

SMALL MAMMAL POT (BAR POT/GG)

April Fools – we must have been!!

1st April 2006

People present - Mike Skyrme, Duncan Jones

“Meet 9.00am, Bernies” said the text from Dunc on Friday evening. “Bar Pot alternative route” it continued.

To ensure time for eats, I set off in heavy rain at 7.30am for Ingleton, ETA Bernies 8.45am, ample time for brekkie and a brew before the long walk up to Bar Pot.

The weather had marginally improved by the time I stopped at Kirkby Lonsdale for fuel. Text from Dunc, “... running late, will be after nine, going to Inglesport for food!” fair enough, “I’ll see you in there” I replied. Oh well, plenty of time for a walk onto Devils Bridge to look at the River Lune. BLOODY HELL! Talk about a raging torrent. Something tells me that today was going to be interesting.

Breakfast and brew over, a read of the paper was necessary to alleviate the boredom of waiting. Dunc finally arrived at 9.30 and promptly began to gorge himself on eggs, beans (of which I was to suffer the consequences of later!!!) and toast, interspersed with tales that the elusive Pete may turn up. Another (free) brew later (thank you kind lady!!!) and a text from Pete to say he wasn’t coming we set off for Clapham.

We were changed and up the track by 11.10 (pausing briefly for photos of Clapham Beck waterfall in full flow) and the walk to the entrance quickly passes, the only notable thing being the amount of water flowing down the track.

Once at the top of Bar Pot shake hole Dunc announced that we were going to do Small Mammal Pot and pointed down a miserable and decidedly shitty little hole and said that I could rig if I wanted. The challenge was set! After harnessing up extremely quickly we dived into the entrance hole to escape the hail storm that had engulfed us.

A short passage and traverse over the 1st pitch (20m) led to the hang point across the shaft. This was quickly rigged and checked by Dunc before I descended into the unknown. Once down, Dunc quickly followed.



After a scrat around the bottom of the chamber, the way on was located and after a brief struggle (for me anyway!!!) and crawl, we emerged into Flowstone Chamber. With Dunc leading we manhandled the bags over a tight rift and climbed up into a wide bedding plane and flat out crawl. This led to a small rift chamber which we free climbed down before squeezing down onto a narrow ramp, which ended on a ledge overlooking the 2nd pitch (10m).

I rigged this and pulled the remainder of the rope from the bag. “Is this rope long enough?” I enquired, “Should be!”, came the reply, to which I threw the rope down and listened – nothing! Looking down, we couldn’t determine if the end of the rope was six inches or six feet from the bottom of the pitch so after some readjustment of the belay and Y hang it was time to find out. As I’d rigged it, it only seemed fair for me to find out. Once at the bottom and off the rope I realised that with the end loop just touching the floor we’d had “plenty” of rope!

With both of us down the pitch, the way on was feet down (what I considered to be an horrendous) a 3m vertical slot. After various arm manipulations and leg contortions and belly sucking, I managed to slip through quickly followed by bags and Dunc.

Another section of flat out crawling led us to “Whitehall”, allegedly “the most impressive section of passage in the Bar Pot system.” I didn’t look that impressive from where we were sprawled, coughing and sputtering and shit up to the eyeballs!

After two more small drops and another bit of crawling we emerged at the top of the big pitch in Bar Pot. Dunc rigged this and quickly disappeared down while I awaited the “rope free” shout from the bottom. Once received, I made my descent, the longest underground to date! After what seemed an age (dry rope) I was back on subterranean terra firma. After a brief chat with another lad who was waiting to come up, we ditched out SRT kit and set off for Main Chamber.

Dunc had me pose at South East Pot for photos and preceded to blind me as I made my way across the traverse. “Follow that ridiculous draught” said Dunc, “draught? More like being in a wind tunnel” I thought as my eyes streamed. As we approached Main Chamber, the rumbling of falling water began to get louder. All of a sudden we were there, standing in the entrance to South Passage looking at what was obviously Fell Beck in flood conditions – a sight that I have always wanted to see since taking up caving – beautiful, noisy windy cold and wet!

More photos ensued before I stepped into the water for a quick (and it was quick, I can tell you!) look up Main Shaft prior to setting off back to Bar Pot.

We had a bit of a wait at the bottom of the big pitch whilst another party made their exit. This gave us time for a snack and a drink, some photos of the “little clay people” and plenty of grumbling about our exit route!!!



Dunc ascended the big pitch first and began to take photos of me labouring up – Petzl Pantin – it had me panting!!! Once up I derigged the pitch before making our way through the crawls and squeezes (which appeared much easier on the return), with me derigging as we went.

After a short struggle and the first constriction, where I couldn’t seem to find any foot holds, we were soon at the bottom of the first pitch. After a quick breather and a bit of chuckling about the esoteric nature of the system, off Dunc went. “Arrggghhh” yelled Dunc from the top of the pitch. “A bloody bat has just flown past my head” “has it flown out?” I enquired, “I think so” came the reply. All of a sudden this “winged mouse” flew through the beam of my lamp and began to circle my legs. “Arrggghhh” I yelled as the poor creature continued to flap around me before disappearing into a crevice as I performed my own disappearing act up the rope, pausing at intervals to see if it had gone for its mates!!!

Once at the top, I derigged and scrambled along the short passage and up onto the surface to a decidedly sunnier day than earlier. All in all, a great days caving, but not one to repeat in a hurry! Like I said at the start of this report – APRIL FOOLS or what!!!

Time in: 12 o’clock ish

Main Chamber: 3.30pm

Time out: 5.30pm

Mike Skyrme

Pictures: Duncan Jones

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