

# BULL POT OF THE WITCHES

Novice trip, nah, this was a mans trip!

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**Date:** Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February

**Weather:** Sunny but wet on the ground and snowmelt

**Grade:** 3, (I will grade this particular trip in there grade 4 based on how sore I was afterwards and the fact that the “pitches” were all free climbed.)

**People present:** Alex Ritchie, Duncan Jones, Pete Dale

Well what a turn up for the books, it was sunny and people turned up for a trip!

Again there was no plan as it was still too wet due to the rain that had fallen recently for our original plan, of something from Northern Caves 1. Talk of Quaking reconnaissance was suggested, however that was soon dismissed, thankfully. Various other ideas were batted around until we finally resigned ourselves to do something on Ease Gill and would you believe it my old favourite BPOTW came up trumps.

This time however, it would not be a novice trip, we decided to visit almost everywhere in the cave and chose not to use any tackle, to save on the faffing.

We were soon in the cave and looking up the last glimpse of sunlight in the Big Pot chamber. We set off behind the way we came in to head down the climbs (These climbs are now “P” anchored and the hand lines have been removed, if there was any). That did not put us off and we set off free climbing them. The first top bit was easy though exposed as you can see it’s a long way down. The second lower bit through was far more difficult as it required a very brave move to progress. This move requires one to lean out over the passage from a slippery ledge and land on the far wall to steady yourself, before falling forwards and landing on your face around 10ft below.

It took me a bit of time to work up the courage for said move but I was soon down and after several more easier P Bolted climbs we were joined by the stream. We headed off down stream for the next set of climbs/pitches.

When I was here last here taking “Daz of Caving” around the place by a different way, this climb was where I stopped and turned around as it looked like a straight drop, however Pete showed us a nice traverse route over the top to get down. This quickly led to the next climb which was very exposed and required another brave move where you need to grab hold of the wall on your right and swing your legs around a corner to the ledges there before climbing down at an inlet.



*The Monolithic Towers*

We headed up the short climb to the sump by pass route and then down stream in the crawl before dropping down a couple of climbs to rejoin the stream, where we found water levels were at normal levels and we could progress in the “Wet Way”. After a cold journey through the water I spotted an inlet on the left which led into a chamber along the dry route. We made a quick round trip to the sump and back up to the inlet again. We then explored a small inlet leading off before heading along the dry route to look at the Monolithic Towers and the “Far Gallery”.

We did not stop for long at the Monoliths and continued on in a surprisingly large passage with the roof at least 30 or 40 ft above us, however, this passage soon terminated in a boulder choke. The choke was passable by an interesting 20ft rope climb up, of which we all scaled led by Dunc. This led to a short continuation that again stopped at another boulder choke. Numerous ways were looked for getting over this one. We eventually wedged a scaffolding bar at head height that was lying around for some reason. Dunc tried to get up and couldn't and then I tried and succeeded. This broke into a crawl between boulders. This again quickly choked, however I could see a very slippery climb going up further above me.

The others were getting bored with my ferreting up there so I did not investigate the climb but managed to wedge a piece of scaffolding in it for a return attempt at another time.

We headed out via the dry way. We then hit the stream and the climbs up however I completely missed the climb up and ended up in very wet and low duck. Realising I had gone wrong I went back and found the climb.

Once up the water fall climbs, we went to our next stop of “Burnetts Great Cavern”. We had a quick mess around in there, until, we headed back via the lower part of “Cavern 32” towards entrance and then crossed over heading towards “Gour Chambers”. Once there, Me and Dunc, with the help of Pete's shoulders had a look at “Upper Gours”. Unfortunately Pete could not fit through as he had “a mans chest” in his words and had “Bone against rock” both on front and back so no matter how much we tried to pull him up he would not come through. Oh well I took a picture or two for you Pete.

We headed on out into the daylight and realised we had managed to spend a good 4 hours in BPOTW it was actually a fun and sporting trip, so you can have fun in novice caves.

*Alex Ritchie*



*Dunc and Pete in the open pot*