

COUNTY POT to WRETCHED RABBIT

Mancunian Way extension pitches

Date: 28th June 2007

People present - Duncan Jones, Rob Santus

Weather: Dry, then rained.

Another wet week had presented itself and we had yet another decision on what might be suitable for our midweek caving adventures..

Having recently read one of the trips in the Not For The Faint Hearted book, the Sylvester Pot trip, I had been reminded of the Mancunian Way extension pitches, which I had previously visited but never completed due to wet weather. The trip described was too long for one of our midweekers, so I thought about it and decided that entering County and doing a round trip was probably the best option.. Unfortunately with the weather being like it was we had concerns about flooding at Dismal Junction. Going down the pitches as I had planned back in 1998 and finding it flooded would mean a long(ish) retreat - not something I would relish on a midweek trip.

The trip I had been on in 1998 had also seen a lot of rain in the days leading up to it, concerns about Dismal Junction were in the back of our minds then. After arriving at the first of the three short pitches we kitted up and descended, the second pitch looked tight and thoughts of coming back up were off-putting, so we sent the fittest/thinnest person down to examine the water levels. A short wait and we were greeted with the words 'water coming in all over the place' - we retreated. The pitches and that route had always lurked in the back of my mind as the years passed. Returning to 2007 and the same concerns entered my head, so I concocted a grand plan, go to Dismal Junction first and then go up the pitches. If there's a flooding issue or the pitch too awkward we retreat without any worries, thus removing any concerns at the start of the trip as everything following it was plain sailing and perfectly do-able in wet weather.

We entered County Pot and made steady progress down the pitch and onwards into Razor Passage, thankfully water levels didn't appear too bad so that put us in good spirits for the trip ahead. As the passage lowered and we reached Dismal Junction everything was fine, why did we worry about water levels? Heading up the low crawl along Clough's Passage we soon reached Clough's Aven and the first pitch up, which is a pleasant affair. At the top we headed off and noticed a side passage - our way on or not? A quick scamper straight ahead and then a quick look up the side passage revealed the 'crux' (if you can call it that) of this trip.

Looking up, it appeared tight, just like I remember it being from looking down it all those years back! Rob being the thinnest was sent up to investigate, words like tight being used didn't encourage me but I wasn't being beaten that easily. The pitch starts ok then about half to three quarters of the way up there is a short tight section, which is, for an example, tighter than the entrance of Link Pot. I thrutched and wriggled whilst wondering what use the rope and jammers were, eventually I passed that section and found a second tight bit near the top, again a similar course of action saw me at the pitch head.

Happy in the knowledge that the two main obstacles had been passed without issue we crawled along to the last of our 'up' pitches, which is quite spacious when compared to the previous one! Once up we de-kitted and started the crawling and stooping towards Nice Way. To say the passage

is accurately named would be an understatement, large numbers of straws adorn the roof and as ever I didn't have my camera with me. I'm sure I will return at some point in the future to take some photographs.

As we arrived at The Surprise we faced two choices; climb up into Sideline or carry on following the Mancunian Way. As Sideline involves a short pitch and we had no rope we decided not to risk checking it out just in case there was no rope in-situ. We pressed on, over the top of Easegill Aven and the continuing crawl, which I only vaguely remembered from my previous visit here, time is sometimes not a good friend. Easegill Aven is a respectable pitch which I've been at the top of and bottom of but never actually done the pitch! Maybe one day, with that camera..

Finally arriving at Cornes Cavern we were back on familiar ground and headed off to Mainline Terminus and thus Stop Pot. After a quick ladder climb we decided to exit via Wretched Rabbit and nip back in County to retrieve our gear from the first pitch rather than negotiating Trident series or any other of a number of ways of getting back there!

We emerged from the Rabbit to be greeted by rain, which, with a smile, justified our decision to get Dismal Junction out of the way early on in our trip.

After collecting the gear from County we trudged back across the fell with visions of a beer awaiting us at some fine establishment, where we could relax and look back and reflect on our different trip in a familiar system. One of the great things about County, apart from easy access and being reasonably ok in places in wet weather, is the sheer number and variety of trips you can undertake. Our trip had just a little awkwardness thrown in for good measure but with fine formations and a few pitches made for a good and alternative County to Wretched trip.

Luckily, for the formations, Nice Way is off the main trade route and separated from it by a long crawl and from the other side by a tight pitch, which probably helps keep a reasonable number of cavers away from trashing the place. And long may it stay that way...

Duncan Jones

A [Black Rose Caving Club](#) trip report.