

Phil and Liam were having anxious discussions when I joined them at the head of the Grand Cascade. They had grave reservations about the bolts used at the head of the pitch, particularly the back-up bolt which could be pulled out with little effort. We had three alternatives; rerig the pitch; carry on regardless; or turn back. I had come too far by now to contemplate going back, as for the first time I realised that a bottoming trip was now on. The bottom was too close to be frustrated by a doubtful bolt, and I had a ferry deadline to meet! Looking down the pitch I could see several bolt changes, one near the top, and anyway the rope was tied off to the tail of the Ressaut Singe rope, so I abseiled down. Phil decided to return to Camp2 and wait for us as he felt unsure of the rigging. Liam soon joined me after a shouted message that the rope was O.K.

There was no mistaking the top of Little Monkey which soon appeared before us. It looked more like the rigging for a circus acrobat than a pitch head, with tackle from previous trips freely strewn along the traverse. A short drop took the main stream into a dark pool which ran over the lip of the main shaft. The main rope was hung behind a block over the shaft, approached by a traverse line along the right hand wall above the dark pool. A short ladder led to the start of the traverse and a short rope led down from the end of the traverse. Another long rope drooped from the pitch head across the dark pool, and was belayed back in the passageway. Liam traversed over, abseiled down the short rope, changed to prusicking mode above the main shaft, prusicked up diagonally to the bolt of the main hang, changed to the main rope and vanished into the darkness below. I tried to emulate Liam's manoeuvres without success, as my self-locking Petzl descender would not run easily diagonally, and ended up floundering in the dark pool before I gained the main rope. The trip was no longer a 'Fun' trip! A short traverse clipped in to a handline led me to the head of 'Hurricane' where the waters poured into space.

The take-off from the ledge where the rope was belayed was very awkward as the bolt was low down, but Liam fitted a foot loop to ease the problem a little. A shout from below, a few awkward moves, and I was descending the final pitch. It was a strangely empty and unemotional abseil, with Liam's lamp a tiny reassuring speck of light in the black cold windy void below. I joined Liam and we strode on together down the boulders leading to Camp3 away from the spray-lashed chamber at the pitch bottom.

The cave was quiet again, and a warm pleasing glow of satisfaction began to grow, despite the steady downwards trend of the cave. We scrambled down the boulders, short cascades and deepish pools with vague memories of a waterfall tumbling out of the right-hand wall, until a short climb led us to a dry oxbow. Here an unexpected and unwanted reminder of previous descents was provided in the form of piles of empty tins and other human rubbish. A short descent dropped us back into the main stream again and soon we were at the Pseudo-siphon, where we peered down the canal leading to the terminal sump. Liam dropped in up to his armpits, but neither of us fancied a swim so we unanimously agreed to turn back.

Returning to the dry oxbow, we sat among the rubbish and tucked in to the usual diet of nuts, raisins, and dried bananas. Liam reached over and unexpectedly passed a tin of pâté... Pâté! Hell! What a place to indulge in such luxuries! After a brief respite, we started on the long slog out.