

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

Important safety information about using CNCC descriptions and rigging topos

This MUST be read and understood by anyone using a CNCC-provided cave description or rigging topo

These descriptions and rigging topos are provided by the CNCC for use by experienced cavers only in assisting with trip planning and route-finding on some of the popular sporting routes in our region. They are not exhaustive, they do not cover every passage or feature, and details may have been greatly simplified to try to keep them concise and clear.

Great efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information. Nonetheless, there are likely to be errors and (over time) an increasing number of inaccuracies due to changes in the caves and the replacement of resin anchors. The descriptions may also contain subjective viewpoints which could be open to misinterpretation. It is entirely incumbent upon all cavers to exercise appropriate care and caution when going underground using these topos and descriptions, and to have researched the trip from several other sources. Never make any safety critical decisions based on the information in these descriptions or topos.

Pull through trips must only ever be undertaken by cavers who are confident in finding the lower route out of the cave without a description, and who understand the extra precautions demanded of such trips (e.g. carrying multiple ropes).

The rope lengths stated in the rigging topos are considered the minimum length required based on average rigging. There may be errors, or your rigging may use more rope than anticipated. Therefore, it is critical that all ropes that are deployed for use have two tightened knots in both ends, to mitigate against the risks associated with the ropes not reaching the bottom of pitches.

Difficulty ratings, or 'grades' have been omitted from these descriptions. All cavers must make their own informed judgements of whether the cave is suitable for their capabilities, backed up by thorough research into the nature of the cave from numerous sources and an understanding of the capabilities of others in your group.

Many in-site ropes and ladders are mentioned throughout the descriptions. These should only ever be considered navigational markers and not safety critical belays. The CNCC does not install or maintain any fixed aids in caves other than the resin anchors shown on the topos. Never trust your safety to a rope or ladder which is left in a cave. For resin anchors you must understand the importance of belaying your rope to multiple anchors, including full traverse ropes leading to pitches, and always performing a pre-use inspection on every anchor. If any resin anchor shows movement, or fracturing in the nearby rock, it must not be used.

Rigging must always be performed to avoid any rub points or other hazards. Rigging exactly as depicted in the rigging topos does not guarantee a rub-free descent; this must be assessed and ensured by each individual caver on each pitch in every cave.

Many caves which are susceptible to danger from flooding have been highlighted in the descriptions. However, all caves, even typically dry ones, can flood in various circumstances, and it is therefore critical that the experienced caver using these descriptions makes their own judgement based on experience, extensive research and weather forecasts. Decisions to descend any cave after or during wet weather, or when wet weather is forecast, should be made based on an informed judgement backed up by thorough research from multiple sources. The critical moto which should be adhered to is "If in doubt, stay out!"

Although warnings are provided where there are some specific known hazards, the absence of a warning does not indicate that there are no hazards. Caves can (and do) change over time. Furthermore, the CNCC does not perform routine inspections or surveys of caves to look for specific hazards (e.g. loose rocks). All cavers are strongly advised to view the webpage on the CNCC website for their chosen cave to check for any warnings that have come to our attention. Experienced cavers using these descriptions must make their own evaluations for hazards throughout the duration of their trip and act appropriately to mitigate any risks.

Neither the author of the descriptions/topos or the CNCC will accept any responsibility for any damage, injury or loss (however caused) resulting from the use, misuse or misinterpretation of information in these cave descriptions or rigging topos.

SHORT DROP CAVE & GAVEL POT

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This description covers both caves. Gavel Pot alone can be descended. For the full experience however, you can enter at Short Drop and make the full trip to the bottom of Gavel and back again. An outstanding and much underrated trip!

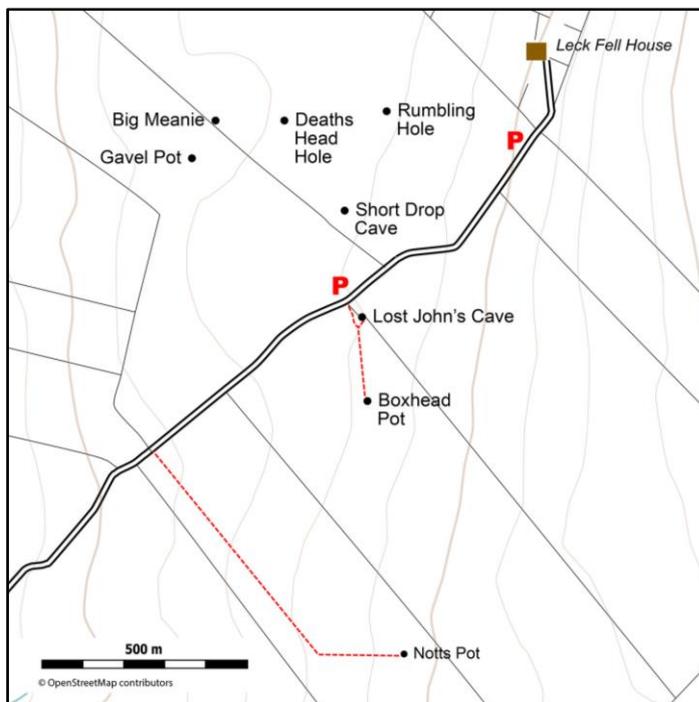
Both Short Drop and Gavel are active caves; the crawls in Short Drop will sump in wet weather and the lower pitches of Gavel will become impassable. Settled conditions are required.

