

## VALLEY ENTRANCE to KMC

You wait ages for a bus and then they all come at once!!

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12th April 2008

People present - Mike Skyrme, Mike White, Neil Heywood, Abigail Skyrme (10yrs), Claudia Bordogna

After months of planning/negotiating etc, things were finally in place to introduce Claudia to the delights of subterranean activities as well as nurturing Abigail's renewed interest in caving and her eagerness to try SRT for real. After exiting via Valley Entrance the previous weekend (Simpson's pull through), I decided that a trip to Kingsdale Master Cave would provide a reasonable opportunity for Abigail's first descent on a rope as well as offering Claudia a chance to overcome some uncertainties regarding heights.

Saturday dawned bright in sunny Barrow and with the car packed and our merry band on board we hit the road. Whilst driving my phone buzzed with a message from Claudia to say that she was already in Ingleton (half an hour before our arranged time) – eager or what?????? Passing through Kirkby Lonsdale we began to shiver as we viewed the high fells beyond which were sporting a winter (its April for gods sake!!!) coat of fresh snow.

Once in Ingleton we piled into our Café of choice for food and to meet Claudia, who wasn't very difficult to spot, sitting by herself at the biggest table nursing a cup of tea. With introductions and food over, Neil retired to the shop downstairs to part with his hard earned in exchange for a neo-fleece, whilst the rest of us hit Bernie's to hire Claudia's kit.

One kit hire and neo-fleece later saw us driving up into a white Kingsdale where we paused briefly to record the scene. Plenty of vehicles at Braida Garth indicated a potentially busy system but as most were carrying rope bags, I assumed that it should be quiet at the bottom, for a while at least – One of the most important things that I ever learned working in engineering was, never assume anything!!!!

The inclement weather (hail storm) made changing an ordeal but once sorted we headed back down the road to the entrance, commenting on how much water was flowing down Kingsdale Beck compared to the previous weekend. Once inside the entrance we set off on an uneventful trip (except for some oooohing and aaaargghing as the cold water filled wellies and touched delicate parts LOL) to the roof tunnel and the pitch head.



At the pitch head I quickly rigged for SRT and abbed down to check water levels in the master cave before heading back up the rope to rig the ladder. At this point I can only assume that a number ten bus had dropped off outside the entrance as one party appeared, followed in quick succession by another two. Where they had come from was anyone's guess as we never saw that many novices outside!!! What happened next can only be described as a melee. As this was Abigail's first attempt at SRT and Claudia's first descent on a ladder I didn't want them to feel pressured by the hordes behind, so I offered the pitch to the party behind us, who promptly rigged their own ladder and began to ferry their own party. As more and more people appeared I decided to rig our own ladder in the alcove and use the fixed line for Abigail.

With the ladder rigged, Mike W descended the rope as I clipped the lifeline to Claudia and coaxed

her to the ladder. After a little hesitation and some reassurance that she was perfectly safe, she stepped onto the ladder and made her first descent – well done!!!!

Abigail then came across and with a little assistance attached herself to the fixed rope and locked her descender off as I attached the lifeline as a “just in case” measure. A little hesitation again before she grabbed the ladder and swung herself off the rock. Once she was happy that she was going nowhere, her hands were prised off the ladder, descender unlocked and she made a fantastically controlled descent without the need for assistance with the lifeline, even managing a “Wheeeeeee” on the way down – another well done!!!! Neil then dropped down our now “free” rope and I quickly followed.



With everyone located (within the crowd) we headed upstream having to brace ourselves against the flow of water which appeared to have risen and in places was now waist deep. The main stream resembled a conveyor belt as groups passed each other on the outward and return journey to the pitch.

We managed to progress 70m or so before the passage narrowed and the force of water increased. We pulled stumps at this point rather than risking further progress and headed back to the pitch. We all returned via the alcove with Mike W up first followed by Abigail who was

given the briefest introduction to ascending and sent on her way, Mike assisting her at the top. Claudia then ascended the ladder in text book fashion with Mike again performing the necessary at the top. Neil went next with his usual methodical yet leisurely ascent with my vociferous shouts of “stop p\*\*\*ing around and hurry up” ringing in his ears together with frantic rope yanking to gee him along. Once Neil was off the rope, I was up it like a rat (drowned) in a drainpipe to escape the spray lashed alcove. Ladder and lifeline derigged I returned to the others where we had to wait for all and sundry to vacate our rope.

Once free I quickly derigged before we headed back pausing en route for a few photo's. A decision was made to miss out an excursion to Toyland as both Claudia and Abigail were feeling very cold, so we headed back to the duck for a few more pics before heading out into a decidedly thawed landscape which accounted for the sudden rise in water levels.

A quick change and drive back to Ingleton saw us residing in the Wheatsheaf for drinks and crisps.

All in all, a positive day for Claudia and Abigail (who can't wait to get on a rope again – strange child LOL) who overcame some fears and uncertainties, but I felt that the day was spoiled by the water levels in the master cave and the sheer volume of people.



I knew it was a mistake selling tickets for “naked caving” LOL



*Mike Skyrme*

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