

Pwll y Gwynt

Location – NGR: SO 18804 15681 - what3words: ///rocky.dust.inflation **Length:** 260m

This cave can be difficult to find, hidden above a scree slope some higher than the tramroad leading to Agen Allwedd. To get there follow the tramroad path from Whitewalls as for visiting Agen Allwedd. Shortly beyond the posts indicating the public footpath heading off downhill the path makes a turn to the left. The gully in which Pwll Y Gwynt is located is up above the scree slopes visible ahead, just before the start of the row of cliffs leading to the Agen Allwedd entrance. There is no well-trod path to get there, so you'll need to forge uphill through the bracken, following sheep tracks until level with the top of the scree slope on the right. Cross the screes heading right to a wide grassy gully which should be followed upwards to reach a tree just below the cliffs. A steeper climb of about 5m to the right of this tree leads to the cave, which is difficult to spot until you are right next to it. The entrance to Pwll y Gwynt is a body-sized tube in a small rocky bluff and has scaffold poles visible from just inside the entrance.

Tackle – This cave is better suited to SRT rigging rather than ladders, with the exception of the descent of Sixth Aven which may be better rigged with a ladder due to the tightness of the crawl to the pitch head. Wearing SRT kit here is a definite encumbrance!

First Pitch – 25m rope or 21m ladder and double lifeline.

Fifth Aven – Pre-rigged with a 12m rope (installed July 2023). Though known to be in good condition at the time of writing, its condition cannot be guaranteed so you may wish to bring your own 12m rope (or 24m rope to allow for rope to be doubled for the de-rigger) or 10m ladder and double lifeline to be rigged by the first climber up.

Sixth Aven – 8m rope or 6m ladder and double lifeline.

Route Description – The body-sized entrance tube leads directly to the head of the 21m deep entrance pitch. This has 2 scaffold bars in place for use as belays. The first of these should be used as a back-up, while the second provides the best hang for the pitch. The pitch has a ledge half way down and beyond this opens up to become more of a circular pot. At the bottom First Aven is reached with two routes heading off. The squeeze down to a lower rift doesn't go very far before reaching a choke, while the way on is up through the tight rift opposite. This emerges into Second Aven via a narrow vertical squeeze and from here a 10m crawl leads to a ledge 5m above the floor of Third Aven. Below this is where the alternative return route via 'Quick Way' emerges, but to continue on to Fourth Aven follow the ledge heading left. Here a short crawl followed by a climb up reaches a window 3m above the floor of Fourth Aven.

From the window, there is a fixed knotted rope to aid the short descent to the bottom of this impressive aven which towers up over 25m high. This has been climbed, but no high-level route found. The way on is a low crawl on the opposite side of the aven, and from here on the journey starts to get significantly muddier. The crawl leads to a drop down a small pot then a T-junction; turn left here as the passage closes down to the right. Soon after, a drop down then a climb up leads to a squeeze into a grotto containing some pleasant but muddied formations. A sharp dog-leg immediately on the left is the way on, while at the T junction straight ahead neither way goes very far, but the left-hand side has some formations. Muddy crawling continues before a tight squeeze over a calcite floor enters larger passage once more. A rift climb overhead is soon encountered, leading up to the bottom of Fifth Aven, while the continuation of the passage straight ahead is the alternative return route, Quick Way.

The climb up Fifth Aven has been improved by the addition of a new SRT rope (July 2023) to replace the distinctly 'vintage' rope previously rigged there. Above the Fifth Aven pitch a spacious ledge is reached with 3 crawls heading off. Two of these silt up after only a short distance, while the third is a small tube leading to Sixth Aven. This is incredibly tight and not worth even considering if you're anything other than skinny. Another problem with this tube is that SRT kits tends to snag, so it's easy to find yourself wedged by your kit – especially on the return. As there is no room to don your kit beyond the tube it is perhaps best to use a ladder and lifeline here instead, making sure there is something to clip into for safety at the pitch head.

Either way, to rig the pitch you'll need to squeeze along the tube headfirst until it emerges at a tiny window in the vertical wall of the aven, 8m above the floor. The bolt to rig this is an arms-length above and the only way to reach it is to lay on your back with your body in the squeeze and water falling on your face. De-rigging is also done by the same method, so you'll need to post yourself in feet first and reverse out of the squeeze. Once down at the foot of Sixth Aven it's not much further to the end of the cave. A passage leads to a low wet crawl to a small chamber, followed by another wet crawl to a dig in sand and cobbles.

Alternative Return Route – Back at the foot of the climb up to Fifth Aven you can either head back the way you came or do the alternative route via 'Quick Way'. This makes for an interesting round trip, but is also rather tight and squalid so best saved for the way out when you're already muddy. This starts as a low crawl over rocks to reach a confined, dug-out crawl. Continue through more crawls, heading left at the only bend, through constricted tubes, short rifty sections and some sloppy mud puddles to emerge at the floor level of Third Aven. Here a climb up puts you back on the main route at the crawl to Second Aven, somewhat muddier than you were on the way in.

Spotted an error in this route description or want to leave feedback?
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