

# LARGE POT – NEW RIFT POT

## Exchange trip

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21st February 2009

People present - Alex Ritchie, Daniel Jackson, Pete Dale, Kate Duffus

Weather: Dull, Grey and foggy on the high ground

Originally it was going to be Pete and me down Large and Kate and Dan down Rift but Kate insisted on going down Large so it ended up with me and Kate going down large and Dan and Pete going down Rift. We set off to the caves, by the time me and Kate were ready Dan and Pete had rushed off to Rift (I have no idea what all the rush was from them two as our trip through Large would take quite a bit longer, they would only have to wait for us longer at bottom of Colossus)

Once ready we headed up the road to the Entrance to Large. Expecting a long walk in the fog I was rather surprised when just after 5 minutes walking we had arrived at the entrance to the ironically named Large Pot. Kate Riggged the entrance, the pitch head was slightly hairy, as the approach was un-protected so great care had to be taken not to slip down the pitch. Once we were at the bottom of the pitch (12 metres), the cave starts to get really ironically tight as we shuffled about in tight crawls looking out for anchors for the next pitch.

This pitch was a slightly more awkward affair where you have to back out over the pitch head straight from the crawl and then turn around once you are on the pitch (clipped in of course), this was made more awkward with my most favourite piece of equipment the tackle sack wedging it self in a narrow gully. The pitch descends down the narrowest of cracks for about 2 or 3 metres to a re-belay, interesting manoeuvres were required to get to re-belay as it was almost impossible to press the handle on the Stop. After the Re-belay there is a short traverse before the main hang of this pitch is reached.



Unfortunately due to the squeeze of the last bit I had managed to get my gear in a twist as usual and ended up having to re-thread my descender a few times as each time I was about to set off down found I was twisted in something else including the green strap on my harness which must had dislodged it self earlier.

The pitch lands several metres down in a now more roomy chamber, after this there is a short drop which leads to another small pitch with some nice and sharp rock to scratch your shins on. Once at the bottom a short crawl quickly reaches a T-junction. A quick reading of the destructions told us that we needed to go left, which lead us to the pit with in-situ rope. A quick ab down one side and a short climb up the other-side got us past this little obstacle with no issues. It looks as if it is possible to rig a traverse over this but no one has got round to it yet I guess.

Crawling and stooping over short obstacles in constricted passageways was next, nothing really difficult but there was a lot of it. Teamwork was required to manoeuvre the tackle sack past various obstacles such as narrow rifts and tight climbs. After this there was some low level traversing to mainly to keep our wellies dry and yet more rift passage with more tackle stopping obstacles. Finally the passageways let up a bit and became more walking size passages until finally we arrived at Colossus a 50 metre or so drop into the void.

We saw the lights of Pete and Dan waiting for us, probably shivering after going through the duck.

The Colossus pitch involves a free hanging re-belay about 1 metre or so down and across from the pitch head. Kate had showed me a different way of passing the re-belay then the way I had been doing it before so I was eager to try out this new method once Kate had shouted "Rope Free". Kate's method worked like a charm (No jammers required), except I had some issue of getting the rope to go through my breaking crab (gate wouldn't open fully due to another rope in the way). Eventually I persuaded the rope to go through my crab and then I promptly headed on down the pitch which can only be regarded as a mini Titan, the shaft was huge and like Titan the far walls were barely visible and the floor no where to be seen.

I stopped a few feet off the ground for a few photos, only to shoot down the last metre until I stopped myself 1 inch from the floor (last bit was very wet). With our quick greetings made with Pete and Dan we soon parted ways. Neither Kate nor me have done this section of the cave before however route finding was not that difficult as Dan and Pete had handily left kerns and trails in the mud for us to follow and before long we were at the squeezes.

The squeezes posed very little problem for both of us as with a little wiggling we slipped through with our SRT kits on, though it did make that horrible screeching noise. The Duck was next all brown wet and muddy, we rushed through this as quickly as possible as it was rather chilly.

Next was the Mouse hole, which is a constricted 2-metre climb. After this however the cave changes character dramatically, there are no more tight and constricted passageway instead the cave gets a lot bigger. We headed out of the crawls into colossal chambers and proceeded to search for the rift pitch which meant we had to occasionally back track as we thought we may have missed the pitch. We found another crawl, which slithered through until popping out into an absolutely huge chamber at least the size of a football pitch if not bigger.

We then set about searching for the pitch rope, which we almost missed in the expanse. We set about heading out. Kate went up first demonstrating her rope walking technique, which certainly is quick, once you get going. So soon rope free was called and I began my ascent. It seemed like it was raining when I started going up, this and with all blackness around me (my light was set on low) felt like I was flying away into the night sky on a rainy night.



The pitch head was reached in quick time and I was soon clipped in on a narrow ledge ready to start the traverse around the corner to the next pitch. I clipped into the traverse line then grabbed hold of the pitch rope round to clip my ascending gear into it (There was very little slack in the rope to pull it through my chest ascender). Once in I unclipped my short cows tail and swung around the corner ready to ascend the next the pitch.

It was at this point I noticed something wrong, the Pitch rope I was on was making a 'V' shape with my chest Croll at the bottom of the 'V', the Croll was on the correct part of the rope to go up I had not made that rookie mistake. So I thought ok I should just be able to prusik from here so I unclipped my Long and started prusiking however as soon as I made my first prusik there was a click and I swung further around the corner to the wall. My chest jammer had only managed to unclip it self!!!, I knew at this point the only thing stopping me from falling 150ft to my doom was my hand jammer. I frantically searched for a cows tail to clip into the rope before this gave way too (I know it wouldn't but when that happens you don't think straight) and proceeded to scramble my way up about 4ft until I reached a wide ledge. "That got the adrenaline flowing" I re-marked, now

safe and secure! I am still not sure why it un-clipped it self I can only assume the latch was not closed properly as I didn't pull the slack through, a mistake I will not make again that is for sure!

Anyway with that little bit of drama out of the way I pursed up the next little bit of a pitch and headed out with Kate, up the tight climbs. Kate seemed to make them seem a bit tighter then they were as she struggled a little bit building her way up them rather then climbing the climbs. I however being a skinny bugger had no problems and ignoring the pile of rocks Kate sculptured I got up the climbs just by kicking off the walls and pushed with ease my self into the climbs.

After a long damp crawl that didn't want to end any time soon, day-light could eventually be seen and I ascended the pitch first as Kate was de-rigging and was soon out into the damp afternoon at around 3:30 – 3:50 ish?

Once changed and after a further 3 quarters of an hour wait the others arrived just before 5:00pm. Me, Dan and Pete went to the Pub and Kate rushed home knowing she had another hard trip somewhere tomorrow. Oh and I lost my gloves... somewhere.

*Alex Ritchie*

*Photos - Dan Jackson*

*A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.*