

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.

Notts Pot is a complex vertical system with several routes all converging at the Lower Streamway. The cave (except BT route) is passable with care to this point in fairly wet conditions. In very wet conditions the final pitches become extremely unpleasant.

Parking: Park at the first major layby on Leck Fell, 700m after the cattle grid. Alternatively, a few cars can be parked on the hard standing either side of the cattle grid, but **PLEASE** leave plenty of space either side of the cattle grid; the very caver-friendly farmer at Leck Fell House needs to be able to use the cattle grid with agricultural vehicles and trailers at all times.

How to find: Grid reference: SD 67100 77805 (GPS recommended)

Walk back down the road and just after the cattle grid turn left through a gate. Go straight ahead up the fell, staying near the right fence/wall. After 600m you will reach a slight plateau (not quite at the highest point on the fell). About 50-100m ahead, a very shallow dry valley enters from the left. Follow the shallow valley away from the wall for about 150m; the Notts Pot shakehole is easily found at the end of this shallow valley.

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

Navigation:

The first pitch is found on the surface and drops to a large ledge 3m down the shakehole. A rebelay allows a further 4m descent into the bottom of the shakehole where a small stream often enters. At the bottom of this pitch, crawl into the cave and keep right to very quickly reach an awkward 3m climb down into the stream (short rope recommended). This can prove to be rather strenuous on the outward journey. Continue downstream for a few minutes to reach a 6m pitch into Three Ways Chamber. A short traverse out helps avoid any falling water in wet conditions. From here, contrary to the chamber name, there are at least five possible vertical routes all uniting at the Lower Streamway:

Left Hand Route: From the bottom of the pitch, an obvious winding passage leads away from Three Ways Chamber. After 20m a hole in the floor straight ahead is the start of the first pitch of the Left Hand route. This pitch drops onto a balcony with an exposed traverse along the left wall (the final part of which is particularly tricky) to the Y-hang for the next (largest) pitch, a magnificent circular shaft dropping approximately 25m. At the bottom of the shaft the rope is rebelayed for a further 4m (free climbable) drop. Then, one final short pitch, using a natural spike for the start of the traverse, drops to the Lower Streamway.

Twilight Zone: This is an interesting and more technical variation on the Left Hand route. Ignore the first pitch of the Left Hand route and instead traverse high beyond it. This route leads out over a traverse to a Y-hang. Descend 10m until level with the balcony (a deviation above this point is on the topo but is either very hard to find or may be absent). At the balcony, swing across 3m to reach the same Y-hang as used by the Left Hand Route, where the rope can be re-belayed or deviated. Several metres further down, swing out of the main shaft onto a ledge in a side-rift. A short traverse leads to Y-hang which drops 4m to another balcony with a window. An anchor here allows the rope to be carefully deviated through the window for the final 15m descent. This lands by the 'natural spike' referenced above, and the short pitch to the Lower Streamway.

Centre Route: Centre route starts as a hole under the left wall near the back of Three Ways Chamber. The first pitch should be protected via two anchors at the bottom of Adamson's route (see below) low down by the right wall, and a Y-hang is gained using two anchors in the roof above the drop. The second pitch is rigged initially from a column of rock and descends via at least three rebelay to the Lower Streamway. Note that a hole part way down this pitch is to be avoided as it drops into the Lower Streamway at the wrong side of a duck; instead swing through a window to ensure you land on the correct side of the duck.

Adamson's route: Across the far side of Three Ways Chamber a steeply ascending traverse (anchors in place for a rope) leads up into a loose chamber. A 2m free climb up into a passage (metal stemples to show the route, best roped) reaches a short pitch into a spacious chamber. The next rope commences at the start of a short crawl which reaches the head of Birthday Pot on the left after only a couple of metres. On the right at the top of Birthday Pot leads to the Acrobat Series (separate research required). Birthday Pot commences as a short descent to a single anchor rebelay and then a further 8m drop to a wide balcony. The pitch continues beyond this balcony as a fine shaft requiring at least one deviation. At the bottom, continue down a narrow descending rift (remaining on-rope) to reach the final drop to the Lower Streamway.

BT Route: This 'Bloody Tight' route commences in a small bedding crawl on the right side of Three Ways Chamber (opposite Centre route). This route is only equipped with some highly defective spits which should not be used. It also joins to the Lower Streamway via a final low airspace duck (which will be sumped in wet conditions). **This route is not shown on the topo and is not recommended.**

Lower Streamway to final sump:

All routes unite at the Lower Streamway. Go downstream for a short distance and climb up several metres in the rift to locate the anchors for a high traverse. Traverse awkwardly along this rift at roof level to the end, where the next pitch is found, narrow at the top and tricky to rig avoiding rope rub (a tri-hang using three anchors is recommended). An ascending traverse from the bottom of this pitch leads upwards to a climb up into a tall calcited aven and then just around the corner is the next large pitch (which can be awkward to depart on the upward journey; an appropriately positioned sling to pull on is suggested). The Ireby Fell stream enters part way down this pitch, providing lots of spray (hazardous when very wet). Halfway down the shaft is a ledge where the rope may be deviated to the other side of the shaft to avoid water (not shown on the topo).

At the bottom, the water tumbles down the final short pitch; continue the previous rope as a traverse over the top of the pitch to a hang at the back of the hole away from the water. Just before landing in the water (a sump!), swing into a small tube, where cavers for many generations have enjoyed a celebratory chocolate bar while admiring the sump and contemplating the long but very enjoyable pending ascent to the surface.

