

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.

CUPCAKE

January 2021

Cupcake, often mistakenly called 'The Cupcake' (which refers to a distinctive shaped formation), was opened in 2011 and provides an esoteric route down into the Notts II system. Cupcake is a muddy, arduous route with vulnerably positioned formations. It is definitely not a quick or easy route to the Master Cave or a trip for novices. There are many tight squeezes and slippery climbs and several sections become impassable in wet conditions. Extreme care is needed to avoid damage to this delicate pothole.

Parking:

Park at the first major layby on Leck Fell, 700m after the cattle grid. Alternatively, in dry weather only (so as not to churn up the ground) a few cars can be parked on the verge (tight against the wall) either side of the cattle grid. **PLEASE** leave plenty of space and do not block access; remember that the farmer at Leck Fell House needs to be able to get up the road with agricultural vehicles and trailers at all times of day.

How to find: Grid reference: SD 6672 7842

From the layby, walk back down the road to the cattle grid. Through the gate, go left and follow the wall towards the corner of the field. The entrance hatch is located about 6m from the left wall as you near the corner of the field.

Rigging:

The rigging topo is included on the CNCC website. **Note that there are a few 'up' pitches on the downward route. These usually have ropes in-situ to help serve as navigational markers and to identify the pitches. You must make your own judgement on how to safely ascend these pitches, remembering that in-situ ropes are not maintained, and their integrity cannot be guaranteed.**

Navigation:

The entrance pitch lands on blocks, where a further shored shaft can be climbed down (a second shored shaft drops to a dead end). A crawl leading away from the bottom of the shaft soon passes the famous 'Cupcake' formation, a calcite bollard of cakey resemblance. At the end of the crawl, Splashdown Pitch is reached dropping into a reasonably roomy chamber (Pool Chamber). There is a small inlet with formations in Pool Chamber that should not be entered as it gets too tight and entering would cause damage.

Climb up out of Pool Chamber and down a 4m chimney into a rift passage which leads towards Mud Pitch (the passage continuing onwards over the top of the chimney should not be used to avoid damage to formations).

Beyond here, it is necessary to **ASCEND** Limbo Pitch. There may be an in-situ rope here to demonstrate the intended route, however, it will be necessary to chimney up a narrow rift just past the pitch, to reach the top where your own rope can be rigged only a few metres away.

The way on is away from the pitch, along some easy traverses, and generally keep left to avoid damage to formations. After a section of crawling and walking between formations (**EXTREME CARE PLEASE**) the passage degenerates into Sludge Crawl. This is a wet and gritty low crawl which ends at Slither Aven, which is rigged with a traverse then a drop to a balcony and then a final 20m pitch with a deviation.

From the bottom of Slither Aven, two routes lead off; take the route going directly away from Slither Aven, through a gap between boulders (the other route drafts but becomes gradually too tight). Ignore the blind hole in the floor and traverse over it to the right into a rift passage. This rift passage continues with various climbs up and down and some tighter sections, ending at a tight squeeze called Bendall's Dilemma.

Beyond Bendall's Dilemma a calcite slope (handline useful) descends into Hubert Carstairs II, a large block-strewn chamber.

At the end of the chamber, ascend blocks to reach some fine mud towers and then descend blocks to another chamber, Hubert Carstairs I. A rift on the right leads to two short **ASCENDING** pitches. There are usually in-situ ropes to facilitate identification of these, however, it is up to the caving team to identify a suitable way to install your own safe belay. Note that these are not easily climbable.

At the top of the pitches, the passage really starts to get interesting and removal of SRT kit is recommended. Easy crawling leads to a gradual narrowing/lowering and about 30 minutes of arduous caving involving a tight muddy U-bend, a narrow squeeze and then Breakthrough Pitch, a handline descent in a rift which must be departed 4m down into an obvious crawl rather than continuing to the very bottom.

More crawling leads to the Inverse Superman Squeeze (a tight sideways squeeze in a narrow rift), followed shortly by The Horse Trough, a 2m long bailable duck which may sump in wet weather.

Beyond The Horse Trough, follow the most obvious route (ignoring an inlet on the right), with more flat-out crawling, to eventually cross over the top of a rift and then reach a chimney down to the tight pitchhead of Count Lazlo Stroganoff's Aven. This is a multi-ledged pitch landing in Sir Digby Spode's Inlet of Notts II. In one direction the drop to the main Notts II streamway is encountered; and in the other direction the passage reduces in size and reaches Bruno Kranski's Rising Sump, which is the route towards Lyle Cavern and Lost Johns' Cave/Boxhead Pot/Cracker (see Notts II description which is found in the Leck Fell Master Cave description document).

