

# Pool jumps into Upper Church Beck

January 2011

## Issue

Knowing your gorge well and keeping information up to date as the gorge changes because of floods is clearly an important safety function. Below are the findings from one such reconnaissance. Note the disclaimer near the beginning that another big flood could result in further significant changes.

## Outcome

This information comes from Bob Henson, who is happy to share it with other providers.

"I would stress it is what one group of instructors found on one day and cannot be relied on not to change! This was written for Coniston Mountain Rescue Team, hence the need to describe common practice amongst instructors, and more detail than you may need.

We don't have previous data to compare it with, but the intention is to repeat the exercise in the future.

Two outdoor activities instructors and myself did an initial survey of the upper pools (the jumping pools) of Church Beck this afternoon. Our particular interest was measuring the depth of the pools and trying to identify any additional hazards.

I have called the pools, for the purposes of this survey, pool 1, pool 2 and pool 3; these being counted from Miner's Bridge downstream. Pool 1, the uppermost pool, is the highest jump and the most scary. The depth of the water at the point that most people enter the water is 2.2 metres deep (7 ft 2 in), the pool deepens to some 3 metres deep at a point between three and four metres downstream from the jumping rock.

A number of instructors are now jumping their clients into this deeper pool from a point below the large tree on the Northern bank, this is reached by climbing and being lowered down to this point. This is a much safer procedure than the big jump that we have done for many years and requires less personal judgement on the part of the client.

Back now to the original jumping point, immediately below this jump where main flow of the waterfall hits the pool, there is a substantial shelf of rock on the left hand (Northern wall) of the pool. I can reasonably safely assume that this is the obstruction that caused our most recent casualty to injure his foot by hitting it.

Now to pool 2, traditionally the most dangerous jump. The water level in this pool has dropped by some 30 cm (1 ft) since the November floods; this is because some of the rock debris has been washed away at the downstream lip. The water level in all three pools remains constant since it is determined by the height of the lip. Except in serious flood conditions, whatever water enters the pools also leaves them. In pool 2 there is a very large underwater rock some 1 metre downstream from the jumping point, this is only some 30 cm under water. I presume that this is what our previous casualty caught her foot on. When I lead this jump, I usually get in the water and stand on this rock so that everyone knows where it is. I then climb onto the side of the pool and point to exactly where I want people to jump. The depth of the water beyond the rock is 2.2 metres.

The next jump is pool 3. This is not a jump but a slide down the chockstone. Generally speaking, this is the easiest challenge and although one occasionally feels contact with underwater rock, the forward motion induced by the slide is such that injury is avoided. Again the depth of the pool immediately below the slide is 2.3 metres. I must point out that all of my experience is

gained whilst wearing a buoyancy aid, jumping without one may cause the jumper to go deeper with unfortunate results.

Another hazard is that some groups climb the waterfall to the left of the chockstone (looking upstream). Traditionally we have belayed our clients up this climb whilst belayed to a large boulder at the top. This boulder has now moved and is no longer suitable for a belay. It is, however possible to set up a belay with wires, a No 10 and No 7 Wild Country rock nut is quite sound using a diagonal crack above the belay point. There also looks to be a good placement for a large hex, however, I wasn't carrying one to try out."

Kindy provided by Bob Henson