

Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter and Journal
June 2020

Issue Number 169

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Cover photo North Wales Trip

1. Foreword

Welcome to this, the second edition of the PCG newsletter to go out under the Covid 19 lock down.

I hope everyone is keeping well and not going stir crazy being hold up at home if you are not a key worker. We are currently about three months into the lockdown now with no official trips happening. Hopefully the restrictions which are now starting to be relaxed will continue to do so, and we hope to resume trips again soon.

Hopefully, we will be able to undertake surface trips whilst observing social distancing by the time this edition gets out. It will be a good opportunity to have a look for new venues ready for when we can start going underground again. For now the priority is for everyone to stay safe, and let's hope there will be no second lockdown imposed on us.

Dave Warne

2. Editorial

Welcome to the latest newsletter. Hopefully we will be able to get out as a club again soon.

Thank you to those who have provided articles. It is good to have more club content this time.

Your contributions would be most welcome as this will allow us to share information and photographs of club trips and make the newsletter relevant to our membership. Please provide any articles in Microsoft Word if possible, without formatting or Headings

Please pass any comments on to me if there are any items that you would like me to cover.

If you have any ideas for new places to visit or would like the club to organise any training sessions eg SRT please let me know

Bernard Page

3. Corona virus update

The club has already had a few enquiries about going underground. In view of this the club has come up with an official position for its members in that you cannot yet go caving (or mining) as a member of the Plymouth Caving Group. However, you can go underground with members of your own household or 1 to 1 with a person from another household.

This message to you as members will also go onto the clubs website.

Your BCA insurance covers caving but government guidance must be followed

Current changes to guidance allow 6 people to meet outside if they social distance. This may allow surface explorations to find new venues to be organised. The Committee and Timmy will be letting you know when any events are organised

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4. European Cave Rescue Meeting 2020

At the time of writing this meeting of the European Cave Rescue Association is still taking place at the little town of Ramales which is near Matienzo, a great caving area in Cantabria North Spain. The Plymouth Caving Group has great associations with this place as, for many years, club members regularly came here, especially in the summer, to go expedition caving.

The meeting will be the 14th such meeting and was originally due to take place in Poland but, as they were unable to organise the meeting for this year, the Cantabrians stepped in and the meeting is due to take place from the 12th-15th November 2020



5. Matienzo

This month some of us were due to go to the French Pyrenees to go caving but obviously in the current circumstances that has had to be postponed. A few years ago some of us also went caving in the Vercors region of France and a few of us went via Matienzo and the Pyrenees. I thought that this time I would write a little piece on Matienzo as this is where a few us went enroute to the Vercors. Next month, to whet our appetites for when the trip is rearranged, I shall write a piece on the Pyrenees caves, particularly the spectacular Pierre St Martin (PSM). It is great to know that on the trips I go on it never rains!



This is a view of the Matienzo valley. It is, of course, via the Santander ferry and, hopefully a Commodore Cabin, less than 40 miles from home which is why it was so popular with PCG members.

Four years ago we didn't have too much time there as were going to the Vercors but we did have time for some caving and drinking of course. We also went to nearby Ramales for some shopping where I bought a cow bell! We also went to the seaside at Noja about 30 minutes away. Nice relaxation after a day of caving apart from the car getting stuck in the sand.

Not far away to the west of Matienzo are the painted caves at Altamira near Santillana del Mar which we were able to visit on the day we left Matienzo to go to the Pyrenees. A small detour but well worth it.





This is **Cueva del Agua** which, as its name suggests, has a river flowing through it. This was one of the first caves I went to when I visited Matienzo. It is approached down a small pathway from a lane where the cave opens as wide boulder strewn entrance. The river does sump in the cave but eventually flows right through to resurge on the other side of the mountain.

Here we see Richard and Dan starting to explore the cave. All togged up and ready to go. In some parts of the cave are some rather fine formations.



This marks the boundary of the village and not far away is Germans (pronounced Hermans) Bar, the social hub of the village and the centre of all caving expeditions where we ended up on most days.



The next cave we went to was Reñada. Not totally easy to find but Bernard eventually found a small, draughting hole which led into a great cave system. The system was massive so Bernard, Richard and Dan had a limited time to explore just a part of it. The next few pictures all come from here.









