



# DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

## Addendum to the DCA Open Council Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Part of the conservation officers report was missing from the reports and this wasn't part of the meeting so for completion, the full report has been included here again.

### Conservation Officer's report for DCA Council Meeting Saturday, 30th June 2018

#### Report based on the Underground Conservation Forum (UCF) April 2018

##### **Natural England funding**

Natural England have secured £5000 of funding for DCA to help with cave conservation projects. Many thanks to Dan Abrahams, our area Natural England adviser, for this! Dan also mentioned that Natural England's Health and Safety policy has changed so its staff are now not allowed down caves so he and NE are relying more than ever on DCA and the goodwill of cavers to help them with conservation monitoring and related works.

##### **SSSI roundup in the Peak**

Eldon Hole dig:

A report from Tim Allen Historic England based on a meeting in Sheffield 20th April 2017 "We had a very constructive meeting and discussed the recent important discoveries by the Buttered Badgers in Eldon Hole. The likely antiquity of the remains recovered from excavation and the implications of this for the national archaeological importance of the hole suggest to all parties that this a good point at which to stop going down and to assess the opportunities that this material presents and what further non-intrusive investigations might be possible from the position we now are. Historic England, the Peak District National Park Authority and Natural England are very keen to continue working with Mark Richardson and the Buttered Badgers (with the very welcome involvement of Dr Hannah O'Regan of Nottingham University) on these exciting finds. All parties are keen to support positive management including ensuring the long-term stability of the recently dug shaft, the conservation of the site's archaeological significance as a whole and on-going sustainable access to Eldon Hole. We will up-date the Forum when we have scientific dating on the bones found and engaged with the site owner"

Longcliffe:

Bull Pit dig, Perryfoot

A report from Andrew Chamberlain, University of Manchester, April 2018

"Faunal remains were recovered from the TSG dig in Bull Pit in 2017. A preliminary examination of the specimens has allowed the identification of bones and teeth of red deer, roe deer, horse, wolf and a small quantity of microfauna including water voles and bank or field voles. Skeletal remains of red deer and horse were found in accumulations at depths of approximately 10 meters and 20 metres, and probably represent parts of the same animals and therefore showing vertical movement of bones through the cave system.

The wolf bones were found at a depth of 25 metres below ground surface and include most parts of the skull of an adult animal together with a complete forelimb bone (see Figure). Measurements of the dimensions of the teeth and the length and breadth of the skull indicate that this animal is a wolf (*Canis lupus*) rather than a domestic dog (*Canis*

familiaris). The skull was fragmented but mostly complete, and the presence of a complete radius (forelimb bone) suggests that the entire skeleton of this animal may have been present originally within the cave system.

The presence of red deer and wolf suggest some antiquity to the bone deposits. Wolf remains have been recorded from fourteen caves in the White Peak, including some examples in the bone assemblage found at the nearby site of Windy Knoll Fissure. The wolf was probably extinct in this part of England by AD 1300, and red deer would have largely disappeared from this region during woodland clearance and enclosure in the later medieval period.

A more complete report on the animal bones is in preparation.



Parts of the skull (left) and radius (right) of the wolf from Bull Pit.”

The Great P8 Cleanup (of Ben’s Dig) by SUSS.

This fabulous work has been carried out by SUSS. David Botcherby (Botch) from SUSS reported that on the 25th April 2018 the team did the final clean up taking away all the trays and rubbish in their own vehicles. See picture. A great job done and many thanks to SUSS for this! Reports on this are also in UK caving forum and in Descent.



#### Longcliffe

The former shaft's depression is now level and the walling and lid looks fantastic. Phil W and TSG folk have almost finished the surface works having lately resurfaced the area with hand carried mole hill earth which will be left to naturally colonize with plants. NT and NE are happy with all work done. Great job many thanks. A full report may be submitted by Phil separately.

#### Lathkill Dale SSSI issues:

There have been problems with people breaking in despite the combination lock on the Mandale gate aqueduct level, so the gate may now have to be locked using a padlock with the key to be obtained from the Access Officer. Natural England do not believe the damage is being done by cavers and would appreciate our vigilance.

