

## **PRIDDY GREEN SINK to SWILDONS HOLE**

Snow fun in the cold..

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Date : 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013

Present : Chris Sharman, Daniel Jackson, Alex Ritchie

Weather : I saw a brass monkey crying its eyes out (wind chill -10c.).

Snow hampered our journey down those in the North East more than others, which meant the people who had requested the trip were no longer on the trip but nevertheless we decided to go ahead despite no one really wanting to do it.

We popped the lid, that is practically in the middle of the village green and set about descending the 45 degree angle rifts. We found out about an important route finding note, which is don't just keep going down you will hit a dead end, you need to take a left turn off of one of the slopes, that leads you into a larger boulder floored chamber.

This led us onto yet more descents down narrow and awkward to reverse rifts until the cave flattened out and the squeezes began. Because I could not remember how big the pitches where I had brought a 60m rope for the pull through which meant I had some good fun getting the bag (fatter than I am) through the squeezes. The first squeeze is in a straight line and the widest part was near the roof, difficult feet first. A small aven to the right provides a small amount of relief before the second more committing section is reached.

A down hill left hand bend is the first part, with the top part being tightest, this is followed by a pinch point just around the corner at floor level that makes things that more committing. Going in feet first is awkward and difficult especially when going through the constriction but is far less committing as its reverse-able. However the easiest way to get through this is to go in head first, left hand down. Slide through the narrow bit at the top and drop your legs down the slot near the beginning now slide yourself forward and through so that you drop down to the floor of the corner where it is widest. Slither around the corner, strenuously arching your back is not required as there is room to half roll over onto your front. Once around the corner push off the floor by a foot to go through the widest bit of the pinch point on your side and then simply sideways crawl the last 10m until you pop out into a chamber. Chris Shaman could not make this move and instead opted for the strenuous surface exit before having a solo trip into Swildons.

More awkward and some quite wet and tight passage led to the first pitch (free climb) and a few small rifts led to a chamber and the second pitch (Cowsh aven). A little exposed to rig. A few free climbs and a harrowing traverse over a deep pit led to a short bit of passage and the third pitch (about 20m). Anchors are out on the left over a sloping rift that drops into the canyon, so its quite exposed to get on the pitch. Then follows the shorter 4th and 5th pitches before a steep free climb leads to the 6th pitch that drops into the stream. We rigged this as 2 pitches standing on a ledge 10m up to avoid getting the rope stuck.

We headed up blue pencil which was quite a challenge with big and heavy bags full of rope and SRT gear before emerging at the T-junction at the top. Now I did not fancy going through the ducks again and I knew we would need to bail them as it had rained quite a lot recently so I opted that we should go right instead. Only issue was we did not know the route and managed to get lost in a junction of passages. After checking them all out (most of which dead ended) I ended up going

down a sloping passage that ended in a deep and slippery shaft that had a slightly knotted rope going down, tied off to a scaff bar. Thinking that this might be the greasy chimney I climbed down only to find after about quite a few meters this seemed to open out and below seemed to be a dig. I later found out that this was actually the route into the wet way (part of the long round trip) and the buckets and bags I spotted are used to bail the sumps down there, the climb I climbed down was actually a 10m pitch- oops. Thankfully I was able to re-climb it (otherwise as Dan was at the top he could have rigged it for SRT) and eventually we worked out where we were and found the right passage and exited the cave through non-muddy mud sump (that we knew would be bailed) into the Baltic conditions outside.

*Alex Ritchie*

*A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.*