

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.

THE MISTRAL (also known as Mistral Hole) TO GOUR HALL

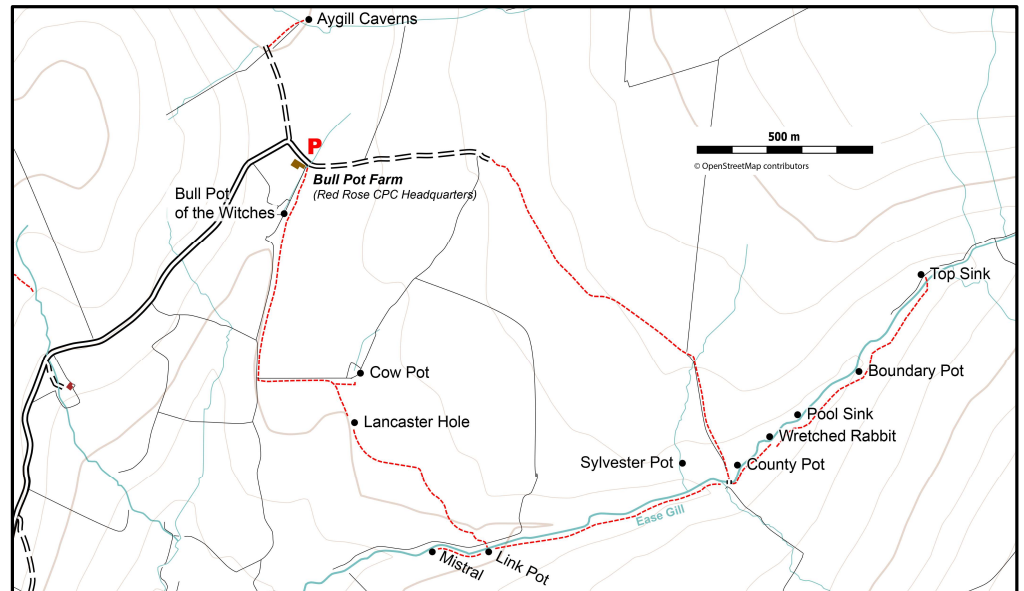
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This description covers the route from The Mistral to Gour Hall as well as a few potential extensions. This is an excellent trip that requires no tackle other than a handline for the entrance and is suitable for all but the largest cavers and those adverse to crawling.

The route to Gour Hall can be enjoyed during moderately wet weather (as long as you can safely cross Ease Gill Beck, the cave should be fine), however the two stream extensions (Canyon and Pippikin) require drier conditions to be safe.

Parking:

Parking available at the end of the public road by Bull Pot Farm (SD 6630 8145) or at Bull Pot Farm itself, car park to rear, please check with any residents.



Approach:

From Bull Pot Farm follow the footpath south through the gate on the side of the farmhouse. The enclosure of Bull Pot of the Witches, a large open pothole, is passed on the right after 100m. The path then bears slightly left and goes steadily uphill for 400m and crosses the wall at a gate. Cross over, turn left and follow the wall. After 250m (near the gate through the wall into the Cow Pot enclosure) turn right and follow along the bottom of the shallow valley for 150m to the lidded entrance of Lancaster Hole.

From Lancaster Hole, a less well-worn path leads up the hillside out of the dry valley. Follow it across the moor and, eventually, down into Ease Gill, where a fence is crossed. The entrance to Link Pot (SD 6685 8035) is directly opposite this crossing point, on the true left bank of Ease Gill, and is a walled shaft against the cliff. It can be identified by having a scaffold pole across it and two anchors in the right wall. The Mistral (SD 6664 8033) is found 200m further downstream, also on the true left bank of Ease Gill, and is a walled shaft next to a tree.

Tackle:

8m handline recommended for The Mistral entrance (**walled shaft; beware of loose rocks**).

Navigation to Gour Hall:

Climb down the entrance shaft with care and enter the small passage on the left. The next section was very tight and awkward in the past but has been enlarged to produce an easily navigable passage, provided you progress on your side and are prepared to wriggle!

Crawling leads to a small chamber, with a short climb up to a junction. Here go left, where further crawling leads to The Hobbit, a large chamber with a sloping roof. Take note of your entry point here for the return journey, particularly due to a crawl on the left (as you go inwards) which is easy to take in error on the outward journey, but which ends at a choke.

The Hobbit slopes down steeply. At the bottom, trend leftwards to enter a walking size passage, which ends abruptly at a large boulder. Here, a step down to the right arrives at a junction. Down to the right, water is normally flowing, and this leads to Canyon Streamway (see #1 below). The way on however is left into a large walking passage which soon passes under an aven (there may be an in-situ rope as a navigational marker).