#### Hamps & Manifold cave sites

Much work on the finding of new cave systems and monitoring existing ones was carried out by Mel Milner in the past. There have been problems with trying to find records of these systems and their actual whereabouts. Paul Mortimer from the National Trust, on whose land many of these systems lie, has now managed to recruit volunteers to find the existing cave sites. He will ensure that these new sites will be shared with the DCA and entered in the cave registry.

#### Ecton Mine.

Paul Mortimer reported that a European Unexmin project with submersible autonomous robots is going to explore flooded mine sites. Deep Ecton Adit entrance will be rebuilt to allow access to deep flooded sections.

Tim Allen reported that Historic England are looking to restore the balance cone.

#### Devonshire Mine.

The owners are very happy with the work done at the site by DCA volunteers so many thanks!

### Masson Hill Masson Mine Quarry and disturbance

There have been concerns about various earth moving activities within the quarry from the caving community and conservation bodies. Jess Eades from Derbyshire bat group had concerns as the base of the quarry and the entrance itself were proven last year to be an interesting and potentially important autumn swarming site for bats. The site was comparable on a single evening to that we have recorded at Jug holes.

The situation has been now been checked and whoever has been doing the work has only reinstated the existing track that goes into the quarry and done a bit of clearing there as a consequence, but nothing else more drastic than this. The quarry itself is just outside the SSSI and Dan Abrahams has been aware of this and been in contact with Derbyshire Dales DC. The DDDC planning enforcement officer has visited and is investigating and so everything is in hand. Dan reported that it is unclear what's planned there by the owner, but whatever happened is happening, it probably needed/needs planning permission. In future the DDDC should be able to inform us, when asked, if anything else is planned which could affect the SSSI or bats at the base of the quarry and/or entrance.

### Other Reports

John Gunn reported that a Geological Conservation Review was undertaken and published in 1997 and is now being updated.

### Derbyshire Bat Group - a report by Steve Roe

Derbyshire and Staffordshire bat groups undertook a number of hibernation surveys, mostly jointly. Sites included some of the National Trust caves including Fox holes, Darfur ridge and St Bertrams (usual numbers in these and thanks to Paul Mortimer/NT for access). The Bincliff mines survey saw a record number of 60 bats across 10 adits. We also did a survey in Jug Holes cave and found 37 bats which is the highest number of hibernating bats found in a single site in Derbyshire (most of these were whiskered/Brandt's bats)!

Species across all the surveys included brown long-eared's, Daubenton's, Natterer's, whiskered and Brandt's bats.

If anyone sees any bats whilst caving this summer, please let us know - we don't have many summer records of bats in caves. We're planning on undertaking autumn swarming surveys in August-September in Castleton area so if anyone is interested in coming along drop me an email.

A full set of details of recent hibernation surveys will be sent from Steve Roe to the DCA in due course.

### Derby & Derbyshire Minerals Local Plan - Spring 2018 Consultation and cave mine conflict issues

The council contacted the DCA to inform us of the Spring Consultation stage of this Plan as we have historically had input during this process and have wished to remain updated. Adam Russell has kindly offered to be the DCA/UCF as far as he can do so. It has been noted that the Peak Park Authority is its own minerals planning authority and some limestone areas are outside the Peak Park. Adam feels we need to know what is going on with regard to mineral planning here because there is mining interest in the area. He has looked over the minerals plan consultation, as best as he could at short notice and there was nothing of particular concern. Adam thinks it is now best to wait until the planning application stage when there will be the opportunity to highlight the potential for underground features not apparent in a surface investigation as a potential planning issue.

### And finally -

Once again, many thanks go to all those folk that have helped with hands on conservation work throughout the Peak and to those that have been coordinating a number of jobs and/or acting as conservation consultees (!) namely Pete Knight DCA projects officer, Phil Wolstenholme from TSG with Longcliffe and Castleton SSSI sites, Adam Russel PDMHS and John Gunn BCRA.

This conservation role would not be possible without your help and guidance. :-)

(Pete K and Phil W may be offer the work they have done as separate DCA reports)