

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.

LINK POT to THE MISTRAL (also known as Mistral Hole)

April 2024

An interesting through trip in the southern parts of Ease Gill Caverns, with some very fine passages and a long, but mostly easy, mud-floored crawl. This short trip, which can be completed in a few hours, has a real sense of journey.

The wallows on the way towards Dusty Junction become impassable in very wet weather.

Parking:

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

Approach:

From Bull Pot Farm follow the footpath south through the gate on the side of the house. The enclosure of Bull Pot of the Witches, a large open pothole, is passed on the right after 100m. The path then bears left and goes steadily uphill for 400m and crosses the wall at a gate. Cross over, turn left and follow the wall. After 250m (next to 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; A short (8m) handline is useful for the entrance climb and if performing the through-trip, this will need to be pre-rigged.

Tackle:

8m handline for The Mistral entrance (to be pre-rigged), 20m rope or 15m ladder plus lifeline for Link Pot entrance.

Navigation:

The entrance pitch for Link Pot is 15m, narrow at first but soon opens out. It is arguably easier tackled with ladder/lifeline, due to the more restricted nature of the pitch and to avoid the encumbrance of various otherwise unnecessary items of SRT kit.

At the bottom, a short descent leads to the impressive Hylton Hall. Head down this (right), ignore a wide rift on the left after 4m, and after a further 6m locate a narrow fissure on the left that usually drips a little. Enter this and wriggle upwards into a large passage, this is Bypus Pybass. ##

Follow the passage, ignoring a crawl on the left and soon passing a fine false floor at waist height, to arrive at Squid Junction. Two tunnels lead on from here. The right tunnel goes to the rest of Link Pot (an extensive and interesting system, worth exploring including as far as Serendipity, see Northern Caves). However, take the left of the two tunnels for the route to Pippikin Pot and The Mistral.

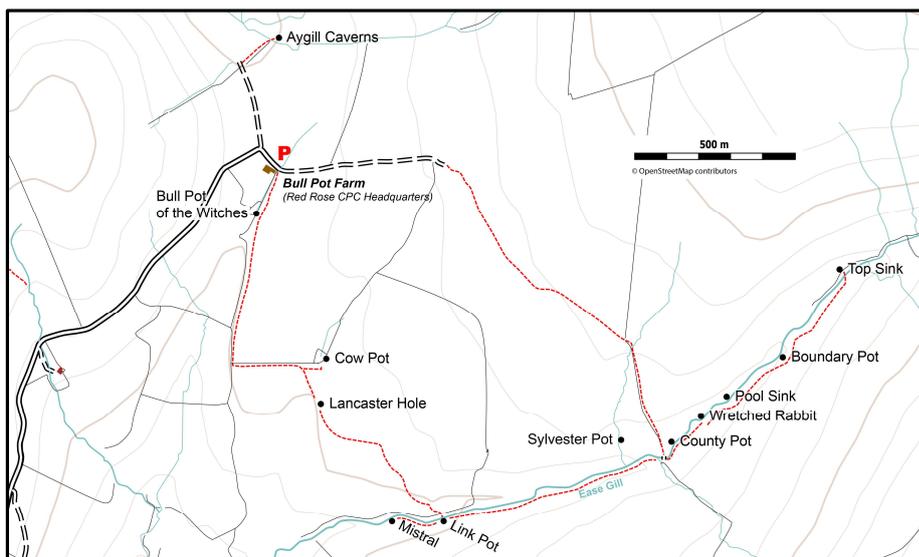
The next section consists of two long crawls; The first is Wet Wallows, which is easily followed by ignoring any obvious inlets or small avens, and ends with a tight, flat-out crawl in the water and then a standing higher aven at a cross-rift (a useful spot to take a breather). The continuation into the next crawl, Muddy Wallows, is directly opposite the aven, behind a boulder blocking the cross-rift. Muddy Wallows involves crawling in deep muddy water at one point. **The Wet Wallows and Muddy Wallows contain some squeezes which may be problematic for larger cavers.**

Respite after Muddy Wallows is brief as Trowel Crawl follows, which is relatively short and ends in a flat out, tight crawl. The passage ahead leads up a calcite slope and then another 30-40m of crawling reaches larger passage at Dusty Junction in the Pippikin Series.

At Dusty Junction, left leads to Dickeries and Red Wall Chamber, straight on leads to The Hall of the Ten and Pippikin Pot. Our way on towards The Mistral is to the right, where varied passages including rift, phreatic tube and short crawls lead past an aven (rope hanging down on the left at the time of writing) and then along a passage (rope hanging down on the right at the time of writing) to The Hobbit, a large flat roofed chamber.

Climb up the slope in this chamber and exit via a crawl, which leads to a small chamber. Continue across this chamber and enter a tortuous passage, where you can usually feel the draught from the surface. At the end of this passage, you arrive at the bottom of the easy climb using your pre-rigged handline up to the surface at The Mistral entrance.

Most guides refer to this as Pybus Bypass, as it is a bypass named after Bill Pybus, one of the original Northern Pennine Club (NPC) explorers. However, original NPC journals use the name Bypus Pybass, which Bill himself has confirmed to be a correct and intentional pre-publication alteration of the name.



