

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.

CRACKPOT CAVE

November 2021

A stunning short trip in Swaledale with a fine main streamway. This is excellent for adventurous novices, while enjoyable for experienced cavers alike. Crackpot Cave is passable in moderately wet conditions, but in flood, the stream passage can become hazardous. Use sensible judgement and do not enter the streamway if the force or depth of the water presents any concerns to the abilities of your group.

Please take a moment to read...

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In 2019, the CNCC undertook conservation work in Crackpot Cave. We found handprints on formations in The Turnip Field, and even mudballs from a mud fight high up in the main streamway. We worked to clean the cave as best as possible to restore these areas to their former glory, for the enjoyment of future visitors.

A video can be found on YouTube by searching for 'Crackpot Cave Cleanup'.

Crackpot Cave is a great place to introduce novices to caving, but we urge this is combined with an educational introduction to cave conservation, emphasising the importance of not touching formations and the need to take care to preserve the beauty for future visitors, leaving nothing behind, and taking nothing away.

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More conservation resources available at: www.cncc.org.uk/conservation

Parking:

Travelling west from Reeth, turn left just after Low Row and then right at the next junction, signed to Crackpot. Follow the road, keeping left at a junction with a farm track and then straight on at the junction in Crackpot village. Follow the road all the way to the end at Summer Lodge, where cars can be parked just before the gate without blocking access. It is also fine to park off the track immediately beyond the gate.

How to find: Grid reference SD 9636 9534

Follow the track beyond the gate, which commences a steep but short ascent up the hill. At the top of the hill a flat grassy plateau is reached. About 50m ahead, turn left to leave the path and follow the wall. After 100m the wall turns right; keep following it for a short distance to a rough track (marked by metal poles) heading steeply down the cliff. This snakes down onto a balcony at the foot of a cliff, directly above the main cave resurgence. The unfairly named 'Kneewrecker Entrance' is a small hole at the foot of the cliff. The original Main Entrance has collapsed.

Note: An alternative approach can also be made by parking on the Askrigg to Swaledale road at the top end of the track and walking 400m down the hill to reach the same flat plateau mentioned above. This means an uncivilised steep walk uphill after your trip!

Tackle/Rigging: No ropes are required.

Navigation:

The Kneewrecker entrance is narrow and leads down into a small chamber. Sliding over a slab gains a continuing easy crawl, soon reaching a junction. Straight on leads towards the original Main Entrance and some very low and unpleasant crawls. The way on is a short drop down on the left into a lower crawl through shallow pools, followed by a combination of easy crawls and small chamber to arrive at the Main Streamway.

Make sure to take note of your point of entry to the streamway so you can retrace your steps later (it is easily missed).

Downstream, the water is usually lost down an impassable hole, but a dry large passage leads for about 30m to an area of the cave called The Intestines. This is essentially an area of collapsed blocks which must be carefully navigated by crawling (not recommended for novices due to dubious stability) to emerge back into larger passage leading to the inside of the now collapsed original Main Entrance.

Upstream from where you join the streamway, is a fabulous river passage, with some nice decorations high-up. This passage can be followed for 100m to Column Chamber, easily recognisable thanks to the floor to ceiling calcite column. This is a good time to remind novice groups of cave conservation, including the importance of not touching any of the formations, including the column.

Beyond Column Chamber, the stream emerges from an impassable boulder choke. Just behind the column, on the left, is a passage leading upwards for 20m into The Turnip Field, a spectacular chamber with large mounds of floor calcite and a gallery of overhead straws. Visitors to this chamber are urged to follow a central path up the centre of the chamber to a viewing area at the top to keep the chamber as clean as possible.

At the top/back of the chamber is a climb down leading back to the stream, which can be followed another 30m upstream to a terminal boulder choke, with the water emerging. This has been extensively dug over many decades and is unstable; avoidance is recommended.

