

Rigging the Entrance Series:

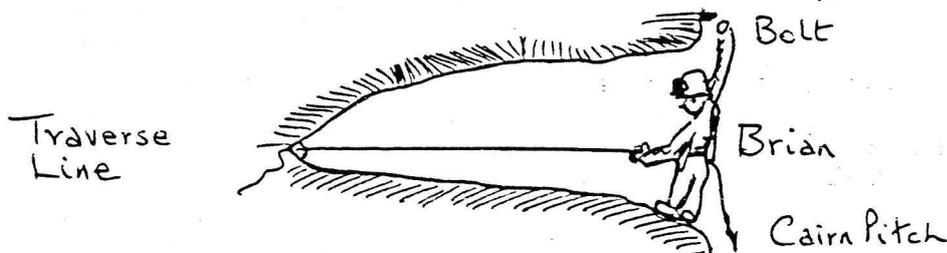
(By Liam Kealy)

The choice of a team to rig the Entrance Series was simple. Most people wanted a rest before starting to cave, after the long drive down from various parts of Great Britain, a visit to a French inn, and an arm wrestling contest at 2a.m. We were to be a mixed team. Rachael (You've done what in my furry suit!?) Clarke, two bearded rapsallions from the Orpheus, Brian Cowie and Russell Carter, Mark Faulkner from Somerset, and myself, the only upstanding member among us.

Brian and I had caved together before so we did not anticipate any adverse clashes of personality, neither did we think that the Entrance Series would provide any major problems. Besides, Mark could always lead us by the hand as he had rigged the cave before.

I led most of the team on a voyage of discovery through the pine forest with a scenic two-mile detour, so that we eventually arrived at the entrance to find most of the expedition had already assembled to wish us on our way. After a leisurely change, I was soon at the entrance pitch fixing the rope and being photographed as if I were the World's leading exponent of the art! Anyway; we were soon all down, and Russell lifelined me whilst I stood on a springy, rotten, loose, and generally nasty looking wooden platform at the top of the Ruiz Shaft. Here, I tried to screw a hanger into an existing anchor with some considerable difficulty. The anchor had been well placed I suppose, but the bolt refused to go in, and anyway could have done with being driven in another couple of millimetres. Cursing, and mentally hoping that all the anchors were not going to be like this, I shook my hand to control my nerve endings and clumsy fingers, and screwed the bolt in. A shared belay was then arranged with an 'in situ' piece of angle iron and Brian's only tape sling (I hope that he got it back!). Having achieved the desired free hang, I abseiled off that manky platform to land some 70 to 80 feet down on a bank of snow.

The Orpheus lads came next, with the ladders for the Holiday Slides, and proceeded to rig these whilst Mark and I cut the Ruiz rope off the 600ft. length we had to carry. There was some delay in rigging these three short pitches and the top ladder was rearranged once the party was down. Following this, Brian entertained us on the Cairn pitch, whilst we shivered on the cold, draughty ledge. Brian's antics involved having to lean out on the main rope and insert a hanger in a bolt on an overhang above his head, which was a long stretch for a lad like him. (See the sketch below.)



The object of this exercise was to achieve a free hang to a ledge about 25ft. down where again Brian had a pleasant time sitting in a sling effecting a rebelay whilst listening to our mumbled encouragements.

Once down, and after refilling our water reservoirs in a pool of cold water up a side passage, we were off into the gloomy confines of the Meanders. Beforehand, we had heard horrific and terrifying accounts of the traverses, and tales of rotting timbers over vast drops with walls wide apart.