

COUNTY POT

Trident obscura! Or Alex's Brown and Smelly Chamber Pants!

16th May 2009

People present - Duncan Jones, Rob Santus, Jamie Santus, Pete Dale, Alex Ritchie

Weather: Showery (some heavy)



The original trip we had pencilled in for this date was Magnetometer Pot, unfortunately the weather had other ideas with rain most of Friday and showers (some heavy) on Saturday, an alternative had to be found. As ever the usual forum debate took place with most things ruled out because they were too miserable, not suitable for a novice (Jamie needed only small pitches without any complicated SRT) or we'd been recently or etc excuses etc. So I took it upon myself to say I was going to County and if anyone wanted to join me they could do! Everyone that was going to Magnetometer came along for the 'journey'.

I had studied the surveys in the hope of finding a route that didn't utilise the same passages twice but provided a varied caving trip and something different for everyone. After some consideration I decided upon a few choice passages and hoped that my understanding of the survey was correct!

After getting changed and finding that Alex had brought all his gear this time we set off on the walk over to County. Once in Rob had soon scuttled off to arrange a pull-thru on the first pitch. All down we then set about taking the alternatives by heading away from Broadway and through a short crawl to join a stream and the start of The Snake. Me and Rob did the short crawl upstream to look at the Oxford Pot pitch (shame it's not still open as it would be a nice way in!) before backtracking along the winding passage and meeting the others just before Confusion Corner. Back in usual surroundings we plodded downstream before clambering towards Battle of Britain Chamber, just before this Rob and Jamie took a brief detour to Spout Hall whilst me and Pete examined the survey.

I had spotted a possible route that avoided Splash Chamber (that I had later planned to return to) so figured it was worth a try. Instead of bearing left to Splash we went straight on (slightly right) to find a 6m climb with a rope of dubious quality hanging down it, complete with flood debris gathered around the knot, what was the forecast again? I was first up and looked into the rather low wet crawl, I shifted a couple of rocks (so I could turn my head the other way!) then got Pete to look, who in turn got Rob to examine it. After yet more rock clearing and shuffling Rob was through, followed by Pete, Jamie (who didn't seem sure but Rob convinced him it wasn't that bad) then me and Alex. A right turn and crawl on the back brought us in to Gritstone Chamber. At the other side a short passage arrived over a rift, with a 7m climb down followed by another short 2m drop into more familiar surroundings (at least marginally more familiar for me and Rob).

Paper Floor Passage was followed pleasantly to the pitch, which still had an in-situ rope on it, at the bottom the passage was followed to a short drop into the Whiteline streamway. Rob, Jamie and Alex visited Whiteline Chamber before we all strolled along the fine Whiteway.

Back in the streamway we headed briefly upstream before climbing out and following the usual Trident route up a climb and step across to stand above Whiteline Chamber, from here the stream was followed to the damp Splash Chamber. Me and Pete got there first and took the dry bypass, then we sat behind the waterfall and waited for everyone else to catch up (hopefully coming through the water, for me to take some snaps!). After this brief sojourn in familiar territory we then headed along Broken Ladder Passage, with a squeeze part way along it, not that any of us noticed it. At the end I had a quick peek down a fair drop into the Whiteline streamway, before a short clamber up and muddy handline climb down of 4m dropped us on to some boulders. The continuing bouldery going was followed to Junction Chamber, where me and Pete took a brief detour whilst waiting for everyone else. As we were about to set off the question of a tackle bag was brought up, somehow Alex had left it a short distance back, once retrieved we carried onwards.



More boulders are clambered over before the passage swings right in to the very fine section of passage known as Lower Trident Roof Passage. At the end things went downhill as we encountered 3 Fag Climb and found ourselves looking at lots of looseness. Unfortunately we didn't have this part of the survey in larger scale with us (the larger scale Trident Survey is well worth purchasing if you intend venturing into this area!) So we followed our noses and traversed and clambered down to find ourselves looking down a short drop and one that wasn't really climbable. (Looking at the survey when I got home suggests there's a 7m pitch right at the end of the Lower Trident passage, which might have been a better option than our dodgy traverse and pitch.) A few quick looks and we sent Rob to assess the situation, he declared we could rig a pull thru and requested the rope. Once rigged and down I soon followed with Jamie after me, then it was Alex's turn, for some reason that we couldn't figure from below he was trying to go on the opposite side of the rock, after making sure he was on the right rope we left him to it whilst we headed to the Poetic Justice pitch. No sooner had we arrived than a large bang could be heard back down the passage, we all quickly scuttled back along to the pitch with the large bang being replaced by significant shouting by Alex. Unsure as to what we would find we were somewhat relieved to find a swearing and cursing Alex on the rope with a very large and broken lump of rock on the floor. It would appear Pete had dislodged this and caused it to come crashing down, luckily missing Alex!

All safely down (including the rock) the rope was retrieved and we aimed for Eureka Junction, and the Main Stream, this was duly followed to Stop Pot. After a brief debate we considered our options; Wretched, Depot or Spiral. Eventually we all went for Spiral Staircase. Following a varied route to Holbeck Junction and then a bit of uncertainty from Rob (me and Pete were saying nowt about whether he was going right or wrong!) we found ourselves at the handline climb up. Now, last



time I was here you did the climb and then over to a couple of balanced rocks that you stood on and then hopped and thrutched into the continuing passage. This challenge is no longer here as somebody has taken it upon themselves to construct, well, a staircase of rocks to make this manoeuvre very easy indeed. From here the usual easy going was followed up the dribbly climb into the Big Rift.

Jamie was sent onwards whilst Pete decided to examine a 3m climb on the left with rope hanging down. This gains access to the Parallel streamway, which we hoped would provide just another off-beat route for us to finish the day. Rob and Pete had gone off in front and were soon coming back with tales of a ridiculous traverse over the Big Rift, even Rob said he wouldn't do it, now if that's the case then I'm certainly not doing it! But as I had made the effort to climb up I figured I should at least have a look around. Whilst doing this Rob had gone back round to the usual Wretched-climbs and found a very low bedding plane connection over



to the passage we were in. It looked decidedly small, so I passed any excess baggage through to Rob, took my helmet off and inserted myself in it. Snug, but not excessively bad. It was a bit like a short version of 'The Cheese press'. Once through I had to dig out my camera and try to get some snaps of everyone else coming through. Pete tried but declared he wasn't going to fit so had to go the usual way, Alex managed it without trouble.

All that was left was one very short climb and the first (or last, depending how you look at it) climb to reach the short crawl to exit. Unfortunately halfway across the fell it rained, with a touch of hail, which was unpleasant to say the least. A quick change was in order and I was soon off home, no pub sadly, one of the problems of living so far away is having less time available for life's little luxuries.

We came looking for obscurity and adventure and I think it's fair to say we found it, some more than others I think!

Duncan Jones

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