

MOSSDALE CAVERNS (Kneewrecker / Fourways / Dull North)

Not quite Crescent Pot!

Date : 4th September 2010

Present : Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Alex Ritchie

Weather : Warm and sunny, slightly cloudier later

A week of confusion reigned on the BRCC forum as the planned trip to Gingling was contemplated, dismissed, considered and more besides. The weather forecast changed as much as our minds, which certainly didn't help the decision making process. A number of harder trips were put forward, including a trip to Mossdale before finally the decision was made to go to Crescent Pot.

The morning arrived with a quick breakfast stop at McDonalds (where we all met up) before we headed off to Kingsdale, just before the junction with the A65 I was ganged up on as Mossdale was yet again considered. After much grumbling on my part I reluctantly agreed (the weather was good so it made sense), not that I had much choice as I wasn't driving!

With no laminated or even printed information we had to stop en-route to get a few pages of NTFH photocopied, we then had to try and locate the parking area using a large scale road map. Luckily the road was fairly obvious albeit narrow and full of tourists, thankfully we left Grassington behind as we climbed up to the parking spot. Instead of the usual process of getting changed we opted for stuffing all our gear in ruck/tackle-sacks and walking up in normal clothes, given how warm it was this was a sensible choice.

The Scar is easily found and we were soon in a sheltered corner getting changed. A quick look around located the entrance, we noticed the plaque with the names of the very young explorers that lost their lives in that tragic accident many years ago; a sombre reminder of this caves character. A climb down, followed by small crawls and shuffles and other small climbs eventually starts to bring you to more roomier surroundings. It was here we noticed an abundance of wire, someone has spent time placing this wire on (more or less) the route through the entrance series and beyond, further investigations revealed this wire has been in place for a fair number of years!

After the Assembly Hall the cave start to take on a wetter character, this briefly relents before the first Drown-or-Glory, quickly followed by the second (possibly The Swims on the survey, although no swimming was needed), neck deep at worst, gloomy but pleasant going.

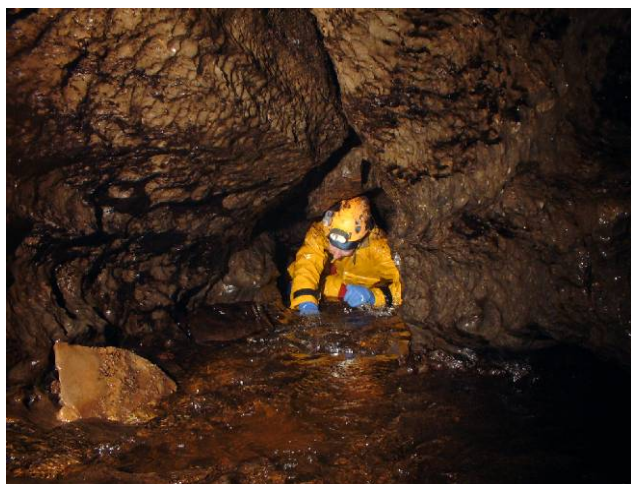


Broadway



Exiting a "Drown-or-Glory"

The passage emerges quite suddenly in the large Boulder Chamber (the largest in the cave), the route onwards involved trying to follow the water whilst clambering around boulders and the like. This gives way to a very nice section of walking passage, Broadway, mixed going continues with only a couple of minor route finding issues, but we soon found ourselves in Rough Chamber.



Kneewrecker



Pausing for a break at False Fourways

We had a brief stop and read of the description before ploughing ever onwards, into Rough Crawl, not as the name would suggest and is actually fairly pleasant, along an attractive sandstone floor and contains one short canal section where it was easier to float than crawl. A few minutes later we were at an important junction, Kneewrecker Junction. To the right the lengthy Marathon crawls which was for another day (maybe, maybe not), to the left our intended route along Kneewrecker. This was more crawling, but again, on a sandstone floor which adds a certain strange interest as the minutes pass by. Towards the end of this passage there is another canal, gloomier than the previous and again, easier to float along than crawl. There was just enough airspace for your head to stay dry and with foam plastered all over the roof as we glided forwards in this section, another reminder of flooding, not that it was ever needed!

Kneewrecker ends suddenly as it pops out in the walking passage of Relief Passage. A very strange rumbling noise was heard in the distance, quite worrying, Alex however was oblivious as he had a neoprene hood on and couldn't hear a thing. We pressed on along to Fourways, mixed going of walking, stooping and crawling with occasional nice passages. We reached the point where we needed to swing left in the direction of the Far North, at this point the character of the passage changed becoming slippy and muddy, everything prior to this was very clean washed! After a while of slipping and sliding I rapidly started to lose interest, we finally reached Farthest North Chamber and decided to call it a day and headed back to more pleasanter surroundings.

On the way out we stopped a couple of times for photos and a quick break. The crawls seemed slightly harder on the way out (to me anyway), maybe because it was uphill all the way as the entire cave is on a gentle gradient, or I was unfit or some other reason that I can't yet think of.. Route finding was fairly straightforward, with only a couple of places where we stopped, had a think and it came back to us. It was sometimes the case that one of us wouldn't know one way but would know at the next junction! Boulder Chamber and the start of one Drown-or-Glory made us stop and think as did another section just beyond and despite all the wire snaking its way through the entrance series there was a couple of moments where we had to stop and think there too. Not a great deal of passage but the way on (out) was not always immediately obvious.

Finally we emerged into a slightly cloudier afternoon after 4 or so hours underground. It was a relief to be out and I have to admit I felt uneasy in that cave at times, I had nothing to worry about, perhaps having read *Race Against Time* fairly recently wasn't such a good idea? We didn't bother changing at the cave this time and walked back in our gear, being wet helped in the warmth of the afternoon.

This place does have an intimidating reputation (a bit of a “Marmite” cave, you either love it or hate it), but treated with the *utmost respect* a very interesting and enjoyable trip can be undertaken in here, with a character that is completely different to any other cave I've been in. No formations but a fine mixture of passage types and shapes along with the geological interest and strangely appealing gloomy wet sections all make for a good cave.

To round off a great day of caving we stopped just beyond Grassington (which was still heaving with tourists) at The Old Hall Inn, a refreshing drink in the beer garden and reflecting on the day.

Duncan Jones



Exiting the cave (do I look relieved?)

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