After Reñada it was of course time to back to German's for a swift drink or two before heading off to the beach at Noja. All was well here until we went back to the car to find it had sunk into the soft sand. This was to be our last night in Cantabria so we had a meal out. The other nights we had BBQ's in the rather nice hotel we stayed in just outside Matienzo



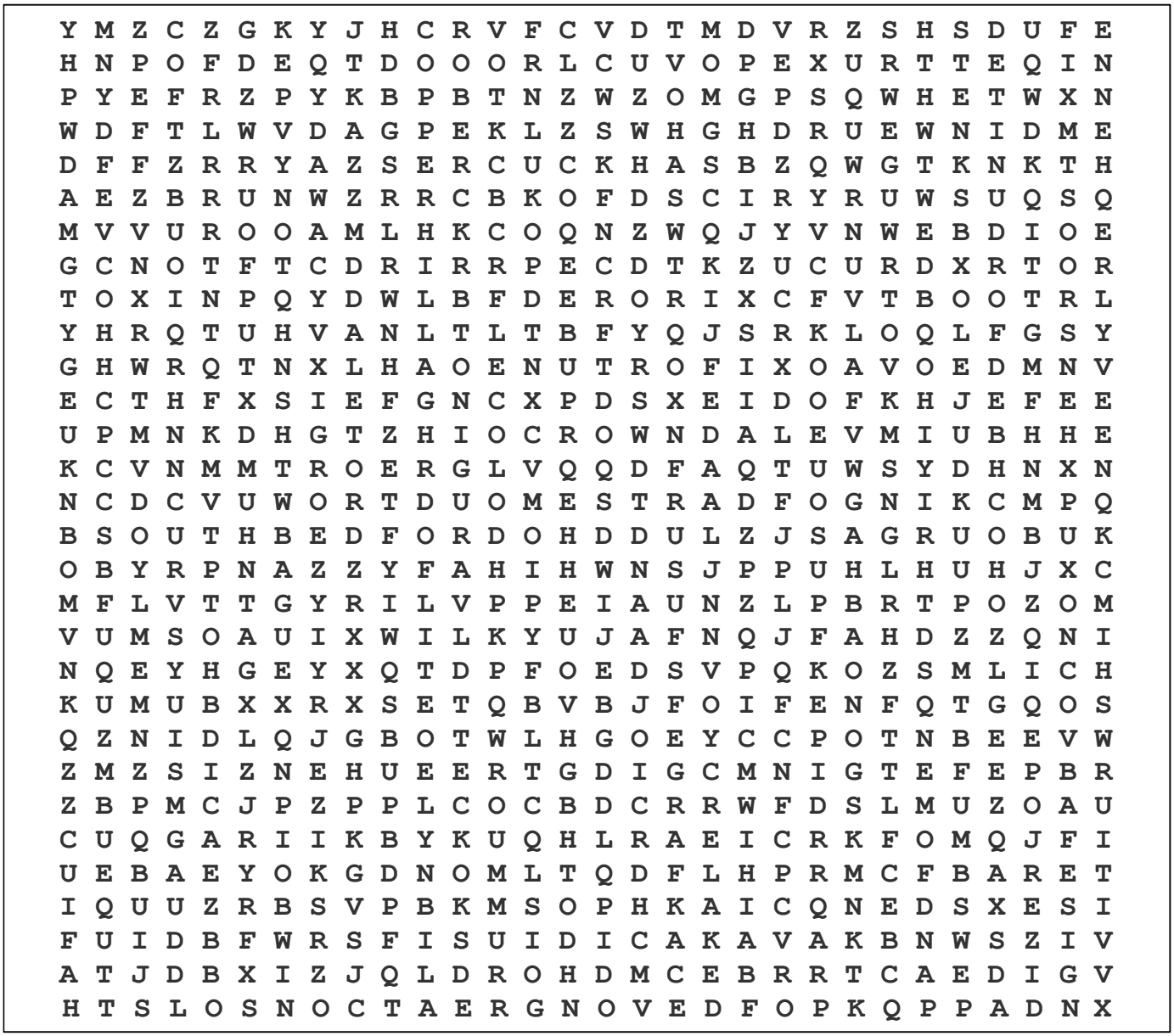
The next day we were off to Altamira to see the fantastic bulls painted by the people who lived in the caves thousands of years ago. The caves are currently closed to public trips but the reconstruction is magnificent. After Altamira we headed east to France for the next part of our holiday. Hopefully this will enable others of you to do your own reminiscing and to write them up for the Newsletter. It will help Bernard keep it going.



