

FLOOD ENTRANCE

And exit via the GG winch!

Date: 25th May 2008

People present - Alex Ritchie, Daniel Jackson

Weather clear & pleasant, with strong gusts.

The plan was for a moderate difficult trip into Gaping gill made easier by the winch out. We were going to go down Stream or flood entrance and come out by the winch after taking some photos of the main chamber.

We reached Gaping Gill entrance and headed to the “control centre” (The big white tent) for the Winch which was hosted by the Bradford Caving Club and told them of our plan, where we totally failed to negotiate a discount using the excuse we only wanted to go one way. With tears in our eyes handed over our tenner's and then headed for where we thought Flood Entrance was.

two of us met up at the car park in Clapham at 9am as agreed only the car park was a little too pricey for Dan so he found him self somewhere else to park. After a quick look around Clapham for Dan we set off up the hill. It was a pleasant walk up the hill towards Gaping gill, which makes a difference to the weather we normally get going up there.

After the usual caffuffle with donning the SRT kits we set off into the cave with Dan in the lead. Shortly after the first entrance climb the cave narrows to a vertical squeeze. The squeeze was too tight to get through with SRT and we really did not want to take our SRT kit off after just taking ages to get it on so we decided to head to one of the other entrance we saw. The one we choose was approximately 30 meters down the path.

This entrance looked more promising, there was rigging in place which could be seen from surface. Despite not knowing exactly what pot this was we headed on in knowing that eventually we would get to Gaping Gill main chamber as this route was rigged.

Shortly after an easy entrance climb we reached the first pitch which descended into a narrow rift. Dan went first as always. After a little bit of metal on rock scraping noises Dan reached a re-belay anchor about 10 meters down, which was easy to negotiate as there was plenty of footholds. Dan then descended the further 15 meters or so before reaching the bottom of the pitch. I then followed him passing the re-belay that turned out to be more like a second pitch head as there was that much standing room.

Reaching the bottom of the pitch we set off down stream following the breeze which was flowing in the opposite direction. Some stooping and crawling ensued where Dan after doing Hangman's hole the previous day was not too happy about. After a short flat out bit following the stream we reached the head of the next pitch/climb. As it was rigged we thought we might as well use and descended it into the pool of water below about 4 meters below.

From here there was 2 ways on either through a dry tunnel on the right or we could follow the water downhill. I decided we should follow the water. After a quick 3 meters climb we were forced to stop because there was a drop off into the blackness ahead and no in-situ rope, so it isn't that way. Climbing back out and following the other passage we soon came to a nice and open 15-meter pitch which dropped us down into another passage. We then followed the stream where Dan almost went for a Burton when he got his foot trapped in a narrow rift. The passage widened up again and there was another small pitch down a small (dry) cascade.

We met up with another caver who told us this was indeed flood pot! Happy we were on the right path we set off to the next pitch. As we headed towards the pitch caver said something about a re-

belay that I did not quite hear.

The next pitch was a big one (biggest for me anyway), I would later read in the guide it was a 38 meter drop, to a hole that would drop you down another 40 meters to a sump. Dan went first again. What ensued was quite a bit of shuffling, swearing and using all manner of kit to get him past the re-belay, though I could not see it, I knew that thing was going to be trouble. After descending 10 meters I reached the free hanging re-belay Dan had hung around to give me a quick reminder of what to do and then headed off down, leaving me to hang there for about 5 or so minutes while he got to the bottom of the pitch. (Turns out he did not have the use of his long cows tail because he was using that to hold his tackle sack for some reason? This of course makes passing a deviation of which the pitch contained two more difficult).

My legs were begging to hurt, so I knew I have to get past this thing quickly before suspension trauma set in. After descending onto my short cow's tale and switching my descender over to the second rope I tried to release my short cows tail using brute force to pull my self up. Realising I was still not strong enough for that I looked around for what I could use, no hand holds and no ledges so I stood in the re-belay loop and released the short cows tail. As I lowered my self down again onto my descender I realised my weight was still on my long cow's tail. Next time I will FULLY lock my descender off, as I must have gone down the rope a little as a lowered my self back down. Too low for the re-belay loop this time I pulled out my secret weapon i.e. my hand jammer and stood in my foot loop to get that out and now I could finally head down I must had only been at the re-belay for a few minutes but it seemed like ages, the funny thing was the height/depth was not worrying me I was more worried about my circulation.

I quickly negotiated the rest of the pitch passing two deviations to the bottom of the pitch over the big 40-meter hole near the bottom of Bar pot. After a bit more crawling for 15 minutes though the muddy passages we arrived in an almost dry and well-lit Gaping Gill main chamber. We took some photos and after a short wait we took the winch and headed to the surface.

All in all a good trip and a good confidence booster for me knowing I can pass free-handing deviations & re-belays on my own.

Alex Ritchie



Photos - Daniel Jackson

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