

# BLACK ROSE CAVING CLUB

## 10th anniversary caving trip; Gaping Gill (five entrances)

A series of reports from everyone on the trip that took place on the  
19th November 2011.

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In November 2011 the BRCC reached its 10th year, a significant milestone that many never thought we would reach. It was events on the 3rd November 2001 that started the wheels in motion, the club name was finally plucked out of our minds on the 17th November 2001, we were born! Fast forward to ten years / a good few hundred caving trips later and we had to come up with a suitable way of celebrating this event, of course we had a meal and plenty of drink on the 12th November 2011, but being a caving club we needed a suitable trip. Discussions and ideas floated around our forum and finally a plan emerged of rigging various entrances to Gaping Gill, five in all - considering we are only a small club this was no mean feat.

**People Present:** Duncan Jones, Pete Dale, Rob Santus, Mike Skyrme, Alex Ritchie, Chris Scaife, Daniel Jackson, Darren Jarvis, Neil Heywood.

**Weather:** Warm and sunny (yes, strange but true, it was mid-November)

### Rob, the Main shaft and the Rat



There was the expected faff in Clapham prior to the big trip with Alex the last to be ready, no rope packed etc. We all pulled together and packed his tackle bags and with a raft of rope and tackle headed up the long hill to the Gaping Gill system on a warm November morning.

I had decided that I wanted to fulfil a long time desire to rig and descend the main shaft whilst everyone else had their own plans. Once at the renowned P3 entrance, I was quickly ushered to begin rigging so others could watch. With the pressure on, I carefully rigged the top section with a dirty 25 metre rope that was stiff as a board, while Dunc took some photos. This short pitch leads to a cleft in the shaft to a traverse and the main hang, which gives an incredible and inspiring view of the huge shaft and void below. Fairly easy but careful rigging allows for a free hang down the pitch until Birbeck ledge is reached whereupon you get a bit lashed by the water. This is truly one of the best descents you can

make in Britain and is highly recommended for those with the necessary tackle, nerve and ability! On reaching the bottom, I waited for a while but got cold so headed to the bottom of Bar pot to see where Dunc was. He had taken some time to cajole Neil, who decided not to bother, so he and Chris were descending the last pitch. I then headed back to the main chamber to see Mike descend Dihedral. Once he was down and me getting cold again, I headed up Dihedral to get warm. This is another enjoyable shaft and gives another viewpoint of the main shaft.

Once up again, I chatted with Neil and some walkers for a while until I was getting cold again so decided to descend the main shaft again. This is better second time without gear and a more relaxed frame of mind and with the lads at the bottom this time watching the descent.

Once we were all gathered, the de-rigging duties were handed out: Dunc/Daz – Bar, Pete/Dan – Corky's, Alex – Dihedral, with no volunteer for Rat, so that was me then! Having been down Rat most of the way before, I knew it was a nasty cold place made no easier de-rigging solo. All was

going well until I reached the main hang of the trouser flake pitch when I heard a snap – a strap had broken on my harness and the tackle shuttled most of the way back down. Not good. It took a while and some good fortune to haul it all back in without descending but very knackered. All gear safely retrieved, I headed to the surface, took SRT kit off and asked Chris to help me retrieve the 2 tackle bags from Rat hole sink which is wet and awkward. All in all, a highly successful trip, with very few mishaps, the worst bit being the awful trudge back down the hill and sorting out a mountain of rope – this was made better with some raucous music and a bottle of beer from the New Inn thanks to Chris.