Continue into a pleasant walking/stooping passage with a trench in the floor, down which water may be flowing. At one point the passage appears to end at a wall of flowstone and formations, but it is possible to duck under here to gain the continuation passage and two sections of crawling. Eventually the passage becomes too low and is exited via a crawl on the left which brings you to an important junction, Dusty Junction.

Dusty Junction is a large wide junction/passageway with three routes leading onward. It can be identified by a prominent stalagmite boss sticking up in the middle of the floor. This is a good marker for the return journey or anyone wishing to travel to Link Pot.

To the left at Dusty Junction, immediately above the stalagmite, is a crawl that leads, via even more crawling to Link Pot (see separate description). Across the chamber at Dusty Junction, beyond the stalagmite, another crawl on the left leads to Red Wall Chamber. However, neither of these are the way on to Gour Hall.

The way on to Gour Hall from Dusty Junction is to follow the right wall to enter a crawl that leads to a series of chambers connected by pleasant crawls, eventually descending steeply into Hall of the Ten. Navigation is easy as the route is well worn and there are no major distractions to lure you off route. Hall of the Ten is another major junction; note the way you came in for your return journey.

Down through the boulder choke floor of Hall of the Ten is the route to the Pippikin Pot Streamway, an interesting extension to this trip and worth familiarising yourself with if you have time (see #2 below). The way on however from Hall of the Ten is following the left wall via a steep climb up a

mud slope to a balcony, where there are two ways on, the most obvious of which is on the right and is the way to Gour Hall. The left route is an inviting archway that leads via a crawl and some passages to Hall of The Mountain King (see #3 below).

The right route towards Gour Hall passes by a pool with water dripping from above (may be absent during dry conditions). The passage continues as a crawl for 50m, sometimes flat out, until you arrive at two chambers, one after the other. These have very photogenic areas of stalagmites projecting up from the floor, with tape to remind you to not get too close. Note your entry point for the return journey.

Walk carefully through these chambers allowing the tape to guide you and ignoring any inviting digs/crawls. The way on is a wide low passage which arrives at Cross Hall, a large chamber which may, in wet weather, have water falling from an aven on the right and sinking in the floor.

Across the other side of Cross Hall, a crawl brings you to another aven, where an in-situ rope may hang down (ignore). Continue straight on beneath the aven to enter a passage that develops into an attractive rift, which leads on and up into Gour Hall. Gour Hall has a dome of flowstone in the middle and gour pools, as well as plenty of mud. Explore as you wish but do not cross any tapes and be careful not to muddy or damage any of the formations. Please leave these exactly as you found them for future visitors to enjoy and appreciate.

Recommended extensions if time allows:

(1) Canyon Streamway (requires low water conditions)

At the junction after The Hobbit, the route down to the right, with the water, leads to a crawl over calcite and a flat-out crawl, then reaching a drop into the Canyon Streamway. This can be explored downstream for 100m to a sump. Just before the sump, a crawl on the left leads into a chamber and then a passage passing avens, to eventually reach the Far Streamway, also explorable downstream for 100m to a choke.

(2) Pippikin Pot Streamway (requires low water conditions)

From Hall of the Ten descend through the boulder choke floor to arrive at a streamway. It is easiest and driest to enter feet first. Then immediately move left and soon leave the stream to crawl over the top of boulders, well-polished to indicate the route, to once again join the stream. Note the exit for the return journey. The way on is to follow the pleasant, if sometimes narrow, winding stream canyon for some way, usually with the water but sometimes leaving it, to arrive at a chamber which is the base of the sixth pitch in Pippikin Pot.

(3) Hall of the Mountain King

This is an impressively large chamber with a scary looking deep pit on the left and copious quantities of glutinous, sticky mud, which will steal your wellies if you are not careful!

From the balcony above Hall of the Ten take the left-hand passage, which starts as an inviting arch and a crawl. After some easy caving you arrive at a point where you are looking down into the vast Hall of the Mountain King. On your immediate left there may be an in-situ rope descending to join a traverse line. This is coming from Peterson Pot. Below the rope is the large and scary-looking pit, often with the sound of a stream coming from below. We recommend research from 'Northern Caves – The Three Counties System and the North-West (Allshorn and Swire 2017)' if you are interested in exploring further.

Useful navigational points for the return journey

The return journey from Gour Hall back to The Mistral entrance involves several confusing junctions which look somewhat different on the outward journey than the inward. The following notes should assist with routefinding:

- (A) In Hall of the Ten, from the boulder choke floor, with a wall on your right, climb steeply up to enter the chambers and crawls.
- (B) At Dusty Junction go straight on/left past the stalagmite boss to soon arrive in the passage with a trench in the floor.
- (C) At The Hobbit climb steeply up and take the left of two crawls (the one to the right ends at a choke).
- (D) In the small chamber that follows, cross to the other side and take a short drop down.