

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.

BIG MEANIE

December 2016

This pothole provides a classic exchange with, or alternative route to, the bottom of Death's Head Hole (see separate description).

WARNING: The first pitch of Big Meanie is narrow at the top and may prove strenuous particularly on the upward journey. Be sure that anyone entering or exiting via Big Meanie has a suitable ability to tackle this. Loose blocks are a hazard on all pitches in Big Meanie and appropriate care is required.

Big Meanie can be descended in moderately wet conditions. However, the connection to Death's Head Hole can have limited airspace in wet weather. Dry conditions are required if planning to enter the Leck Fell Master Cave.

Parking:

Park at either of the laybys on Leck Fell as shown on the adjacent map.

How to find:

Grid reference: SD 66677 79175

Follow the north side of the wall between the two parking areas for 500m down the fell. Just after a shallow valley, Big Meanie is found as a small shakehole near the wall.

Rigging:

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

Navigation:

Just inside the entrance a traverse line should be rigged leading down to the head of the first pitch.

The first pitch is extremely narrow at the top and will require some careful rigging to ensure this is made as simple as possible. It is useful to have a coiled ladder or a selection of slings available at the top of the pitch which can be deployed if necessary to aid a struggling caver. The pitch quickly widens and reaches a rebelay several metres down above a magnificent shaft. Two further rebelays, separated by a deviation complete the full descent. This pitch is loose in places and extreme care is required to avoid dislodging rocks onto companions below.

Follow the obvious (east) passage from the bottom of the pitch through a large chamber and avens until a junction is reached after the top of a muddy slope. Go right, down an uninviting route through boulders into the connection crawl towards Death's Head Hole. This passage starts small but gradually enlarges, and is muddy and wet throughout. There may even be limited airspace in wet conditions. It ends at balcony overlooking the Death's Head Hole Main Chamber, and a thread on the left provides the first belay for the rope used to descend.

Two rebelays complete the descent to join with the main route entering from Death's Head Hole.

Route to Leck Fell Master Cave (note that this is not included in rigging guides and not resin anchored):

For those wishing to continue to the Leck Fell Master Cave, a scaffolded shaft in the floor of the Main Chamber leads via a short pitch (15m rope required), some crawls and short squeezes into the Death's Head inlet passage. Downstream leads to a junction where the majority of the water then joins. This continues downstream for 100m to a short pitch (12m rope) dropping into the Leck Fell Master Cave.

Downstream reaches a sump in about 200m; however, upstream passes through several very deep sections (which may require swimming). Eventually the water depth decreases and you can follow the fine passage upstream for several hundred metres. Eventually the Lost John's inlet (Groundsheet Junction) is passed on the left, leading via 100m of twisting passage to the bottom of the final pitch of Lost John's Cave. Continue upstream another 150m to reach stooping in the water and then boulders, where a climb up enters Lyle Cavern.