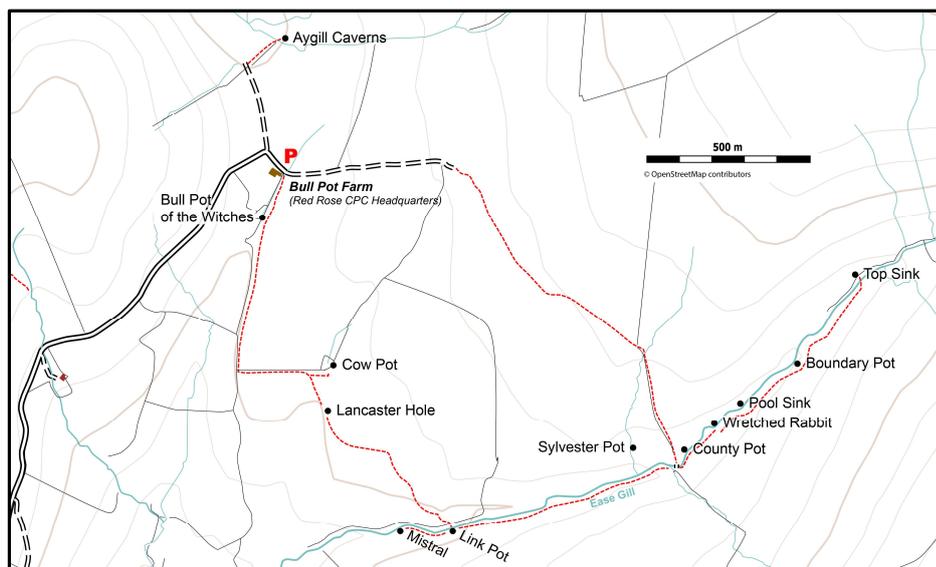
LINK POT (to Serendipity)

August 2022

A much-overlooked adventure in Link Pot. **The pitches into Serendipity are flood responsive and typically cannot be descended when Ease Gill is flowing at Link Pot entrance.**

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

Approach: From Bull Pot Farm follow the footpath south through the gate on the side of the house. The enclosure of Bull Pot of the Witches, a large open pothole, is passed on the right after 100m. The path then bears left and goes steadily uphill for 400m and crosses the wall at a gate. Cross over, turn left and follow the wall. After 250m (next to 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.

Tackle: 20m rope for Link Pot entrance, 15m + 45m ropes for Serendipity pitches, total: 15x krabs, 1x sling.

Navigation:

The entrance pitch for Link Pot is 15m, narrow at first (and awkward particularly on the ascent near the top) but it soon opens out.

At the bottom, a short descent leads to the impressive Hylton Hall. Head down this (right), ignore a wide rift on the left after 4m, and after a further 6m locate a narrow fissure on the left that usually drips a little. Enter this and wriggle upwards into a large passage, this is Bypus Pybass. Follow the passage, ignoring a crawl on the left and soon passing a fine false floor at waist height, to arrive at Squid Junction. Two tunnels lead on from here. The right tunnel is the way to Serendipity, leading into a short walking-height passage that soon reaches Night Shift Chamber.

Night Shift Chamber has several ways on, but the way to Serendipity is a descending slope on the left (may have water entering in wet weather). This leads down into an unappealing flat-out crawl, which quickly enlarges to hands and knees. After about 20m there is a left bend, and soon after this the passages reaches a step across a deep crevasse (with a bridging rock) into a much larger passage. This is the start of The Canyon.

The Canyon should be followed to the right in good sized passage, passing China Dog Chamber (once finely decorated, now badly damaged), and then reaching some exposed traverses. There are currently in-situ ropes demonstrating the route along these traverses, but of course these should never be considered a safe substitute to rigging your own. The traverse nears an end at a particularly wide step across onto a balcony. The Canyon continues (and can be explored for 30 minutes, including a descent to the streamway), however, the way to Serendipity is another exposed step across into an obvious vadose inlet passage, Tiger's Inlet. There is an in-situ rope/chain here to help identify the route.

Tiger's Inlet is a pleasant walk for about 50m to a junction; Keep left, and then a short distance afterwards look out for another junction with a route going off on the right. Follow this route down blocks to soon reach Cairn Junction, a prominent crossroads with large cairn of rocks. The way on at Cairn Junction is right, a low grotty crawl passing various stalactites. After about 30m the passage starts to choke, and it is necessary to take one of two routes diverging off on the left to continue in a parallel crawl for a further 20-30m reaching an obvious dry T-junction. The way on is right, which after only several metres reaches the start of the pitches down to Serendipity.

The first pitch, 7m (15m rope), may be descended via a backup anchor on the right and then two roof anchors. In dry conditions, many cavers choose to traverse around this pitch to the right, and then around to the left corner where it is possible to climb down (an explore of the 60m of walking-height passage upstream is also worthwhile). From the bottom, a multi-anchor traverse to the next pitch commences almost immediately and involves an exposed straddle over the pitch to where anchors allow a take-off. There is a deviation using a drilled hole approximately 6m down, and a rebelay on a ledge approximately 10-15m further down, where the final 6m pitch commences.

In wet conditions this pitch very quickly becomes impassable, with the water spouting directly over the hang of the rope. Do not descend here unless you are confident in the weather forecast! Even when water levels are low enough, there is often lots of spray at the rebelay.

The pitch drops into Easy Street, a fine 400m long walking-height passage, and the reward for your efforts. There are several inlets into Easy Street, all on the right which quickly degenerate to unpleasant crawling. The second of these inlets, an obscure roof tunnel 35m from the pitch, provides a connection to The Grind in Lancaster Hole (additional research needed from Northern Caves). Rather than ruin an otherwise excellent day though, it is more fun to eat a chocolate bar and commence a leisurely outbound journey.