

Fresnedo 2. Description of route to the far end and tackle needed.

This isn't a full description of the cave, it's intended as an aid to those wishing to go to the end. Where I know of an area of interest along the route I'll give as good a description as I can. It's not accurate enough for publication yet, nor is it intended for such use, but with some input from those who enter Fresnedo 2 this summer, and editing of some personal comments/waffle, it could be brought up to a suitable standard for public consumption. I'm happy to assist where I can.

Toby Chilton

The outward draught is strong. There are only a few places where keeping it in your face will lead you off course. Loose the draught and you've almost certainly gone wrong.

Entrance is probably overgrown with the brambles that kept it from being found when Fresnedo 1 was explored. Offer of beer/meal to Pedro could see these removed before the Brits arrive?

A slumping boulder was making the entrance a bit tight, same as above?

Entrance passage is 'soft' crawl in a bedding, with the draught in your face. Just before boulder choke and pitch in floor head to R hand side of passage and a tight, dug crawl with draught for a body length. (Bags dropped in this area can fall down pitch, room for stacking bags beyond tight bit). Easy climb up choke, going slightly left, with solid wall behind you, leads to top of choke, walking for a few metres then slope down to continuation of entrance passage. Turn right. Keep at floor level (odd step up but no climbing) with couple of short crawls under blocks until you're in a solid walled passage again. At 3 way junction in small chamber turn right into One Footprint Passage (my right footed welly was in Azpilacueta with Jane so Pedro saw only left foot prints ahead of him). (L is tight n thrutchy to a short, choked piece of larger passage). Passage gets bigger but look out for passage on L with the draught coming out of it, easily missed as passage you are in is much taller and appears the obvious way. (If you find the passage getting tall and narrow, without a draught, you've missed it). The passage to L lowers and short crawl to R, through stal grille, (and muddy pool) leads to downwards sloping passage and Loredo Junction. R chokes, ahead is obvious way on.

Next section is easy bumbling along in largish passage with silt floor and mudbanks, with odd small chambers, until 2nd Boulder Choke. Above this is Paul's Chamber and connection to Knotted Rope Series. A draught comes down here but it's not the main way on. (I'll describe bits of this later as it would provide a flood escape route if the crawl below it flooded. The crawl is known to sump in a wet winter and has been passed as a duck at Easter. If open I believe it would take significant rainfall to cause problems but an awareness of a bypass maybe useful).

Look for a hole down on R hand side of passage near base of choke. Short drop into flat out crawl, normally dry. (Can't remember name of crawl, Andy Pringle, Andy Quinn/Little Julie or Pedro may recall it). This leads to more walking passage, a slope up to the left (on a cross joint?) is way to higher level Knotted Rope Series. Continuing on, there's a short, easy traverse (I think a rope was put on at one point but it's not needed by most folk) then look out for water splashing in from the L. Just beyond the splashing water turn L up a slope. Going straight on leads to The Howling. (This was dug and pushed by Neil Pacey and joins with the further reaches of the cave. Due to its mud, water, lack of airspace and siltbanks which run in on you, it's only a viable option for those with an extremely high tolerance of death).

A short distance up the slope Cascade Streamway (we called it Shitty Streamway) enters as a short waterfall on the left. An exposed step over a drop and an easy climb, it's probably worth putting a handline on. This helps with passing heavy bags too. I recall a natural belay in the passage above the climb but it's over 20yrs ago so ?

The streamway has short sections of traversing above a narrow floor slot but it's fairly easy going. Most of the bigger loose stuff has been knocked off but there is likely to be small bits of crumbly crap about. The climb out of the stream starts where a boulder choke forces a crawl in the left side of the passage. The draught comes down the climb AND from the continuing streamway. I think this area is probably the most dangerous part of the cave. At the top of the first climb the obvious foothold is on a boulder that appears to

be holding back a lot of nasty stuff and this boulder has been seen to slip. A short traverse line at this point makes things safer and also consider only having 1 person on the climb at a time, at least for the first time through it. The climb leads to a passage that chokes close to a passage in the Knotted Rope Series. The way on is a pitch upwards of about 8m (?), back over the top of the previous climb, with the draught coming down it. As a climb it's very exposed and is done as an ascending traverse from a short distance along the passage. It's quite a wide straddle! The passage above is Known Passage, easy walking to the handline climb down into what I think is now called Big Chamber (originally 'The Blackness'). Climbs in the roof of Known Passage have all been done and don't go. (Possible that first climb up, over climbs from Cascade Streamway, hasn't been done but worth checking with Neil Pacey who I believe did it only to find footprints?) One hole in L wall of Known Passage allows a climb down into base of a couple of dribbly avens, other holes would require tackle to get to same place. Small stream can be followed to very close to upstream choke in Cascade Streamway. (Digging could give a 'no tackle' route to this part of the cave but not sure that it would be faster or easier if carrying gear for further in).

