

DERBYSHIRE CAVING CLUB - INFORMATION

Established 1960

This information sheet is for members, old, new or prospective, gives a taster of what the club can offer to new and existing members, and summarises some of the important information in the Handbook. The Club Handbook is available on-line to members. There is also a special newsletter available with more general information aimed at new and prospective members. We hope this will encourage you to take your caving and mining interest further.



More information about the Club, our activities and details of how you can get in touch with us can also be obtained from the website at www.DerbysCC.org.uk. There is a members' area of the website with personal contact details and other information which is not generally available until you join the club. There is also a private Facebook group through which many members communicate with each other, and organise trips to caves and mines.

If you want to join the Derbyshire Caving Club, it is strongly recommended that you get to know some club cavers or miners before you send in a membership form, as you need a member to nominate you for membership. It also helps if you have a go at some simple cave or mine trips, so that you know it is what you really want to do.

We look forward to welcoming you into the club.

CONSTITUTION AND AIMS

The Club operates to a Constitution which covers membership requirements, the structure of the committee, club meetings, subscriptions, etc. The aims of the Club are:

- To provide the facilities (including information and records) and organisation to enable members safely to participate in caving and in mine exploration and, where appropriate, to pursue specialist interests.
- To encourage responsible exploration of caves and mines, the recording of discoveries and artefacts, and specialist activities including photography, surveying and historical research.
- To support through membership as a Club the activities of the British Caving Association and National Association of Mining History Organisations and to encourage adherence to relevant guidelines of these and other appropriate organisations.
- To lease the Alderley Edge Copper Mines from the National Trust and to manage the mines for the long term benefit of members, other caving and mining clubs, the National Trust, other organisations and the general public.
- To foster a general interest in caving by lectures, publications and exhibitions, and co-operation with other organisations and individuals and by any other means deemed fit by the Club.

MEMBERSHIP

The Club is made up of individual members who pay an annual subscription to receive newsletters, get information about trips, take part in Club activities and generally support the Club's aims. Members have to pay for either caving (including mining) or non-caving third-party insurance which we buy through the British Caving Association (BCA). Subscription rates for 2022 are £13 full and £6 associate membership, plus BCA insurance of £20 (active caver/miner) or £6 (non-caving). For a full, caving (or mining) member, the annual subscription is therefore £33. At the start of 2022, there were over 100 members in the Club. To join the Club, you need a membership form which can be downloaded from the website or obtained from the Secretary. Membership is open to everyone 10 years old or over but special conditions apply to those under 18.



Members receive a newsletter named The Dodger's Dispatch, which is usually produced two or three times a year. Distribution is via email, and is also available to members on the Club website. This includes any news, articles, digging updates, trip reports and essential dates for your diary.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE CLUB

The Club is run as a company limited by guarantee (Derbyshire Caving Club Limited) which means that in the extreme case where the Club/Company has to be wound up, the maximum liability of the members is £1 each – so protecting your own home and savings. However, day-to-day administration is devolved to a committee and discussed and

generally agreed at one of the six general meetings each year, currently held Alderley Edge, which every member is entitled to attend. The Committee is elected each December at the Annual General Meeting and is formed of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian together with five or six other members who share jobs such as looking after lights at the Surgery and the Club records. To contact a committee member, send an email to chairman@derbyscc.org.uk, secretary@derbyscc.org.uk, treasurer@derbyscc.org.uk, tacklemaster@derbyscc.org.uk, recorder@derbyscc.org.uk, meets-sec@derbyscc.org.uk, memb-sec@derbyscc.org.uk or librarian@derbyscc.org.uk.

EXPLORATION OF CAVES AND MINES

The Club's main objective is to encourage and facilitate cave and mine exploration. Therefore, new members are encouraged to go caving with as many members of the Club as they can so as to get to know the Club, its activities and other members.

Natural caves are found in Britain wherever there is carboniferous limestone. This means the main areas are Yorkshire, Derbyshire, South Wales and the Mendip Hills but there are several other places such as in Scotland, North Wales and Devon. DCC members often visit the popular areas and make trips to the smaller ones from time to time.

There are mines all around the country from Surrey to Scotland and from Cornwall to Cumbria; some members have a particular interest in exploring them. If this is your interest, then ask around the Club and keep your ears and eyes open for trips to Nenthead, North Wales, Derbyshire and elsewhere. Whether its caving or mining, you can stay close to home but the sport becomes even more enjoyable when you get to see other parts of the country too.