**Pete, Rattus coitus part Deux, out via Corky's**

We met in Inglesport and after a quick bite to eat and usual banter we made our way to Clapham. After getting changed we did our best to sort all the ropes and krabs and other crap needed for a mega outing such as this. Once we were all sorted minus Alex as usual we set off on the long slog to Gaper Gill. Alex had caught us up by the time we had got to Trow gill and a short while later we were all stood in Fell beck for a group shot before we all parted ways on our various trips. Right then here's the list of what was happening:

- Me & Dan – Rat hole
- Rob – Main shaft
- Mike Skyrme – Dihedral
- Alex and Daz of – Corky's
- Dunc, Chris and Neil – Bar Pot

We watched Rob edge his way round main shaft and after a few photo's and banter we left him to it and all went our separate ways, now the route guide we had stated that Rat hole sink was the easier of the two entrances which is true it is also wet! Removing the metal grill and clearing a few sods Dan set off down with me close behind. A short climb down with the water n your head lead to a hands and knees crawl in a tube half full of water, this tube was fairly easy if you follow two rules, 1. Wear knee pads - 2. Push the bag in front of you.

Dan however did neither of these and as a result moaned a lot and got stuck frequently due to the tackle bags he was dragging getting jammed every couple of metres! I however had knee pads and my tackle sack floated easily in front of me requiring no effort whatsoever on my part to move it since if it jammed the water would back up behind it and all the force would lift the bag and float it off in front of me. Soon enough though we met the dry way in on our right and were able to stand up this is also where the fun really begins! Dan was bullied into rigging so after locating the drilled hole he set off down. A short 10ft pitch and then an easy traverse takes you along and around a corner to the top of Rat hole shaft, looking down it's hard to believe any part of you would remain dry if you opted for this 95m descent to the floor! Dan abed down a short way and swung across to a rift leading to Mouse hole shaft and the infamous Pendulum rope however, daunting as it looks it was passed with little effort, until we were both at the top of the next 54m pitch. We had to rearrange the ropes here as we had packed them wrong, (A near miss with the clipping of said bag to harness nearly ended our trip short) once sorted Dan carried on rigging and set off down Mouse hole clipping the first deviation in with no problems. Upon reaching the next deviation he lacked the movement to swing across to it and after a bit of faffing had to prussic back up to where he could push off the wall and once swinging violently from one side to the other he made his descent again and gained the deviation. A few minutes passed and I heard the 'Rope free' so I made my way down and after passing the 2nd deviation found Dan sat on a large rock jammed in the rift a good 20m

from the bottom of the pitch! Joining Dan on the rock we could see people going up dihedral and could have easily walked over to them, however our trip was not over yet, I told Dan I would carry on down and rig the rest of the pitch so the problem was how was Dan a mere mortal going to get on the rope from where he was? After nearly pulling Dan off the rock it was decided that he should clip on the rope above me while I rig to the bottom and then he could follow. I set off down and made sure I was the right side of the trouser flake this time much to Dan's dismay about it. Reaching the bottom I clipped into the 'P' bolt and waited for Dan. By this point I was soaked to the skin and shivering quite dramatically and upon joining me we decided there and then we would not be going out this way under any circumstances! I rigged the last pitch with no issues and was soon in the Main chamber where I found Dunc.

Alex soon appeared with Daz so we walked over to him and Dan soon joined us and coffee was gratefully drunk although pouring it proved a challenge due to the shivering! A short while later Rob came hurtling down the Main shaft again (what a hero!) After a short discussion it was decided that:

- Rob would de-rig Rat Hole
- Me and Dan would de-rig Corky's
- Alex would de-rig Dihedral
- Daz would Exit Bar Pot

With that sorted me and Dan set off for Corky's and with one last look at the Main chamber we headed into the darkness. I was first up the Mud Hall pitch and having got over the rubbing sensation from rock and rope I reached the top and saw Alex's rigging, not perfect but a valiant effort none the less. Dan was soon at the top and we hauled the rope up and packed the bag. Climbing the loose boulder slope we reached the next pitch. Due to the lack of slack rope at the top getting off was rather interesting to say the least, in the end the only real way was to free climb the top part while watch the sling the rope was rigged off edge it's way up the knob of rock used to anchor it. Dan had the same issue with the rope so we both blame the rigger. The next short crawl was interesting with tackle but passed uneventful. The next pitch was a short affair and reaching the top the one anchor didn't inspire confidence luckily there was plenty of places to hold onto and the unused hangers were useful to clip into to haul the bags up. Nemesis crawl followed and was passed without to much effort although it would have been easier for Dan if he had of had knee pads!

