

BUCKET ON THE HEAD

For fogs sake it's no pail imitation..

29th November 2008

People present - Duncan Jones, Mike Skyrme, Alex 'have you got a light boy' Ritchie, Rick Pinches

Weather - cold and frosty

My morning started with me standing in pea soup and de-icing my car, ah the joys of winter caving. The drive up was uneventful and rather grey, being in fog for two-thirds of it! Luckily the closer to the Dales I got the better things were - it was still cold but with no fog. After a quick brew in Ingleton and some quick information gathering we headed off to Barbondale.

We got changed at a reasonable pace and were soon heading the short distance up the hill to the respectably constructed entrance, not wasting any time I set about moving the slabs to reveal the short drop in to the cave. Not wishing to be out in the cold air any longer than was necessary I was in and was soon heading down a descending passage with a little drop, more crawling led to a climb down (5m perhaps), a short shuffle and though a hole followed by a small drop to the blasted crawl. This is a low blasted crawl that quickly arrives at a short 'skydive' into a chamber.

I decided that people emerging from this fun little obstacle would make for a good photo or two. Out with the gear, get set up, wait for caver and fire.. Oh, no flash, bugger. Still two cavers left so two more chances at a photo, tweak and check flashes, they work, next caver, fire.. Nothing.. Try other flash for last chance - ahhh, bloody electrical equipment. It would appear my fireflies had flown, no photos for me today. Bucket 1 Cavers 0



Not having much information to go on we started looking around for what goes where. I headed towards the water and followed it upstream for a few metres, ahead looked low but I spotted a climb up. At the top I waited for Alex who had decided to follow me, we strolled along a rather pleasant high level passage but it arrived at a choke, down to the left was a small hole which dropped us into a passage that ran from the entrance chamber. One round trip completed, time to leave.. No! Arriving back at the entrance chamber we found it all quiet, apart from the distant shuffling of Mike in the boulder choke and then Rick reappeared from the upstream

section looking a tad damp. It would appear Rick was following me and Alex, but hadn't realised we'd climbed up so stuck with the water, which according to Rick was crawling in elbow deep water and very cold! Bucket 2 Cavers 0.

Mike seemed to be 'enjoying' his bouldery excursion so in fine sheep fashion we all followed. Up and down and around brought us to a short and loose drop (loose is a common feature in this cave). From here further scratting around and poking our heads in various directions we found a way on, I saw the way ahead getting low and space above me so climbed up. Touch a rock and bang, oh, more looseness.. I shuffled forward and climbed down to the other side of the low wet bit, which wasn't as bad as it first appeared! The stream is now followed as it ambles its way along with the noise of water falling up ahead, the stream crashed down a narrow slot onto a broad ledge. I headed over the top of the slot (too narrow to descend), left looked too narrow, right looked promising for the pitch.

Although looking down a long way I figured our 10m ladder might have to be stretched, second opinion needed. I backtracked to rejoin the other three, nobody had brought the bag along.

Alex with his new found fitness volunteered to retrace his steps to retrieve the bag whilst we examined the pitch head, it seemed more than 10m and may be wet (perhaps there's a high level option of rigging it dry?) A suitable rock was commandeered for hanging the ladder from, luckily Rick had brought along his super-long sling, which fitted round it perfectly. The ladder was uncoiled and appeared to be hanging in space, bugger, Bucket 3 Cavers 0. It looked like there might be a ledge we could stand on so Mike opted to investigate. Past the first broad ledge the remainder of the pitch was wet and yes our ladder was dangling well above the floor, luckily it was long enough to reach that ledge where you could climb the remainder of the way down. Bucket 3 Cavers 1.



At the bottom of the pitch is a fine and well watered chamber. The passage heads off along a decorated section, after some nice pretties the calcite creates a blockage, look down and a wet crawl awaited us. This must be the duck then. Mike was given the task of examining the offending article, short wet crawl but head dry - not too bad, but bloody cold! A couple of small cascades followed by a hading rift leads to the terminal? chamber, the stream can be seen heading off into what looked distinctly like a sump. Disappointing end, no, the formations made it a worthwhile place to visit, Mike took plenty of photographs, Bucket 3 Cavers 2.



Heading back out we rejoined Rick who decided he'd had enough of cold water for one day and didn't do the duck, and we set off back to the pitch. All safely up and without too much of a problem we packed the gear up and headed back to the choke. Threading our way through the boulders and back up the loose climb we were soon back in the entrance chamber where we sat down for a group photo. Time to head out along the entertaining entrance passages to be greeted by a still cold but sunny Barbondale. Trip completed (although we didn't explore the upstream passages where the connection to Dog

Holes lies) - a short but fun little trip, all out safe and sound with only bruises and scratches for some people. Bucket 3 Cavers 3.

Unfortunately time was short for some of us, hence the short trip and lack of visit to the pub for me and Rick so we headed for home and yet more driving in the fog! Alex and Mike fiddled with some light change before heading to the Whoop for refreshments.

Duncan Jones

Photos - Mike Skyrme