David Jean

6. Mine Word-search

Richard Vooght has come up with a Local Mine word-search. For those that need help the list of mines can be found at the end of the newsletter



7. Keeping fit for caving

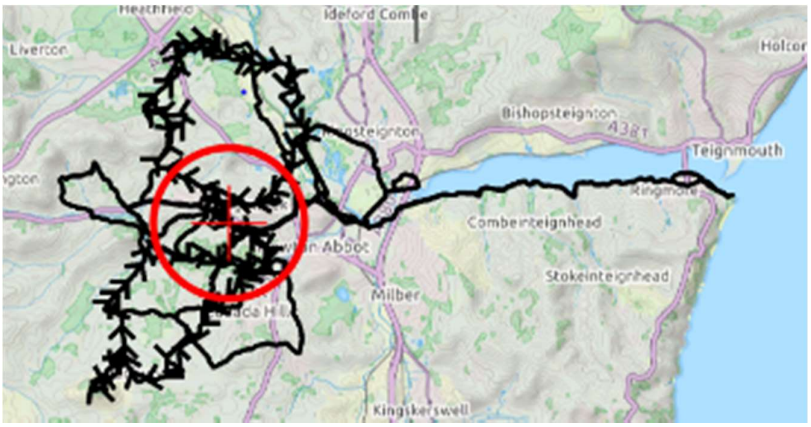
Caving requires a reasonable level of fitness. Stamina, flexibility and balance are important but no individual exercise can keep you fit for caving. Any of the following can help so now is the time to get in shape for some exciting exploration. Long distance running, cycling and walking can help with stamina and Yoga or Pilates can improve flexibility and balance. If you are new to endurance exercises build up your distance slowly and stretch before, when warmed up and after exercise. Begin with 20 minutes and work up to over an hour.

Tara has been setting an example for all of us to follow:-

Like everyone, the introduction of a nationwide lockdown and a global pandemic has had a significant impact on my personal time and hobbies; with the biggest effect on caving, which also tends to go hand in hand with going to the pub! Being unable to go to work and not being in my own home has meant that frustratingly there is very little to do hence the introduction and focus on keeping 'fit'.

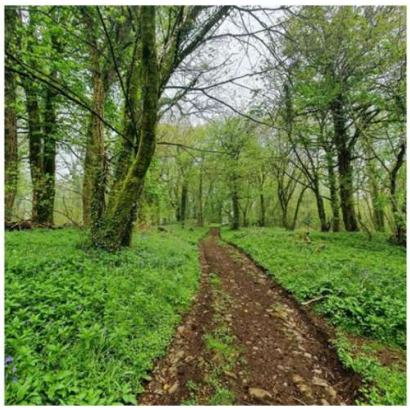
It's been extremely difficult for everyone and I have channelled my frustrations on wanting to go caving into other sports and activities, which I'm hoping will keep me somewhat fit and ready for the return of our subterranean sport. For me walking and cycling have been the main focus, although compared to caving they seem rather pedestrian!

For walking I use Viewranger to find walks around my local area, in the first section of lockdown I stuck to walking or cycling from home which meant I had to get pretty creative on my walks (although I am lucky currently living in a relatively rural area).



The centre of the red cross is where I am based. The black lines (some are thicker than others as I've been on those roads a few times!) indicate the walks I have been on and generally were between 5-10 miles of my local area, as you can see I had to get increasingly creative to stave off the boredom! Following country lanes and public footpaths meant that I could create multiple and circular loops. Some of the highlights were:

- Templar Way Newton Abbot to Teignmouth
- Denbury Hill Fort
- Stover Country Park Circular
- Teigngrace Heritage Trail
-


Since the rules have been slightly relaxed I have been able to venture onto more exciting walks which have mostly been centred around Dartmoor as I am only less than 10 miles away. Hikes on the moor have been really fun and challenging especially in the heat we have been experiencing! I have found that I am able to walk quicker especially on big uphill sections and definitely feel fitter.

Moor walks have included:

- Hameldown Beacon and Grimpound
- Wistman's Wood and the Devonport Leat
- Dr Blackall's Drive
- Hunters Tor and Lustleigh Cleave






In between walks I have found that cycling has been a good way to move at speed and do something slightly more exhilarating. It has been a few years since I last got on a bike so it has been definitely interesting. I have been using Strava to track all my exercising.

I started off pretty wobbly especially as I have been riding a road bike which is something I have never used before. However, I have found that I have improved pretty quickly and have found it enjoyable - I've been trying to ride 3 times a week. My favourite routes have been;

- Newton Abbot to Torquay
- Newton Abbot to Teignmouth
- Newton Abbot, Chudleigh, Chudleigh Knighton and Bovey Tracy

The toughest cycle overall was from Newton Abbot to Haytor; 21 miles in total with 2 hours 20 minutes moving time. In that time period there was 1750ft of climbing. It was tough and a mental battle but I did it. Definitely didn't think I would be able to do that when I first started!



