

# CHERRY TREE HOLE

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Saturday - 29th December 2007

People present - Chris Scaife, Rob Santus

Weather: Cold and wet to begin with, then on exiting cave, colder and wetter.

We had a few thoughts for the last trip of the year, but as there had been quite a lot of rain recently, and yesterday's news headlines had featured 2 bodies being retrieved from Lower Long Churn, a more all-weather option seemed best. Neither of us had ever done Cherry Tree Hole, so we decided to give that a try. This also meant Rob could buy a flaggon of beer from Watershed Mill.

We found the entrance surprisingly easily and climbed down the slippery slope past the cherry tree to a new entrance with scaffold poles. The old 4m entrance pitch has now been dedicated to the bats and the new entrance pitch should probably be rigged with an 18m rope - ours was slightly shorter and only just made it.

Once down this pitch, a short descent is made to a figure-of-8 passage, which is crawled through in the upper section. At the end of this crawl, a large slab signals the left turn into Crossover Passage, which leads into the main streamway. Despite the near-flooding on the surface, this streamway was never above the knee.

At first we went Downstream (left), which leads after a few completely dry boulder ruckles to a fairly tight muddy crawl. We followed this for a few minutes, getting tighter and tighter, before realising that we had gone wrong and were in a dig. Unable to turn round, we reversed back to the large chamber, caking our SRT kits in mud.

There was in fact a fairly obvious slot down leading into the streamway and final pitch. This part was wet but with imaginative rigging utilising two harnesses, a spit and an in situ piton we found an almost dry way down. The sump follows very soon after and we decided to make our way upstream.

The upstream passage is straight forward until a short free climb on the left and after an easy traverse, we were back in the streamway. We followed the streamway as far as a cascade that made Victoria Falls look like an old man drooling, and neither of us felt like throwing ourselves at it so we made our way out.

*Chris Scaife*

