

LONG DROP CAVE

Down, up, down, up..

18th August 2007

People present - Duncan Jones, Pete Dale, Rob Santus

Weather: Rain, bit breezy

After a quick stop at Ingleton for a snack and to gather some information for this cave, like is it safe in the wet as, yes, you've guessed it, it was another Summer 2007 wet weekend, we headed to Leck Fell. Making a quick change we soon made progress along the grim fell, noting the volume of water flowing into Short Drop Cave as we passed, upon arriving at the fenced hole we all commented on what a pleasant looking hole it was (see photo below) - although the clamber down the slippery muddy slope wasn't exactly pleasant, in fact it was probably more dangerous than the caving.

Once inside you quickly reach a little drop and the first pitch. Going down this a short scaffolded climb is met and at the bottom of this is a flat out shuffle for about 5 feet which, after a brief enlargement, I went feet first to reach the top of the second pitch. A short crawl, which seemed shorter on the way out, follows and whilst not difficult is just the right shape to make crawling awkward - especially when carrying a camera tub which turned out to be a rather pointless affair as for some reason the cave today was very misty and along with the problem of water dribbling in everywhere it made photography harder than normal.

Once at the head of the third pitch the cave becomes big and fairly impressive, the three rift pitches follow one after the other in fine style, the last one lands in a chamber with the way out being a crawl with the stream. After about 30 or 40ft along the crawl a short duck is reached although even with conditions like they were on the surface there was ample airspace. After some grumbling and muttering about going through it we all made it and carried on along the stream passage for about 100ft before the stream slipped away into a rather uninspiring little sump. (This is the sump that connects with East Passage in Deaths Head Hole and if drained would make a fine exchange trip!)

Having arrived at the bottom quite quickly our thoughts turned to what to do next, did we fancy another cave or should we visit the extra bits of Long Drop? Well, on the ledge at the bottom of the fourth pitch is a rope going up the other side, with this in place we couldn't pass up the opportunity to visit could we! Pete had decided to not bother with this extra section so it was left to me and Rob to go exploring. A short prussik and a small climb up brings you to a small hole, through which the passage bends sharp left into a short narrow section, which then enlarges just enough to allow you to swing your legs in and then double back on yourself into another narrow piece of passage, this then turns sharp left into a bedding plane. Phew, that fun over with we reached a rope down a sloping tube, Rob descended using his descender but the word from below was that there were plenty of ledges and it could just be treated as a handline climb.

Clambering down the muddy ledges we reached a small stream which soon drops down a pitch or as we chose, a climb. This deposits you in High Stream Chamber, the name I assume comes from the stream that pours out of some passage high above you on the other side.. With nowhere to go from here we headed back up the pitch and along the stream passage, going upstream past the muddy tube/climb, this reaches a split in a rather pleasing chamber (nicely sculpted walls), straight ahead is an aven which Rob ascended only to descend a minute later. The only other way on was a short climb into a narrow stream passage, as it looked quite narrow I didn't bother going in but Rob was keen to have a look. Watching the stream slow down and speed up seemed to suggest something (or someone!) was blocking the passage which just confirmed what I thought about it being small. So I sat and waited for Rob to reappear and sure enough he informed me that it was small and narrow.

The job of ascending the tube was waiting for us and it turned out to be easy enough to get up with

the help of the handline rope, the tube itself was a little bit slippery and being on a slope made it interesting too. Once that was done we had the sharp bends, a down-climb, small pitch down and then started on our way back up the pitches finally emerging after a few hours underground. It makes for a short easy and different trip to the usual Leck-pots, in fact it could be done as an afternoon/evening trip if you can manage them. Back on the surface we headed over to Short Drop so Rob could have a quick nip in and out as he'd not been there before whilst me and Pete made use of the surface stream to wash our gear off. A few guys passed us after their trip in Short Drop/Gavel and they claimed it was fairly wet down there, I can believe them!

Duncan Jones



Photos - Duncan Jones

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