



DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

Information Circular 2008/3, April-August 2008

NEXT DCA MEETING

DCA Open Council Meeting, 10am Saturday, 1st. November 2008, Monyash Village Hall

The hall will be open from about 9.30am with tea, coffee & biscuits available. The Old Smithy Café next to the Pub does an excellent breakfast from about 9am. (All meetings start at 10am. at Monyash Village Hall.)

The following Meeting will be the AGM 2009 - 10am. Saturday, 21st. February 2009.

DCA OFFICERS FOR 2008-2009

DCA Equipment Officer, Dave Cowley, has unfortunately had to stand down due to pressure of work. We thank him for all he has done and wish him well. For the time being Bob Dearman is looking after this aspect of DCA's affairs.

CONSERVATION & ACCESS

If you have any queries or problems about Conservation or Access in the region, please contact the Conservation Officer, Dave Webb, 0115-840-1109, or Asst. Conservation Officer, Wayne Sheldon, 01226-710368, both at conservation-off@theDCA.org.uk; or the Access Officer, Iain Barker, 0114-264-7561, 07710-689704, access-off@theDCA.org.uk.

LONG RAKE MINE, BRADWELL - DANGER!

By now most people will have heard of the near-fatal incident on 24th. May, when 2 cavers near the top of the 5th. pitch in Long Rake were affected by CARBON MONOXIDE poisoning. This is potentially very serious and they were extremely lucky to get out alive, although they collapsed afterwards and had to call the emergency services and were taken to hospital. They were kept in overnight and given oxygen, being diagnosed with 10% CO poisoning. Carbon Monoxide is the gas found in exhaust from cars and machinery, in explosives fumes, etc.; it is this gas which regularly used to cause fatalities in houses where the flue of a gas fire was blocked.

It is suspected that the carbon monoxide may have percolated through to Long Rake Mine from the quarry, which is getting ever closer and is using huge charges nowadays - however there is no proof of this as yet. (There was a fatal accident to cavers in Ball Eye Mine some 30 years ago due to fumes from the working quarry over the hill percolating into Ball Eye.) It is known that a trip into Long Rake on 4th. April encountered no problems but recent blasting, a change in wind direction, etc. could have caused fumes from the quarry to travel through voids in the rock to reach Long Rake. It is known that New Venture Mine, which is even closer to the quarry face, has recently suffered damage from blasting and must now be considered unstable and it is likely that Bird Mine is also affected.

If the problems are due to the quarry (either blasting or machinery fumes) they are likely to continue - so Long Rake Mine, New Venture Mine and Bird Mine should be regarded as closed to cavers for the foreseeable future.

CLATTERWAY LEVELS & SOUGH

Please note that one of the three entrances to the system is in the garden of Hollowbrook Cottage and, while the owners do not want to restrict access, they would like you to ask permission **before** you cross their garden. (Some groups doing a through trip have simply trampled through flower beds on their way out!) If you are intending to use the route through the garden, either for entry or for exit after a through trip, please ask permission beforehand and please use the path from the mine entrance that runs to the house and then up the driveway to the road

PEAK CAVERN, SURPRISE VIEW LADDER

It was reported on 7th. July that there is a problem with the Surprise View ladder in the Peak Cavern system. The top of the ladder seems to have sprung apart and the top rung is only held at one end, it LOOKS OK till you stand on it! The next 3 rungs also look rather doubtful.

It is hoped to remove the ladder in the near future for repair or replacement. In the meantime if you are planning a trip you should take an electron ladder and lifeline.

GIANTS HOLE - THIEVES AROUND!

Earlier this month it was noticed that the temporary(?) replacement box for money had disappeared and had been replaced by another of a similar type which, at the time, contained a number of envelopes. A caver who placed a cheque in the box, later got a call from his bank that his cheque had been found in Buxton. Presumably all the cash contents of the box had been removed? If this continues it could affect our access. If possible, we would suggest you pay by cheque, £3.00 per person, making cheques payable to Peakshill Farm - this will foil the thieves as, if there is no money in the box, there would be no point taking it!

