

WITCHES II CAVE (SHUTTLEWORTH POT)

A 'pretty' good trip!

Date : 21st August 2011

Present : Duncan Jones, Alex Ritchie

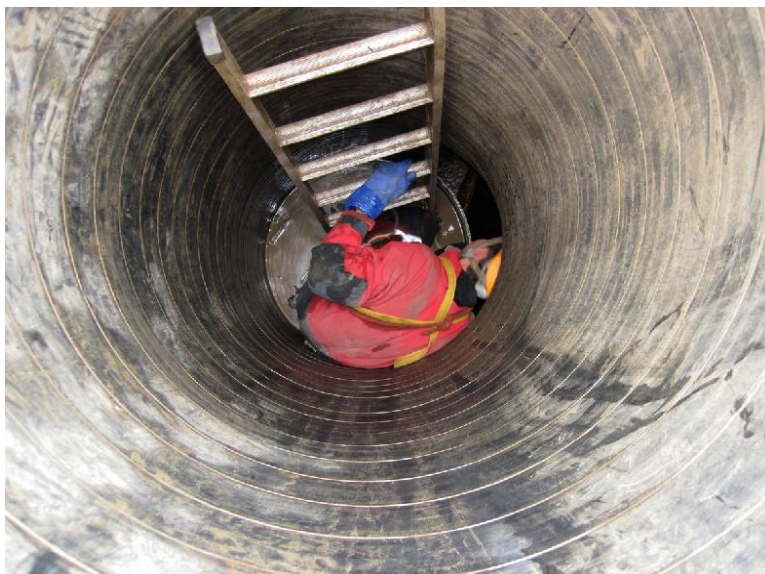
Weather : Cloudy start, sun later on

After a week of indecision we had a short-list of possible caves to visit, more to do with the changeable weather and equally changeable forecasts than anything!

Numbers of attendees should have been perhaps 6 or so but due to illness, tiredness, unfitness etc it was finally just two of us that had a bite to eat in a very quiet Ingleton. After the grub was consumed and we settled on a trip we headed for an equally quiet Bull Pot Farm, only one person there, someone I'd not seen in years (hello Jan if you're reading this!!)

Quickly changed, packed and a quick natter we were off along the path to Ease Gill, just before the final descent to the stream bed we scanned the fell ahead and using the map I'd brought along, spotted a likely looking outcrop, all we had to do now was find a path to it, easier said than done. We started walking up and soon found ourselves neck deep in ferns, knew I should have packed the machette. Eventually we gained higher ground and the outcrop was once again visible so we aimed for it, taking a look at other shakeholes on the way. After dismissing one very minor outcrop we headed for the more obvious one and soon found the entrance.

Alex was dispatched down the pipe (currently with loose ladder in) to rig the first pitch, once down he shot off along various crawls to emerge at the start of the pitches. The pitches are actually easily climbed, as Alex proved by disappearing down with me following behind rigging! After I'd fuffed rigging the first and second pitches climbs (and told Alex about health and safety), I rejoined Alex at the head of the Divers' Pitch, a spacious affair dropping down the side of a very large passage. Part way down this pitch whilst pulling rope out of the bag I heard a clattering sound, looking in the bag I realised my tripod and map (brought for finding entrance, so why I had it with me down here I don't know) had gone, looking down the tripod had dropped a couple of metres onto a small ledge, the map was further down on another ledge, although not quite at the bottom. Items retrieved without any difficulty, on with the trip.



To the north lay a very loose slope or traverse and pitch down, based on the fact it had lashed it down the night before and we couldn't hear the cascade we figured it wasn't worth the effort; after the trip I asked someone who knows and he said you should be able to hear the cascade from the bottom of the Divers' Pitch, decision justified.

We headed south up a slope and into a low crawl, decorated, emerging into larger passage once more.



It was from this point on that photography became common between myself and Alex as we found more decorated sections, including Volcano-type formations, fine straws, calcite flows and an abundance of helictites and sedimentary features.

It was along here we became disappointed, seeing bootprints in a mud floor that had been taped off, I'm no fan of locked gates but it's damage like this that makes me think sometimes it may be worthy, it's either idle/lazy caving or plain ignorance when it comes to the cave-environment – I would like to think the person responsible would read this and realise their errors, but I won't hold my breath as something as simple as reading is probably beyond their level of intelligence.

Eventually after some fine helictities the passage reaches a climb up and down to emerge in larger surroundings, and a split, we headed right first. This leads past a very large sediment bank (~3m!) at which point you are then greeted by a forest of straws, more photography then. After

the snaps we continued to where the passage diminishes, taking a quick peek up a parallel passage which also fizzles out. We returned to the junction and headed up the slope to the dog skeleton, sadly a shadow of its former self due to inconsiderate oiks. Why oh why do people have to touch something, as I say to my 3.5year old daughter you look with your eyes not your hands, but she doesn't know better unlike the (allegedly) mature/adult people visiting this cave – how about you bring your partner along and I'll touch them as being all touchy-feely is fine, isn't it?? Thought not.. F---wits..

After paying our respects to the dog and wondering how it managed to get where it is we reached the top of the slope and the end. Only thing to do was head back, taking a picture of a splash cup on the way. We were soon at the pitch, Alex stepped over to the traverse and some loose material broke free and tumbled down the slope, I threw him the end of the pitch rope, just in case. There is a handline dropping down near the loose slope but it's probably best to take (at a guess) a 25m rope and rig the traverse from the bottom of the Diver's Pitch out and drop down the far side. One hanger



needed, the rest of the traverse bolts are in-situ at present. It was also about this time we both heard a strange rushing, rumbling noise (of water) coming from afar, it soon passed only to reappear a few minutes later, rather odd and still not quite sure what caused it.

We were soon both up the pitch and climbs (why did I bother rigging them?) and just before the entrance pitch we ground to a halt as Alex suddenly realised he had no camera.. So, back down he went desperately searching for his camera on all the ledges and around the base of the pitch. Nothing found he backtracked to the low crawl and thankfully found it comfortably lying there, rather than in pieces at the bottom of a pitch!

Back up and finally on to the entrance pitch, Alex went up first climbing a short distance before getting on the rope with me hot on his heels climbing most of the pitch. We emerged into a pleasant afternoon and from above we found a slightly better path for the walk back down through the ferns, still hard work going uphill on the other side of the gill though. Back at Bull Pot Farm we utilised the reasonable flow of water at the pond to clean our gear.

A short trip but enjoyable, fingers crossed it remains in good condition.



Duncan Jones

A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.