

## ALDERLEY EDGE – WES MINE & WOOD MINE

Wonderful wizards cast a no-photo spell on Dan..

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Date: 11th January 2009

People present: Pete Dale, Duncan Jones, Dan Jackson, Alex Ritchie. Our DCC Guide: Nigel Dibbin.

Weather: Dry, cool and breezy

The plan was laid out for meeting at 10.30 at the car park by the Wizard, everything was running smoothly with four of us in two cars.. On the morning I received a phone call, it was Dan, running late, luckily the route planner I had seen suggested 30mins so all was not lost as he arrived at 10am. We sped off for 'The Edge', arriving we found Pete and Alex already getting changed. When everyone was ready we then spent further time waiting around for Dan to sort out his camera and other assorted photographic equipment.

A short walk soon brought us to the entrance climb, from which an easy level was followed for a short distance to where we met a shaft on the right - we opted to descend this. Heading from this we were soon looking out over the sizeable Main Chamber, getting to the bottom involved two short but entertaining traverses, crossed without problem by all of us and then a short but easy handline climb.

Various passages and lots of ups and downs brought us to Sphinx Chamber, where we all had a go at the small hole (reached by a small traverse), of course Pete had to try it in the opposite direction too! Heading off more varied going brought us to Chain Shaft. Alex's vision of a 70ft drop from his previous trip were quickly dismissed as we abseiled down the 20ft drop (It would seem that what Alex was told on his trip a few years back was somewhat exaggerated). At the bottom we abandoned bags and headed off along the wet level, wet enough to nearly reach places cold water shouldn't reach. We soon encountered a collapse, beyond the passage carried on towards Plank Shaft - a quick dig was initiated by Nigel and Pete - everyone else sat around or dodged clay being flung around as there was only room for two at the dig face. Once the way on had been cleared Alex was inserted into the hole and he set off along the crawl, which was muddy. Pete found that the top layer could be peeled off in a thin layer, revealing another layer which when peeled revealed a sandy layer - certainly different.. With the way on blocked we turned round and headed away from Chain Shaft for a round trip in the further reaches of the mine.

Alex had mentioned a climb at the Laundry Chute which he had done on his last visit, we had to check it to see what it was all about. It was decided to descend it and arriving at said obstacle Pete tried getting me to go down first, I had other ideas! Nigel shot off down, followed by Alex, I sat at the top of the shaft and lifted my leg to allow some water to run down out of my wellies, this went largely unnoticed by Alex. Pete and Dan thought this was a terrible thing to do and promptly took



off one of their wellies, Dan having a respectable quantity of water in his tipped the lot right down on Alex's head.. Suddenly the Laundry Chute had a blue-rinse as various expletives poured forth from Alex's mouth!! My turn next, but with wellies full of water I was hesitant, nobody else wanted to go down either - a stand off ensued until all wellies had been emptied. Pete followed next and then Dan, who received payback as Alex and Nigel had ran round back to the top of the climb to seek revenge.

Most of the trip had been walking and dry, and this continued, although Alex and Nigel found a short wet level to stroll along whereas everyone else opted for the spacious dry option. Arriving at Lion Chamber Dan decided this was the place to take a photograph.. The only one of the trip! Well, two to be precise but the same shot. After much faffing with flashes the shot was done and myself, Pete and Dan took the high level option involving a step across a gap, followed by a handline climb and chain climb to join Nigel and Alex at the ledge we abseiled from earlier. After rope and bags had been retrieved we set off back across Plank Shaft and back in the direction of the Main Chamber. Another traverse was tackled followed by a clamber down without a handline.

At this point we were close to exiting and still had plenty of time to spare so Nigel suggested a quick stroll around Wood Mine. As it was only early-noon we figured this short extra trip would make for a worthy extension to our day.

After a short walk across the surface we were at Wood Mine, climbing down the ladders into the level and off we went for a short round trip involving ladders, stairs, a visit to see an excavated shaft.. We also headed in the direction of Brynlow Mine which would form the connection to Hough Level and Engine Vein - myself and Pete had been here previously but it wasn't familiar, mind you it was over 7 years ago since we last passed this way! Dan also admirably carried his photographic equipment all the way around this mine too and took a total of no photos - impressive effort indeed ;)

Once changed and having had a hoot or two from passing motorists we headed over to the Wizard - the tea room and not the pub! Not the pub, poor old Dan was in shock. The civilised bunch found the tea rooms rather busy, but luckily Nigel had the key to the museum so we enjoyed tea and scones surrounded by mining artefacts.

Thanks must go out to Nigel once again for a good tour of the mines - having someone knowledgeable about the area makes a trip far more interesting.

*Duncan Jones*

*Photo - Dan Jackson*

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