



# DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

## Minutes of DCA Council Meeting, 25th. June 2010, Monyash Village Hall

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Officers:</b>	Bob Dearman [BD]	Chairman (Eldon P.C. & Ind. Memb.)
		Terry Jackson [TJ]	Vice Chairman (Ind. Memb.)
		Jenny Potts [JP]	Secretary/Treasurer (Orpheus C.C. & Ind. Memb.)
		David Webb [DW]	Conservation Officer (Masson C.G. & PDMHS)
		Peter Mellors [PM]	Legal & Insurance Officer (Ind. Memb.)
		Paul Lydon [PL]	N/L Editor/Publications Officer (Orpheus C.C.)
		Chris Broome [CB]	Asst. Secretary / Planning Liaison (Masson C. G.)
	<b>Club Reps:</b>	Wayne Sheldon [WS]	T.S.G. (& Ind. Member)
		Karen Slatcher [KS]	Orpheus C. C. (& Ind. Member)
		Paul Chandler [PC]	Masson C. G.
		Boyd Potts [BP]	Orpheus C. C.

**Individual Members:** B.Dearman, T.Jackson, J.Potts, P.Mellors, W.Sheldon, K.Slatcher.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / ESTABLISH QUORUM

- 1.1 **Apologies received from:** Iain Barker (Access Officer), Christine Wilson (Asst. Cons. Officer), Nigel Atkins (Training Officer), Graham Marshment (B.V.T.), Elaine Hill, Dennis Jump.
- 1.2 **Quorum:** The meeting was quorate with 7 officers present.

### 2. APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING: (13 February 2010; circulated previously and on DCA website.) *That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. P.Lydon. **Agreed unanimously.**

### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

- 3.1 3.1.a **Sheffield Cliffhanger 2010 & Peak District Outdoor Activities Festival:** JP reported that arrangements for Cliffhanger were in hand. She had asked Nigel Atkins to deal with PDOAF.
- 3.2 3.2 **DCA Artificial Cave:** Dennis Jump had reported in writing on progress with his "Artificial Speleological System", which would be ready for Cliffhanger. (*See attached report.*) JP would sort transport to get the "ASS" to Sheffield.
- 3.3 3.3 **Manifold Hamps Publication:** Suggested that a suitable poster advertising it could be done for Manifold Valley sites: cafes, cycle hire centres etc. JP would look into this. **ACTION: JP**
- 3.4 3.5 **Paper Pulp Dumping:** In CW's report.
- 3.5 3.8 **Holme Bank Chert Mine:** In IB's report.
- 3.6 3.9 **Ashford Marble Mine, reported damage to taping:** A check had revealed no discernable damage to tape.
- 3.7 3.11 **Plate hangers on Garlands Pot in Giants:** JP would follow this up with Jules Barratt and Nigel Atkins. **ACTION: JP, JB, NA**

### 4. ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS:

No applications received.

### 5. OFFICERS' REPORTS:

#### 5.1 SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT: (*Written report tabled.*)

- 5.1.a There was discussion re. the best way of making use of DCA's money to fund projects; agreed we would be better to use our funds to advantage of cavers as current interest rates were minimal.

*That the Secretary/Treasurer's report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. K.Slatcher. **Agreed unanimously.**

#### 5.2.1 CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT: (*Written report tabled.*)

- 5.2.1.a **Do You Dig Caves Leaflet:** DW presented a draft of the leaflet and asked for comments. These were noted.
- 5.2.1.b **Water Icicle Close Cavern, new extensions:** There was a lengthy discussion on the best way of safeguarding the fragile floor in the new extensions. The discoverers had taped a route to safeguard the floor as soon as the discovery had been made. If a gate were to be put on the extensions, Orpheus C. C. would be prepared to organise an advertised leader system. PM stated that he was against any form of gate but others felt that no alternative system could succeed, given that a few cavers had already ignored requests to stay out of the area while scientific work continued. It was noted that there had been a preliminary inspection of the area by cave scientists, who had emphasised the importance of the discovery and the necessity of keeping the floor area undamaged so that further scientific investigation could take place.