Prelim Pitch was larger than I remember and the top was tricky due to the 1 hanger rigging but the bags were hauled up and stashed while I waited for Dan to catch up, the next crawl although short was awkward due to the slope but the bottom of Arnolds was reached and looked tight. I clipped my chest jammer in and free climbed it and once safe at the top proceeded to pull the bags up while kicking stones onto Dan's head. I ascended up the next to pitches and pulled the bags up and some how pushed them into the crawl up on which I realised I could not unclip my hand jammer as both my arms where in the crawl and reversing was tricky yet again due to the rope being on 1 hanger instead of going to the top of the pitch thus making the last manoeuvre into the crawl exciting due to no safety issue, Dan also enjoyed it by the expletives I could hear behind me! I proceeded into the crawl pushing the bags in front and then turning round to go back to grab them and pull them out while Dan wrestled with the last rope. The rest of the exit was a crawl through to the next large bit followed by going back in to help knee padless Dan with the rope and bag, reaching the surface felt good! We then walked over to Gaping Gill so I could go down main shaft but everyone had gone! We then walked back to the car which took ages.

A great trip none the less and yes Alex did do well rigging although he needs a few pointers for next time!

Well done all the BRCC members on this most epic of outings yet a great tenth anniversary trip to remember!

## **Dan, Rat Hole to Corky's**

There was quite a bit of water going down the Rat Hole sink as Rob was rigging Main Shaft so we couldn't divert it all down there. Pete said that the dry route into Rat was tight and awkward so we went down the rather wet sink hole which proved rather 'sporting' i.e. soaked to the bone having only been in the cave for 5 min. After the entrance crawl it's all vertical. The 1st pitch is dead easy, then on to the fun and exposed stuff: A short traverse to a Y hang then a bit of fun swinging to get to the first rebelay. From there there is an in-situ rope that is used to swing across to the other side where a short climb is required to get to the next bolt (end of fun stuff).

Here the dimensions of the shaft increase as it is part of the fault at the end of GGs main chamber. As well as increasing in size the wind picks up and there's a lot of spray about. Looked at rigging guide which shows 3 deviations down about 30-40m of pitch. Spotted 1st one easily then along way to the next which by the time I could see it I was hanging dead centre in the middle of the shaft a good 3m away from the nearest wall. Had to prussik back up about 10m before I could touch a wall again then start descending whilst pushing off the walls and swinging from one side of the 8m diameter shaft to another to ensure I'd be able to reach the rebelay...not sure if this is how it should be done but I couldn't see any other rebelays and it was a proper eco-resin hanger! After that I went down another 5-10m and saw a large flake of rock with a sling and some old bolts on the wall above it. Not sure if this was the way on I abseiled to the flake, 'secured' myself and called Pete down. It was a wet spot, the wind was blowing and I was getting chilly.

It wasn't the way on. Pete came down and continued to descend but we realised that the route down would take the rope out of my reach from the flake..uh oh. As we were both getting very cold and it should be a short distance to the next bolts (where we would start the next rope) I got onto the rope with my ascenders whilst Pete continued to descend. The way on appeared to be an obvious 3rd deviation that took the rope away from the water and down a kind of shaft within the shaft. Pete did not go this way despite my shouting loudly at him (I was getting very cold hanging motionless on the rope in the wind and rather a lot of water even after dry conditions), I later learnt that this was the way he had gone previously and it ended in an apparent dead end...would love to know the proper route down as the way we went worked but seemed less than perfect (a little potential for some rub)! Pete finally called me down and so I arrived at the next spray lashed rebelay violently shivering and decidedly not having fun anymore. Again, the bolts for the rebelay were not obvious and there was another set of more easily visible bolts and some rope a short distance to the right (facing the wall with the bolts) though this was obviously not the way as rigging down from there would involve going straight into the waterfall.

