

TOP SINK to PIPPIKIN POT

The classic Ease Gill traverse 'Not For The Faint Hearted'

15th June 2008

People present - Daniel Jackson, Duncan Jones, Pete Dale, Rob Santus, Alex Ritchie, Chris Scaife
Weather - Warm and sunny

This was my first trip into the Easegill system and what a cracker it was. It had a bit of everything with the highest of highlights being matched in scope only by the lowlights...

I arrived at Bull Pot farm 10minutes late in the expectation that somebody else would surely be later than me. Pete, Rob, Dunc, Chris and Alex were already there and half ready to go so I had to get a move on (though I could of course rely on Alex to still be last to get all his kit on thanks to footloop issues).

The weather was lovely though we failed to appreciate this fully on the 40min hike up the hill in our furries. We arrived at Top Sink all hot and sweaty and keen to get underground where the temperature would be more suited to our clothing. We headed down some tightish windy passage to the top of the rather fine first pitch (18m), then more tightish windy passage and a short pitch brought us to Limerick Junction. My memory of the trip is hazy, my knowledge of the Easegill system is minimal and it was a bloody long trip, therefore I won't attempt a 3 page in depth description of the next parts of the trip (if anyone wishes to add one then by all means feel free), just a brief summary of the high/lowlights.

Not too long after Limerick Junction we reached Nagasaki cavern; an impressively large place though it would be made to seem small by later parts of the cave. After some (mainly) walking I was presented with the opportunity to go to Easter Grotto on my own to see the pretties and get some photos. Not sure what the rest of the group did at this point (*Ed: various fun and games were had trying to find alternative climbs, then a couple of people nipped in to the Chocolate Box*) though they must eventually have got terminally bored as I took far too long in the place 1) Because it was very pretty (though many broken stals and straws) 2) Because every time I attempted to take a photo something went wrong or some component of my equipment failed 3) I somehow got a bit lost on the way back (went too far in the high part of the aven). Sorry for the wait chaps.

On catching up with the by now slightly annoyed/bored others we went merrily on our way. Next highlight was some very impressively sized passage (not sure of the name - *Ed: numerable names, including; Stop Pot, Monster Cavern, the biggest section being Cornes Cavern*) leading from the Assembly Hall (I think). Some nice walking and climbing etc. This was followed by a short climb down (a navigational error had been made somewhere apparently (*Ed: Duncs route advice was ignored at Oxbow Corner*) but I thought it was a great route) some lovely large open streamway with nice formations and textured rock. Shortly afterwards we had a snack/water break at Stake Pot and began the start of a hands and knees crawl. I think we were about 2 thirds of the way through the trip and It was about at this point that I remarked how wonderful the cave had been thus far; great pitches, beautiful formations, huge passages, nice climbs, attractive streamway and now a nice bit of crawling and squeezes to complete the package. I believe my next words were: 'Isn't this a bit easy to be in Not for The Faint Hearted?' ...Oh how I love famous last words...

I knew it would be a fairly long crawl but it just went on and on and on. My knees at least were feeling the pain. After the 88ft pitch there was more knee and bally crawls than I care to mention before we eventually reached the bottom of the Echo Aven pitch. Then it was a question of waiting and waiting and waiting. Pete took a while at the top of the pitch then Alex had a few problems as well meaning that me and Chris were waiting for a long while at the bottom. I got cold and put on the balaclava and took a few small sips from my water bottle which I was now realizing was a little inadequate for a trip of this length. Finally got up the pitch which was in fact a rather fine one. The

top was tricky but not too bad with a bit of common sense. It was shortly after here that Alex decided to exit via Mistral (a wise decision). He apparently did a fine job of negotiating his way out solo as he is still alive.

More horrible crawling followed and once Pippikin Pot proper was reached it became horrible little narrow rifts squeezes to be navigated by thrutching. I was a bit behind here and made a few wrong turns (not that you could go far wrong) as people didn't wait (grrr). Was tired and thirsty and dragging tackle sack was a real pain in the backside. Eventually got to awkward climb that I'm sure you've all heard enough about and ended up leaving a tackle-sack with all my camera gear in (another big thanks to Rob and Pete for going back for this on Friday). Caught up with the rest at one of the pitches. The rest of the cave was tight bits and pitches interspersed by a few really tight and tricky bits. Wouldn't be too bad on a good day but by this point me and Chris were very thirsty and very tired. Dunc and Pete still had a fair bit of oomph left and left us well behind (*Ed: we took the tackle sack off Rob that he had admirably carried all the way and set off out to prevent us getting cold again and to avoid congestion on the pitches/tight bits*) so it was left for Rob to do a fine job of helping us out with route finding and his kind words of encouragement: 'Hurry up you lazy buggers...'.

Me and Chris eventually and squeezed through the last of the horrible bits to feel the glorious light of the sun at the bottom of the 1st pitch. By the time we got out everyone was long gone and it was a long walk back to the cars.

We got to the pub in Ingleton (the one with the car park) just before they stopped serving food and had ourselves a hearty meal (recommended) and a pint of coke (£3...not recommended)

Was bruised and knackered but it was a great trip thanks to those people who knew where they were going (you need people who know the system for this trip) Easegill is probably the nicest system I've been in and I definitely hope to return and despite my thoughts at the time would definitely do a repeat of the trip...but perhaps in the other direction!

Daniel Jackson

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