

MISTRAL HOLE

Sing us a muddy song..

Date: 21st July 2007

People present: Alex Ritchie, Pete Dale

Another wet day was how this trip started as Peter picked me up just off the M6, the drive gave us time to familiarise ourselves with the route and check the water levels of various rivers we crossed and to occasionally surprised by the occasional spree of 30 seconds of sunlight.

We arrived just outside of the Red Rose Head Quarters at about 11am where I insisted we put our names down on the board where Peter put the optimistic time of 8pm as the out time. On the way to the Mistral, Pete showed me a few of the other cave/pot entrances such as Hidden Pot, Bull Pot of the Witch's in the distance and of course Lancaster hole. We were unable to see the bottom of Lancaster hole entrance shaft, as it is about a 100ft/30m drop.

Using the survey we proceeded to attempt to find the entrance to Mistral, I went right to the spot where it should have been according to the survey only to spot it another 50ft away. We cleared away the wooden planks blocking the entrance and began our descent into the caves down a short and easy climb where a few small frogs had made there home.

Pete had me lead the way through the entrance passage which was a nice tight crawl to start the day, however it is not as tight as it used to be as part of the passage way had appeared to have been drilled out. After a bit more crawling and scrabbling over some boulders we arrived in the Hobbit chamber and could stand up for the first time (Hobbit??, bloody big hobbits if you ask me).

We then headed on in further through to Dusty Junction, looking at some climbs that Rob would no doubt love above us leading to the Dinnertime series along the way. Once at Dusty and a bit of a kafuffle with the survey we headed further south, through the muddier and muddier passageways and chambers. We reached the Hall of Ten and slid our way down the mud bank.

We had a look at the stream way underneath the chamber to check on the water levels, happy that the water wasn't too high we decided we would come back that way later on, I had the previous night been dreaming about being marooned on a rock with water rising around me, I was hoping that, that dream would not come prophetic.

Back in the Hall of Ten we carried on towards our goal through some pretty rooms with some nice formations reminding me of an old dead forest that had been blasted by a pyro-plastic flow from a volcano. We carried on through some more squeezes and tight crawls where Pete showed me his impression of a snake with his sideways wriggle while we were tackling those squeezes to finally arrived in Cross Hall, where I had a quick refreshing drink from some dripping water in there.

Pete then suggested I had a go at Extreme Ways, I of course being a keen caver, I took him up on this and squeezed my way through Extreme Ways, a very tight passageway. With my face half submerged in the water as I squeezed through I eventually popped up in Extreme Ways chamber where I had a quick look around, it was a nice chamber very high ceiling and a few formations I walked up to just before Capped rift before returning back through the extreme ways passage to meet up with Pete again who was amusing him self by singing and playing music (so called..)

We then back tracked a bit and tried to find the passage that linked to the lower steam passage ways. While doing so we explored a few side passages where Pete went one way I went the other. After exploring one particular section and returning I saw Pete had gone, so assuming he was still up that other passage and I could hear his singing again, I went down that passage only to find it getting tighter and tighter so much so I could barely move and it took a real struggle getting through. Once out I thought hang on this seems mighty familiar I had managed to come out in a chamber we had

passed 10 minutes earlier. I followed Pete's voice its like a Psyren call (a really ill one) to be greeted with the words "Where did you come from?". It turned out Pete had backtracked the way we came in so I went through that real tight squeeze for no reason oh well at least I can say I explored there.

We finally made our way to Hall of the Mountain Kings which should be called hall of the mud king as we slowly made our way through thick viscous mud which followed us down the slope, down to the stream passageway.

Cautiously we proceeded up stream where foam was all around us some above head height where the stream had obviously recently flooded. The thunderous roar of water greeted us further as we reached Cigalere falls. Being as muddy as heck we decided to have a real good shower. There was far too much water coming down there to climb the falls however.

Entering Leck Fell Lane we started a climb up a dangerous and slippery rift that got the adrenalin pumping as we ascended and traversed 30ft up (9m), to cross over passage where the only way to get in was to lean over the gap we had just traversed into the slightly sloped entrance of cross over passage and try and get hold of something before you came sliding back down to your doom.

We dropped back down at the end of Cross Over Passage to Pippikin stream way where we followed the stream down stream through the cold water again, finally emerging at Hall of the Ten. From there we had a quick look at the very imaginatively named Red wall and White wall chambers before heading out and emerging at around 3pm. We had mess around on the moors trying to dig out a few entrances before heading back to the Van.

Alex Ritchie

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