The last pitch had some fairly sharp deviations but they were at least easily visible and we were out of the water. Finally arrived on the floor of the main chamber and, after running to the far side to get out of the draught, did some much needed limb shaking and hot coffee drinking (the only trip I ever brought a hot drink with me was the one I most needed it on!). I was glad to be there as another 20min on the ropes without much movement would have put me in a bad way. Met up with the rest of the group and (not wanting to de-rig Rat...or ever go there again) myself and Pete volunteered to de-rig Corky's. It had been a good few years since I'd been down Corky's and I'd forgotten how twattish it could be.

A few aggravating hours later and having navigated some of Alex's highly original rigging (if Pete wants to elaborate on the Corky's part of the trip he can) we were out Corky's and I just about managed to convince myself that it had been a good trip!

## **Mike, Dihedral in-out and Bar in-out**

After meeting the rest of the party in Inglesport for food and drinks, I made a quick escape to Clapham so Neil could get a head start on the long slog up to Gaping Gill. With Neil gone I changed and waited for the others to arrive. Vehicles began to arrive and soon we were into the fuff of sorting who needed what for which hole etc.

With everyone (Alex being the exception as usual LOL) changed and bags all packed we set off up the trail expecting to find Neil dozing at some point along the way. After a bit of whinging by Alex (who'd finally caught us up) near Ingleborough show cave, the trek soon passed - with no sign of Neil to boot!!!. After stopping off at Bar Pot and shouting for Neil, we strolled over to Gaping Gill to find him on the path. After a quick photo call for prosperity in Fell Beck we began to depart our separate ways.

I had elected to rig Dihedral and with that and a final salute to Neil and Chris, I disappeared into Jib Tunnel.

A quick look at the rigging toppo suggested three hangers to a Y hang. I found three and another loop but nothing in the opposite wall for the Y. After a bit of faff to fabricate a suitable hang, I finally leaned back out over the first pitch and admired the view below - I also noticed another hanger and the Y hang which had been positioned around the corner of the wall – BA\*\*\*RDS LOL. After pulling myself back from the brink, I set about rigging around the corner and utilising the proper hang point. A descent of 6m or so located the first of four deviations on this pitch to keep you out of the water spewing from Spout Tunnel. Using the in-situ tat, the first was quickly rigged and it was on to the second!!!

Reaching the second deviation, a few moments were taken trying to decide how the hell to get to it - hanging stationary with the thing around 6 foot away and the full force of Spout skimming my back, I began to swing. After a few minutes flailing around in and out of the falling water, I finally managed to grab the tat and clip the rope in. The third and fourth went fine and I was soon down to the bottom of the first pitch and standing on a spray lashed ledge overlooking the magnificent Main Shaft and across to Birkbeck's Ledge.

Continuing the journey, I rigged the next hang and dropped over the edge of the shelf, looking for another deviation in the opposite wall. Quickly located, I abbed down and locked off before leaning across and grabbing the tat and clipping a snapgate in. However, unless I was 7ft tall, there was no way I was ever going to be able to clip the rope in. I decided to clip into the tat with my long cows tail and abb down a bit further – unfortunately, at this point I made the mistake of not locking off my descender. Grabbing the tat, I pulled myself upwards but as I brought my left arm across my body to grab the krab, my upper arm caught my descender and without a “by your leave” I dropped around 2ft squealing like a stuffed pig until my cows tail finally took my weight and left me suspended mid pitch huffing and puffing like the demented soul I was.

Thoughts collected, I managed to change over and ascend until I could release my cows tail before heading back up to the ledge above.

After a few minutes here to calm down, I made my second attempt. This time I used my own sling through the tat and easily clipped the rope in whilst ensuring there was no rubbing above. Descending again, I was soon at the penultimate rebelay and looking down onto the floor of the main chamber and headlights looking up at me. Quickly tied and down to the final rebelay before making the fantastic free hanging descent to the floor (cold and shaken but not stirred LOL) to meet up with Rob, Dunc, Chris and no Neil.