The toughest walk I did was Pullabrook Woods, Hunters Tor, Foxworthy and Lustleigh Cleave. Around 1500ft of climbing in a scorching 23c (probably very easy on a cool day). It was a sweatfest. Overall, it's been amazing to have the free time to spend knackering myself out by doing more exercise than normal. Hopefully it means that return to caving won't be too much of a shock. I think I can speak for us all when I say that the sooner the better.

Totals:

Miles walked since the start of lockdown: 210

Miles cycled since start of lockdown: 177

Tara Beacroft

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8. Ystrad Einon Mine, North Wales



The waterwheel on a previous time we were there

Ystrad Einon is a lead mine in Ceredigion, North Wales not far from the Dovey estuary. Normally we visit this mine on our way to the hut where we stay near Llanberis when we go to North Wales. This time we went on our way home so for some reason we found it a bit more awkward to find. We were also in a race against forecast rain and Fran had a train to catch. Dave did an article on the other places we visited in the last Newsletter and mentioned this one in passing. So here are a few pictures of it.

As well as lead, silver, zinc and copper came from this relatively small mine which first opened in the 18th century but was usually worked on and off by very few people. It is accessed through adits in the hillside and is particularly well known for a waterwheel still inside the mine. The picture shown of the waterwheel at the beginning was taken on a previous PCG trip.

We reached the adit by a short climb up a spoil tip.

As we left the mine to start our homeward journey it started to tip with rain and stayed like that all the way back to Devon though we did stop for a rather nice meal on the way home at Bluith Wells. I also bought a few cakes to have with a cuppa when I arrived back home.



Ready to go in



Comfy in a Kibble

David Jean

9. Derbyshire weekend

Carlswark Cavern

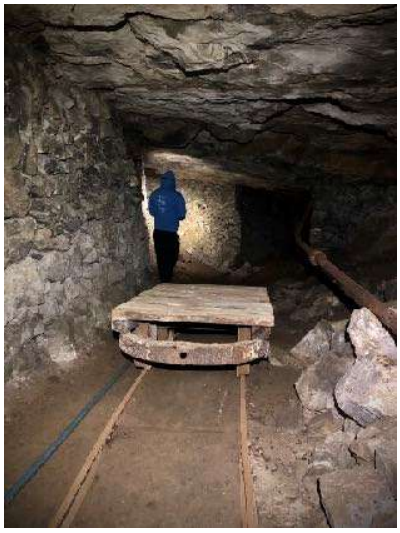
On Saturday, Craig, Richard, Fran and Dave W headed to Carlswark Cavern. Carlswark Cavern is situated in the Stoney Middleton Dale. There are several of entrances to the cave, both needing rope and not. But the lower entrance was sumped where the resurgence was. So we headed to one of the higher entrances (Gin Entrance).

The entrance is an open rift on a terrace above the resurgence. It comprises of a scramble down a rift which led to the bottom of Eyam Passage. Eyam Passage is a classic phreatic passage beginning at walking height and quickly getting smaller to crawling. Within, the passage there was lots of crawling in puddles. During this, Dave managed to lose his camera in one of the wet sections. After finally finding it (30 minutes later) we carried on until the junction where Eyam Passage met the North-West Passage. Dave, after the crawling decided to head out so Craig, Richard and Fran continued. Carrying on along the passage, we went through a couple of quite tight squeezes which lead us to the main streamway. When we reached the streamway, we headed downstream along Stalactite Passage which had formations!!! (The cave didn't have very many formations) More crawling and some tighter sections brought us to the streamway. We carried along the streamway to the Rift Sump where there was a nice waterfall plunging into the sump. The route carried on above the sump, which involved a climb above the sump with a very bold stretch into a crawl. So we decided this was the time to turn around and find Dave at the car.

Carlswark is a nice cave, but next time we visit, I'm going to take knee pads as my knees were killing afterwards, and left a few other places in the cave to explore. The trip took 4 hours.

On the way back from the cottage we stopped at Magpie mine, which was a 19th century lead mine. We walked around the surface working which there was a few building ranging from numerous mine shafts with headgear, a Cornish Engine House dating back to the 1860's and many buildings which were built for the mine.







Water Icicle Close Cavern

Craig and Richard

We started Sunday at the Orpheus Cottage and drove out to Monyash in the cold wind. Still, amazingly there was a glimmer of sunshine and parked just in the village at the junction to Derby Lane.

