

# PROVIDENCE POT – DOW CAVE

The start of the year extravaganza!

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Date: 2nd January 2009

People present: Daniel Jackson, Alex Ritchie, Barry Lawton (Dan's Friend), Chris Scaife, Dominick Mennie, Peter Dale, Kate Duffus

Weather: Clear and very frosty

We all arranged to meet up in Kettlewell, where I was the first to arrive shortly followed by Chris. We decided to partake in some Cream Tea at a lovely little Cafe while waiting for the others to arrive, who did arrive not too long after 10am. The plan was to take two cars up to Park Rash where we would be exiting. One car we that was chosen, Kate's car could not make it up the hill and skidded back rather dramatically or so I was told back down the hill. Only Barry's car remained, as we needed Chris's car to ferry us back down to the village again. We decided all those not wearing Wet suits would be colder and therefore would get priority, of course I was in this category.



This faffing around took some time and it is now passing 11am. We finally set off across the moors on the 3km but rather gentle hike through the frozen Tundra to the providence pot entrance. A few formations were noted on the way across sculpted of ice rather impressive temporary formations. I was not expecting to see pretties out side of the cave.

We entered Providence and climbed down the short 8-meter (7m) scaffold (scaffolded) shaft and began our lengthy underground undertaking. The first section of this cave was relatively quite easy and with only one real

possible wrong turning route finding was a doddle, through the crawling and scrambling over rocks (Rocky) sections in relative dry passageways. This kept us warm even when some of the crawls were not actually that dry making Pete spout some expletives, I am not the only cave swearer it seems. (It was bloody cold!)

After more crawling the first and only really large chamber on the providence side "The Palace" was reached where an easy though slippery rope climb lead down to the "The Dungeon". After here it was more relatively easy caving up and down boulder slopes in very large square shaped passageways, which look like they have been mined, before we hit the streamway proper at the "Bridge". This is where the start of the possible traverse which if you choose you could traverse for almost a mile.

The bridge was the first real obstacle because it had an awkward 2-meter drop into fin-air. I however was on a different route and managed to accidentally miss out the bridge by dropping down a rift and then going up and over boulders, which gave me a great view of the bridge from below. I waited until everyone was across down the climb before I progressed as the bridge consists of 4 wedged rocks side by side held up by just friction alone, I did not fancy the lot falling on my head.

After "Bridge Chamber" we followed the streamway for some time where we were traversing in and out of the water when the water got too deep and cold or there where simply giant boulders blocking our way as was often the case. I did find a way through one of these boulder chokes a

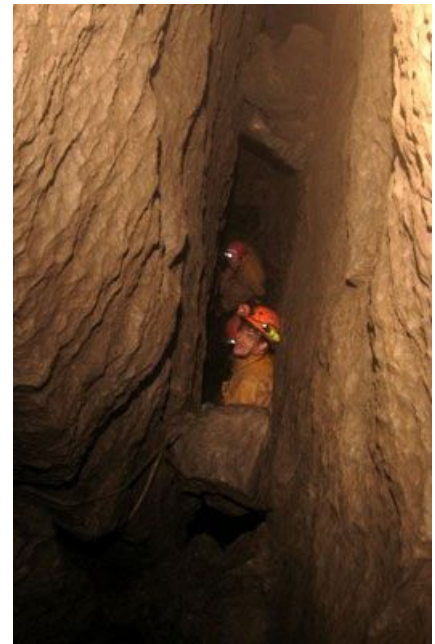
barely visible tight duck in shallow water can be followed around one of the blocks and leads to the other side, however for some reason no one else followed me through.

We reached “800 yards chamber” where the way on seemed to get too narrow, though the guide said it was the normal way on to carry on at stream level. However the guide also said it was a good point to get into the traverse and have a go. So off I went up a narrow and steeply ascending traverse which often had me stopping looking for the way on which seemed to eventually go up some more. Once at the top of the rift a small false floored near roof level chamber was reached where the passage split into two. To the right looked nice and wide but was not following the steam however to the left was a nasty thrutchy sideways squeeze in a very tight looking rift. This thankfully didn't go on for too long and we soon came out into another false floored chamber with a few traversable drops which we descended to yet more jammed boulders and a false floored chamber still above the steamway.

