

HANGMAN'S HOLE

A slot, a crawl and loose rocks galore..

Date: 24th May 2008

People present: Pete Dale, Rob Santus, Daniel Jackson

Weather: Bright and sunny

Well another Not for the faint hearted special today. The choice was either Growling hole or Hangman's Hole, I had always wanted to do Hangman's hole and could never find anyone to come with me now there was two people well to be fair only one since Daniel was not told were we were going till the last minute to avoid him thinking about it. We met in Bernie's and then headed off up to South house farm to get changed, this is where Daniel found out he had forgotten his undersuit! We thought that this was a get out clause but alas Daniel being the ever resourceful type concocted an undersuit from an over suit and some thermals. We were soon ready and made our way towards the cave. After about 20 minutes of easy walking we had arrived at our chosen hole and strapping the SRT kits on Rob made his way down the entrance climb first. I passed the tackle bags down and then climbed down myself we then followed the steeply sloping boulder slope down to the first obstacle 'The slot' 4m deep with a constriction part way down. Rob had a look first and after a couple of minutes poking around he retreated up out of the slot. It was then my turn to have a look at this slot thing. Climbing down facing the right wall my legs reached a ledge I could stand on and space was adequate for me to move around easily enough but to get past the tight bit would take either guts or a quick weight loss diet. I climbed back out and let Daniel have a look. Now Daniel being the ever resourceful type decided to climb into the slot facing the left wall he got to the same point that me and Rob had and said he would not go first but it felt possible to get past the tight bit. Out he came and Rob climbed back in facing the left wall this time. He could see what to do and after a quick wiggle slowly slid down and out of sight into the passage below 'Bugger!' Me and Daniel thought.



Those fearful words were shouted out 'Your turn!' I had heard Rob but did not acknowledge him, I muttered to myself as I climbed in once again facing the left wall finding the ledge with my feet, looking down I could see the widest part was to the right of where I was standing so with a bit of wriggling and writhing I managed to get myself over and with reassurance from Rob below, I slid down into the passage.

Slithering through I saw Rob digging his way into 'Unprintable passage' oh dear that is low I thought. By this time Daniel was through the slot and behind me Rob had crawled off into the flat out passage I started to follow only to be stopped by it being too tight for me to get into. The floor was shingle so some quick digging and the removal of my helmet gained me access to the passage as I wriggled forward the tightness eased and soon the crawl gained a bit of height and after 7m or so it turned to hands and knees crawling. Daniel was still following so upon reaching Bridge pot I carefully climbed over the top of the pitch and onwards into the muddy crawl. Only a few meters further the passage opened up to allow plenty of room to put on SRT kits while Rob rigged the pitch, did I mention the entire cave is rigged off of naturals?

The first pitch is rigged off two knobs of rock with a deviation 2 meters down from a flake. At the bottom you land on a large pedestal of rock hence the name for the following chamber. From the

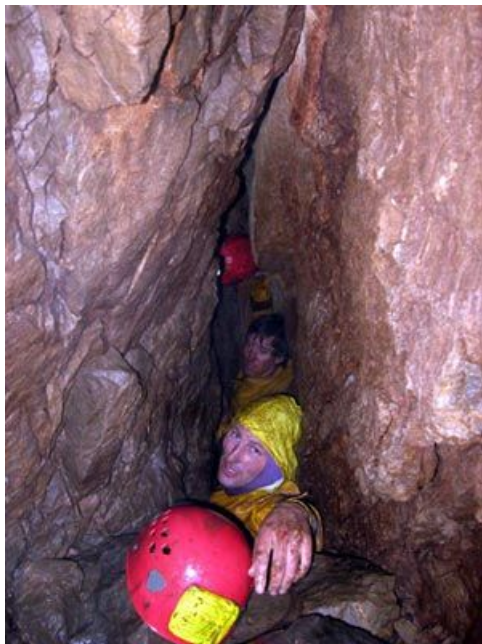
bottom of the pitch the chamber sloped down to the top of the slot pitch this time rigged off two stalagmites and a chock stone at the pitch head. I went down first a narrow rift landing on a ledge high above the bottom and from there a short clamber over and down the 'Spanish donkey' a large flake of rock. Once climbed down a squeeze follows to the top of another climb down on shattered limestone where every foot and hand hold needs checking three times and one for luck! Gallows pot follows and the route down to the pitch head was unstable and loose, a real ring clencher! With Rob at my side and in rigging mode I anchored the rope to a rock in the floor of the slope and Rob devised some other methods with some slings. With the rigging done we could hear Daniel struggling so Rob went back to see what he could do while I rigged the last pitch.

With Daniel sorted out and the last pitch rigged Rob braved the 'Collar' first and soon shouted up 'Rope free' it was then my turn to enter the 'Collar' not too tight to be honest even though the descender was tight against rock and bone. After 2ft it opened out and was an easy pitch with the NFTFH book mentioning care needed past some boulders I'll say just picture 4-5 boulders balanced on each other with nothing more than 1cm of friction with solid rock! Once at the bottom of the pitch it was just a simple if somewhat loose climb down to the final chamber with all routes on choked.

All that remained now was to get out alive. The collar didn't prove much of a problem as long as you had your left arm up when reaching it, and the other pitches passed without problem, Unprintable passage seemed a lot easier on the way out which then just left the tight slot to negotiate, Daniel climbed up first without much of a problem although a few moans and swearing could be heard. With Daniel out it was my turn so I wriggled up into the slot and if you take your time and look for the widest way to go it was fairly easy enough so with me free I called Rob up and with us both snug in the slot Daniel got a few pictures, we then made our way to the surface and after a quick change we headed for the pub!

Well after all those years of not going because people had said it was nasty and dangerous I can now disagree with them since it is not nasty and not dangerous ok ok it is dangerous but no more than any other cave filled with loose rocks!

Pete Dale



Photos by Dan Jackson