops down 2m and widens with another 4.5m drop on your left through boulders. We dropped the pitch to find loads of holes in the floor. I quickly dropped a tight pot only to end up in a miserable place. Andy continued traversing for 15m to reach two crawls on the right.

I asked if he'd attempted any, He said, "Yeah that one only got so far then reached water... couldn't be arsed!"

I "manned up" and got stuck in. The crawl soon closed to a tight flat out horrible passage which pinched $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the way through. At the end a very small chamber led to small aven with very restricted turning space and a mouse hole on the left where water drained. It was quite funny at its tightest the acoustics of the tube were amazing. The only thing you could hear was your heart pounding like mad! Andy had a quick look only to immediately regret his decision.

I "manned up" and ventured down the first tube. Aching as hell this crawl continued for 91m passing cross rifts and avens. There are three digs at the end which only one got looked at, a continuation of the tube to a silt choke. To get here I stepped over a hole in the floor too tight to enter but it draughts strongly. We decided to hastily bugger off and agreed to go back with equipment.

May 2009 - Gaping Gill Trip **Report by Tam Rennie**

Leann had persuaded most of her family to go up to Yorkshire and drop into Gaping Gill via the winch operated by the Bradford Pothole club so we were up for a quick poke about whilst we waited for them. Bob came up Saturday morning but unfortunately had to miss breakfast at Inglesport as we wanted to get an early start to avoid the queues at the winch! We caught up with Leann's family at Trow Gill and arrived at the main shaft minutes later to see a large crowd waiting to descend the winch, luckily all we had to do was pick an entrance and sign in at the tent. We decided to descend Wades entrance then come out stream passage pot and I had found a route description online which promised an interesting route via the main chamber. We spent the first half hour looking for the entrance of Stream Passage Pot so we could leave our bags away



Top of Gaping Gill. Photo by Tam Rennie

from the crowds but after checking hundreds of shake holes couldn't find the entrance so we stashed all the gear down Wades.

Finally underground we descended Wades/Flood following the water down before dropping into south east passage above the big hole in the floor which we passed on the left and carried on past the bottom of bar pot. The route on was a bit of a crawl in a low stream into Henslers passage which we followed into mud Henslers passage, turning the page over I realised there were a couple of ducks ahead but luckily they weren't too bad apart from filling my wallet with mud. Through the huge Mud Hall via the traverse line and we were soon in the main chamber which was very impressive being floodlit by the BPC. There was a long queue waiting for the winch but no sign of Leann's family so we didn't hang around and headed for Stream Passage and the exit. We stopped round the corner for a quick cuppa (more of a Lincoln thing than on an Eldon trip but bloody nice) but we were soon in sand chamber and close to the exit. As it was mid afternoon, other cavers had started to appear and we passed three groups in fifteen minutes who had descended Stream. After a quick detour to look at a dead end we found mud pot and the bottom of stream passage pot and were soon up the bottom pitch. Passed another group here but luckily that was it and we had the rest of the pitch to our selves. Again, like Wades, the pitches in Stream were very impressive and well worth a trip. A little squeeze at the top of a short pitch and we were almost there, only a short ladder up the drum lined entrance shaft and we were out, this was the hardest part of the trip for me as I couldn't bend my legs and get up the damn ladder but it was just me as Bob and Leann zoomed up it.

Back to the main shaft to sign out and Leann's family had made it to the front of the queue after a six hour wait! We didn't hang about but headed back to Clapham for a beer. Thanks to Johnny and partner for the beer and Bob for the company on what was an interesting route and a great trip. Good points are not having to apply for permits or carry a load of rope up the hill and the opportunity to see the floodlit main chamber. Only downsides would be waiting for other groups on the ropes and loads of people milling about in the main chamber but overall well worth a visit.

27th June 2009 - P8, Ben's dig Report by Jon Pemberton

Cavers: James Wood (EPC), Pippa Furlong, Jon & Sam Pemberton (EPC)

A quick afternoon trip before the TSG party was on the cards, Bottom P8 and check out Ben's dig sounded a good plan. A bit short on rope we had to improvise. 18m on the first pitch fine, 9m on the second pitch a bit shady (figure of eight backed up with a sling). Bottomed the cave as far as possible without diving in no time t'all.