*That a gate on the new extensions should be instituted, coupled with a leader system run by Orpheus C. C. on the lines already suggested. This would be subject to review.*

Prop. D.Webb, Sec. T.Jackson. **Agreed nem con.**

OCC would construct and install the gate on the new extensions; the main part of Water Icicle would remain un-gated and accessible to all. The original suggestion to Orpheus C.C.: that the site be gated, had come from DCA's Underground Conservation Forum and DCA would therefore fund construction of the gate.

**ACTION: OCC, JP**

- 5.2.1.c **UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund:** The fund had now been reconstituted and a new Secretary appointed by BCRA. DCA had been invited to propose a Fund Representative from the Peak District.  
*It was agreed that Dave Webb should be nominated.* JP would inform the BCRA Secretary of DCA's nomination. **ACTION: JP**  
*That the Conservation Officer's report be accepted.* Prop. B.Potts, Sec. K.Slatcher. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 5.2.2 **ASSISTANT CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT:** *(Not able to be present but written report tabled.)*
- 5.2.2.a **Water Icicle Close Cavern:** High CO<sub>2</sub> levels had been recorded in Urchin Passage. A new CO<sub>2</sub> warning notice was needed on the lid and the hinges needed repair. DW and BD would deal with this. **ACTION: DW, BD**
- 5.2.2.b **Paper Pulp disposal:** A meeting had been set up to investigate the problems in limestone areas where the pulp appeared to be affecting underground watercourses. TJ noted that there were now piles of the pulp ready for spreading near Dr. Jackson's, Sheepwash and Gautries caves. This was outside the SSSI but within the catchment so would affect drainage into the SSSI.  
*A vote of thanks was given to Christine Wilson for all the work she had done.*
- 5.2.2.c **Abbeyle School:** DW had written to the school to thank the children for the cleanup they had done around the caves in the Stoney Middleton area.  
*That the Conservation Officer's report be accepted.* Prop. P.Lydon, Sec. W.Sheldon. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 5.3 **PROJECTS OFFICER:** *(Not present and no written report received.)*
- 5.3.a **Eldon Hole:** DW reported that Martyn Grayson had carried out work on Eldon Hole.
- 5.3.b **Big Dig:** PM asked if MG had been approached by Frank Beasley of Chesterfield C. C. re. Big Dig. Not known.
- 5.4 **ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT:** *(Not able to be present but written report tabled.)*
- 5.4.a **Holme Bank Chert Mine:** PM asked what action was being taken re. Holme Bank. PC had mentioned to J. Oldfield that the gate was open and a combination lock was fitted. The emergency exit lock had been vandalised and Mr. Oldfield offered to pay for a replacement. Noted that D.Carlisle had recommended that there should be an emergency exit so BD will check with PICA. **ACTION: BD**  
*That the Access Officer's report be accepted.* Prop. T.Jackson, Sec. W.Sheldon. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 5.5 **LEGAL & INSURANCE OFFICER'S REPORT:** *(Written report tabled.)*
- 5.5.a **Snake Mine:** We would ensure that a reference to the access agreement appears in the DCA Handbook and a note in CoPD. **ACTION: TJ, JP**
- 5.5.b **Club Projects:** PM's information re. "duty of care" was noted. JP would ensure that the information was put in the next Information Circular and in the Handbook. **ACTION: JP**
- 5.5.c **Access to Big Dig:** This could be a case for DCA taking an active role but a request must come formally to DCA.  
*That the Legal & Insurance Officer's report be accepted.* Prop. P.Lydon, Sec. T.Jackson. *Agreed unanimously.*
- 5.6 **EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT:** *(Not present and no report received.)*
- 5.7 **TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT:** *(Not present and no report received.)*
- 5.7.a **Cliffhanger:** JP noted that NA had provided the necessary risk assessment documentation for the Cliffhanger organisers and would be involved in the event.
- 5.7.b **Information on Caver Training events:** NA had provided information on Caver Training events in Derbyshire and this leaflet had been circulated to members in April.
- 5.8 **PUBLICATIONS OFFICER/NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT:** *(PL gave a verbal report.)*  
PL noted that there was a shortage of material for the Newsletter - it was up to members to provide content.
- 5.9 **ASST. SECRETARY / PLANNING LIAISON OFFICER:** *(CB gave a verbal report.)*
- 5.9.a **Derbyshire Minerals Core Strategy:** CB has been dealing with this consultation. Note that it covers Derbyshire outside the Peak Park and includes the Magnesian limestone area. BP asked if the Magnesian limestone area was now being targeted for quarrying; CB said that this was being dealt with under the usual consultation system and we would check carefully all proposals. Suggested that a copy of Dave Webb's "Masson Hill Conservation Audit" be supplied to Derbyshire County Council - JP would supply a copy for CB to send.
- 5.9.b **Tearsall Quarry site:** Work on this would be going ahead after appropriate consultation.
- 5.9.c **Quarries breaking into natural caves:** PM noted that there was no mechanism to halt quarrying if a natural cave is broken into. It might be possible to include something in the planning approval where there was a possibility of this happening and Natural England may be able to advise.
6. **CAVE DISCOVERY FUND APPLICATIONS:**  
The CDF Panel had recommended maximum grant be given to Orpheus C. C. for the discoveries in Bottle Pot and Water Icicle Close Cavern. The total amount would be £69.03.  
*It was agreed unanimously that the meeting confirmed the recommendation from Cave Discovery Fund Panel for maximum grant to Orpheus C.C.*  
Noted that Orpheus C.C. members present excluded themselves from voting on the award.
7. **PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS:**
- 7.1.a **Caves of the Peak District:** JP reported on progress - a local publisher had been found who could produce the quality that we required at a reasonable price. She recommended that DCA fund the entire production, which would require a further £3,000 over and above the money already promised. **Contd. Over >>**