Initial thoughts after the scare was “no f\*\*king way am I going back up there” but after a bit of banter with Rob, I followed him back up Dihedral with no issues.

On the surface Rob and Neil began trying to promote a descent of Main Shaft and after some umming and ahing and watching Rob disappear down for the second time, I re-donned my helmet and began to climb down. My head was clear until Neil enquired about the possibility of Bar Pot being derigged by the time I got there – this stopped me in my tracks, I had left word with Dunc and Chris that I would not be back down and that Daz would have to derig Bar himself so at that point I abandoned my madcap decision to follow Rob back into the abyss and headed over to Bar Pot instead.

Once at Bar, I realised I needn't have worried about being stranded as there were another two sets

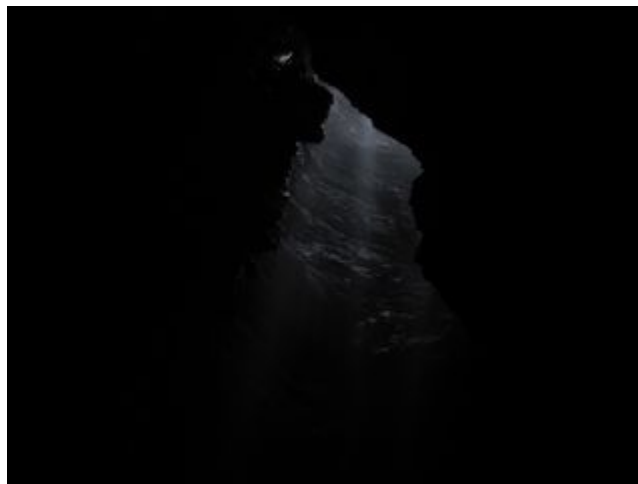
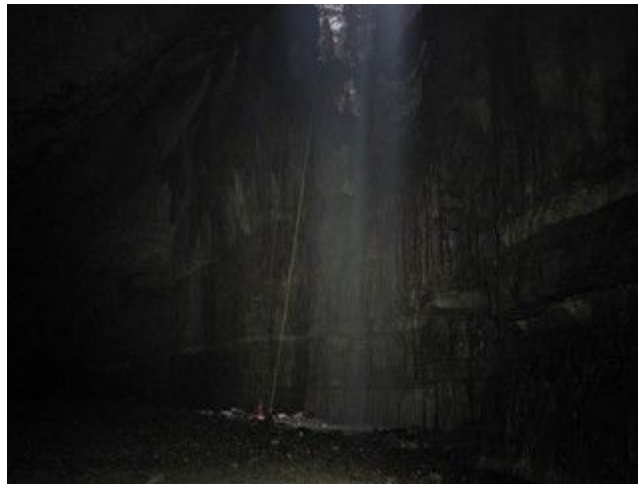
of rope along with ours - talk about spaghetti junction. I quickly dropped down the first pitch and headed for the big pitch – picking up a CHECC rigger along the way. At the big pitch, I could hear Dunc already ascending, but no sound of Daz (if you've ever met him you'll know what I mean LOL) and tales that he'd set off for Bar before Dunc. As we pondered on his whereabouts, he suddenly appeared at the bottom as Dunc unclipped at the top. I quickly descended and let Daz go up before making the return journey to derig.

Heading out was fairly uneventful except for Daz kicking a few stones down the entrance pitch – seems to be an ongoing theme here (see Alex's report). Once on the surface and into semi darkness we headed back to Gaping Gill and met up with some of the others. Main, Dihedral, and Rat had been derigged with Pete and Dan still underground derigging Corkys.

The trek back to the car seemed far longer than the walk up but eventually we made it, changed, sorted kit and said our goodbye's as Neil was already 2.5hrs overdue LOL.

