

## AQUAMOLE POT

Well, at least I did not have to derig..

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Date : 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Present : Alex 'how do you tie this again' Ritchie, Mike 'you are elitist' Skyrme, Chris 'overhang' Kelly

Weather : Foreboding clouds, ground very wet – perfect for a caving trip then.

This is meant to be short report, but as normal with me they end up being longer than intended. I feel I need to write a report for this place as it was interesting from my prospective as Mike and Chris had a different trip than me even though we were in the same cave.

The day started off well, I had decided I would get some practice rigging, but when I got in there could I remember how to tie anything? could I sheep's dangily bits. I guess maybe, I should not have stayed up until 2am the previous night, it seems knot tying is the first thing to go from my memory when I have not had much sleep.

Anyway another group came along, meaning we had to hurry up proceedings so Mike took over part way down. We got far enough ahead of them to give me time to rig the second drop. This might be climbable I thought, as I bent down to kick the rope off a ledge.

At the main pitch (Aquamole Aven) I decided not to go down. I had been down there before and with 5 other people going down I did not want to stand around getting cold, so I thought I would go off exploring, this is after-all when I normally have all my "fun" and today would be no different. The passage I chose is supposed to go to Jingling or at least may do. The first part of the passage was tight even for me and necessitated me actually taking most of my SRT kit off. Shock horror! After the squeeze, it opened out into decorated walking passage to my surprise, result!

I could hear everyone's voices clearly at this point. So I followed them. I found the downstream end was actually the top of 5m pitch just before the big pitch only round the corner to the left. After saying hello & goodbye, I walked along the passage taking care not to fall down a big hole in the middle of the floor (Alternative Aquamole pitch route, I believe) I carried on until the passage closed down, but not entirely.

To my right was a sump or at least a very low duck, straight on was a wet canal passage and to the left was an almost hidden route under the left hand wall up a cobbled slope. This led into a rift passage and after a climb up I was confronted with a pitch up. So it was time to make my choice of the three passages, surprisingly or not the pitch route won. Of course now I had to go back for the bits of my SRT kit I took off. I met the other group and told them that I was exploring an aven. I grabbed my kit doubled backed and up the pitch I went, cautiously.

I reached the top of the first pitch after a Y-hang and a couple of re-belays after ascending approx 25 - 30 metres, in an impressive aven. This led to a traverse and a further ascent of 10 metres, the passage was still quite large. At the top I had another choice of routes, to the right a dodgy looking traverse and to the left a further short pitch into continuing passage. I took the pitch but this soon closed down and ended at a small aven 5m high with nothing bigger then a mouse hole at the top. It also turned out unfortunately to be caked with mud and clay, so it was time to play guess the SRT bit game again, oh I love that game.

I checked my watch, after removing the clay from the face of course and my cautious approach was costing me time (Did I mention this was all on 8.5mm rope, with spits that rotated in the wall?). I did not want to keep people waiting, so I left the dodgy traverse for another time and made my way down the pitches. I returned to the window overlooking the Aquamole pitch, no one was there and

the rope had been de-rigged. Well looks like I will be de-rigging the other pitches then.

I slid through the squeeze (best to rotate onto your back halfway through when going out) and saw that there was no one at the other pitch either. There was also no rope. Wait a sec, no rope??? It dawned on me "Well how am I meant to get out of here?" I thought. That has got to be up there in the top 5 caver nightmares.

Well the top pitch has in-situ rope so if I can get up this one I would be home dry. "Hello?" I shouted. I did hope the others would miss me at some point but when that would be I did not know. Would they get back to the cars and realise then? Two hours, three? Maybe they would forget altogether, daft thoughts I know!

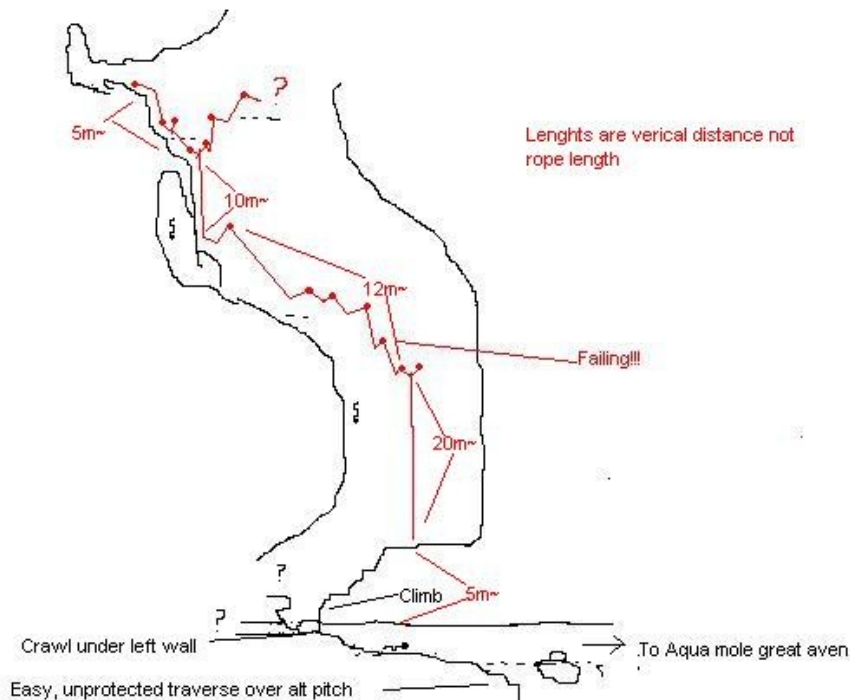
"Hello" I shouted again, I forgot I had a whistle in my pocket. No reply and because of the above I decided against my own advice to climb it, well I attempted to. Got about half way up until a too smooth wall made it just too darn dangerous to continue any more. I was about to climb down and out of the water dripping on my head when I heard movement above.

"HELLO?" I shouted, louder than before, Chris thankfully replied back and I was soon on the hastily lowered rope and heading out. It transpired the other group exited first, Mike and Chris then began to exit. They assumed by this point, as I had been a while, I must have already exited, my SRT kit etc was gone of course, this is despite the other group relaying my message. They met the other group at the entrance pitches and asked them if I had been by. No was the reply so back down they went to re-rig the pitch.

No harm done and I was surprisingly understanding as I can see how these things can easily happen, so I did not swear, not even once ;).

*Alex Ritchie*

One armed bandit, rope in good condition however mallons and crabs are severely corroded, and one bolt looks like it will fail soon (marked). Caution required.



*To the left is a sketch survey by Alex. Shows approx pitch sizes*