

## DARNBROOK POT and CHERRY TREE HOLE (Upstream/Far North)

The Darnbrook double-bill.

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Date : 14<sup>th</sup> June 2009

Present : Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Alex Ritchie

Weather : Warm and sunny (although there was a pleasant breeze at Darnbrook!)

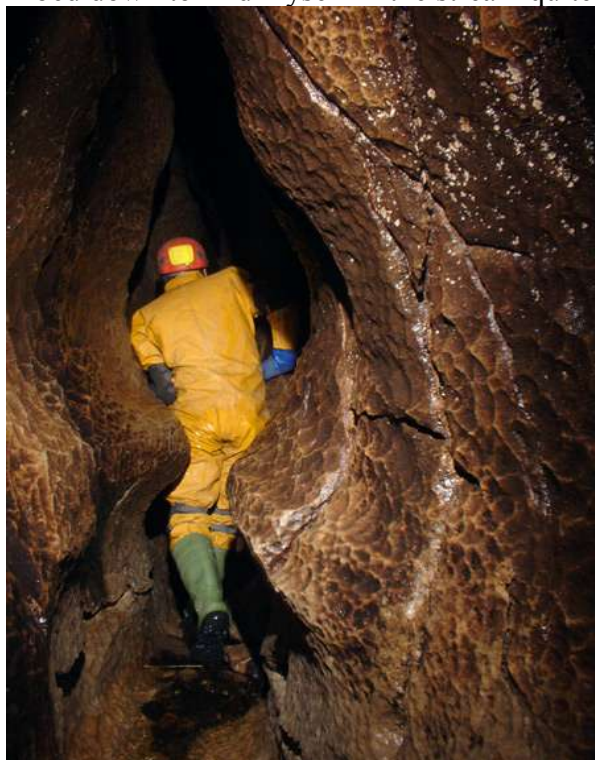
After the usual drive up we saw a suspicious looking character lurking at the Settle car park, it was Alex ready and raring to go after his Wretched-County trip the day before. A quick toilet stop later and we were soon leaving the crowds behind as we headed through Langcliffe and onwards into foreign lands.

Arriving at the bottom of the track that we intended to walk up, we told Alex to start getting changed whilst me and Rob went to Darnbrook House to ask for permission. After a friendly exchange we headed back to Alex, got changed and we were still ready to go before he was (less faffing required, Mr. Alex!)

The changing facilities in this kind of weather, sunny with a gentle breeze, are, it has to be said superb with fine scenery all around, excellent stuff.



The stroll up was warm and uneventful and Darnbrook Pot proved surprisingly easy to locate, the large log over the entrance climb was still present and we opted to use this for rigging. Alex was given the task of rigging and whilst he knitted a knot I climbed down the easy entrance climb. At the bottom a short shuffle brought me to the “pitch” which certainly wasn't tight as described in Northern Caves 1, narrow perhaps, but not tight. The other noticeable thing about this “pitch” was the number of ledges that appeared to continue downwards, not wishing to get kitted up for nothing I climbed down to find myself in the stream quite easily.



The others followed and we decided to head downstream first. The passage is easy going and pleasant and soon arrives at Bomb Alley, a clamber down some rocks, to a couple of short cascades into a reasonable sized chamber. The passage onwards soon leads into the even larger Main Chamber, impressive stuff and not really expected.

At the bottom of the Main Chamber a climb down through and past blocks, followed by even more rocks, blocks and climbs brings you back to the streamway. A brief pause for some snaps at a nice formation before the continuing streamway is followed, unfortunately it disappears in the rocks and the passage chokes, Alex had a ferret around in a couple of digs before deciding they weren't leading to caverns measureless. The potential must be there going on what is accessible at present, more big cave is to be found, somewhere...

Once Alex had finished his ferreting around we headed back upstream and it's certainly a long way to climb back up (the pot is ~70m deep with no real pitches, just climbs). Passing the fresh air of the entrance we continued upstream in yet more pleasant passage, this time with a few nice pretties along the way.



Eventually the passage lowered and a short crawl led to the upstream sump. At this point we had one last objective, Sentinel Chamber. This is accessed via a climb out of the stream, which, it has to be said is an obscure climb and not completely obvious, but with three of us systematically checking everywhere we soon found it. Once visited we headed back to the entrance and out into the warm and sunny afternoon.

The trudge over to Cherry Tree Hole was started quickly and we walked almost straight to it, with a few false shakeholes looked into beforehand. The dead sheep was thankfully not too smelly and not too close to the entrance to be a problem. Rob rigged the pitch and abseiled down, soon followed by me and then Alex. Rob then gave instructions to Alex as to where to go and we set off, I waited a short while near the start of Crossover Passage but Alex had vanished somewhere so I left him to it and caught up with Rob at Main Junction.

Heading upstream in another pleasant stream passage (along with Robinson's there's a trend for nice stream passages in this area!) we soon arrived at the cascade that had caused me and Rob problems in the past (on different trips) due to the volume of water crashing down it. Not today though and we were soon up and making further progress in new territory, eventually the passage lowered with that ominous look about it, we had arrived at the 'duck' or 'low wet bedding half filled with water'. Rob shot through, I hesitated before taking the plunge, it's basically two short flat-out bits with a breathing space between them, standing up was soon possible at Aurora Hall but this was not to last as we discovered the Far North was where Cherry Tree gets its Grade 4 from!

Numerous crawls, boulder obstacles, wet crawls and shuffling led finally to the spacious surroundings of Blackstone Chamber, with its fine array of straws. Rob disappeared down to the Terminus and I followed the Morass Inlet for only a short distance before sitting down and having a breather. Rob made a quick visit to the sump before we started backtracking, wondering whether or not we would encounter Alex. It didn't take long and we were impressed by Alex's solo exploring, all regrouped we made quick progress out. The entrance pitch was examined and climbed (handlined) by all of us and we emerged into a still sunny day, grand for drying your gear off.

Time, as it always seems to be was in short supply and we opted to visit Watershed Mill to gather some bottled ale instead of visiting a pub, a shame as it would have been nice to relax in a beer garden, but I made do with some nice ales in my own garden instead! A relaxing end to a fine days caving.

*Duncan Jones*