

NEWBY MOSS POT

No mist opportunities.

1st November 2007

People present - Duncan Jones, Rob Santus

Weather: Foggy. Then dark on exit to add to the fun

Well, with me having the opportunity to do a midweek trip I was keen to go somewhere that wasn't too long but packed some entertainment into the trip. Rob suggested Newby Moss Pot, I was unsure about this at first owing partly to the long walk, but having been once before only as far as Guillotine Chamber I figured a return was in order. Not for the Faint Hearted promised 'a short leisurely trip with an interesting collection of small pitches and climbs; an active streamway and some good formations.' Who could argue with that! The trip was on.

Setting off for the drive there, we were not entirely sure it was such a good idea, the cloud was low and it was drizzly; NFTFH warned of possible flooding in the entrance passages and claimed it was difficult to locate in bad weather. Things didn't look good when we arrived. After some deliberation we finally decided to go for it and take the chance. Trudging up the hill we followed numerable paths, not really sure if we were ever on the right one, until we saw the large dry valley on the right, quickly followed by a pond - this is a very useful marker. From here we veered off and promptly arrived at a large shakehole, that was easy we thought. Or not, as reading the description it mentioned a rock bridge which this shakehole didn't possess. Bugger, back out into the fog, a short stroll and I noticed what might have been a shakehole over in the foggy distance, a quick jog and there was the huge shakehole with Newby Moss Pot awaiting us. The first large shakehole, we later found out, was P2b.

Entering the pot via a short climb soon brings you to two short semi-squeezes, never overly bad but just enough to make you think. Immediately after is the first pitch, narrow at the top, although it's no worse than, say, Link Pot and it soon opens out to more spacious surroundings. A short crawl and clamber down rocks, which this pot has plenty of, brings you to a small hole with a tube leading off, this provided an interesting manoeuvre to get in. Once in, it's almost over with and you arrive at Guillotine Chamber. Exiting this via an easy climb (the in-situ handline wasn't needed and I can't see the point of it being there..) leads to a pleasant section of passage with a couple of nice climbs down with the stream, these are classed as the short pitches but are just easy climbs.

Of course, all good things come to an end and sure enough the way on was another small hole, this one leading to Rakes Progress. This starts flat out but soon eases a touch before the roof drops and you leave the stream for a short sideways crawl on the right, not overly difficult apart from shoving the tackle bag forward with one hand. Once you rejoin the water the passage increases in size reaching the third (free-climbable) pitch. This pitch/climb is probably the most awkward of the climbs in the pot, but again, not overly difficult.

After the refreshing climb we quickly arrived at the fourth pitch, this was soon rigged using a bolt and a small dubious knob of rock. At the bottom, a short spike provided a backup and a single bolt gave a hang down the fifth pitch. The in-situ crap (very rusty krab, very rusty knackered ladder) were dumped to one side on a ledge and left there - perhaps the owners of this gear and other ropes and ladders littering the pot may wish to retrieve them at some point? Easy going from here was had along a pretty section of passage, with some nice straw and stalactite formations. Following the stream instead of the crawl-traverse above (which we saved for the return journey) we reached the Great Stone Shoot. Clambering down the bouldery slope a short flat out crawl soon enlarges and once again we were greeted by some respectable formations. In a very short distance we arrived at the final pitch, which is rigged from a very convenient thread

and a bolt. Once down we took a quick look at either end of the chamber at the two digs, neither of which seemed overly inspiring to pursue to the bitter end, so we headed out.

There were no major issues heading out, although at the top of the fourth pitch we contemplated the possibility that there was more water, but we dismissed it as being silly. At the entrance Rob commented on the colour of the sky, very dark and gloomy and it was drizzling quite heavily. Hmmm, dodgy, nah, I can imagine a couple of places becoming interesting in high water but water levels were never an issue on our trip.

3.5hours; from standing around sorting tackle at the car, walking up and going to the bottom and back. A short but fun packed little pothole, worth a visit if you fancy something quiet and off the beaten track. We had achieved a lot in that short space of time, but we couldn't get cocky as we were stood in the fog, in the dark, with about one mile of walking across featureless terrain with more paths than you can shake a shitty welly at. We thought we started well, then found the first large shakehole which we hadn't expected to, missed the pond, crossed a path we didn't recognise, walked across pathless ground for what seemed like ages until, we spotted that ever useful dry valley, guided by this we headed down. Thankfully we found a track, not one we remember being on, but a track all the same. Eventually this joined the path we had started out on, we were home and dry (so to speak). The smell of distant ale is always a good guide to get you safely off the fell in weather like that!!

A short pot, not too much tackle to lug around, plenty of interest in various forms and definitely worthy for an afternoon trip. As I said above, if you fancy somewhere that will be quiet when everywhere else is overflowing with cavers this pot would be a good choice. We rounded off the day with a fine pint, although before this much discussion took place about which pub we should visit. We eventually opted for a pub in Blacko, The Rising Sun - ironic?

Duncan Jones

A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.