All in all a great day's caving amongst good company and sat here a day later typing this, I know I've had a good trip as I'm still aching LOL.

Here's to the next 10 years!!!



### **Alex, Corky's to Dihedral**

Still being rather in-experienced at rigging I was hoping that someone with more experience than me would be sent down to supervise me rigging Corky's, but alas Daz of was chosen.

Daz found the cave instantly too keen maybe? We were down the ladder and in. I was told that under no circumstances should I do the "first bit" head first, so I went feet first and climbed down a 5 foot drop. Thinking this was the skydive they were on about proceeded head first for the rest of the way only to be confronted with a 4 metre drop (pitch) and no way to turn around. After a rather hairy manoeuvre I got out over this small pitch and rigged it for the others. I climbed down it, as it

looked free climbable.

Once at the bottom, Daz decided to use me as bit of target practice and knocked a decent sized henry down which whacked me on my shoulder and ear. Thanks Daz. After recovering from that, I then rigged the second little drop and left a spare rope attached to the bottom (as I rigged both drops with one)

Rob had told me against my wishes to rig all the pitches except the main one as single anchor hangs and only supplied me with enough crabs to do so, despite all but one pitches having several anchors to rig from. Apparently one of the in-situ anchors I had chosen was a bit loose! (Seemed okay on the way down, which pitch was it Pete?). After the jip I got off Pete I refuse to rig that way from now on, need to always have a backup where possible.

Anyway after several pitches, a few slightly thrutchy crawls we were at the second to last pitch which had a sketchy climb leading down to it. I found I had enough krabs and mallions left over to rig this one properly and used a sling I had to provide a backup for the climb down to the pitch. The last pitch, I will admit was a bit of a faff as I had to re-rig the bottom hang again when I realised I had not given my self or anyone else for that matter enough rope to get on and off. The bottom hang it self was one of those little ones where the bolts where 6 inches apart one above the other. A bowline on the bite may have been a much better choice here, but as I am not confident enough in that knot I stuck to what I knew. I ended up with something I knew was not perfect but nevertheless it was safe. (Not a smiley face but acceptable according to Alpine caving, fig 235).

The pitch was fantastic drop as you emerged into open space twenty metres down. We met Dunc in the main chamber followed by a very cold Pete & Dan. Later we were joined by big a whoooooop, followed by Rob who had come down the main shaft. Daz wanted to exit Bar so I sent him out with my bag and I headed for Dihedral. I forgot we used that bag for some of the rope while rigging Corky's, sorry Pete and Dan. It was they who would be bravely exiting Corky's on my rigging, carrying the top pitches rope by hand.

Dihedral was fun and offered some great views I also kept in touch with Rob next to me on the other rope. All was going swimmingly until I reached that bottom deviation 40 metres above the floor. This deviation was made by Satan him self to teach all those cavers with short legs a lesson! De-rigging, I first had to remove Mike's sling which he used to rig it with as he could not reach the insitu tat to use that. I got that off all right but unfortunately in doing so I had clipped my self into the tat with my cows tail. The now released rope proved to be a monumental force that pulled me in the wrong direction. My cows tail was holding me fast on other side. I was now suspended in the middle out of reach of both walls with no where to go.

What followed was a very long struggle to release my cows tail. If my knife cord was long enough I would have cut the ancient tat without a second though but alas it did not reach. I was one attempt away from cutting my own cows tail when I used one last monumental effort powered by an almighty primal scream and pulled my self up against the rope with one hand while the other hand was used to release cows tail.

“Whack” I was slammed against the other wall. I now know why I am aching this morning. Suffice to say, that I was now rather knackered and the rest of the ascent was a slow slog. I cared not for the view any more, my eyes only set on the surface. I was also rather un-nerved when I heard a large crashing sound coming from Rob's direction in Rat Hole. He was having troubles of his own. That deviation almost ruined the trip but in the end it proved to be a challenge and what is caving if it is not overcoming challenges. It was a great day and well done to all.