The aims of the Club include finding and exploring previously unknown caves or mines that have been lost for centuries. We have a history of discovery and exploration in Derbyshire, North Wales, Alderley Edge and overseas in Spain and Italy. For some members, this is the main aim whether at Alderley or in natural caves. There is no greater thrill in life than going into a passage which nobody even knew existed or, if it is in a mine, had been "irretrievably" lost for centuries. If this is what you specially want to do, you need to get to know the particular Club members who spend more time exploring new places than visiting known caves – although everyone in the Club usually does a bit of both. The picture was taken in a Spanish cave in 2003 on the day we broke through into previously unknown passages.



Opening up a new cave passage in northern Spain

TRIPS AND EVENTS

It is difficult to start caving if you do not know an active caver or miner. This is why we organize regular events that include trips for people with a range of abilities and interests. Trips and events are most frequently organized on the club's Facebook page. Other regular dates which appear in the newsletter and on the club website are the Spring and Autumn Open Weekends at Alderley Edge, the annual national mining conference in June and the similar national caving conference in September. There will also be dates for the Annual Dinner of the Club and significant expeditions or social events. The Club has a history of social activities although this varies from year to year.



In a wet cave in South Wales

Caving and mining are team activities and you rely – for your life sometimes – on the skill and endurance of other team members. This leads to a much stronger bond than forms in some other clubs (like train-spotting or the WI) and also to a wish among members to meet socially as well as for the caving. There is always the Club Annual Dinner and other stomps, barbeques, camping weekends,

etc. take place throughout the year. Some years we may have an expedition to another caving region of the world or a party to celebrate someone's special birthday. It is a matter of choice whether members join in these events but it certainly is a good way to meet other members – young and old, recent and longstanding. Keep an eye on the diary and listen out for any plans for a BBQ or stomp.

Some social events are shared with other clubs in our area such as the Eldon Pothole Club, TSG or the Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation and these are a chance to make even more friends in the caving and mining world.

ALDERLEY EDGE MINES

The Club leases most of the mines at Alderley Edge from the National Trust. The mines are freely accessible to Club members and the public are also taken down under Club leadership. The mines are regulated by the Mines Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive, and Nigel Dibben has been designated Mine Manager by the Club. As the

public are involved in visits to the mines, safety is very important. The full safety policy is in the Handbook and in the Safety File in the Surgery. A summary is given below.

ALDERLEY OPEN WEEKENDS

Open Weekends take place twice a year. These are held over a Saturday and Sunday in April and September and give the public the chance to visit the mines without making up a group and planning far ahead. We set up some lighting in the mines, prepare displays and lay on leaders for upwards of 200 to 300 people a day. Open Weekends are a really good opportunity for new members to get to know the other members in the club. There is usually some sort of social event on the Saturday night too.

CLUB LIBRARY AND RECORDS

The Club has three collections of caving and mining information of its own and a fourth collection made available by Ethel Burton on behalf of a deceased club member, Stan Gee. The three club collections are: (1) the club library of books most of which can be loaned to members, (2) the club records which contain surveys and journals for reference only and (3) the Jim Lovelock collection, donated by Jim and kept together as a collection. To borrow books from the club library or the Jim Lovelock collection, contact the Club Librarian. To consult the records or add items to the records, contact the Club Recorder. To borrow items in the Stan Gee collection, contact Ethel Burton. The Club Library and Records are currently stored at the National Trust Offices at Alderley Edge.



CLUB TACKLE

The Club now owns only a limited amount of rope etc. as most of the active members use their own equipment. (If you are a full club member and wish to purchase rope or ladders for use while caving and mining, you may request for the club to help towards the cost of these. A request must be made and discussed at a meeting, and if successful up to 50% of the price may be paid by the Club.) The Club also owns bolting kits, a battery operated drill, winches, surveying kit, generators, and of course a dumper, all of which are for shared use. To use Club tackle, you must be a paid-up full member of the Club. Contact a Committee member who will sign out the tackle borrowed.

PERSONAL KIT

If you are a new starter to caving, the Club can lend you some items of basic kit, but there are only a couple of oversuits and furry suits available and the lights are mainly for use at Alderley Edge. Some members have spare kit which they may be willing to lend you for a trip or two. There are several places you can buy caving kit and we suggest you start with a warm and well-fitted undersuit (about £100) followed by an in-expensive helmet, along with light (can be as little as £20 for a decent light ex-China). The Club has some oversuits to lend to new members and you can also use workwear such as a green 'chemical suit' or even a cotton boiler suit on top of the furry suits.