<< 7.1.a contd.

*That DCA allocate a further £3,000, in addition to the £5,000 already agreed, to the publication of Caves of the Peak District.* Prop. K.Slatcher, Sec. P.Chandler. *Agreed unanimously.*

It was further agreed that the full price of the finished publication should be £20 - it was likely that postage would come to between £1 and £2 per copy. *It was agreed that there should be a pre-publication offer of £20 per copy, incl. postage.* JP would arrange for order forms, website advertisement and information on UKcaving and noted that we needed a deadline for this offer. PL suggested that we needed to arrange for payment to be via PayPal as well as by cash/cheque. **ACTION: JP**

Agreed that there would be a requirement for complimentary copies and review copies to be sent out.

7.2.a **Peak District access and Rigging Guide:** TJ reported that the access section was being kept up to date ready for publication. There would be a need to check other sections were ready. **ACTION: TJ, JP, PL**

8. **REPORT ON BCA COUNCIL MEETING, 5 JUNE 2010:** (*Verbal report from JP, DCA rep., and BP, Orpheus C.C. rep.*) JP and BP reported that this had been a useful and constructive meeting, ably chaired by BCA Chairman Andy Eavis. Nick Williams was now the BCA Equipment Officer so the furore over the Bolt Installation Document (reported to the DCA AGM as item 6.14.a) was now being dealt with satisfactorily.

9. **CONFIRM DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

9.1 **Next Council Meeting:** Confirmed as Saturday, 30 October 2010, 10am, Monyash Village Hall.

9.2 **2011 AGM:** Confirmed as Saturday, 26 February 2011, 10am, Monyash Village Hall.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

None put forward.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 14.23pm.

