

# GREATER NENTHEAD TRAVERSE

## A Walk In The Mine : Caplecleugh to Nentsberry Haggs!

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**Date** : 28<sup>th</sup> May 2011

**Present** : Darren J, Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Pete Dale, Alex Ritchie, Mike Skyrme, Chris Kelly

**Weather** : Dry, cool.

Well after months of planning it was here, the big one. Meeting in the car park at about 8.15am the weather was found to be cold but settled. Once everyone (except me) had squeezed into their wetsuits and the complimentary entrance photo had been taken it was time to go.



Down we went through the excellent entrance passages making quick process through the collapses and wetness, spirits were high and jokes flew, except I couldn't hear them due to a neoprene hood. We quickly arrived at Toilet Box junction with no problems, here the first photographs were taken and Pete told us about the ghosts of the mine and my light decided it didn't want to be on anymore. Once we were sorted on we went to some nice passage with deep water in places, eventually we came to a junction and route finding issues arose, we took the right (effectively straight on) path and on we went through water and horribly squishy mud (Bogg's Shaft was passed on the right, we went around the bottom of the collapse debris, Middlecleugh Sump was on the left before the ladders.)



Eventually we all reached the next big obstacle of the trip, the 25M calcite ladders leading to a Sub-level below Smallcleugh, once we were in more photos were attempted with limited results due to a bad behaving flash gun (ghosts?). We took a left and another left, climbing up in to Cowhill Cross Vein and carried on into some nice walking passages, heading towards the Smallcelugh portal, following the railway lines we soon arrived in Cowhill Cross Vein, heading left then right ending up

at Gypsum Corner. Heading right we came to another long mine run (horse level where the shale had collapsed), decided not to bother with Wheel Flats, carrying on through and bearing left and carrying on north across some interesting hole which require some walking on the lines. Eventually we reached the pitch (Sump), this was a nice 20m pitch which we all downed with no problems, we then reached the next 10m pitch, Pete informs us not to go all the way down and yelled up that he couldn't get off the pitch? EH? Huh? It was easy, just land on the ledge. Alex was also slowed down here with some SRT fuf (harness inside out or something), once we were all down and in Prouds Workings. The next section involves the dodgiest looking ladder climb ever, its quite scary climbing down a swinging ladder in a loose old mine.

Once down and in Hangingshaw Branch Level, it was time to face Rampgill, heading north we came to Whiskey Bottle Junction and kept going and going and going and.... until we eventually arrived at another junction and turned right, we then took the next left up some steps. Up we went to the next 10m pitch, here we all caught up again and had a debate about how to rig, pull through or not etc, we decided to do a very err... basic rigging job and everyone descended.



Turning right at the bottom we quickly found the big pitch (40m), I think Pete described it best as a "Loose version of Bitch Pitch in JH". Alex managed to rig himself into the ropes much to my amusement, once he passed the self made obstacle and made it down we carried on.

Turning right the next section involves 900M of wet passage of various depths, it was long cold and a lot of comments were made about my ability to survive (and smile) without a touch of wetsuit (I think I have lizard blood). It was around this section the teams were split with Mike, Chris, Rob racing ahead and me, Alex, Dan, Dunc and Pete following up the rear. At the end we passed through a dig into Gudhamgill Vein, this is a wide strange area with lots of different passages going off, we all arrived at Engine Shaft at the end of the Brownley Hill portal and carried on, just about to take a sneaky left turn (climb up and down) we realised the team in front would not have known the way. So we were in a predicament, they could be a totally lost and we couldn't leave knowing that. We went back to the junction, chambering area and took a piss and yelled, after a few actuations moments we heard voices from the passage behind us and were reunited. It transpired they had ending up outside? (They found the Brownley Hill Low Level Portal).

Up a slope, through a crawl and down next to the compressor pipe we went following the awesome machinery, we carried on down a metal ladder and into the Nentsberry Hags horizon (CARE!) Turning left it was the final stretch to the Portal through some nice chambers, passages and route formations and... We WERE OUT! After seven hours we excited at about 3.50pm. The seven of us got into the back of Rob's van and drove to the car park, caving in style!

Now I love to say it was over but for two of us little did we know the day was just beginning...

**A ropy return...**

**Rampgill**

**Me and Alex**

Alex decided we should get the ropes back today and as he was my lift I decided to assist. I went down to the top of the forty with a lot of stress but no problems, once de-rigged I came back to the 10M and we got the flip out of there more dead than alive...

*Darren Jarvis*

*Photos – Dunc and Alex*

*A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.*