Ordinary wellies are a favourite choice of footwear for cavers. Next, it is advisable to get your own caving oversuit as well as a belay belt and cowstails. After that, when you are sure you want to carry on caving (and have the cash) start building up an SRT kit. Later, you may want to get a tackle sack (or two). All this could cost about £200 for a new set including basic oversuit, wellies, helmet and light. A full SRT kit will add another £200+. However, after that, nothing needs replacing for the sake of fashion - only when it wears out.

From time to time, Club members can also get a discount from selected suppliers of caving kit and if something like a complete SRT set is bought, we have been promised a still greater discount. Speak to the Tacklemaster about suitable kit suppliers.

INSURANCE

The Club carries insurance to protect itself and its members in case of claims. Two forms of public liability insurance are held, one in case of claims arising by members of the public visiting the Alderley Mines and a general policy covering similar claims elsewhere or claims between members. The Club also has fire insurance on the Surgery and Third Party Fire and Theft insurance on the dumper. The dumper is not insured for passenger carrying. The Club does **not** insure members against personal injury; this is each member's own responsibility.

SAFETY IN CAVING

Caving is a hazardous sport but very few accidents occur. Unfortunately, when they do, they tend to make front page news. Always observe the caving safety code and you will reduce the risk to a minimum:

- All parties should be properly organised, equipped, and supervised by a responsible and experienced leader.
- Pick a cave or mine well known to the leader and within everyone's capabilities.
- Let others know where you are going. Ask for permission to enter sites on private land, and securely replace

gates, grills, and shaft cappings.

- No less than 3 in the party, and no more than 3 novices for each experienced leader makes sense. For Alderley Edge, do not exceed 7 visitors per leader.
- Take notice of the weather forecast before going down caves where water flows.
- One helmet and reliable cap lamp for each person.
- Beware of disturbing stacked rock, loose boulders or props, especially in mines.
- Ensure that ladders, belays, ropes are rigged properly before hanging your life on them.
- Someone should carry emergency lights, food and first aid.
- Act sensibly - do not drop stones down mine shafts or cave pitches.
- Falls, loose boulders, flood water, exhaustion and being cold and wet cause most accidents - take care.
- Exit takes more effort than entry, especially on long trips-plan with the return in mind.

CAVE RESCUE

In case of a serious emergency underground, dial 999 and ask the operator for POLICE and then CAVE RESCUE.

Club members are part of the DCRO (Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation) and always contact DCRO for Alderley or other caving incidents in Derbyshire. All members (and suitable non-members) are eligible and encouraged to join the team. Contact a committee member or the DCRO if you are interested.

SAFETY POLICY FOR THE ALDERLEY MINES

It is the policy of the club and its members not to carry out any activities in a manner so as to put at risk the safety or health of the members or the general public. With respect to Alderley Edge, the policy includes taking a responsible attitude to safety during digging and exploration as well as when conducting visitors around the mines.

In order to achieve the stated policy aims, the club has appointed a mine manager (Nigel Dibben) as required by law who is responsible to the club. The manager has been selected from among the members on the basis of experience and knowledge of the mines. In addition to the manager, substitute managers have been appointed who can take the same responsibility as the manager in the manager's absence. Both the Mines Inspectorate and the National Trust



Part of the main chamber in West Mine

require the Mine Manager to be consulted before any new digs are started at Alderley. Despite the appointment of the manager, all members are aware that they have responsibility for their own actions and that they must not take part in any activity which they know to be unsafe. As part of the safety arrangements, the Club has appointed a safety manager and carried out Risk Assessments on the various activities at Alderley.

ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES LICENSING and PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

The Club is not registered and does not intend to be registered as an Activity Centre. The Club's policy is to limit its activities so as to take advantage of the exemptions in the Regulations. To this end, the Club has committed itself to various rules concerning donations from people under 18 years old. The Club also has a policy on Protection of Children, which is essentially that children (under-18s) must be accompanied by two or more adults at any time. Full details of both these policies will be found in the Handbook which is on-line these days.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

There is a lot to read on the Club website (www.derbysc.org.uk) including pages unavailable to the public. You will also be invited to join the DCC Facebook group. But the best way to find out more is to join in and speak to the existing members. If you have got this information sheet from a member, ask him or her to put the contact details here:

Name:

phone

or e-mail