*J.Potts  
Recorder*

**APPENDED TO THESE MINUTES AND FORMING PART OF THEM IS THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT:**

**Officers' Reports to the DCA Council Meeting, 25 June 2010:**

- |    |            |  |
|----|------------|--|
| a. | Item 5.1   | Secretary/Treasurer's Report,            |
| b. | Item 5.2.1 | Conservation Officer's Report,           |
| c. | Item 5.2.2 | Assistant Conservation Officer's Report, |
| d. | Item 5.4   | Access Officer's Report,                 |
| e. | Item 5.5   | Legal & Insurance Officer's Report.      |

**Plus**

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|----|--------------|---|
| f. | See item 3.2 | Cliffhanger - Artificial Speleological System (ASS) |
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**Item 5.1 - DCA SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT**

**Communications**

Since the AGM I have circulated to all members, mostly by email where possible:

AGM Minutes and DCA Annual Report and Accounts (in printed form to all members).  
DCA Information Circular 2010/1. January/April 2010,  
DCA Training Events Circular,  
Minutes of DCA Council Meeting 13 Feb. 2010,  
Appeal re. the damage in Giants Hole reported by Daryl Godfrey,  
DCA Newsletter "The Derbyshire Caver", no. 131.

I have also circulated by email and placed on [UKcaving.com](http://UKcaving.com): notes on the problems with the JH/Speedwell connection and the notes on the new discoveries in Water Icicle. (Which last caused considerable controversy.)

**Membership**

I have circulated a final subs. reminder to Individual Members and all but two have now paid for 2010. The two will be considered to be "lapsed" after the end of June but I will send them a warning of this. Thus membership currently stands at:

Clubs (all BCA member clubs)	- 30
Individuals	- 49 (incl. 2 Hon. members)
Associates	- 9

**Thanks**

As always, my thanks go to the team of DCA Officers who work their socks off on behalf of ALL cavers in the Peak, not just DCA members. They keep me fully informed of what they are doing and ensure I have the information to send out as widely as possible.

**Finances**

DCA's financial status is better than it's ever been! Last year at this point we held a total of £9911.51 in our two accounts and we were able to agree that we could contribute £5,000 to the cost of publishing Caves of the Peak District - this comes up for discussion later in the meeting.

**Contd. over >>**

This year our accounts hold:	Deposit A/c	£ 14,739.84
	Current A/c	£ 536.14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 15,275.98</b>

Of that amount, we expect to pay up to £5,000 (but not more) to fund the Cave Digging Leaflet (see Conservation Officer's Report) and a further few hundred £££s on the Artificial Cave and Cliffhanger, which I hope we will eventually recoup from BCA under the Youth Development banner. There is also an application under the Cave Discovery Fund, which the Panel have recommended DCA approves (see item 6.1). We have also paid for a number of projects in various areas involving maintenance of access and conservation of caves, including supplying conservation tape and pegs and grids.

We have received £9,800 from Natural England towards the expenditure on 3 cave conservation projects, two of which have been completed and all expenses paid. We have recently received a donation from Ralph Johnson from the sale of his DVD "Mid Rope Rescue", the proceeds from which are being split between DCA and DCRO, and we hope there is more to come from that source - so thanks to Ralph for his generosity.

It is worth noting that during the 3 months January-March we received a total of £8.91 interest on our balance of well over £15,000 in the deposit account. This is pitiful! We will not do better with any normal deposit account, given that we can't "tie up" our money long term, so we should think about other ways of making our money earn more for us and benefit cavers - CoPD is a good example (see item 7.1).

Finally, a reminder that you should now be looking for a new Treasurer as I shall not be standing again next year.

*Jenny Potts, 25 June 2010*  
*Hon. Secretary/Treasurer*

## Item 5.2.1 - CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT

### 1. Paper Pulp Spreading.

See Asst Cons Officer's Report

### 2. Carbon Dioxide Levels in Derbyshire Caves/Mines.

See Asst Cons Officer's report.

