

ROARING HOLE

Battle of the chokes

1st September 2007

People present - Duncan Jones, Pete Dale, Chris Scaife

Weather: Warm, cloudy, bit of light drizzle

Cave: Mainly dry, apart from the end

An alternative view on this trip can be found below in Pete's write up..

Well, over 7 years had passed since I was last in this cave and I figured a return was in order, especially considering the recent weather had been dry; although it was slightly drizzly in Chapel-le-Dale when we arrived.

We found the entrance reasonably easy, not that it's hard to miss, a large shakehole formed in an obvious fault! Entering the cave it all came back to me - boulder chokes, this cave is well known for them to say the least. Once down the initial climb you enter a substantial sized chamber, the roof of which can't be too far from the surface at the far end. Also at the far end of this chamber is the first boulder choke, at the bottom of which is a short crawl and the first pitch into the sizeable Auditorium. Arriving at the pitch all we could locate was a scaffold pole which wasn't inspiring confidence so I was summoned to go back slightly and take a crawl on the right which arrives at an alternative pitch head, this time equipped with spits.

Once everyone was assembled at the correct pitch head the rope was rigged and down we went, owing to the fact we had enough rope (just) to abseil all the way down we avoided the traverse around the edge of the chamber. The rope landed right next to the second boulder choke. This choke was a more damp affair, the water conveniently dribbling off the rocks just in the exact spot where you want to place your neck or ears. Although it was damp this was nothing when compared to my last visit when it was more like a torrent!

From here the point of exit was noted as last time we came out we failed to notice this and spent ages looking around for the way out - it is a cunningly disguised climb on the right of the passage when you're coming out. Following the passage you quickly enter a muddy chamber which soon drops you back in the water for another crawl to the third boulder choke.. This choke brings you to Masons Chamber, the exit to this being an obscure hole in the floor - in-between boulders of course, but obviously not enough boulders as the survey doesn't class this as the fourth choke! Once out you quickly arrive at a climb, in solid rock, quite a nice pleasing piece of the cave. This brings you to another climb on solid rock, the Slab Climb, into Slab Chamber. As we had brought a rope we figured we may as well use it to make the climb that bit safer, abseiling down you soon find.... Go on, have a guess... Yes, it's the fourth boulder choke..

Beyond the fourth choke the cave takes on a more solid form with a mixture of walking, stooping and crawling. You arrive at a choice of ways on, one with the water (although it was dry) and one dry oxbow - Pete went for the oxbow and me and Chris sampled the smaller and longer water route. Once reunited another pleasant section of passage soon arrives at a pitch down into another chamber. But we don't go down this, instead we take the traverse around the corner, utilising the substantial in-situ rope.

Around the corner is a short pitch with a slightly small and awkward head, with a few grunts and grumbles everyone was down and on to the muddy sloping climb. This leads to another climb down which is narrow at the top. The final short clamber drops you into Sunset Boulevard, on my last my visit the water was a lot deeper, suffice to say last time we turned back at this point. It was tempting to turn back again with the water being as cold as it was, but, with it being 'dry' and the chances of coming back again slim we had to do it. Down on hands and knees we braved the cold, and in one place deep water, the crawl is followed over cobbles around a bend and onwards to the 'Roaring

Hole'.. This is the final pitch which lands at or in the sump (we couldn't tell either way). With a rope in place that had seen better days, us not having brought our own tackle for this and the very hostile nature of the pitch we were more than content to just look down at the large volume of water pouring down this beautifully formed circular shaft.

The cold started to get to us so we made our exit, stopping briefly in the crawl to wonder whether it was left or right we came from, luckily we realised it was right and off we went. Once up the climb and pitch we sent Chris on ahead whilst me and Pete took a few photos. The Slab Climb was climbed to one side rather than using the rope, the traverse in the Auditorium was used to avoid a bit of rope rub on the lower pitch. The final climb proved an entertaining obstacle due to the lack of hand/foot-holds but we all made it out and it had stopped raining, but that didn't stop us aiming for the Hill Inn and its warm fire and of course a refreshing drink!

Duncan Jones

Alternative report, by Pete

Seven years and five months later we where off to roaring for a second trip and hopefully bottom it this time. The plan was to bottom Roaring hole, Hardrawkin pot and then have a jolly through Great Douk but alas this was not to be.

Dunc picked me up at the usual and we sped off to the Hill Inn (literally!) arriving outside Dunc promptly went in to ask if we where okay to park over the road but the miserable sod said no as it was too busy???? (Three cars!) So we drove up to the lay-by and found a suitable spot and waited for Chris to arrive. After a few minutes Chris arrived and we got changed sorting the ropes in the process ready for our venture back into Roaring.

A short walk was all that was needed to reach the entrance and after removing the metal basket I set off on the climb down closely followed by Chris and Dunc. An easy if somewhat technical climb down lands you in a rather impressive chamber 'Macchu Picchu Chamber' similar to the entrance to Ireby Fell with its numerous ledges of stacked boulders but in Roaring's case they lead you down to some dodgy shoring and the start of the first boulder choke. A short drop down on to rotting timbers and then a cautious scramble down the first choke (admiring the rusting scaffold poles and expanding foam!! as we passed) we soon popped out at the top of the first pitch with a lofty view of the Auditorium, another impressive chamber. Finding a rusty old scaffold pole we decided it was not good enough to use so, after Dunc was told to go and find another way down, we repacked the rope and made our way round to the other side to use the spits that where handily placed in the rock. Rigging the rope off of one spit it was decided that Chris should test the safety of the rigging first and once he was down I carefully got on the rope, while glancing up I noticed a second spit so after some quick alterations to the rope work I abed down as well, bypassing the wire traverse for the safer option of using the rope, once we where all down it was time for the 2nd boulder choke a lot shorter than the first but no less safe.

What made a nice change was the stream way, no water was present compared to last time and what was even nicer was the third choke climb, the only problem being that you could now see the loose boulders that were hidden by water spray from when it was wetter. All safely down we entered another large chamber called Masons chamber (Stone masons??) the way on again being a choke in the floor with the added excitement of a squeeze at the start, only a short climb though and you have the relief of some walking passage only to be stopped by a 15ft drop, the way on being a small hole just before the pitch and a climb down to the top of the next chamber 'Slab chamber' the guide book says it's a free climb but we decided it was safer to drop a rope down it, what we used to rig off last time had parted company with the wall and had caused the caver on the rope to fall and gain a broken ankle in the process. Once down yet another choke to go through then some nice stream passage to the next pitch which we traversed around the top of to gain access to the smaller rift pitches. Two tightish climbs saw us all standing in cold water with the way on being a wet crawl to

the top of the last pitch. Needless to say it was volunteered that Chris should investigate the crawl first to avoid us all getting wet if we didn't need to. Having checked the time me and Dunc decided that we might as well look at the last pitch since there wasn't going to be any time left to do owt else, so with one ear in the water we made our way towards the roar of the water dropping down the last pitch to the sump. We didn't descend the last pitch as it was heavily spray lashed and I don't think there is a ledge to stand on in the sump pool and treading water while waiting to go back up was not a good idea to say the least, so we all made our way back up the climbs, pitches and boulder chokes with no route finding difficulties this time although Chris did make the same mistake we did the first time we came down here. Reaching the surface we were greeted by warm air and no rain so a nice pleasant walk back to the car, a quick change and off to the pub for a beverage or two!

Pete Dale





Photos by Duncan Jones and Pete

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