



Frequently Asked Questions

DERBYSHIRE CAVING CLUB

OPEN DAYS AND WEEKENDS AT ALDERLEY EDGE, Cheshire

Open Days or Weekends are held twice a year when anyone who arrives at the mine (usually Wood Mine or Engine Vein) will be taken down in a small group – subject to leaders being available. To make the trip easier and to add to the special nature of the Open Weekends, parts of the mine are floodlit and a circular tour is arranged. We also have displays and demonstrations of the Club's activities. At various times, we have displayed surveying work, history and chemistry of metal extraction, tool making, practical demonstration of rock drilling, smelting, cave radio, single rope techniques and cave rescue. We may also organise trips further into the mine for those interested and provide information about surface walks for those who do not want to venture below ground. The "caving" members of the Club are also involved giving demonstrations of rope and ladder work as well as talking to visitors about joining the Club.

When are the next Open Days?

The Open Days are usually in April (chosen to avoid Easter and public holidays) and the first full September weekend. We generally open Engine Vein in April and Wood Mine in September. For the dates of the next Open Days, refer to www.derbysc.org.uk/opendays.

When is the first and last trip and how often do they leave?

Open Days usually start at **10.00 am on Saturday and Sunday** and end at about 5.00 pm (**last admission 4.00 pm**). We normally take trips every 30 minutes and, wherever possible, we try to give people an opportunity to go underground within half an hour of arriving at the ticket desk. Tickets are issued for time slots when we have the leaders available.

How long do the trips last?

Trips usually take about an hour, sometimes a bit less or a bit more depending on the size and ability of the group and the amount of interaction with the leader. You should always allow at least an hour and a half between arriving at the mine and getting back to the car park.

Can I book in advance? If so, how?

You do not need to book in advance but you can do if you want to be sure of going down the mine at a certain time. There is a booking form on our website which you can find by going to www.derbysc.org.uk/opendays. We will keep your tickets until fifteen minutes before the time the trip is due to leave when they will be forfeited if people are waiting for a trip. If you cannot use the website for any reason, choose the day, pick a time from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm (on the hour or half-hour) and e-mail us via OpenDays [at] derbysc.org.uk (replace [at] with @) saying how many adults and children. We regret that telephone bookings cannot be taken. The booking form will be available on our website some months before the actual day. No bookings can be taken after the closing time, the day before the Open Weekend.

Can I telephone to make enquiries?

You can call for information on 07727 347020 or 07766 857480. However, please remember that Club members have jobs and messages may not be answered for a day or two. These lines will also be available over the weekend in case you have to cancel at short notice.

How do I pay for advance bookings?

You need to pay in advance to secure a place. You can pay through PayPal using a credit or debit card or a PayPal account. You do not have to have a PayPal account. If you arrive without booking, you can pay on the day by cash or card. Card transactions are subject to mobile phone network coverage so it is usually better to bring cash.

How much will it cost?

The Open Days are designed to be an interesting and informative experience for all visitors as well as an opportunity to see demonstrations of caving and mining club activities. We therefore make a charge for the event and this is payable by all visitors. The charges are as follows:

Child under five years old:	free
Child five to fifteen years:	£6
65 and over:	£10
Anyone else:	£12
Family (2 adults and 2 children):	£34 (£12 less for a family with 1 adult and 2 children)

These charges apply to the normal trip. Any longer trips made available, such as down the Hough Level, lower levels of Wood Mine or West Mine, may incur a higher charge.

Trips to (mostly) Wood Mine at other times in the year are charged simply at £12 a person regardless of age.

Can I bring my young child or parents with me?

We have taken many young visitors down the mine with the youngest being just weeks old. Young visitors usually thoroughly enjoy the experience although how much they remember depends upon their age and personality. Young visitors should each be accompanied by a responsible adult; trying to manage two or more children is a great deal easier with an adult for each child. Older visitors, some in their seventies and eighties can also enjoy the experience and we will happily provide a short trip on the level for anyone who is uncertain of their ability to do the whole trip. See restrictions below regarding visits to West Mine.

Can I bring my dog with me?

We also have no restriction on dogs in the mine although it is the owners' responsibility to look after the safety of their pets. Dogs must be kept on a short lead.

I've been down the mines before; will this trip be the same as last time?

In Wood Mine, we sometimes run two alternative trips which will visit different parts of the mine. Therefore, you should have the opportunity to see more provided you are fit enough for the alternative trip which includes a short climb and some crawling. Trips in Engine Vein follow the same route every year.

Can I visit West Mine?

Trips to West Mine take longer and need more leaders and smaller groups so are not now offered on Open Days but might be available for suitable groups at other times.

What should I wear?

You should come prepared as if for gardening or a walk in the spring or autumn. You will need warm clothes but not winter-weight clothing. Wear clothes which will not be damaged by contact with sand and possibly mud. Stout shoes or boots should be worn. We often find that the walk to the mine is muddier than the walk around the mine so we recommend walking boots or wellingtons. Again, be warned that footwear will get sandy and muddy: this is particularly so if you visit the further reaches of Wood Mine.

Will the trip be affected by the weather?

The weather will not affect the experience underground. There is no risk of flooding and the mines change very little from season to season. The worst effect of rain is getting wet or muddy on the walk to the mines. We erect shelters at the booking-in points and at the entrances to the mines.

Will there be things to see and do without having to go into the mine?