### 3. New Cave Digging Leaflet.

The amount of work needed to complete the new leaflet has proved to be far greater than at first estimated. It has involved several meetings and many revisions, updates and correction of typos by the printers. However we are now hopefully on the final draft and a copy is being circulated at this meeting. Plans will soon be made to launch the leaflet to the caving community. We are grateful to Natural England for their generous grant towards publication (currently residing in DCA's account), and I expect to be drawing on this in the next few weeks to pay for the not inconsiderable printing and other associated costs.

**Cave Digging Poster** Also coming out of the grant will be the cost of publishing and printing some posters carrying a similar message to the leaflet. The design and layout of this has still to be finalised.

### 4. Environment Agency "Enjoying Water" workshop (February)

As I was unable to attend the workshop I wrote to the convenor expressing our interest in the quality of water entering our caves. I explained that stream caves were used frequently by recreational cavers and cave divers, and were also a source of scientific study, and this should be taken account of when assessing the overall use of water. Unfortunately I received no reply and caves were not mentioned in the report of the workshop.

### 5. Conservation Materials.

**Tape and Pegs.** Following a high demand for materials for conservation measures in the new section of Water Icicle and Hollywood Bowl in Bagshawe I asked Twiggs to make up a supply of stainless steel pegs. These have been used effectively in both caves and have been a major factor in helping to conserve the delicate floor features in WICC.

**Walkway Mesh.** A number of mesh panels were supplied from stock at Magpie Mine to Mel Milner for use in replacing corroded covers over river bed swallets in the Manifold. These have now been fitted. Part of last year's NE grant has been used to replenish some of the stock of panels.

### 6. Stoney Middleton Audit.

I attended a meeting called by Mark Cope to seek views on the final audit report and management options in the Dale. The eventual layout of the audit will be based upon other similar DCA publications. Mark has spent a great deal of time on this important document but disappointingly the meeting, which was widely circulated, was poorly attended.

### 7. UCF Meeting May 2010.

The meeting was well attended and included a further short presentation of the Stoney Middleton Audit during which Mark was able to explain the need for the various earlier research Phases, give a progress report, and reassure Forum members that the final version will be on the same lines as previous audits. Karen Slatcher presented a report with slides on the impressive and scientifically important new find in Water Icicle which created a lot of discussion as to the best way to protect the find for future generations to study and enjoy in its pristine state. Other items included updates on CO<sub>2</sub> levels in caves and progress with Natural England's project to highlight the potential impact of the spreading of paper pulp.

### 8. Water Icicle Close Cavern.

As conservation Officer it has given me a great deal of satisfaction to have been closely connected with the OCC in helping with conservation measures introduced in the scientifically important new discovery. Thanks to the efforts of all concerned it can be confidently cited as an example of best practice in the region if not nationally.

Naturally I will fully support any further measures to control access as recommended by John Gunn and the OCC digging team.

Contd. over >>

#### 9. Wilful Damage to stal in Giants.

This episode of incomprehensible vandalism has naturally been a source of great disappointment to us all, but it has provoked much discussion and has certainly raised the issue of the vulnerability of these freely accessible and increasingly rare and fragile areas. I have collected all the bits from Daryl Godfrey and they are now residing at Natural England's offices in Bakewell pending further action.

#### 10. National Trust South Peak Cave Strategy meeting.

I attended this meeting which was to seek the views of those with an interest in our local caves, and particularly those in the Manifold Valley, on the wording of the above draft document. The NT wish to develop a strategy locally for dealing with the potential impact of animal and human presence on the mainly archaeological remains in caves on their land. This is not intended to be an "exclusion" strategy but rather a management tool for the benefit of all parties.

Further consultation will be arranged as and when necessary before the plan is released.

