

IREBY FELL CAVERN

The boot is on the other foot..

Feature flash back caves: Tatham Wife & Hammer pot.

Date : Friday 2nd April 2010

People Present : Alex Ritchie and Darren Jarvis (Daz of ...)

Weather : Overcast, rain forecasted for late afternoon, but not heavy.

Grade III : My Grade III and a half (Bubbles route is more sporting then the normal route and chuck in the long skylight crawl gives it that extra half a grade.)

I met Daz in Clitheroe. Pete had texted him to tell to say he was not coming at the last second as usual. So it was down to me and Daz to find something to do that either did not need rigging or was already rigged.

After speaking to Dave in Inglesport he recommended and gave us permission to use his in-situ ropes in Ireby Fell, this sounded like a good plan.

After a feed, we went to towards the cave. After a leisurely jaunt across the fell, following the partially paved carver's highway we arrived at the cave. The time was now around 10:30 am. Once in, I showed Daz the normal route down before leading him Bubbles route. Despite all the recent rain Bubbles was quite dry, as was the rest of the cave. After negotiating the climbs and a short thrutchy traverse we were soon at the pitch head.

I went down first and guided Daz down to the re-belay where I gave him a few pointers on what to expect, before descending the rest of the way down this surprisingly large pitch. Daz made it down past the re-belay and deviations fine and soon met up again at the bottom.



Once off the rope we had a scrat about. We spotted a climb up that quickly lead to another climb/pitch that led to an Electron ladder. We stopped at this point as I guessed this the bottom of Overshadow and it would be pointless to go back out again.

Anyway we soon got bored and headed into the main stream and onwards to Well Pitch. Getting onto the traverse as the rope had been shortened was not as difficult as I remember and we were soon passed the traverse and looking down Well pitch. This pitch did not seem to have an in-situ rope. A quick inspection however, found it was still there, it was just coiled up in a bag. I did not like the idea of traversing much further along, as apparently it is very loose. I decided to uncoil the rope. After making sure it reached the bottom, I descended it, clipping in the Deviation on the way down.

Daz soon followed me down safely we went down the stream way to the last short pitch called "Rope Pitch" this is a tiny pitch about 3 and a half meters high. Again I descended first and had no problems. Then Daz err descended. I turned around just in time to see Daz plummet straight down the rope before crashing to the floor on his arse. After making sure Daz of Falling was alright and clearing my head of flash backs of a fall I had taken in my early days on a Tatham Wife trip, we carried on.

P.S. Daz that must have hurt!

After a good romp down Duke Street, we reached “Skylight Passage” where I pointed out to Daz the big pile of Sand I had help to move out of the tunnel with Sam’s ULSA lot. We went up the rope into Skylight passage and then onto the long crawl before dropping down the climb (thankfully not literally). I was not sure which way the water was flowing so consequently went the wrong way. We ended up near the sump before realising. Back-tracking through the mainly waist deep cold water we finally reached “Duke Street 2”.



We had an another good scrat around here, going up stream as far as we could pass the pitch up to Escalator and over to some boulder chokes were we were blocked by yet another boulder choke containing a waterfall. (Looking at the survey it seems it is possible to climb over these boulders by a 26ft climb, but it looked bloody loose from what I could remember on the day). Once back into Duke Street 2 I had a quick look up a pitch near Escalator series until I got bored and checking the time we decided to start to head out, knowing rain was due at a later point.

The crawl out seemed a lot longer this time but thankfully it is nice and soft. We made good progress out, up all the pitches and I must say despite Daz’s earlier accident he was impressing me passing the re-belays and Deviations with no issues. We were soon up Bubbles pitch that was slightly awkward to get off of and then all that stood our way was the climbs out.

I did struggle a little bit on that bottom climb as I was trying to force my self through too low down. With my SRT kit on, I was not going to fit, it also kept catching on the lip of the climb as I pulled my self up. I just was not going to get up that way so I traversed out and got back in higher up. Daz seeing how I did it went up there and greeted me too early for my liking, owe my pride.

However, round the next bend was a short traverse that I forgot about, it was only 2 meters long but this two meters was a very short sample of what the rift in Hammer Pot was like. I had just got beyond the traverse and round the corner before I heard an agonised shout from behind. Daz was stuck. He had done what I did in Hammer and let his legs drop down into the rift.

I put my “Rob Santus” hat on and calmly instructed him how to get out of the rift by his legs back up to where they swung down. After a bit of a struggle, and a few ignored calls to get CRO out (I am sure they would have loved me). With a bit prodding and the removal of his descender he was out again however on the wrong side of the rift. I got him to remove the rest of his SRT gear and pass it to me before he attempted it again. He got through it this time following my advice. (For those who don’t know Rob was the one who talked me out of the first bit of the rift I got stuck in Hammer, I used that exact same method here to get Daz out, thanks Rob.)

Quickly up the climbs we were out at about 4:30pm, just before the heavens opened up at exactly 5:00pm just as was predicted. Weather forecast, right? Weird eh? I drove Daz to Clitheroe to catch his train meaning that I for once could enjoy a beer, as I did not have to drive anywhere seeing as I live in Clitheroe.

It was a fun trip and despite Daz’s adventures he enjoyed it and probably learned quite a bit too.

P.S. Dave Ramsay we have re-coiled your rope on Well Pitch so is back in its bag the way we found it.

Alex Ritchie

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