Handline climb down into Big Chamber can get a bit slippery, but easyish free climb in emergency. With back to handline, way on is obvious passage above short, easy scramble in far wall, Tile Passage. (Lots of alcoves been bolted into in R wall of chamber, obvious big passage in same wall is climbs to complete choke with stal. Shame as a way through here would give easy walking straight into Ecstasy Chamber. Mud bank to L leads to complete choke. Nothing found in this chamber, bar Tile Passage and hole in floor, despite a lot of bolting).

Tile Passage has a few milled potholes in the floor. We had short ladder hung on a natural belay on left wall of one of them to make life easier, but passable without. Look for silt and boulder slope, going upwards, in right wall. (It's obvious and has the draught, I recall a bit of easy traversing if continue on in Tile Passage which would indicate you've gone too far, Tile Passage ends in Avens).

There are two ways down into the continuation, both go off from part way up the slope, more to centre or right than on left. One is a scrappy little (5m?) pitch but, not as far up the slope, there's a scramble down through silty boulders that needs no tackle. (Pitch is probably climbable but scramble is much safer).

Crawling with draught in face leads to a hole in the roof up into short section of nice walking passage. (Hole up is easily missed but draught is lost as soon as you go beyond it. Passage below hole has been followed as a low, silty crawl for a short distance but has not been conclusively pushed). Walking quickly ends at (Not the) Stal Pitch on left. (Was known as the Stal Pitch 'til someone relocated the large stal boss used as a belay. Now to be found in smaller pieces at bottom of pitch!)

(Boulder choke and various holes above this pitch have had not been fully looked at, nothing was 'pushed' as such, to my knowledge).

Short pitch (7m?) into passage that reminds one of Yorkshire caving. (Only a few feet from base of pitch is climb up left wall, going in, to crawling passage going off to the right. Soon ends at fallen boulder beyond which passage continues). Way on is a short section of crawling traverse on your side which ends at small chamber and head of Pendulum Pitch. Choked at bottom (-20m?), look for mud slope in far wall about 10m down. At top of slope, passage turns right and there is plenty of room to stash SRT gear, brew kit or whatever. (Short, low passage on left is too tight at T junction with slightly larger crawling passage. To left should re-join pitch, some draught comes from the right). From top of slope up off pitch, walking and crawling lead to small hole at floor level in left hand wall. This is The Mistral and draughts strongly. (Straight ahead quickly chokes.)

Taller folk find The Mistral a bit awkward and are best off going through on their backs. If on back, shuffle through then go diagonally up to your right, then diagonally left. (Plenty of room to see where to go and various places to turn around. Boulders appear stable but a good thrash may drop something). A few metres of walking leads to Venus's Playroom and some appropriately shaped formations.

Best route on is to turn right and skirt around the bottom of the stal slope and formations. (Other route involves going through the formations to a short, slippery fall down into Ecstasy Chamber). Holes on right lead to drops which connect with route through from The Howling, over 20m below.

Ecstasy (short lived) Chamber slopes down to the main streamway (I don't think we actually called it anything).

The rest of the cave is basically a misfit stream which has invaded an old phreatic passage. This has cut under the right hand wall (as you proceed upstream) and the best going is to avoid this side, keep left and clear of the right hand beddings. Near start there's two or three different levels, floor level is the best and they all end up there anyway. Towards the end there are a couple of sections of crawling and in two places the stream has eroded trenches through the fill that require short free climbs down and up rubble, fun with heavy bags! The survey shows a couple of side passages off to the left, I've not been in these but have a recollection of someone thinking at least one could be pushed further by climbing/bolting. Unfortunately the survey notes appear to have emigrated to Canada, could be worthwhile re-doing.

I've only been to the end once, some 20yrs ago! I recall a short upwards ladder pitch, I think this was just beyond where Munster Waltz goes off on the right. (Neil Pacey did the original exploration around Tandoori Palace and will know more than me about this area, well worth asking him about it). When I went in, on a later trip, Big Nose and I started bolting an aven above this pitch. I don't think it was the first one you come to, we went up a muddy slope to the right to get to 'our' one. Good rock, easy going, I think there was a ledge visible above and the aven continued up beyond it. Maybe 10m up, Big Nose had a complete light failure. With only an old Premier stinky as a spare light, we thought it best to leave for another day (NOT another century!)

Although the aven looked good, and we intended to return, Munster Waltz is probably the best place for a first look. I was told of a climb that required 2 bolts at most (yeh, we've all heard that before) to get into the continuation. Climbs in boulders were also mentioned, not sure if these refer to exactly the same spot. (Big Nose and I had left Munster Waltz for other people on the trip, I can't recall why they didn't bolt it, I remember us both being a bit surprised that they hadn't even looked at it. It was at the end of the expedition and folk may have been 'caved out').

The sump near the end looks good but it's a long way from the entrance.

Knotted Rope Series.