#### 11. SSSI Cave Conservation Monitoring Meeting.

The committee met this week to discuss progress with the SSSI monitoring scheme and other conservation matters of concern to cavers. The second round of monitoring is now complete, and fuller report will be available in due course. The committee, which is chaired by Natural England, is made up of representatives from the six SSSI areas in our region and myself as collator.

*Dave Webb June 2010*

## Item 5.2.2 - ASSISTANT CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT

### CO2 monitoring

The Natural England funded purchase of two Gasbadge Plus oxygen meters and one Sperian 3 gas (oxygen/infrared carbon dioxide/carbon monoxide) for monitoring caves, in our region, for carbon dioxide/oxygen are being used successfully by various cavers.

The more robust Gasbadge meters are small, very easy to use and re-calibrate and are permanently on for 2 years. These are proving ideal for cavers to use and so far outdoor centres, club cavers and independent/professional cavers have used them.

The Sperian meter (more expensive and bulky) has been loaned to John Gunn on occasions and used to monitor CO2 in Bagshawe, in particular, every week.

Other meters used have been Nick Williams' 4 gas meter (hydrogen sulphide/carbon monoxide/carbon dioxide and oxygen) and Ralph Johnson's Gasbadge oxygen meter.

To date carbon dioxide levels, in all systems that have been tested (including Water Icicle), have been low (0.03-0.7%) compared to unusual higher levels found in October and November 2009 .

#### Bagshawe ('Tourist' part -upper level to hippodrome and on to top-stream junction)

Carbon dioxide levels were high in October and dropping slowly in November. During the months of December until Mid May outside daily average temperatures were consistently below 8.5 degree centigrade, which is Bagshawe cavern's cave temperature all year round. During this time carbon dioxide levels were a maximum of 0.4% found at 'top-stream junction', the furthest most part of 'tourist' part of the cave). The remainder of the tourist cave was 0.05%ish (equivalent to surface CO2).

During the spring burst in mid-May a slight rise was observed in Bagshawe top stream junction to 1.08% and the remainder of the cave ranging from 0.2-0.7%. To date the level at top-stream junction has not exceeded 1.38% and the remainder of the cave has ranged from 0.6-1.1%.

From mid-May onwards outside average temperatures have on the whole been above the temperature of the cave with about 50% of evening temperatures being below that of the cave.

Note: From October 2009 to present, levels in the stream found downstream of 'top-stream' junction have never been recorded below 1.21%. Maximum levels were 5% in November 2009. The last reading June 17th was 1.41%.

Thanks goes to Nick Williams for loan of his meter, Ralph Johnson for his monitoring efforts and updates John Gunn, Jenny Potts and myself on CO2 levels found in various systems and to all those cavers that were willing to do the monitoring.

### Paper Pulp and CO2

Jo Poll from Natural England has successfully brought together the Environment Agency, paper pulp industries (Envar and Bluestar) and ADAS to discuss paper pulp issues and the possibilities of doing a formal study on the effects of paper pulp spreading in karst areas -the Peak District & Derbyshire: Land use and SSSI speleothems. Subject to the availability of funding for this work, the study is hoped to commence in our area, notably in the Bagshawe catchment area, at the end of this year. In addition the Peak Cavern catchment may also be studied.

*Christine Wilson*

## Item 5.4 - DCA ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

A fairly quiet time recently. Most of my attention has been focused on the new edition of Caves of the Peak District.

It was reported that the top lock had once again been destroyed at Holme bank Chert Mine. As far as I am aware, Bob Dearman and Martyn Grayson are looking into a solution.

There have been no applications for access to Ashford Black Marble (Rookery) Mine.

*Iain Barker*  
*DCA Access Officer*

## Item 5.5 - LEGAL & INSURANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

### Snake Mine

At her request I have added the owner of Snake Mine to DCA's list of Indemnified Principals. She is Mrs Rose Slater of Arm Lees Farm which lies alongside the Hopton to Via Gellia road. This means she is covered under the BCA Insurance Scheme for any claim brought against her arising out of caving activity/mine exploration on her land. The indemnity applies as long as visitors to the site have the benefit of the BCA insurance cover, too. Intending visitors should therefore be aware that Mrs Slater may ask to see their current insurance card as proof of liability cover.

