

SWINDON HOLE – BOUNDARY POT

Unauthorodox Underground..

Date : 16th July 2013

Present : Duncan Jones, Alex Ritchie

Weather : Very warm and sunny.

Originally no trip was planned for this date, it was just a chance grab that revealed itself due to the dry spell we were enduring and a post, by Cave Mapper, on UKCaving.

The post, or part of it, read: *“It was indeed choked with masses of big gritstone cobbles, but these turned out to be easy to move and after an hour of digging I was through into the rift. This was also almost blocked with a wall of precariously balanced boulders, which was soon demolished with an impressive rumble. I was then able to climb up the rift into the bottom of Swindon Hole, and after clearing a few more cobbles in the connecting crawl to Corner Sink, I completed the through trip.*

For anyone who enjoys collectors pieces, now is the time to grab this one.”

With the dry weather continuing the scene was set and I was available for a Tuesday evening trip. I made a quick post on the forum to try and gather interest, most were understandably busy and not available, luckily Alex was available and we formulated a plan.

Having recently gone down the wrong hole, trying to exit via Boundary, Alex was happy with the option of exiting that way. Just as well as I had no idea where the connection was or the pitch bypass route for that matter!

We arrived at Bull Pot Farm and a quick change and warm slog over the fell, along with a few clegs for company (thankfully not loads), brought us to County, somewhere just beyond lay our objective, Swindon Hole.

A small hole in the true right bank of the gill drops you in to walking passage. Are we in the right hole, we are undertaking a lesser visited esoteric entrance, surely this can't be right. All too soon a drop is reached and the cave assumes more expected proportions, crawling!

The crawling is mixed; flat out and hands and knees, occasionally you stoop although not for long. A few side passages on the right are passed, some go nowhere, one is the connection to Corner Sink, one ends low. After the final junction the cave soon enlarges to walking size again.

According to the Red Rose online description this is the point where you climb up and enter a bedding. I set about doing this whilst Alex, having not read the description, ferreted down below. I saw what I thought was a very low bedding and wasn't overly enthused, however ahead I heard noises, it was Alex who had forged a route through lower down. I retreated and followed. The short slope leads to a short drop and what at first glance appears to be the most hideous squeeze known to man, however a cheeky shuffle left and the other side of the flake reveals a small but much more appealing way through.

I tried feet first as, immediately after the hole, you drop down some of those oh so familiar slippery black cobbles, I quickly dismissed that idea as stupid and rearranged myself for a head first attack. This proved to be far easier and I was soon spotting non-slippery handholds, Alex stood nearby to

offer a shoulder, which I briefly rested my head on before completing the manoeuvre. Beyond the rift continues and just to clarify how wet it gets, a nice clump of debris above my head somewhere – it does get very wet. Whether or not this trip can be done in average weather conditions remains to be seen, it is however, unlikely.

As the rift ends a flat out cobbly crawl follows, we are now in Splash Inlet, a few metres of crawling brought me to familiar terrain – part of the inlet I had used on some random wandering through the Trident series a few years back. We soon pressed on to the step round the corner above Whiteline Chamber, to utilise the in-situ gear that exists on this pitch. However, the chain, ladder and/or knotted rope was gone and there was SRT rope, this was a trip supposedly requiring no gear, not good. We had a brief moment to think. I opted for a Flying Angel to get me to the ledge where I crawled along and climbed down as I have always done. Alex with his belay belt and krab knocked up an Italian Hitch and abselied the pitch, thankfully a short one.

With this over with we were once again making quick progress. We briefly stopped to re-enact a photo, this time in very dry conditions (see bottom of report for the comparison), soon after we arrived at Eureka Junction. Stop Pot soon passed, as did the Assembly Hall before arriving at Nagasaki. Alex led us down a hole, the other hole to last time and set about trying to find the right point to clamber up and traverse. With alarming accuracy he hit the spot in perfect fashion and we reached the impressively shored “Manhattan Connection”.



Dunc admires a fine formation in Boundary Pot

We headed out and I, yet again, let Alex lead as he knew where the pitch bypass route was as I had only done the pitch route before. The route involves a good few climbs and is a fairly satisfying way out with nothing particularly awkward.

The entrance crawls were passed dry, apparently you're in with a chance of getting wet on these, most certainly not today though.

We emerged in to a pleasant late evening, the clegs had thankfully bugged off, the only problem facing us, apart from the long slog back, was the midges were still active when we were getting changed. A fast change was the order of the day!

Given another respectable dry spell I would say Swindon is worth a visit (the hole, not the town, god forbid), it's not the cleanest or easiest way in but it's definitely different and, always a bonus, tackle free.

Duncan Jones



What a difference a year makes...Both photos just downstream of the junction where Whiteline/Trident streamway joins main County route.

Above; Dunc and Alex in a very dry streamway, 16th July 2013

Right; Rob and Alex in a very wet streamway, 15th June 2012



Photos: Alex Ritchie (wet County photo by Duncan)

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