What we really came for, a gander up Ben's dig. The climb in t'owd mans rift kitted with some coated old rope. The dig contains loads of massive kibbles worn through on the bottom, you can imagine the amount of work that was done. The passage continues gradually sloping upwards until you enter a large chamber. Straight on continues followed by an iron ladder with walking passage at the top. This passage eventually ends at a hand line climb to the top of a large pot about 1.5m in diameter and about 4m depth silted at the bottom. Back at the large chamber a hand line hand over hand climb leads to a constriction and continues but was not entered. To the right of this up a mud slope a hands and knees passage leads to a climb through a calcite floor to a chamber with stacked sandbags. At the top the going back on yourself the passage continues until another climb to another chamber with a sleeper jammed across at about 8ft high. A climb up to



Leann Rennie and Bob Toogood. Photo by Tam Rennie



Wade's entrance with rabbit (look closely next to Leann's left hand) Photo by Tam Rennie

the sleeper gains access to a hand line climb up to another crawl where a choke has been dug through into yet another chamber containing loads of flowstone and a few long stal. Climbing up flowstone leads to a small aven on your right and a crawl over rocks on the left leads to a squeeze to a further choke heading right which I didn't enter due to the rest of the party being slack and not climbing up the chamber with the sleeper, So quickly headed out to party at the TSG.

June 2009 – Yorkshire Dales caving

Report by Jules Barrett

Cavers: Jules Barrett (EPC), James Wood (EPC)

Me and Jams figured out that we had a couple of days off work mid-week so thought we'd make the most of some reasonably dry weather with a trip up to Yorkshire. Drove up the previous evening and stayed at the Yorkshire Rambler's club hut near Clapham. Excellent club hut but pricey – they've recently put their prices up. On Day 1 we went to Kingsdale where we did both routes down Jingling Pot (not particularly exciting) and then went to the bottom of Rowten (I never get tired of Rowten!) On Day 2 we visited Sell Gill Holes in the morning and then dropped Alum via the classic route in the afternoon. An excellent couple of days with plenty of caving!

22nd June 2009 - Hungerhill Swallet

Report by Jon Pemberton

Cavers: Andy Chapman (SUSS), Jon & Sam Pemberton (EPC)

Dropped down the oil drum shaft and headed down the squeeze into the top of the streamway. Andy rigged Deep Space (haha, we bought rope protectors just for this!) following what I believe is Dan's old rope, Its pretty easy going just repeating that rig exactly. Backed up, a y-hang drops you onto a ledge (rope protector 1). Followed by another y-hang over the ledge (rope protector 2) for 4m to a short deviation (straddle the sides, its not so bad.) This drops you to the bottom with one more rub point. Deep Space is very impressive, amazing waterfall pitch!

At the bottom we followed the stream down the first cascade and climbed up a tight rift to a squeeze at floor level. Andy, "Don't push too hard Sam! Did you have to control your breathing?" What a joker. The rift continues up left leads to a space with stacking straight on leads to the bottom of 'Elbon's Kram' a strenuous climb/wedge in upwards leads to a squeeze on the right which is pretty damn awkward. I got through the squeeze and had a good look. Now there should be one more squeeze beyond that eventually leads to 'Happy Breakthrough' the continuation of the horrible little streamway and the bottom of the collapsed timbered shaft entrance. Supposedly 'Elbon's Kram' was blocked, now the way on looked like a few rocks had fallen in but it could be pushed with ease. It'd be interesting to see how far up the timbered shaft entrance you could get before you meet the collapse.

We went for a quick look up Bag of Worms and the continuation of the choke before deciding we'd need more time for a better look, so out we went.