Parking: Park at the first major layby on Leck Fell, 700m after the cattle grid, just before a wall on the left.

How to find: Grid references: Short Drop: SD 67015 78922
Gavel Pot: SD 66607 79062

For Short Drop Cave follow the far side of the wall down the fell just beyond the car park. After 150m (next to a depression by the wall), the entrance to Short Drop can be found about 60m away from the wall. It is a fences enclosure. For Gavel Pot, follow the wall down the fell on the same side as the car park, for about 600m until a large enclosure with trees is seen about 100m on the left. This is Gavel Pot.

Rigging: The rigging topo from 'Northern Caving' is available on the CNCC website (courtesy of CNCC Technical Group).



Short Drop Cave (to Gavel Pot Entrance)

If wishing to exit at Gavel Pot, the entrance pitch must be rigged in advance; the Gavel entrance shakehole is not free climbable!

At the entrance, a 'short drop' enters a stream passage. Follow this passage downstream which soon lowers to a crawl. Just when you are starting to get fed up of crawling, the passage enlarges at a junction with the main water inlet entering on the left. This junction is easily missed if travelling upstream so take note for later. Continue downstream. The passage gets larger and then passes under a gravity defying boulder bridge. Beyond here, the passage narrows slightly and descends some cascades just before the first pitch.

This pitch is quite easy and descends clear of the water, landing in a pool. A traverse leads to a free-climbable alternative.

Downstream of the pitch, daylight can be seen from above and the water cascades down a pitch to a sump. The route is a climb up just back from the pitch to an exposed traverse along the right wall which can be followed over the cascade and around a corner into a passage leading up to the bottom of the entrance shakehole of Gavel Pot. This is a fun traverse and will test the nerve of the rigger.

The route onwards down Gavel commences as per the third paragraph below.

Gavel Pot

Scramble down the entrance to a ledge surrounding the main shakehole.

There are two SRT routes to the bottom of the entrance hole; on the left is the Eyehole route involving a roped traverse underground to a Y-hang, which connects directly to where the traverse route from Short Drop Cave enters. The more usual route is further along the ledge to the right where anchors for a Y-hang over the edge followed by a deviation enable a simple drop to the bottom of the shakehole.

At the bottom of the shakehole, at the far end, the route goes underground amongst boulders to the first pitch (enter the boulders high on the right hand side). The second pitch is then located across the chamber, down a wall of precariously stacked blocks. This can be free-climbed with relative ease, although take care to avoid loose blocks! At the bottom of this pitch a short crawl reaches a low streamway.

Follow this downstream for 90m. The passage soon enlarges, and a junction is reached where right leads to the October Series (rather unpleasant so best ignored). Continue downstream for another 50m. The stream then starts to cut down as a canyon as it approaches the next pitch.

*As the stream approaches the next pitch, there is a short dry oxbow on the right containing a small crawl which leads for 50m to a junction in a large passage. Left goes to a sump but right follows along a fine passage to Glasfurd's Chamber, a beautifully decorated grotto. **Please take extreme care here to avoid damage to the vulnerably located formations!** Do not confuse the October Series with the route to Glasfurd's Chamber! This is very easily done (including by the author of this guide) and is definitely not recommended!*

Following the water downstream along the winding passage which gains size. This eventually reaches a 3m climb down (an alternative to this climb down can be found via a roof-level tube about 10m further back but is not much easier) and then the next pitch is quickly encountered. This pitch is an excellent, dramatic and sometimes wet descent and has a long traverse out over the top and a few rebelay to help avoid the water.

A short distance onwards is the final, also excellent pitch, with a deviation from a flake to avoid the water. This lands next to a fascinating and ominous sump pool. This draughty chamber is the end of the trip and a return to the surface at Gavel Pot or Short Drop begins.