### Club Projects

I have recently advised on how the BCA Insurance Scheme applies to clubs undertaking digs and/or projects involving stabilising pitches or collapsed passages. Clubs have a duty of care to ensure others do not come to grief through any negligence on the clubs' part. At the same time an important function of liability insurance is to indemnify clubs in the event of such negligence claims by aggrieved parties. It follows that any excavation or stabilisation work should be done with a view to minimising the risks to those people who go on to put their faith (not to say their lives) in the effectiveness and safety of such work.

*Peter Mellors  
Legal & Insurance Officer*

## Item 3.2 - CLIFFHANGER - ARTIFICIAL SPELEOLOGICAL SYSTEM (ASS)

Not having come up with any better 'brainwaves', construction has begun on the design suggested at the last DCA meeting.

Construction, as I write, is almost complete (Thanks to Dave Webb for very kindly driving down to assist in the work). More time is needed (this coming week) to finish off and add the extras.

This system consists of a series of four 'boxes', eight feet in length and two feet square. They are constructed of 12mm ply which are bolted (roofing bolts and wingnuts) to the inside of four square stout timber frames. Ends are similarly bolted on as required.

The boxes will interlock to provide a 'maze', with at least on climb up, and down, into another section. So far, construction has shown the arrangement to be very robust, but of course the "Proof of the pudding....."!

A two foot square section gives plenty of room for an adult, even more for a young child, to crawl through but each module can easily be adapted to provide more challenge.....

I am putting a 'squeeze' into one – a hinged flap that can be held at a selected incline by inserting a broom handle from one sided of the box to the other. The base of all four boxes will be carpeted, so hinges etc will be covered, and the danger of splinters to knees is minimal.

Another box can have bean bags placed in it...the possibilities are endless.

The interior of all the boxes has already been painted in black, so the interior is dark, and pretty well splinter-proofed anyway.

I am purchasing two or three cycling helmets and some LED lights to fix permanently on to them for use by younger children (Caving helmets we have learnt, fall off and 'strangle' younger children!).

I would envision one person / child in the system at any one time, unless an adult accompanies a young child in.

Question – do we need some sort of 'waiver' on site to say this is a 'Home project' / not CE marked and like caves, has some potential danger – if only splinters(as I say though, I am trying very hard to make this almost a non-issue).

Construction will be finished next week (sorry, delayed by my extended desert adventures in the States), so some arrangement will need to be made for transport to Sheffield.

An idea of size etc can be gained perhaps by imagining sixteen 8ft by 2ft ply boards, and sixteen 2 foot square frames. Not bad really. The whole system virtually 'flat-packs'.

The hardest part has been trying to be 'uniform' so that pieces are interchangeable, though it would help if unit components are kept as a 'family'.

With approval, I shall be adding a few 'accessories' like spiders, a few 'cobwebs' and access holes to spray in just a 'little' water with a water pistol!

I would love to be able to develop this idea, as I am sure we will learn a lot by using it and find ways of improving it (maybe scrapping!) and making it more fun.

**A Plea.... I need urgently-**

**Carpet...four 8ft by 2 ft pieces, or about 20 carpet tiles.**

**A tarpaulin (clean) that can be sewn into a tube – heavy plastic would do.**

My own personal view is that this is a great asset to have, and will allow us to 'push' caving to the people who matter – young ones, by sowing the seeds of interest. It can be used by young and old alike, changed at will to give more / less challenge. Maybe next year, Cliffhanger will be hosting not the Bouldering Championships, but the Speleological Squeeze -Maze Championships!!

*Dennis J.Jump (MCG)  
June 2010*