It was also reported by a caver that as his party were coming up Garlands a guy appeared, wellies, street clothes, no helmet, hand torch. He was uncommunicative, elbowed his way to the pitch head, had a look at what was happening, then left without a word. Apparently another club had a visitation while they were on the pitch from a small group who were obviously not cavers.

ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES LICENSING AUTHORITY

Safety Alert Number 1 - Mine Exploration, Gas Hazards - Issued: 24 July 2008

Background

On 17 July 2008, an adult caver became unconscious, apparently due to a lack of oxygen, soon after entering a disused coal mine shaft. Despite prompt efforts by his companion on the surface and the rescue services, he died in hospital three days later.

This alert has been issued to remind adventure activity providers who offer mine exploration of the gas hazards that may be present in old workings. Others who participate in mine exploration may find this information useful.

Gas Hazards

Old mine workings are poorly ventilated and may well contain atmospheres that are very low in oxygen. This is most likely in unventilated blind ends, shafts and other dipping workings. Variations in atmospheric pressure can affect any natural ventilation and the distribution of gasses in the workings. Oxygen deficient air can kill very quickly after entry and, if not immediately fatal, can impair the victim's judgement and physical ability to escape this hazard.

The risk of encountering oxygen deficient air is particularly high in old coal mine workings since oxygen reacts with coal to reduce the oxygen and increase the carbon dioxide content of the air. A similar effect can occur in some other mines, notably those that worked ironstone.

In coal mines, there is also the risk of methane; producing flammable and potentially explosive atmospheres.

Other Hazards

There are also the more obvious hazards of unstable ground, hidden voids and shafts as well as flooding. Coal measures strata is unlikely to remain stable without support for long after the mine's abandonment.

Action by Activity Providers

In accordance with advice from the Coal Authority and HSE's Mines Inspectorate activity providers should not be taking groups into old coal mine workings as they are inherently too dangerous.

Where other abandoned mines are used, providers should review their risk assessments to ensure that gas hazards are considered. Where appropriate, providers may need to make use of portable gas monitoring equipment. The users need to be trained in its correct use and the monitors need to be calibrated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Useful References

Coal Authority - deals with surface hazards arising from past coal mining activities such as open mine entries or ground collapse. 24 hour emergency number - 01623 646 333. Web - www.coal.gov.uk .

Mines Rescue Service Limited - can provide training on testing for gas in mines.

Providers should direct enquiries about this alert to their AALS inspector.

A BOLD SPONSORSHIP CHALLENGE!!!

On Saturday, 6th. September, Rob Eavis is doing a sponsored prussik up Titan the equivalent of a mile (9 times) in aid of Cancer Research UK. If you're interested in donating even one pound then go to:

<http://www.justgiving.com/ropeclimb>

A REMINDER - DCA NEEDS A NEW TREASURER FOR 2009

Present DCA Treasurer, Jenny Potts, has been doing the job for many years and would like to hand over to a new Treasurer in 2009. If you are interested yourself, or know of someone who might be suitable, please contact Jenny direct on 01335-370629 or email secretary@theDCA.org.uk with a view to discussing what's involved.

HIDDEN EARTH 2008, 26TH TO 28TH SEPTEMBER

The Venue is Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley, Leeds. Further information from the Hidden Earth website: www.hidden-earth.org.uk

NEWS FROM BCA

The next BCA Newsletter is due out in August and, under its new Editor, Mike Copeland, should soon be with you. Simon Froude has been unable to continue as BCA Secretary so Damian Weare, the BCA Handbook Editor, has taken on the post of Acting Secretary for the moment.

FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER / NOTICEBOARD

www.theDCA.org.uk dca@theDCA.org.uk

16 August 2008

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