This is a section of a high level route. I believe that Known Passage and the passage below the climb up to it (above the first part of climb out of Cascade Streamway) are part of it, the section of passage above (Not the) Stal Pitch is very similar. If assumptions are correct then there's a section of passage missing between the top of Paul's Chamber and somewhere above the present entrance. (A shame 'cos that's where all the formations could be hiding)! The complexity of the area above the climb into Knotted Rope may be due to one or more old inlets. Whatever, if the crawl below were to sump this would provide a viable way out of the cave, although gear would need to be recovered from further in for both the traverse and Pauls Chamber pitch.

Go up the slope from the main passage. It looks blind but at the top a slope goes down to the left. Walking soon ends in an aven and a short, easy climb up stal to a ledge. A slope continues up and to the right but the way on is a small, muddy hole up to the left, somewhat hidden. Originally tight, this is now fairly comfortable. This leads to a ledge overlooking the passage by the climb up the stal. The pitch down is about 20m and, when rigged, is the preferred way into this part of the cave despite having an exciting 'twang' point on a huge sword of stal. (Bold step over pitch leads to original Knotted Rope passage, named after a formation visible in a roof chamber which both Pedro and I thought was the remains of an old rope with a frayed knot in the end of it. Roof chamber is blind and passage below chokes close to choked end of passage above climb out of Cascade Streamway).

Traverse to left, badly exposed, enters continuation of passage. Ignore all side passages. Ends in a dreadfully muddy pitch down wall of Pauls Chamber. (I think the obvious passage on the other side has been looked at, worth checking with Andy Pringle). Below pitch, hole in floor is a spiralling climb down to rejoin main passage via route through boulders at 2nd choke. (Bolts were placed for traverse to left at head of Knotted Rope pitch, immediately before reaching Pauls Chamber a passage on the right, short drop, then an immediate left turn lead to a ledge in the wall of Pauls Chamber where there's at least one 8mm spit. It's very unlikely that this route would be needed but worth knowing as mud would make it virtually impossible

to bolt up to it from Pauls Chamber if rescue was needed. It's the sort of cave to avoid getting hurt in anyway)!

Rigging.

Once again, worth having a word with Neil Pacey, I believe he was probably on the last trip into the cave and may know more about in situ gear.

Climb into Cascade Inlet – a handline very useful. Belay may be several metres along the passage. May be a natural, not certain.

Climb out of Cascade Streamway – easy climb, don't remember a handline but may find one useful. The step over at the head of this climb is well worth protecting with traverse line. (I believe some stainless steel studs were placed, these require bolt being removed from hangar which is then placed on exposed, threaded end of stud. Nuts should have been left on studs. IF these are the thinner, galvanised studs they should not be used, awfully weak!) I think there's a bolt in the passage wall above the slope up after the step across. 10m of rope ?.

Climb into Known Passage – Bolts at top for ladder and lifeline. Single ladder needed. Possible a pull back line in place.

Handline down wall of Big Chamber - Probably still in place. If not then around 10m. (Thread belay low down on L when looking out over the climb?)

Hole in floor of Tile Passage – I think bolts/studs placed in L wall for traverse line. We hung a ladder off a natural on L wall to use as a foothold.

(Not the) Stal Pitch – Due to demise of the original stal belay, I believe bolts/studs placed in passage wall on R at pitch head. Not certain this ever got done.

Pendulum Pitch – Will need re-bolting. (There may a belay, natural or bolt, at end of crawling traverse to protect short climb down into chamber which pitch goes out from) (pitch head is smallish hole in wall at floor level) (Has been rigged as both SRT pitch and single ladder with rope belayed at pitch head and other end at top of mud slope up to provide protection (?) via a cows tail. Nobody fell, thank god)!

Pitch up near Tandoori Palace – single ladder.

It's worth assuming that all bolts and in situ gear require replacement.

Fresnado 2 is enjoyable caving with a bit of just about everything (but not many formations on main route). With the cave tackled up, and no route finding problems, a small party will be at the Big Chamber in about 45/50 mins. I've only been to the end once and that was with 8 other people so can't give a realistic estimate. For the most part the going is reasonably fast, tackle bags are not off your shoulders much and there aren't any very arduous sections.

As well as avens around Tandoori Palace there are avens off to the right of Known Passage and at the end of Tile Passage which may be worth a good look. At least some of the water in Cascade Streamway comes from the avens off Known Passage.

Above (Not the) Stal Pitch there's a damp looking boulder choke which hasn't had a serious examination. (I think from here to Pendulum Pitch is clean washed. Pendulum Pitch would be iffy with much water going down it. Big thunderstorm may make things moist).

Going left above slope up from Pendulum Pitch, the right hand passage at too tight junction has some draught.

The passages on the left of the main streamway need another look at.

The passage reached by a climb just beyond (Not the) Stal Pitch needs one boulder capping but there's little draught and I don't think it's a priority.

Fresh eyes could easily spot something we missed, best to assume anything spotted hasn't been fully pushed, not many trips went beyond The Mistral and most of these were focussed on pushing the end or had a specific objective.

Good luck to all, Toby.