

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.

Swinsto Hole is a classic wet pothole which can be descended as a pull through to Valley Entrance or hard rigged for a return trip or an exchange with Simpson's Pot. Ascending Swinsto Hole can be a wetter experience than descending!

Swinsto Hole is an extremely wet pothole. The long crawl, the wet pitches and the Master Cave become impassable in wet conditions. Only descend in dry and settled weather.

Parking: Park in either of the laybys just before or after the track to Braida Garth Farm in Kingsdale. Do not park opposite or close to the track as this can block access to farm vehicles.

Location: Grid reference SD 69377 77532

Walk up the steep hillside immediately opposite the track to Braida Garth Farm to meet the Turbary Road track at the top of the hill. Turn left and follow the track. About 40m before the wall, turn right and walk parallel to the wall up a small and probably dry stream bed. The entrance is in the streambed, about 75m from the Turbary Road track.

Rigging: The rigging topo is available on the CNCC website.

Navigation:

If planning to exit at Valley Entrance, you must always pre-rig your own rope on the Roof Tunnel pitch down to the master cave (a 30-minute initial trip for a few of your team). While it has become taken for granted that this pitch will have an in-situ rope, this must NEVER be assumed, as in-situ ropes may be removed without warning; Furthermore, in-situ ropes should not be trusted. ALWAYS rig your own. The pitch up to the Roof Tunnel can be climbed (high difficulty), but this should only be relied upon if you have done this before and are confident in the climb.

The description below assumes the cave is being hard rigged. If descending as a pull-through (as is commonly done in Swinsto Hole), ensure all members of your team are familiar with pull-through procedure and safety. **Always use two anchors for a pull-through and always take spare ropes of ample length so you don't get trapped if one rope fails to pull through on any of the pitches and must be left behind.**

Inside the entrance, follow the stream to the first pitch (the traverse line is belayed initially to a natural thread). At the bottom of this pitch is the Swinsto Long Crawl, 300m of wet, cold, but easy hands and knees crawling in a canal leading to the second pitch.

Continue onwards with the water to reach the third pitch (Curtain Pitch), where most of the water can be avoided by a traverse. The fourth pitch (Pool Pitch), of similar depth, is soon reached, which is rigged starting at a natural thread just before a climb up to the Y-hang.

The largest pitch (Split Pitch) is then reached, which is split by a broad balcony part way down. This is often a very wet descent, in the full force of the water on the first section before the balcony. Ascending this pitch is even wetter because with your feet engaged in a foot loop, it is harder to push yourself off the wall to get away from the falling water. The second section below the balcony is drier but still has a lot of spray.

Continue to follow the stream until it disappears and then take the dry route to reach Spout Pitch (rigged initially off a natural spike). This drops into Spout Chamber, where the water is re-joined. A short distance onwards along a rift with cascades, a large junction is reached. On the left only 10m away is the landing point for Slit Pot, the final pitch of Simpson's Pot. On the right, following the water downstream, the final wet pitch is reached leading down to Swinsto Great Aven, where a choice of options for exiting the cave are now available.

Exiting via Simpson's Pot (if an exchange trip has been arranged):

Just before the final pitch of Swinsto Hole, the Slit Pot rope from Simpson's Pot enters. The top of this pitch, if rigged the conventional way, is awkward, requiring a thrust through a very narrow slit to depart the rope. Alternatively, if the Swinsto Great Aven route has been rigged, you will need to descend the final pitch and then scramble up boulders into a large hall where the rope from Swinsto Great Aven will be seen; This ascends via a rebelay to a stal chamber where a climb down and then descending traverse joins the Simpson's Pot route, bypassing Slit and Aven Pots.

Then, simply follow the (many!) short ropes upwards; there are no navigational issues. The only point to note is that after the initial short upwards pitches, the way on requires a 1m long duck under a low arch through chest-deep water to reach the bottom of Storm Pot and the next series of pitches. Several further short pitches/climbs up, and then a short section of crawling emerges back onto the surface.

Exiting via Valley Entrance:

At the bottom of the final pitch is a large chamber (Swinsto Great Aven) with a route downwards through the boulder floor underneath the wall (extreme care; these boulders have moved in recent years). Follow this down to a crawl eventually reaching a wide, low canal. Follow the obvious wet passage for some distance, crawling in 10-40cm deep water, to eventually arrive at the Master Junction. Turn right to enter the main Master Cave stream. Follow the flowing water downstream to the sump, where your rope from Valley Entrance will be found entering from above.

Climb up the rope. Follow the obvious worn route via a mixture of crawling, walking and stooping for about 15 minutes (ignoring any smaller side-passages, particularly on the right at a junction which goes to Toyland). Eventually, this reaches a narrow, knee or waist deep stooping-height wade through water and then immediately after this is the pipe to the surface. This emerges (pleasingly) next to where you are parked.