When we got dressed and ready to go, we left the two Dave's and Timmy at the cars and slowly walked up the lane towards the cave. As we walked up to the cave, we were glad that we didn't try to leave the cars along the final green lane as it was only passable by foot or four-wheeled drive. Finally, after about a two-mile walk up the lane, we reached the shaft for the cave. We thought that the cave would be locked by the tried and tested "Derbyshire Key", but this time it wasn't. If anyone else has been to this cave, they would realise that there isn't very much shelter at the top of the shaft, in fact, none! Rigging the shaft consists of the main hang from a scaffold bar at the top of the shaft, with a backup in a cemented stake just outside. In the Book (Caves of the Peak District) it says you need a 32 m rope, to be honest, it felt longer than that we used a 50 m rope and there wasn't much more rope in the bag, even Richard had a little wobble before going down. The shaft itself was lovely it would make any Cornish Miner smile as it was small in diameter and solid limestone. For most of the decent then until it pops out into the chamber at the foot of the shaft. We didn't use a deviation but reading further into the cave some trips do.

The chamber has three possible passages; North, North-West and South. We first went to the North passage; this wasn't what we were expecting. We thought that majority of the cave would be a clean and walking passage, not this passage. It was mostly stooping and crawling in the mud to reach a mud choke

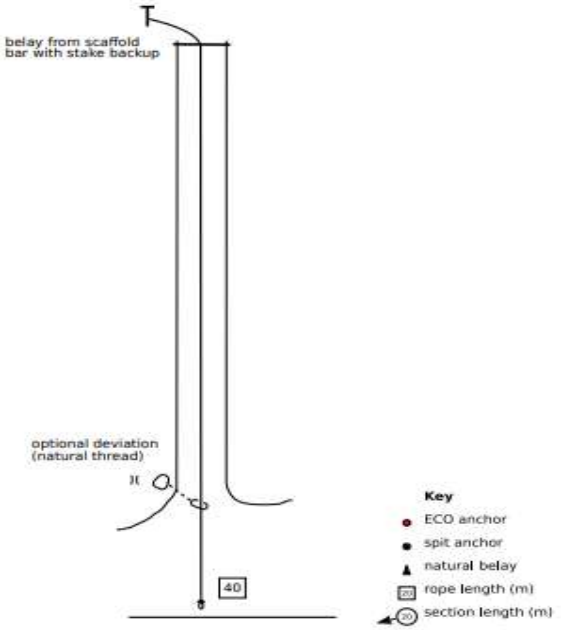
approximately 100m from the shaft, there were some delicate formations but mainly like a classic Devon cave.

Next, we got back to the foot of the entrance shaft and took the south passage the passage consisted of walking passage for 40 m. As we were walking a hammering noise could be heard from a distance. I was wondering there shouldn't be anyone down here. But, to realise that it was only water dripping onto an aluminium ladder which was used to access Batty Farber Passage. After this, we continued to pass the ladder into another crawl into what's called the Great Rift. This part of the cave most looks like a mine; in fact, there were small lead veins; the rift looked more like it was stoped in the pass. At the foot of the rift, there's a squeeze through a choke into the 2012 Orpheus discoveries. Involving some very clean and pristine passage where a taped off route along the passage was. At the end of the passage was one of the Orpheus's digs, looking like digging through another choke. But, this was the end of the passage. We headed back to the entrance shaft once again and looked down the North-western passage.

This passage was the largest in terms of diameter. It mainly a sizable phreatic tube which had a few elegant decorations around the passage. From here, we walked to the scaffolded shaft and realised that at the top of the permanent ladder that a hand line would be needed. Hence, we decided to head back to the shaft and out of the cave. As we got out of the cave and back into the cold, we forgot how exposed to the elements the shaft was. So everything was de-rigged and bundled back into the backs and headed back to the car where we found the two Dave's and Timmy who been to Bakewell to have yet another pudding. We then headed back to Devon. The Trip took approximately 4 hours.

Richard Vooght Craig Holdstock

DCA Rigging Guide - Water Icicle Close Cavern



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revised: 2/01/2017





10. Word -Search Results

BEDFORD UNITED
BROOKWOOD
COPPERHILL
CREBOR
CRELAKE
CROWNDALE
DEVON AND COURTENY
DEVON GREAT CONSOLS
DEVON UNITED
EXMOUTH
FORTUNE
FRANCO
FRIENDSHIP
GOLDEN DAGGER
GREAT ROCK
HAYTOR
HENSROOST
KING OF DART
NUNS CROSS
SOUTH BEDFORD

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