

LANCASTER HOLE

To Wretched Rabbit via Wilf Taylors and Depot 1.5

9th May 2009

People present - Peter Dale, Alex Ritchie, Darren Jarvis (Daz), Dominique Mennie, Daniel Jackson and Bruce Stone

Weather: Cloudy & Overcast but dry, sunnier on exit and the drive home.

After picking up Daz from the train station, (He has no car) we set road for Ingleton for our customary breakfast, where introductions were made. Quickly we were up at Bull Pot Farm and heading out with an excited Daz to Lancaster Hole. Quick progress was made down Lancaster Hole after a little bit of entanglement from Daz & a problem with me and my light as I forgot to seal the battery compartment, so the batteries were not making contact with the contacts. Once in the Ease Gill system we abandoned our SRT gear ready to pull up the pitch at the end of the day. We set off; our first port of call was a quick side trip to see Colonnades (Where Daz rather worryingly announced that the climb up there was his first ever-proper cave climb!).

Back into the main passage a lot more crawling saw us through the maze of tunnels that eventually leads to the upper stream way. Dan and me were complaining, as our knees were still very bruised from Penygvent last weekend. Finally we reached a junction, where the party decided to split up as is the "Black Rose Way" quoted by one member to do two different ways on to main drain. Me, Dom and Daz decided to go left and give the waterfall route a go and the rest went to Wilf's Taylors.

We reached the waterfall after a little bit of navigation errors going up the stream rather than down. To put it lightly it was rather wet indeed. Dom descended the first half of the waterfall, I didn't like the look of it, but Dom came back up and said it was way too wet to climb the next bit. So we had to make a quick re-treat. We headed up stream until we reached the sump and though hmm we have gone too far. Luckily however a memory sparked in that dusty locker I call a brain and I remembered on my first trip down there 2 years ago I climbed down to the steam way somewhere around here. Sure enough I was right! And used that climb to climb out and carry on.

More crawling and then some walking sized passages ensued brought us to the double helix climbs, which are not really that difficult. The first one we passed with no incidents Daz, though not 100% sure of him self demonstrated good technique in getting down. The second one was more fun, as if you slide off the last bit as I did; you end up doing a Tarzan swing across the chamber which was great fun. After a few more short climbs saw us re-united with the others who like they were having a little snooze on a small pebble beach in the main stream way, awww.

We were soon heading up stream towards County Pot trudging for half an hour through the main stream way negotiating the deep-water pools and boulder falls as we went. Once through the final boulder choke we made our way into the high levels series. At this point Daz was loving it and to tell you the truth so was I, Dan of course was depressed, as he couldn't take any pictures! (See Penygvent trip report). Once through the Palisades and into monster cavern, we had a quick breather for snacks etc, Bruce seemed a little tired but still up for it at this point. So guess were Pete decided to take him and us, you guessed it the infamous Depot 1.5. It was surprising how vividly I remembered that passage from last time I was there which has got to be more than two years now.

Dropping down Stop pot we headed into some tight crawling and then a squeeze we soon reached the first climb. Which had no real holds and what is more was very slimy. A few of us tried it and got no where, I announced Rob had used a sling to help me up there last time. So Pete and me looked for an alternative. An easy climb up the other-side of the small rift saw me, Pete and I think Daz in a muddy traverse which got rather wide 1.25 metres wide in places, 6 metres above the

others still faffing with the climb. Dan decided to use his body as a climbing frame to help those who had not done the traverse up the climb. Shortly after this, the next climb was reached the one I really struggled with last time. Pete and Dan made it up quickly I decided not to waste any energy for I knew more laid ahead, so I found a very hairy way of traversing over it after climbing up the far side of the chamber. Pete told me not to attempt but once he buggered off down the passage I did it anyway. At one point all that was stopping me dropping below was my left hand on a slimy rock as I swung my leg over the drop to get over the chamber. I was soon lying at the top of the climb.

What followed then was a long period of what I call the climb puzzle. Several attempts made by different people trying different ways to get up climb or the traverse and deciding against it. Bruce decided to have a go at what I thought was an impossible rift to the left of the climb. Taking his helmet off he slowly but surely squeezed him self through (with a quick leg up into the rift), well-done Bruce that was bloody tight, soon afterwards Daz came through the rift.

To get the rest up Pete went back down & I made a knot at the top of the rope to provide another hand hold so Dom with the aid of Pete climbed the climb, once Pete had climbed up again we then headed into a tight 30metres or so flat out crawl over calcite floor, which some members regarded was tighter then spectacle.

Dan at this point was swearing at Pete's route choice, Bruce was too, thought when asked he didn't seem to care, saying he's used to it with Pete being pals. Eventually the crawl relented at an easy 4 metre climb into the first sizeable chamber on the Depot 1.5 route, known as "Ahaa chamber". A short bit of yet more crawling and the Final climb (which I think is the most difficult climb) of the Depot 1.5. climbs was reached, Pete was up first again, quickly followed by me on my second attempt good job on my first attempt I told Bruce to stay back. It was a difficult climb as there really were no handholds & no rope to help and being ease gill was all very slippy. The only way up was to wedge knee and hand in a tight rift. Luckily for the others Dan had yet again decided to erect him self as scaffolding helping the others up the climb, before easily making it up him self.

All that was left was a bit of walking, stooping and climbing through Wretched Rabbit passage before reaching the climbs out. None of us had any problems with the climbs, I could finally hand over hand them and we had Dan the scaffold man was there to help the others. Bruce however was exhausted by this time but Pete helped him out. I found time around here to explore a side passage to the left of the short climb below the final climb out. This passage lead up and up and up until finally reaching a boulder choke which must be almost on the surface, I was far higher then the top climb in WR by about 20ft or and was heading the right way to the stream outside.

Anyway we were all soon out and after washing ourselves in a nearby waterfall we got to the cars and headed our separate ways after a good days caving of about 5 and a half hours.

Alex Ritchie

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