

SHORT DROP CAVE & GAVEL POT

November 2025

Gavel Pot can be entered from the surface for a shorter trip, but for the full experience you can enter at Short Drop and make the full trip to the bottom of Gavel; This fine trip has everything a caver could want!

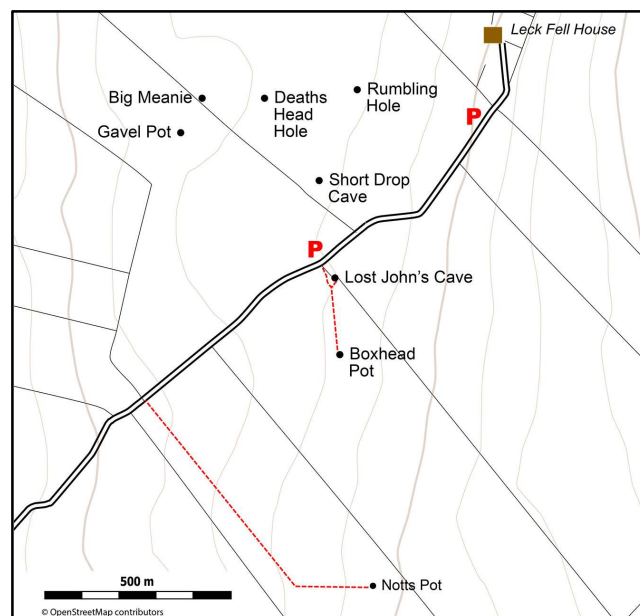
These are active caves; the crawls in Short Drop will sump in wet weather and the lower pitches of Gavel will flood. Settled and dry weather during your trip is essential, but the caves will usually be passable with care if the fell is still drying up following recent light rainfall.

Parking: Park at the first layby on Leck Fell, 700m after the cattle grid.

How to find: Short Drop: SD 67015 78922, Gavel Pot: SD 66607 79062

For Short Drop Cave follow the far side of the wall down the fell just beyond the car park. After 150m (next to a depression by the wall), Short Drop Cave is an obvious shallow valley within a fenced enclosure, about 60m from the wall. For Gavel Pot, follow the wall down the fell on the same side as the car park, for about 600m until a large enclosure with trees is seen about 100m on the left. This is Gavel Pot. Care is needed on the approach.

Rigging: The rigging topos are available on the CNCC website.



Short Drop Cave (to Gavel Pot)

If wishing to exit at Gavel Pot, the entrance pitch must be rigged from above in advance, either with rope or via the ladder route.

At the entrance, a 'short drop' enters a stream passage. Follow this passage downstream which soon lowers to a crawl, which may be a little wet. Just when you are starting to get fed up of crawling, the passage enlarges at a junction with the main water inlet entering on the left. This junction is easily missed if travelling upstream so take note for later. Continue downstream. The passage gets larger and then, after some distance, passes under a gravity defying boulder bridge. Beyond here, the passage narrows slightly and descends some cascades just before the first pitch.

This pitch (5m) is quite easy and descends clear of the water, landing in a pool. A very exposed traverse leads to a climbable alternative.

Downstream of the pitch, the stream passage continues including several cascades, until, on a left bend, the water cascades down a pitch to a sump. The route at this point, marked by anchors, is a 3m climb up, just back from the left bend at the start of the pitch, to an exposed traverse high up along the right wall which can be followed over the cascades and the pitch and around a corner into an ascending passage with daylight above. The entrance pitch from Gavel Pot lands here. Continue straight on along the passage into the splendid Gavel Pot shakehole.

The route onwards down Gavel Pot commences as per the [second](#) paragraph below.

Gavel Pot

Scramble down the entrance towards a ledge surrounding the main shakehole. At the bottom of the slope on the left is the Eyehole route pitch involving a short backup line to a Y-hang, followed by a deviation. This lands at the end of the traverse coming up from Short Drop Cave; up-slope from here is a short passage to the floor of the Gavel shakehole. Note: beyond Eyehole route, further around the ledge, are anchors for a second pitch into the Gavel shakehole, however this route cannot be rigged without rope-rub and is only recommended as a ladder route.

At the far end of the shakehole, a pitch goes underground amongst huge boulders. A Y-hang can be found high on the right above the boulders, dropping to a Y-hang rebelay. Alternatively, you can take a protected wriggle under the boulders (bottom right of the stack) for direct access to this second Y-hang. Both options are shown on the topo. This drops into a lofty passage, at the end of which is the next 'pitch' down a wall of stacked blocks. Experienced cavers will just climb down this, but an eyehole a few metres above provides a belay for a handline if needed.

A short crawl reaches the stream, which can be followed downstream for 90m as a mixture of crawling and stooping. The passage then enlarges at an obvious junction. Right here leads to the October Series (rather unpleasant and best ignored). Instead, continue downstream for another 130m, as a mixture of crawling, stooping and walking (**take care to avoid the roof formations**), to eventually reach an awkward 3m cascade climb.

*About 50m after the right turn to the October Series, a 2m climb up on the right of the stream passage leads into a dry oxbow, where just around the corner a climb back down to the stream bypasses a considerable (40m) loop of the streamway. Within this dry oxbow is a crawl on the right for 25m leading to another large passage. Left goes to a sump but right leads to the well-decorated Glasfurd's Chamber. **Please take care here to avoid damage to the vulnerable formations!** Further flat-out crawling beyond here passes through a succession of additional well decorated chambers, each connected by crawls, until a chamber is reached with no way on. An excellent excursion for **careful** cavers.*

This climb is awkward and benefits from long slings or a safety line rigged from stal bollards above (not shown on the topo). An alternative climb can be found by departing the streamway about 15m further back, leading to a similarly exposed climb down emerging from the left wall only a few metres beyond the first climb. Beyond these climbs, the next pitch is quickly encountered, and Gavel Pot starts to feel more like a classic pothole. This is a dramatic and sometimes wet descent with an exposed traverse and a few hard-to-reach rebelay to avoid the water.

A short distance onwards is the final, also excellent pitch, with a deviation from a flake to avoid the water. This lands next to a fascinating and ominous sump pool (care not to fall in). For non-divers, this draughty chamber is the end of the trip and a return to the surface begins.