

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.

This description covers the route down Heron Pot via the traditional (wet) route (which can be done as a pull through in very dry conditions or hard-rigged) or via a drier and dramatic high traverse route. There is the opportunity to exit with the water at the resurgence in low water.

Heron Pot can be (cautiously) enjoyed in part under slightly wet conditions. After wet weather the traditional route becomes extremely wet, meaning a pull through is impossible and this must be hard-rigged (and even this may become too sporting for many cavers). Furthermore, the resurgence exit will sump. The high traverse route however is passable in slightly wet conditions and is an excellent trip.

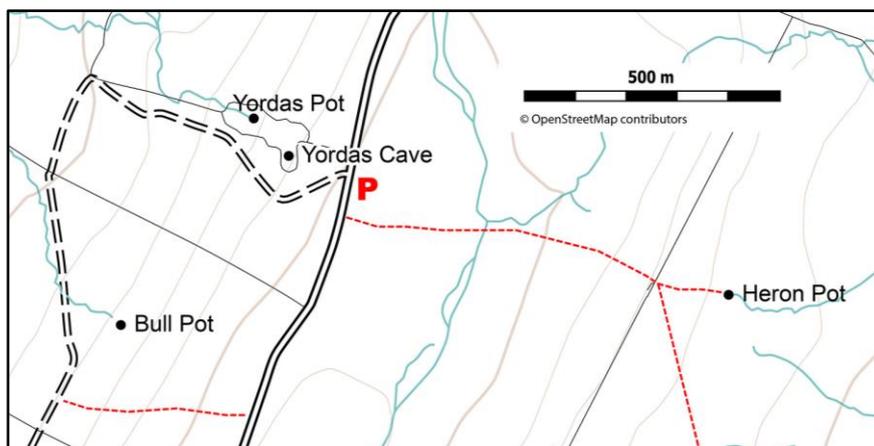
Parking:

Park in the laybys on the side of the Kingsdale Road near the gates below Yordas wood (a walled, wooded area on the left as you approach the head of the valley) (grid reference SD 70700 79130)

Location:

Grid reference for upper entrance SD 71440 78760

Just downhill from the parking area, cross the wall at the stone stile and approach Kingsdale Beck (the river at the centre of the valley). A smaller stream joins the main river here. Follow this inlet upstream and after 100m* turn right up an even smaller (usually dry) gully leading up towards the wall at the top of the hill. Pass through a gap in the wall at the top of this gully. Follow the small valley straight ahead for another 150m (ignoring several holes and an obvious point where the stream sinks if it is flowing) to find the entrance to Heron Pot; A small hole on the right-hand (south) side of the shallow valley set about 5m away from the stream.



* To check the resurgence exit continue upstream for another 200m; a small stream joins which comes down from the Heron Pot resurgence.

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

Navigation:

DURING/AFTER WET WEATHER DO NOT ASSUME THE RESURGENCE EXIT WILL BE PASSABLE – CHECK BEFOREHAND IF IN DOUBT

Drop down into the entrance. The route onwards is behind you, underneath the boulder beneath the entrance hole. The passage starts as a crawl, however after a few minutes you meet the stream and the passage becomes mostly walking-sized. Note that if exiting from the cave here, take care not miss this junction on the way out (i.e. if exiting, turn right out of the stream as soon as the crawling commences).

Continue downstream to enjoy 10 minutes of excellent and easy passage, leading eventually to the pitches.

Traditional Route: The traditional route of descent is two short pitches following the water. These can be done as a rather wet and exposed pull-through from the first anchors on each pitch, with exit via the resurgence. This is only recommended in dry weather and with experienced cavers. Alternatively, you can install properly belayed ropes on the traditional wet pitches (recommended). Traverse out on the first pitch to a Y-hang just around the corner. At the bottom, take an ascending traverse to a Y-hang for the second pitch. The second pitch has a single anchor rebelay half way down and out of sight around the corner to pull away from the falling water on the final descent.

High Traverse Route: The other route is to go up a 5m chimney immediately before the first pitch. At the time of writing there is an in-situ rope located here to identify the ascent, however, the integrity of this rope should not be assumed and it is recommended to send your most experienced climber up first to then rig your own rope down this pitch for others to use. From the top a 10m traverse commences, starting with an exposed 2m step down (which can be abseiled if preferred) and then a splendid wide traverse where long legs are a benefit. At the end of the traverse, anchors allow for a Y-hang and a direct descent of the entire shaft well away from the falling water. This is an excellent, much underrated and very photogenic pitch.

The two routes land only 5m apart in the draughty aven at the bottom. Follow the water downstream along a fine passage. After several pleasant minutes, the passage lowers briefly to a wet stoop/crawl. The passage then remains a mixture of walking, stooping and wet crawling before finally degenerating to a very long crawl along a wide, low and wet bedding plane. Follow the water throughout.

At the end of this long crawl a wall of blocks is reached with daylight beyond; exit at this point requires a sideways squeeze in the water through the blocks which may benefit from removal of SRT kit (which tends to snag at the most awkward moment). In wet conditions this becomes a very desperate duck and in extremely wet conditions this sumps and must not be attempted.