

OGOF FFYNNON DDU

Top Entrance to Cwm Dwr – very wet!

18th May 2002

People present - Duncan Jones, Jan Willder, Martin Donaldson, Darren Cassidy

The drive down to South Wales was a worrying one on Friday night due to the amount of rain falling, after numerous attempts to do this trip before it was looking like the weather was going to stop me again, weather and foot and mouth being the two barriers I have faced in the past.

On Saturday morning we awoke to a dry looking day, after obtaining the key and waiting for everyone to surface we headed for the cave, finding a hefty door we ventured into big passage straight away, no messing huh! Following the passage we opted for a minor diversion to Big Chamber near the Entrance before continuing with our trip. Armed with a description and a survey we made reasonable progress through the passages that is until we got to the Gnome Passage area.

For some reason, still can't work out what went wrong but we ended up following Gnome Passage, a bit of a diversion out of our way but at least it was easy going with nice formations to look at. After realising our error we retraced our steps back to a known position (not far from the entrance actually) and tried again. This time we found the Wedding Cake and the slope and entertaining climb down into Salubrious Streamway. A pleasant streamway follows with the occasional clamber over boulders we suddenly found ourselves looking down a few metres, a pitch, can't be right we thought, a few puzzled looks later we had a closer inspection and a small ledge was seen either side and a traverse allowed us to descend and continue onwards.

Eventually the water disappeared and once again we were in dry passage and soon found ourselves traversing over a rift and attempting a descent, apparently easy according to the book, something tells us we missed the easy bit. Eventually after some interesting climbing we found ourselves in the stream again, Maypole Inlet, walking downstream encountered the ladder. As I climbed down Jan was blocking the water, thankfully she stood up after I got off the ladder and I missed a soaking. A couple of short climbs and we were over-looking the Main Stream, a rather wet main stream, slowly I lowered myself down and realised that while it would be fairly sporting it was do-able.

Upto this point, I expected the Stream to be good, but this was excellent, after lots of walking, clambering and a good soaking we soon found ourselves in the Great Oxbow, then it was back to the water, more superb streamway soon entered the interesting Marble Showers Series. Dark limestone with calcite veins makes this a lovely section of the stream. After a brief stop we had yet more streamway to follow until we met a low arch and The Confluence. In normal conditions the stream disappears through small holes but the whole length of the Flood Bypass had the stream flowing along it, which confused matters briefly before it sank in that we had reached the right spot!

Despite the streamway being entertaining and most fun it was nice to get out of it into the drier passages again. A walk and climb up led us into the large chamber of Piccadilly. Impressed by the size we followed the large passage as it climbed steadily, and branched off a side passage and followed this round to the Smithy. An easy passage followed by a short traverse and things looked good, but the description we had didn't match what we saw in the cave so I thought sod it and took to the survey and made my own way through the passages into the Big Shacks and straight to the Cwm Dwr choke.

I had heard that this could be a problem for route finding, but from the start the route through was fairly obvious being well worn, after clambering about in there we popped out into another big passage, Cwm Dwr Jama. Yet more walking and a climb up followed by more walking and some impressive formations we soon encountered a hole in the floor just after some calcited boulders, this is it we thought, the crawl. I sent Martin down the hole although he didn't seem overly keen with it

as a boulder set about trying to block him in there so a quick exit was made! We walked a short distance further along and noticed an obvious passage on the right, strangely that matched up with a large passage shown on the survey, oops, we still had further to go..

A few more formations and another calcited boulder pile - a more promising looking pile this time and a short distance beyond saw us looking down an obvious well worn hole, this is more like it. Martin was sent down first again, just in case it was wrong and tried moving again, but the shout from below sounded good. The cheek of this cave forcing us to crawl after all the walking we had done, it wasn't right, but we knew we wouldn't have far to go and soon found the metal bar conveniently positioned at a climb up which brought us into a section of larger passage. The entrance climb was all that stood between us and the surface. That accomplished we looked back and thought - superb trip!!! And only a short walk back to Cottages, lovely, couldn't have been designed better.

It was a good job we had done the trip downstream, upstream against that kind of flow would have been an extremely hard trip, we were lucky the water wasn't any higher or the trip would have been changed. Next time, water levels permitting an upstream trip is on the cards.

The day after we popped back into Top Entrance to take in the Mini Columns, White Arch, Bedding Chambers, Chasm, Gnome Passage - hopefully we will have some pictures on here shortly...

Why not [take PCWs virtual tour](#) to see what your missing out on!

Duncan Jones

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