More traversing was to follow, however just before I was about to set off along the traverse Kate had disappeared and re-appeared below me, intrigued I exited the traverse and found an obscure side muddy passage climb that drops you down to the steamway under the false floor.

This decision had however led to a problem of people taking different routes as Pete decided to lead a couple through the traverses saying it was the way on and me with my small group consisting of Kate and Dan streamway racing off ahead underneath. We eventually rejoined each other at the next boulder choke/slope.

A climb up the boulder choke lead to a rope climb leading back down again, which also led to a queue as Kate life lined everyone down. (4m climb) I promptly got bored of waiting and had a little explore around and found a way through the boulders underneath, which I found thanks to the light of the people who went down the climb illuminating a way through.



The Narrows were next consisting of as you would guess plenty of narrow squeezes mainly at stream level one of these was particularly tight which I foolishly tackled facing forwards. Slowly I inched my way along through, with Pete in tow. I quickly realised that facing forwards and being on my side was not a good idea as the only way to get out of the squeeze was to practically sky dive into the unknown depth of the stream and hope it is shallow enough not to drown me.

After Pete came through (feet first) Dom was next to tackle it. He made it look easy as he passed the squeeze that was narrow at the top stood up! I think Dom needs to eat something otherwise he may just fade away.

After a bit more streamway, yet another boulder choke was reached where half way up was a nasty looking exposed rope climb dangling ominously over a precarious drop we had just climbed up. We didn't like the look of it so I led them another way. Negotiating our way through the boulders we almost attempted to go through a section that was too small for us, I then realised this was probably where Rob tried to get through the week earlier and couldn't fit. So I looked around and climbed up some more and slithered out backward through a slot at the top of the boulder choke.

After the choke there was a two and a half meter drop onto a sharp rock where there was no easy way down so I simply dangled off the top and slowly lowered my self down to this sharp rock hoping my arms were long enough. They where and only when I landed on that rock did I notice that there was in-fact a rope there I could have used hidden under a overhang Do'h.



We reached the streamway and carried on at this level for quite a while passing Rock. Getting tired of the cold water I found a way out of the stream and traversed along a bit with Dom checking out the stream passage. I carried on until it looked too slippery so I decided to go back down and get wet and cold again. Kate it seems following my wet footprints along the traverse didn't seem to notice they had suddenly stopped because she kept going along Gypsum traverse (no she didn't) with others following. From Kate's and Dan's accounts it was one horrible traverse.

At the duck, Chris decided to go on ahead with me following checking out the next bit in the stream way with the others going up to the traverse again. (Gypsum traverse proper) We carried on all the way to the sump thinking we could climb over the block, but after several attempts by Chris that didn't seem possible. We backtracked and found a hole in the ceiling back out of the water between two rope climbs which others in the group were now crossing. Going up from here was bloody hard as this isn't a normal exit route out of the stream I slipped just before getting a proper hold of the ledge and ended up getting fully submerged in the freezing water I may as well have done the free dive sump.

Finally with a little help from Chris we got out of the water ourselves and back at traversing level. From here there is a choice of directions either go up the easy rope climb with a swing on it (block of wood) or go through Hanslers Nightmare. (Hardy's horror) Pete being Pete decided to challenge me to the Hanslers Nightmare sending me off into traverse. I got into the traverse ok but it got tighter and tighter until finally at point above some jammed rocks I could move forwards no more. I had no purchase with both my hands and legs and was firmly wedged in there was also appeared to be no way on as after the squeeze there was just a sky dive of 15ft back to the stream, so I reversed my course and headed up the easier rope climb instead. Pete I don't know how somehow managed to fit him self through the traverse (it was easy) as well as Barry. Though Dan him self swore at Pete for merely suggesting the idea of going through it.

The way the rest of us went ended with 6m rope climb back to the water after the free-dive which was life lined by Kate for some-reason though it meant I could have a go at hand over handing it. After this it was the magnificent sight of the Buddhist temple where we all didn't wait for Dan to take any pictures (we never waited anywhere for him to take pictures) on the account we were all freezing our butts off in the waste deep water. An easy walk out of Dow cave into the iciness outside rounded off this most interesting trip.

*Alex Ritchie and (Edits: Pete Dale)*

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