We put on displays about the mines and recent caving activity and there are always opportunities to talk to caving club members. There are usually demonstrations of rope and ladder climbing, but these are inside the mine.

Should I bring a torch or helmet?

We provide helmets and lights. Our helmets have fittings to hold the cap-lamp so unless you have a helmet that is designed for use in a cave or mine, please do not bring your own. You do not need a torch and we advise against having anything to carry in your hands when you are in the mine as you may need to climb a ladder in Wood Mine.

Can I bring my camera?

You are welcome to bring a camera but BEWARE that the mines are dusty and damp. The DCC can take no responsibility for the safety of your camera underground. Remember too that the mines are very dark and the normal flash on modern cameras or phones is not powerful enough to light much more than an ordinary living room. You must bring a suitable case for your camera so that your hands are free at all times.

What facilities are there at the mine?

There are no toilets; you should make use of the ones in the Main Car Park before you set off for the mine. Also, we cannot offer refreshments but there are the Wizard tea rooms offering drinks, snacks and ice creams.

Do you sell any information booklets or souvenirs of the visit?

There is a full book about the mines with history, geology, plans, photographs and descriptions of the individual mines. The book costs £12 and is available on the Open Days or on-line. We also have leaflets which provide some background information about the mine you visit and we normally have some maps available as well to help you to see where you have been. We also have some leaflets aimed at young children.

Who organises these visits?

The Derbyshire Caving Club leases the Alderley Edge Copper Mines from the National Trust. We are a private club (based on a Limited Guarantee Company) with a great deal of experience in caving, mining and taking visitors down the mine. The National Trust acknowledges that the Club's members are the experts with regard to the mines at Alderley Edge.

Can I meet Derbyshire Caving Club members at the weekend?

Besides being an opportunity to take members of the public around the mines, Open Days have developed into social events for the Club members. The Open Days have proved in the past to be a good time for anyone interested in joining the Club to get to know many of the active Club members. If you want to spend more time with the Club over the weekend, come up on the Saturday and you may be able to have extra trips for no charge later in the day or on the Sunday if you are seriously interested in caving. We also try to arrange a trip down the larger West Mine or to a Derbyshire cave within a few weeks of the Open Day as this introduces visitors to caving techniques and the caving experience.

Is the visit insured?

The Derbyshire Caving Club carries £5 million cover against accidents to visitors in the mine while visiting the mine under the Club's leadership. This does not cover any accidents on the surface.

Is it safe?

Apart from bringing suitable clothes and footwear, you do not need a helmet as these are provided to every visitor. You should be aware that there are steps in the mines and, for some trips, a ladder that may have to be climbed so you would be advised to contact us in advance if you have limited mobility or special needs so that we can adapt the trip to suit your requirements. Risk assessments for public visits have been conducted and are available on request. We use personal battery-powered cap-lamps in addition to generator-fed 110V lighting so as to eliminate the risk of loss of light underground during Open Weekends.

Does my state of health matter?

If you have a medical condition that might affect your mobility, it is wise to discuss this with the leader before the trip. **If you have a condition where medication might be needed urgently**, then you **MUST** prepare yourself for the possibility that it could take at least half an hour to fetch drugs from the Car Park and bring them back to you.

Do you welcome visitors with disabilities?

We will always be prepared to offer a trip to visitors with disabilities but the visitor (or, if appropriate, their carer) must assess their capability to undertake the trip. The entrances to Wood Mine and Engine Vein involve steps and only the first underground part of Wood Mine is accessible by wheelchair. Persons with a condition affecting balance or who may be prone to claustrophobia could be at a particular disadvantage. If you are unsure yourself or on behalf of another, speak to a member of the Caving Club and we will be able to give you advice about whether you could undertake a visit and how far into the mine. We are always prepared to give visitors a "taster" if they are unsure.

What should I do if I have to cancel or might be late?

If you know before bookings close on Friday before the Open Weekend, you can email us or cancel the booking yourself. If it is after that time do not email but, please ring or text 07727347020. We have this phone with us all

weekend. You can also ring this number if you have last minute questions although, before the weekend, an email is more likely to be answered promptly. Be aware that mobile phone coverage can be poor on Alderley Edge.

Where can I find out more about the history, geology and minerals?

For background information about the mines, refer to our website at www.DerbysCC.org.uk. If you want to read up about the mine before you come, look at the website or look for a copy of Chris Carlon's and Nigel Dibben's 2012 book "The Alderley Edge Mines" (visit www.dibben.org.uk/shop).

How can I find out more about Open Days and visits at other times in the year?

If you require any more information about Open Days, please contact the Club by e-mailing to OpenDays@Derbyscc.org.uk. You can also use a quick link: www.derbyscc.org.uk/opendays.php. We also look forward to your comments on this information sheet as they help us to ensure that we tell our visitors what they need to know.

How do I find the mine which is open?

We now take all groups from the reception tent to the mine. At or near the mine, we erect a small tent where lamps are issued but please do not go there until you have your tickets. For those of you using SatNav, the postcode of the Wizard Inn is SK10 4UB. The reception tent location is on OS 1:50000 map number 118 at SJ 85943 77308. Lat/long is N 53.29186, W 2.21234. What3Words is yards/able/decay. The map below may change if we have to move the reception tent so check with the website before the Open Weekend (<https://www.derbyscc.org.uk/opendays>) where the up-to-date map is shown.

