

PENYGHENT POT

Our dreams didn't flood away -or- Pyg it may be, but a swine it is not..

3rd May 2009

People present - Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Alex Ritchie, Daniel Jackson

Weather: Mix of sun and cloud with odd spots of light rain

The finest stream pot in the country, also accompanied by words like flood, fills and other such words of watery warning. I awoke at 4am and it was raining, not good, I fell asleep before finally getting up at 6am, still raining. I wasn't impressed with the view out of the window so turned the TV on whilst I munched on breakfast, the forecast suggested only a slight chance of a light shower here and there and mostly sunny afternoon, this lifted my damp spirits a touch.

I set off and soon met Rob, Pete had sent a text saying we were meeting in Ingleton as Penyghent was off, me and Rob looked puzzled. Various phone calls were made to ascertain the problem. After a number of phone calls we decided to proceed to Horton as planned (we had no means of contacting Alex anyway so had to go there), at this point Pete decided he wasn't happy with the trip and weather so he wasn't going and we were down to four men. Arriving at Brackenbottom we asked the BPC if we could park our vehicles there, which they kindly allowed us to do (thank you) and we also quizzed them about water levels. As we assumed they said what we thought, as long as there's no really heavy showers it should be ok.

With the bags finally packed, a task that proved awkward owing to the fact Pete had two decent bags and we had some crappy ones, we got changed although an all too familiar sound came from the direction of Alex's car.. What has he forgotten this time? Wellies! Luckily Alex was kindly loaned a pair from one of the BPC guys (thanks again) so we were ready for the stroll uphill.

Penyghent Pot might at first appear to be tricky to find, but this is not the case, at least not on a dry day, low cloud may make things a little more awkward though.. I was first in, the reason being I was the only one sensible enough to be wearing a neo-fleece! Off I shot along the entrance passage before the drop down in to The Canal, which is ~300m of crawling with a brief flat out section near the end. The crawling is generally easy and progress along the passage is reasonably quick. Arriving at the 'Twin Falls' pitch we got kitted up and that all too familiar sound could be heard, not twice in one day surely? Apparently Alex's chest jammer had disappeared somewhere en-route, but I was too busy getting the pitch rigged and ignored the kerfuffle going on behind me. At the bottom the strangely named 'Easy Street' is followed for a few hundred metres to the second pitch, quite why it's called "easy" I don't know as I'm tempted to say the 300m of crawling is easier than 300m of stooping!

I rigged the second pitch from the near bolt although once down the pitch Rob decided to rerig it using a bolt slightly further out due to the water levels. I found out at this point Alex had been ordered out of the cave due to lack of gear, Penyghent is not the place for exchanging missing items of kit. From the bottom of the second the third pitch is quickly reached, this dry alternative proved to be a touch damp. I seem to recall reading in Selected Caves that if water is flowing down this pitch it's wise to retreat, I ignored this and continued rigging. At the bottom a chilly ledge and rebelay provides access to the fourth pitch down the edge of a fine chamber. The waterfall crashing down was an impressive sight, although it also made it very cold and draughty and not a place to hang around in. It was at this point we last saw Alex, who had crawled back along The Canal and found his chest jammer, then came back in to reach the top of the fourth pitch, where, we later found out, he had decided to call it a day owing to shivering from the cold, wet nature of the cave.

Shuffling past the boulder we were in 'The Rift' with its optional climbable pitches, we had brought rope for everything owing to the potential higher water levels but as it turned out there were ropes on all the pitches (except Flake Pitch). Some of the locations of these ropes would be fine for drier

weather although with water levels as they were we chose to use our own ropes on some of the pitches.

At the top of the fifth pitch as I was rigging, Dan opened his camera case to find he would be undertaking in splash photography! The o-ring had vanished, later found lying in the boot of his car, meaning everything was soaked, luckily his camera was on it's last legs anyway so now he has the perfect excuse to purchase a new one.

The other rift pitches followed quickly - Coffin and Eighth were climbed (handlined) fairly easy on the way out, although we treated them as pitches on the way in. Nearing the end of The Rift we stayed high rather than following the steeply dropping rift, this brought us to a pitch in to Pool Chamber, which had a fixed rope on it. From here a short crawl and drop out of Boulder Chamber brought us to a short section of passage to Myers Leap. A pleasant pitch (well, as are all the pitches in this pot!) with damp crawl leading off, this soon gave way to walking albeit on an awkward uneven floor. Eventually we arrived at a short but wet cascade, the rope hanging down the cascade looked somewhat dubious so we utilised the rope to the side. This was more awkward to use but at least the rope-core wasn't visible unlike the other one. The tenth pitch quickly followed and a short chimney climb allowed us to bypass Niagara Pitch, although there was no escaping the deluge to get in to the continuing passage.

We then had a short stroll to a chamber before a drop to the stream, plenty of foam on the roof and floor of this chamber is testament to flooding potential down here, lovely. The Lower stream passage was followed, again on an uneven floor before the sump finally loomed into view. A quick gaze at this before we retraced our steps back to less flood-prone surroundings. Our exit was reasonably smooth and without any issues with Dan derigging a couple of Rift pitches before I was yet again volunteered to derig the cold fourth and third pitches, because I had the sense to wear a neo-fleece!! We emerged looking exceptionally clean (nowt like a wet pot to give your gear a damn good wash) into a pleasant afternoon and strolled back down to Brackenbottom where we found Alex enjoying the BPC's hospitality (another thanks due!)

All packed we had a short drive to the Golden Lion in Horton for refreshments and luckily they had a nice open fire to relax next to..

It certainly is a fine stream pot, a true classic Dales pothole, a must for anybody. It took us 5hr 15min, not bad considering, it could easily be done in less time and with less gear - but, what's the rush?

Duncan Jones

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