20th June 2009 - Nickergrove Mine

Cavers: Jon & Sam Pemberton, Pippa Furlong (EPC)

Went for a real quick look to inspect the Timbered Shaft in Nickergrove. Dropped the main internal shaft only to land sitting in the old cart from the 1984 dig. Pretty good bit of kit with use of a shock absorber for the self tipping mechanism (one of Tom Proctor's creations.) Anyway we followed the railway to the Clay Chamber, unsure of its location I sped off the continuation level to a crawl which led to loads of stacked deads where ahead lowers until its too tight.

I met Sam & Pippa back at the Clay Chamber where Sam noted the Spits on the wall. "Ahhhhh!" We were standing on it. We quickly removed two metal sheets a few large sleepers and a few rotten timbers to find the 6m shaft. It has been said that this shaft is totally funky, but it's not totally! It drops a few metres until it through timber and hits an oil drum shaft lined with three fairly solid drums. From here the way on is back underneath (towards the left wall as you enter Clay Chamber.) The way was through a metre square frame to a short timbered level, this leads to a solid level to a large stretch of streamway that's sumped in both directions. Upstream is the downstream continuation of Streaks east sump. Only a few metres separate the two but it has not been dived as its fairly constricted and is thick with black mud.

Downstream water is next seen in the Merlin streamway. It was pushed by Beck in the 1990 drought through a squeeze to a chamber and a continued duck to an air bell where it sumped. He said it was a very scary push, He could feel the airspace beyond and dived through into a large cross rift where the passage beyond sumped. Once it had been surveyed he got back down and started feeling for this air bell at the base of the rift but did not have a clue where it was. He eventually got out if you didn't know but you could imagine the panic set in! I climbed down the timber and stood on the oil drums. They seemed OK but the timbered level at the bottom may well have collapsed. If it is bugged it was noted that to gain access back to the streamway started a new shaft following down the left hand wall in the Clay Chamber thus deleting any need for a shored level. Although it would be a pretty difficult job as the amount of clay in there is unbelievable. A quick climb back up the shaft and exited via the didsbury shaft, Job done.

Oh and Pippa decked it coming out and nearly died! Haha, She said she was really having to hold back the tears, Sam just laughed, "We wouldn't have helped you, probably just laughed."

27th June 2009 - Providence Pot to Dow Cave Report by Jase Rider

Cavers: Jase Rider, Stick, Tam and Leann Rennie, Bernie Madison, Julian McIntosh, Bob Toogood, Phil Burke (all EPC)

Bob and Phil left early to get a head start in front of forecast unsettled weather.

The remaining six took a leisurely walk up to Providence Pot, in quite warm and humid weather, and were underway just after midday. Over halfway in to the Providence Pot series, Stick turned back as he had been feeling unwell during the walk up and he was not getting any better - the right decision given the demanding nature of the cave to follow.

Before long we were at the beginning of Dowbergill passage. Here the stream issues from the left and the main passage continues to the right and cave takes on an interesting nature. The passage becomes high and largely narrow. The rift can usually be traversed at various levels as well as in the streamway. The knack in this place is to pick the correct level or you often have to back track, which can be energy sapping.

We didn't do too bad on the route-finding front until a good two-thirds of the way through when we spent some time trying to push through an increasingly narrowing section of streamway. Eventually I decided that this wasn't the way on and there was an arduous retreat and climb back up the rift to a higher level traverse. Some good route finding by Bernie and Tam saved the day here and got us back to a more recognizable section of the passage.

Varied caving followed including deep canals and awkward handline climbs, before we eventually emerged into the spacious and impressive Dow Cave. Ten minutes later we exited into the heat of the warm afternoon and were greeted by Stick, Joy and Rowan who were waiting at the entrance.

The trip had taken five hours, which isn't too bad, however, Bob and Phil had apparently taken two and a quarter which must be some sort of record!

An excellent day was rounded off with a meal and beers in Kettlewell.



2009 Trips to Albania – Barny

Barny and Dave are planning exploration trips to Albania. Just to whet a few appetites Barny sends this which he found on Google Earth:

42°29'59.65"N
19°45'19.52"E

There are 4 others like this in the area, could be a 1300m depth potential. Could be even more if the first bolts are placed near the summit!!

