

BROWN HILL POT

A place to test your nettle..

Date : 23rd April 2011

People Present : Alex Ritchie, Duncan Jones, Peter Dale

Weather : Overcast at least when we were above ground, apparently it got quite sunny when we were underground.

The day started overcast, chance of rain was not an outside probability, and it had also rained hard the previous night. But with no rain actually forecasted we decided to go ahead with the trip.

It did not start well; I parked up where Pete had parked. This was where he believed the correct starting point was. Dunc however believed a point 300 yards up the road, where he had parked was also the correct starting point. Needless to say at least around 20 minutes were wasted waiting for each other until I decided to take it upon my self to find out where the heck Dunc was, by walking up the road.

The trip up the hill, once all sorted was not all that great either. I managed to fall over into a bed of nettles. The left hand and wrist was stung and had nettle rashes all over it. Suffice to say, for the rest of the day I would not forget that fall. The one thing that was on our side was that we found the entrance instantly, as Pete remembered where it was from his last visit.

The entrance had in-situ hand line, so I used that to lower the Clubs brand new Beast bag carefully down, not wanting to lose any more stuff. The mysteries of the missing spanner in Birks still fresh in my mind. Going in first I was puzzled when I dropped down the barrels and saw no way on. That was until I moved the bag and a narrow passage was revealed.

Sliding in, progress was slow along the narrow stream way. 80m of rope and personal stuff is difficult to drag through. The others were not exactly hot on my heels either though. They too were struggling with gear etc. We took a breather at the second enlargement, before I again led the way through some very narrow and thrutchy passage. When the traverse started I swapped places with Dunc who had the rope for the first pitch so he could rig it.

I chose this time to see what was keeping Pete. Returning back up the windy passage I found he could not get past the calcite constriction after the "Awkward corner". I eventually coaxed him passed it. We returned to Dunc, who had by then descended the pitch and told us it was already rigged though it was rigged with something he called "A washing line" (8mm) rope.

After a little more faffing, this time on my part, a constriction near the pitch head was causing me trouble with my bag. We then descended these first two pitches. The second one we rigged to avoid the washing line in-situ. After a crawl at the bottom, the cave finally started to open up. An easy climb saw us down to the start of the big traverse to the big pitch. The traverse was moderately difficult but it would have been far worse if I had not had left the rope bag at the bottom of the climb. As I guessed this pitch too would be rigged and it was on more "Washing line".



Pete could not be bothered to descend this 56m pitch as he had been down before. He decided to get cold and sat in the rift instead for some reason. Dunc and me dropped the pitch. This pitch was effectively two pitches as the ledge half way down was big enough to build a house on. We dropped the second half and traversed along the decently sized passage at the bottom to the next short pitch.

Dunc tried to descend the last short pitch but found that one of the in-situ ropes did not actually reach the bottom and in-fact was at least 3 meters too short. This fact he found out 3.5 meters off the floor. I think the lesson here is to look before you leap but then again you would expect the rope to actually go to the bottom. He came back up not bothering with the sump.

I decided I would use the other rope on the pitch that was very old and was attached to seriously rusty crabs. I wanted to at least properly bottom this cave fully, having only really finished one other cave properly this year.

I dropped down, turned a corner, took a picture of the nice frothy big sump pond and headed back up very gingerly up the old in-situ rope.

Progress out was slow and steady for all of us but nothing really to report. We got out after about 5 hours underground.

A quick visit was then made to relax in the beer garden at the Marton Arms.



Alex Ritchie

A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.