

SWAN DIKE POT

Tricky or not?

Date : 17th July 2010

Present : Alex Ritchie, Rob Santus

Weather : Cloudy, overcast and rainy

Alex and I fancied a re-visit after a recent failure by some of the lads recently due to size limitations (Alex excluded of course). We were a little concerned about the weather especially in the morning but the afternoon forecast looked ok. After a light breakfast, we headed up to Penyghent Ghyll, a quick change and a swift saunter down to the entrance.

The entrance is fairly easily free climbed and once down, fairly straightforward passages follow, with a couple of climbs thrown in. The first pitch is reached after about 15 minutes which involves stepping over the wet pitch to the dry one. There are 2 bolts to rig from, providing a relatively safe descent. After this, the fun starts (the Trick squeeze). I sent Alex first into the hairpin body size passage since he'd been through recently. Half way along he dropped his camera which he duly managed to kick back to me. After that he quickly slid through the Trick down into the stream. I then sent my bag through to Alex and slid through too. It was tight but not too bad - reminiscent of a few trips we've done, couldn't say which though.

After the trick you basically just crawl, stoop and walk in the stream until you get to the 2nd pitch. This section is clean and untouched with some pleasant formations. The next 3 pitches are the nasty weather pitches. There is not much to rig off at this point, just the odd knob of rock here and there which is character building (lovely single anchor belays). The pitches are rigged separately and not in one like I was planning (good job too as it was seriously wet) and Alex was quick to point this out. Anyway, once down, there is an awful flat out crawl in the stream to the 5th pitch which takes about 10 minutes. The 5th is quite laughable with the smallest knob of rock to rig from that I've ever seen. We both went down very quickly, had a look at the sump and then headed out (it was very wet and very cold in that little chamber).

We made good progress back out from the bottom to the Trick. We needed a good plan of action because extricating ourselves from this side looked very difficult. I went first and asked Alex to attach one tackle bag to me once I was in the rift. As I thrashed about I knocked Alex's camera out of his hand into a large pool of water, much to his dismay. After a short delay, the bag was attached and I quickled wriggled through facing the right hand wall in the tightest part. I then headed back to the chamber to ditch tackle and then went back in to assist Alex. I then took his gear out and offered any support I could give – which as it turned out was very unwelcome (I was politely told to F off). It turned out that Alex had a couple of attempts at the Trickster and got through on his 4th, explaining later that it was a lot harder this time because 1. We had tackle bags and 2. We had bottomed the cave and were obviously more tired. It must also be mentioned that Alex lost a welly in the process which is par for the course and we both decided that there was no way we were going back for it! Getting through this section was a relief because it is strenuous and should not be under-estimated on the return.

Quick progress was made up the 1st pitch to the entrance climb and it was pleasing to surface to a much less threatening sky (turns out the met office forecast was right!).

After 4 hours underground, this is a good trip with some difficult challenges thrown in and Alex and I had no real problems of note.

Rob Santus

A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.