

Hodge Close, Cumbria. 26th November 2011

Neither the full wrath of the Cumbrian weather nor the prospect of zero bacon butties could deter us from diving Hodge Close last weekend. Nine intrepid members (including keen photologists who are renowned for their intrepidness) headed off to the land of the lakes to find the disused slate quarry for a couple of cheeky dips.

Setting off at 6.00am early Saturday morning (there's nothing like a bit of neighbourly cylinder rattling for disturbing lie-ins) we hit the great 180 mile northbound to arrive at The Lakes in good time despite the Sat-nav having other ideas. A couple of wrong turns later and we're soon greasing the palm of a local to get him to move his Fiat so as to allow us through to "the car park" situated at the bottom of a twisty track, so steep even the sheep were avoiding it - it looked highly improbable for Jagwaars but we've come this far so what the hell!



Just getting to the quarry is a test of grit in itself. All kit has to be lugged through a man-made tunnel approx. 120 metres long, thigh deep in water & just the right height for some regular head banging.



And the fun isn't over yet; nursing our embossed noggins, we find ourselves in a cavern some 10 metres high up from the lake surface, the opening of which is furnished with a ladder of such makeshiftness it would cause a HSE inspector to take 6 months sick leave. Fully clobbered, we gingerly descend said ladder followed by a steep, slippery bank to finally arrive at the water's edge. Never again will I listen to complaints about the walk to the car park at Stoney Cove. Anyway, kit up & in we go.

until the 1960's and a few mining artifacts can still be found above & below water, but most noticeable is the pile of wrecked vehicles that reside in the bottom of the lake at 25 metres. This must have provided much entertainment for the miscreants who had pushed them in as the only way would have been over the cliff top some 40 metres above the water surface.

Underwater was a fresh 8 degrees C and the vis was reasonable in spite of the rain, though the light level was dark & green. Huge rock formations and boulders bearing scars from the quarrying days loom towards you as you swim around and the towering underwater cliff faces with



large overhangs are imposing and just a little intimidating. There's not a lot of life in the lake apart from a few critters, certainly nothing fish shaped anyway. A tunnel & cave system leads off from one wall at about 20 metres - part of the original mining works - but temptation had to be quashed; only being suitable for properly kitted, hod carrying cave diversites.



After lunching on Tesco's finest, the second dive provided further delights. A short walk along another tunnel ends with a small opening into a flooded cave. The cave itself is safe to dive in and the water is only about 5 metres deep, but you won't find the entry technique in any BSAC manual. Some say a leap of faith – it's more like a fall from elegance - sitting on the ledge with torches

primed and sort of belly flopping forward into the abyss of dark water a couple of metres below. It took us a whole five minutes to explore the cave which is inhabited by beer-can fish & shopping-bag fish and the less common cylinder-boot crab. The cave then terminates with an exit which is guarded by a submerged overhang of rock, and this brings us out on the opposite side of the quarry from where we resumed a second bibble there-in.

It's all lots of fun & the novelty of it makes the effort of getting there worthwhile, but we figured one day of ferreting around in tunnels & caves to be enough for a weekend. So we dined & bunked overnight at the convivial Kirkstone Pass Inn (Cumbria's highest pub) and headed off the following morning for a yomp up a mountain which is a whole other story involving horizontal sleet, dry-stone sandwiches and some sinister looking sheep.

Divers:-

Mark Sherwood
Anita Sherwood
Steve Fulcher
Mike Bonner
Robin Welford
Simon Yates
Janet Yates
Charles Erb
Trevor Rees

None Divers:-

Josh Yates (shore cover)
Penny Welford

Many thanks go to Mark & Anita for making it all happen – the bruises are healing nicely.

Steve F