### **Dunc, Bar to Bar and surface derig of Main Shaft**

After the slog up there and the obligatory group shot we went our separate ways, before heading to Bar I started taking pics of Rob rigging Main Shaft, then headed off. At the entrance of Bar (not my ideal choice of pot but still wasn't feeling fully fit after a recent illness) I assisted Neil in getting dressed as his usual dresser was otherwise occupied at Dihedral, whilst this was going on Chris

rigged the entrance. Neil went in to the start of the rope and ushered me past (I knew what was coming when he did that!) I descended and Neil bailed out. Me and Chris headed to the big pitch, Rob was at the bottom waiting, he then headed back to Main Chamber. I rigged and then once down me and Chris ambled over to meet Rob, with Mike just on his way down and nobody else to be seen.

Some people exited Dihedral, I (unsuccessfully) fuffed with the camera trying to get a Main Chamber shot and slowly everyone else arrived, after a drink and discussion about who was derigging what, we set off out. Daz set off for Bar with me collecting the Main Shaft rope bags, as I didn't want to haul them up the shaft too. Once grabbed I saw Rob set off up Rat and set off out myself, a few minutes behind Daz I was somewhat surprised when I arrived at Bar and no sign of Daz! Fettle gear and headed up, Mike appeared at top, then Daz at the bottom having obviously taken a scenic route!

I headed straight out and over to Main Shaft to sample the delights of the top of this grand pothole, to derig it (nobody wanted to exit this way as it was too wet!). I edged over the void and abseiled down admiring the fine situation, dangling around looking at the waterfall and deep shaft below, but I couldn't stop too long as I had rope to retrieve.. I shuffled onto the ledge and took in a nice but brief view over to Alex on Dihedral and started the task of hauling 100m rope up and into the bag (bloody heavy, glad the bags were took off) By some minor miracle as I exited, Alex did and not long after Rob appeared from Rattus. After the bags were packed Mike appeared and we all headed down as Pete and Dan were nowhere to be seen.

Long walk back, lots of gear fuff, bit of a wait for Pete and Dan exiting Corky's, nice bottle of beer brought back from the New Inn, thank you Chris. A great day out and a superb effort by all.

### **Chris, Bar to Dihedral**

I headed down Bar Pot first, and sat waiting for a while; looking through the graffiti I saw the name, "Ged Dodd". Dunc came down the pitch next, Neil stayed at the top and shouted for us to carry on, then I think he slept. Dunc then rigged the 2nd pitch using some horrible rope that would have killed lesser men. We got to the main chamber to find Rob, who had descended the main shaft and wandered up to the foot of the 2nd pitch in Bar Pot and back. Mike was at the final rebelay on Dihedral and soon joined us on the floor of the magnificent main chamber. Rob headed up Dihedral, followed by Mike. I was planning on waiting around for Pete, Dan, Alex and Daz but as you know, the Hall of the Winds is a cold, wet and draughty place (it's also one of the most impressive sights in the country) so I headed up Dihedral after Mike. I stopped on the ledge halfway up. At this point I could see Pete and Dan on the way down Rat Hole. I stayed on the ledge to watch Rob descending the Main Shaft for a 2nd time, then headed upwards. The views down from towards the top of Dihedral are absolutely awesome, with the waterfall crashing down onto Birkbeck's ledge and then disappearing into Oblivion. The pitch head looked quite puzzling from beneath, but presented no problems at all, then out through Jib Tunnel and into the World.

### **Neil, surface**

After walking alone through the wilderness I managed to talk myself out of Bar Pot. Myself and this caves entrance have a checkered past, I got stuck lost my foot loop and had to be hauled out. I was trying to work out if I was smaller then. I decided to exit via Bar Pot was not for me. The other routes were out due to their technicalities so I decided to be the public face of the BRCC on the surface. I clipped in at the top of main shaft and peered into the void. I spoke to members when they emerged. I enjoyed the hassle free afternoon I had. As for Bar Pot I'll be back when the winch is on.