

BULL POT, KINGSDALE

Neil's wet annual trip!

Date: 6th August 2011.

Cavers present: John Gardner, Neil Heywood, Chris Scaife, Mike Skyrme

Weather: Started off badly, tailed off a bit in the middle, and the less said about the end the better.

Neil Heywood joined our club in 2005, the same year as my first Black Rose trip, but today was the first time I had actually met him. The reason for this is that Neil only ever manages one cave per year, with such alarmingly precise regularity that this trip was officially titled, "Neil's Annual Black Rose Soiree". Personally I think the word 'soiree' suggests an altogether more comfortable occasion, but nonetheless the name has stuck.



We met in the usual place (Inglesport cafe) at 9am and made our way through the rain up to Kingsdale. John found a stray dog bounding along the road without a care in the world, and made very noble, and successful, efforts to reunite it with its Braida Garth owners. Up we then went to the short entrance shaft into Bull Pot. John swiftly rigged and descended this pitch, a loud crash of thunder audible just as he disappeared over the edge. I then set off onto the traverse, which snakes around left right left, then a descent was made with a small trickle of water running alongside. At the foot of this pitch was a wide ledge, followed by a fairly narrow pitch, broken by a ledge and rebelay half way down.

Beyond, a short drop down into a rapidly rising stream led to another short traverse and onto the 4th pitch. John was rigging now and after the first deviation, he came back up. The roar of water all around us by this time, plus my frankly terrible hearing, meant that I could not hear his declaration that the pitch was too wet to descend.

'But but but', I babbled, 'Isn't there another deviation to avoid the water?'

John just looked at me and said, 'Trust me, it's too wet'.





As he said this the water levels were noticeably higher than just a few minutes before. What had earlier been unrecognisable as a waterfall at all had developed into this raging torrent on the the picture above.

We began the return journey with as much haste and speed and velocity as our legs and jammers would allow. I headed up first, followed by Neil, while Mike and John shivered away at the foot of the pitch, with Mike calmly photographing the action as it unfolded. The ledge between the 2nd and 3rd pitches was now receiving a huge amount of water, and the ascent of the 2nd pitch was a turbulent affair. Even the base of the entrance shaft, which had been almost dry when we entered the cave, was bubbling with white water.

We exited into surprisingly light rain, but the sight of Kingsdale Beck raging through the fields of the farm with its newly-returned canine.

Chris Scaife

Photos – Mike Skyrme