

WASHFOLD POT

A lesser visited classic

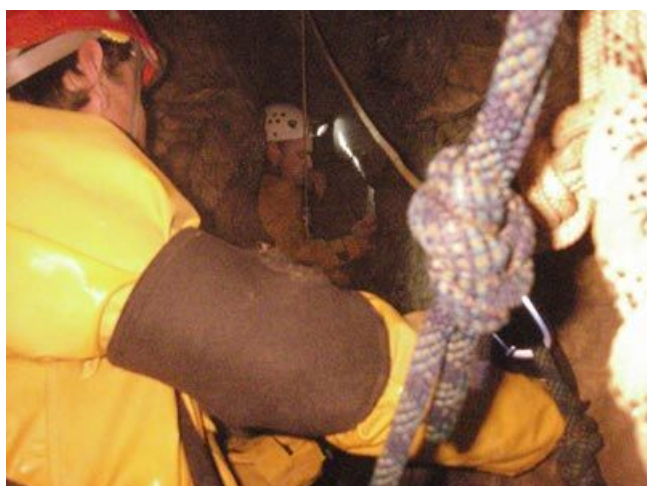
7th April 2007

People present - Mike Skyrme, Duncan Jones, Rob Santus

Weather: Sunny and warm

Saturday dawned bright and sunny and the pleasant drive to Ingleton taking longer than usual due to typical Easter traffic. A quick scoot into Bernie's to procure the long awaited 60m rope and well overdue rope bag and I was on my way along Chapel-le-Dale to meet up with the others at Ribblehead. Dunc's text said traffic allowing, a 12.30 meet was on the cards. A bite to eat and a repacking of the new rope, followed by another sit in the car passed the time until Rob's vehicle appeared at around 1.00pm – Easter traffic yet again!!!!

Parking up in a lay-by on the Ribblehead – Horton road, we quickly changed and sorted tackle before setting off up the fell to locate the pot. This proved relatively easy as once we topped the slight escarpment, the only noticeable feature being the fenced entrance of our destination.



Dunc was down first followed by Rob and then myself. The free climbed entrance was ok but once down we were into a nice (albeit tight in places) clean washed rift. A drop down led to some hands and knees crawling and traversing slightly higher before meeting the first real climb which led into a bedding plane. A flat out squeeze was passed easily by the skinnier members of the group and once I had altered the position of my oversuit zip (was making my ribs sore!) I slipped through and dropped down the other side into a small chamber, "The Depot". SRT kit was donned as Dunc climbed up into the rift at the far end of the chamber before

disappearing around a corner to begin rigging the first pitch (40m). Once kitted up, I climbed into the rift to join the others and took some photos of the proceedings. Whilst the three of us were wedged into the rift we debated the depth of the pitch, which appeared smaller than stated – however, once at the main hang and as the descent started you became aware of how deep the pitch actually was – and very beautifully sculpted as well I hasten to add!!!

Once down, more crawling and traversing led to the "6m chimney descent to the stream way" as the guide book described it! Taking no chances and definitely not opting to use the in-situ washing line we rigged a line down to make things easier – and boy am I glad we did!!!

Further on the floor dropped away and we progressed by traversing the rift using all manner of chockstones where appropriate, at the end of which was the chockstone climb. Again, although stated as free climbable we opted for the safer way and used another rope.

Another squeeze, another climb down using an in-situ rope followed by some crawling and a traverse descent led to the last series of pitches. Rob rigged the first of these, which had an interesting hidden rebelay part way down and I rigged the last down to the miserable looking little sump. Both of these pitches, especially the last were decidedly wet.

Once all three of us were down to the sump, the return journey began in earnest. I opted to derig back to the big pitch and Rob said he would derig that one. From this we sent Dunc on his way. Some assistance was provided at the bottom of the spray lashed final pitch with me pulling the rope clear of the water to give a dryish ascent for the others. My turn was over pretty quickly because it really is amazing how quick you can move when freezing cold water is pounding the back of your neck! Last pitch derigged and it was onto the next. The hidden rebelay proved a little awkward as once released, a hair-raising swing around the buttress followed until I connected with wall – oof! Once up, this was derigged but unfortunately, the rope had looped around a protruding rock and couldn't be pulled up. The tackle bag was then thrown down the pitch to release the rope which was successfully pulled back up and repacked. It was at this point that I began to tire drastically! Wet rope, the continual climbing and traversing seriously began to take its toll on me and every new obstacle became harder for me to pass.



Eventually I reached the foot of the big pitch and after a little breather, up I went. Once at the top I clipped into the traverse line and wedged myself in until I caught my breath as Rob began his ascent. Back in the Depot, I removed my SRT gear before grabbing what felt like the heaviest tackle bag ever and making my way to the surface leaving Dunc to help Rob.

The bedding plane squeeze was passed without incident but as I traversed with the tackle bag I could feel my energy disappearing. About 20m from the entrance I had to stop and let the others climb over me to get out – thankfully they took my tackle bag with them – cheers lads! Five minutes later I had recouped enough for the final push to the surface and a long awaited collapse onto the grass – bliss!!!!

Almost 5hrs underground and my first grade 5 cave under my belt. On Sunday I felt like I did after my first ever SRT trip – one big ache from head to foot.

Washfold Pot makes for an excellent days caving, with lots of interesting scenarios and even better if you cave with good friends who are prepared to support an old codger like me!

Mike Skyrme

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