

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE

And other nearby short and fun trips..

Date : 22nd June 2014

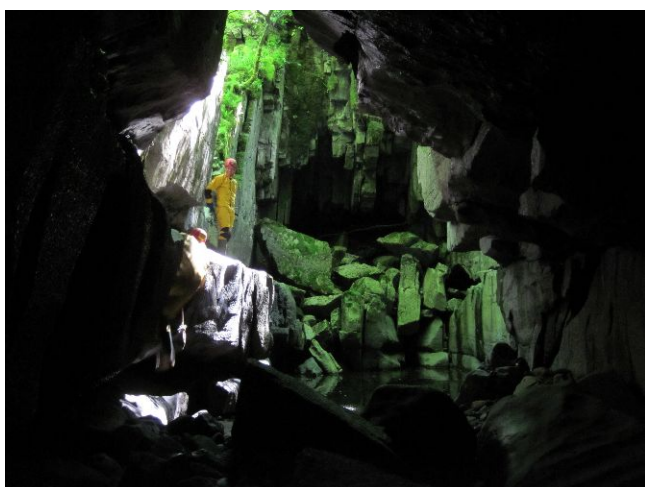
Present : Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Peter Brookdale

Weather : Warm and sunny

Earlier in the year myself and Pete had visited OFD for an explore of the Marble Showers Traverses. A minor route finding issue and time not being on our side we made a retreat, having had a fun time exploring what we did. Roll on a few months and a plan to return was made. Unfortunately the weather had other ideas – it was largely dry!

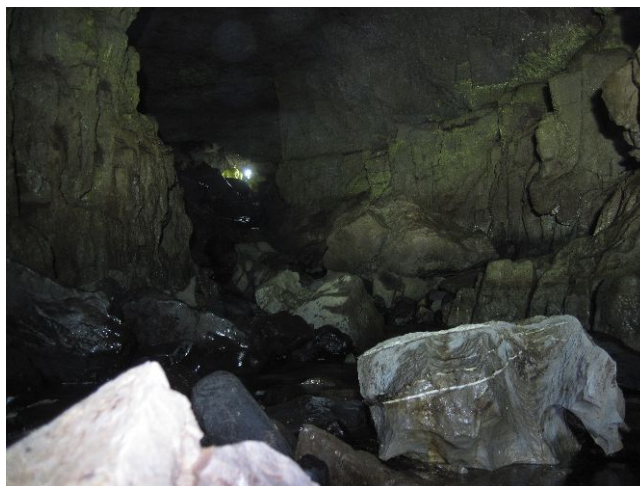
Having long wanted to do LNRC and the weather tempting me a hasty rearrangement of plans was made. A madcap adventure was planned; a day trip from North West England to South Wales! The early start arrived and a simple drive later found us in South Wales looking for breakfast. Given the time-constraints and our lack of knowledge of decent (and open) cafés we opted for those golden arches for a quick and simple option before continuing.

We paid our dues, parked up, not before the car gouged itself on a rock. Whilst Rob went for a nosey around Pete concocted a plan of tipping some water under the front of the car to look like damage. It was a good plan that briefly had Rob looking shocked, until my face gave it away, damn!



Kitted up we headed down the dry stream bed to arrive at the most impressive Cwm Pyll y Rhyd. A quick explore here and we continued down valley and a more enclosed gorge. All quite pleasant so far. Eventually a short climb down deposits you at the entrance to White Lady Cave. Only short but very nice and worth a quick detour, as is the side passage. A short distance beyond was the less interesting sounding Town Drain. It starts nice then soon lowers to a crawl where enthusiasm waned and a retreat was made. At this point we head back up valley to Bridge Cave.

The entrance to Bridge is not overly exciting, starting as a crawl. This improved and average passage was followed to the choke, beyond which a very nice section of stream passage leads you out in to the sizeable main passage! Big passage leads on before lowering to a crawl. We headed out, back to the car for refreshments before heading upstream of the bridge to find LNRC.





A pleasant stroll beside and finally in the stream reaches the small sporting looking entrance. Small well watered passage can be followed down a climb to the duck. Obligatory photos and video followed before we pressed onwards. The passage slowly gained size. It was about this time we realised the survey was a different to usual scale, it was taking ages to get anywhere – being used to northern caves where features pass quickly we had to remind ourselves we were in Wales where caves are long...

After some time we passed Mud Hall, took a brief detour to the other side of the Bridge Cave sump before heading off to The Canal. As it turns out, in neofleeces and going downstream, it was, where water depth allows, easy to float slightly along this passage making progress a little easier. The crawl-cum-swim continued for some time, occasional grumblings were heard when we had to crawl rather than float!

Junction Chamber was reached and thus the quite impressive Main Stream Passage. This again

turned out to be far longer than anticipated. Just when we thought the crawling would herald the sump, it rose again and continued some more. We left Pete behind just before this crawl and Rob pressed on, forcing me to follow. After further fine stream passage we reached the end and made a retreat. The cave was a hell of a lot longer than I had anticipated!

The exit was largely uneventful apart from going round in a circle on the Canal Bypass route. This error was quickly rectified and we were soon marching along the bypass and back in to the relatively warm waters of the entrance series

Afterwards we nipped over to Symmonds Yat, just for a quick nosey. And stopped off at some services somewhere for a coffee and pricey piece of grub. Unfortunately we got stuck in traffic on the way home, bit of a nuisance, but not enough to cast a cloud over a fantastic outing! We need more random, crazy adventures like this.

Most definitely recommended this trip. I certainly wouldn't fancy it in damp/inclement weather or in winter when the water would be colder!! Brrr, I can imagine it being thoroughly unpleasant.

Duncan Jones