

# COW POT (Aardvark Country)

**I don't know about ants, but they were dropping like flies!**

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**Date** : 30<sup>th</sup> January 2010

**Present** : Duncan Jones, Rob Santus. Part trip: Alex Ritchie, Chris Kelly

**Weather** : Cold and dry.

Plans, always made, rarely stuck to! The plan for today was a recce approximately halfway down Quaking Pot, nobody was keen. Mike had a couple of novices he planned on taking underground to either Long Churns or what was eventually decided upon; Bull Pot of the Witches. So I planned to do a full exploration of BPotW and anyone wishing to join me could do. Suddenly other people were available and FOUL Pot was suggested, a day or so later Pete suggested Cow Pot via Aardvark Country.. Decisions, decisions...

The day arrived, Pete's chances of joining us had spirited away and the remaining hordes (a total of 8 of us) arrived at Ingleton and consumed food whilst last minute thoughts were aired. The decision for four of us was Cow Pot, the rest would have a trip down BPotW, all we needed for our trip was some nuts (the metal variety, not the kind you eat) for the two exploration studs.

Luckily for us Dave Ramsay had some lying around which we snaffled and we were off to Bull Pot Farm, which was very quiet. Kitting up quickly and heading off over the frozen fell we soon arrived at the impressive entrance, this was not a morning for hanging around too long. I set off and rigged this and was quickly followed by Rob who was dispatched down the 17m climb. Chris and Alex followed a while after.



The climb was undertaken one at a time due to loose material being abundant, some of the wood holding back this material has, shall we say, seen better days! All safely down and the narrow rift quickly starts and is a mixture of stream level and traversing, eventually a sharp corner is reached and the way on is not immediately obvious. The stream route looked too small so Rob looked in the roof which looked like it might go but closed up around the corner. The middle it was then. A short shuffle around and back down brought us to a straight section of rift that looked even more non-doable than the last section!

We stood and shone lights down the rift to try to work out a plan of attack, again it looked like somewhere near the middle was best. Rob was sent to investigate and a slightly rising horizontal thrutchy section brought him to a wider section where he could stand up of sorts. Bags were passed through and it was my turn whilst Chris watched, not being used to this kind of caving trip he decided that heading out was probably the best option. This left Alex, who shuffled through whilst Rob was rigging the second pitch. On arriving at the 'enlargement' Alex set about retrieving his bag from the floor, but it was temporarily wedged and much banging and cursing ensued. Meanwhile Rob had descended but had forgotten to unclip his cows-tail meaning a very difficult job getting himself back up high enough to unclip the offending item. I was in the middle of all this commotion wondering what on earth I was doing down here.

I offered a knee to Rob which assisted him and then heard Alex saying his bag didn't like getting stuck and it wanted to go out, two down, two left. Having seen Rob struggle on this pitch I wasn't too keen but carefully lowering myself down I found it wasn't as bad as it looked, the traverse is found 2m down with ample ledges (on both sides) to make progress easy across to the far side. Luckily for Rob there were four hangers in-situ which was sufficient to rig the traverse so we didn't need the nuts after all.

On the far side we found the tiny aven where it was just possible to remove gear to make life easier when going through the flat-out bedding that followed. According to our ever faithful NTFH description we had 10-15minutes of body-sized tube, it didn't sound inspiring but we pushed on. The tube is never really tight, there's a couple of awkward corners but on the whole progress was reasonable and we soon arrived at a junction and larger surroundings. From here the third pitch is soon reached, which to our surprise was rigged, a couple of climbs and then the fourth pitch (also rigged) brought us via a short and low passage to pop out in the side of the main stream. To be honest it's quite easy to miss this passage if you're ploughing up/down the streamway as it's a little obscure..

The NTFH description suggests an excursion up the main stream to take in Maracaibo, we didn't have anywhere near enough time to do it justice so we sat down, had a bite to eat before we headed back out.

The journey out was uneventful, the traverse was easily derigged, the second pitch wasn't too difficult to get up, the rift was passed easily, in fact the hardest part was probably a climb from stream level to gain a traverse! We were soon out in to a fine and slightly less chilly afternoon, trip time was about 3 hours, just about right for the short trip we needed.

Arriving back at the farm we found the others were well gone so we got changed, took an educated guess and popped in to The Whoop, where we found everyone relaxing with drinks and snacks.

Aardvark Country makes for a quiet alternative to the usual Cow Pot route, with some awkwardness thrown in for good measure, the worst of which is either side of the second pitch. Done just to the main stream and back makes for a short sample of real NTFH-style caving.

*Duncan Jones*

*Photos – Alex Ritchie*



*At the rebelay; note the fine ice-stal-formation!*