

Redhouse Lane Swallet, surveyed length 11.3km, depth 106m

Redhouse Lane Swallet is a major cave system that has everything for the sporting caver, with future potential to connect to Slaughter Stream Cave and caves in the Wye Valley.

Access

The cave lies on private land with no public right of access and falls under the Forestry England Cave Access Agreement.

FoDCCAG has negotiated access with both parties such that only a single permit is required. This must be obtained by applying in advance to permits@fodccag.org.uk.

Party number is limited to 6 maximum, one permit per day.

There is a logbook at the start of NIRA. Please sign on entry and indicate route planned.

Conservation

Great effort was made throughout exploration to minimise damage to floor deposits. The cave contains a vast array of calcite formations, sand and mud floors, dried and floating calcite rafts, cryogenic calcite, remains of rocks on ledges left after the last glaciation, and many more features. Please take care, and observe the taping, so that we can preserve for future generations.

Note: No access is permitted beyond:

- **The start of Snow Flake Passage (to the Marble River)**
- **The end section of Pâques Passage (in Crack in Black)**

Both passages are taped across with signs. Failure to adhere to this will permanently damage the cave floor.

Digging

There are many active digs in the cave. If anyone wishes to take part, then please contact FoDCCAG for details.

For any new dig, please contact the Conservation Officer of FoDCCAG at conservation@fodccag.org.uk , giving details of the location together with any considerations (e.g. spoil disposal, conservation, etc.)

Warning

The entire entrance series floods to the roof and should not be entered during prolonged periods of rain. If water is coming in the concrete rings at the entrance, **do not enter**. The cave is normally inaccessible from November to March.

Trips to the far reaches of the cave, especially when carrying ropes and equipment, are long and arduous. Do not underestimate the return through the entrance series.

Loose boulders abound in the 2024 extensions and rescue would be extremely difficult.

FoDCCAG will not accept any responsibility for any damage, injury or loss (however caused) resulting from the use, misuse or misinterpretation of information in this cave descriptions or rigging topos.

Location

Redhouse Lane. Approach from English Bicknor (the other route is a dirt track, unsuitable for cars).

Parking

W3W: ///atlas.nuptials.mime

OS: SO 57457 15255

Lat/Long: 51.83429, -2.61881

Park on the large verge near the gate. Ensure that the gate is not obstructed.

Cave

Cave: W3W: ///gadgets.dispenser.alcove.

OS: SO 57326 14990

Lat/Long: 51.83189, -2.62068

Go through the gate (leaving it closed as the field often contains livestock). Continue straight ahead to a wooded closed ended valley after 300m. Go over the step stile. An obvious concrete ring sits over the entrance. At the base of the concrete ring is a grill cover secured by a padlock and chain. *(Note that this will be upgraded in due course.)* Please re-lock on exit.

History

In 1990 a depression was revealed after extensive flooding and digging commenced. The first major breakthrough occurred in 1992 after an extensive 2 year excavation project headed by Paul Taylor and Tony Marden of GSS. Minor extensions by GSS/RFDCC to 2004 brought the cave length to 1.6km.

GSS re-started digging in 2022 and finally broke through the end boulder choke with RFDCC on 10th August 2024. The cave was extended to >4km by the end of 2024. Further discoveries in 2025 increased the length to over 10.5km. At the current time (June 2026), the surveyed length is 11.3km.

Rigging

Entrance	Fixed ladders - 20m rope plus sling, belayed from a tree
Pitch and climb rigging topos	Available from the FoDCCAG website

FoDCCAG does not install or maintain any fixed aids in caves other than the resin anchors shown on the topos. Any ropes or through-bolts found in the cave are **not** official fixed aides and were placed for exploration purposes only. ***Should cavers choose to use these they do so at their own risk.***

Entrance Series

Below the entrance grill, stirrup loops in concrete tubes descend to a series of fixed ladders. The rope should be belayed from the adjacent tree. Continue down an 8m climb through the ***Horror Choke*** to a crawl into ***First Chamber***. A 5m climb down a cascade, further crawl and a struggle over a rock flake (***Toilet Seat***) enter ***Fair Chamber***. Further crawling reaches a junction. To the right is the exit of an alternative route via the ***229 series*** that can be reached via a climb up from the bottom of the first entrance ladder.

The 229 series is an entertaining route in its own right, much harder on return. At the bottom of the first entrance ladder, go up a short ladder to a rift. Follow the passage and descend down Water Rift. A low crawl beyond leads to a short climb, reverse at the top. At the base is a chamber. Follow the right wall and descend to the stream. The way on is low. Turn left at a junction and continue along an awkward passage to join the main route.

The combined routes continue in the stream to the **Mud Duck**. In high water this will sump and may need clearing after winter floods. Shortly beyond is a crawl up to the left to the **1992 Breakthrough - 'The Up and Over'**. **WARNING: Do not follow the stream, which becomes too tight and is very hard to reverse.** The crawl beyond the breakthrough descends to rejoin the stream. The passage becomes flat-out to the **Gravel Duck**, which requires clearing after winter floods and heavy rain. Shortly beyond the stream flows to the left (*terminating in a sump with a short inlet just before*). The main way on is to the right (**First Junction**).

A series of flat out and hands and knees crawls eventually rejoin the **Marden Streamway**. Mixed going in deepening water reaches the **Farr Duck**. There is a line through this 8m long obstacle, which has minimal airspace in high water. Shortly beyond is another ear wetting at **Toad Duck**. More mixed going in generally larger passage goes through two more ducks to a crawl where the passage abruptly turns left (west) at **Sponge Corner**.

Here one can begin to stoop and eventually walk to arrive at **Second Junction**. To the left leads to the **Fossil Series** and **East Inlet**.

Straight ahead the streamway is varied going until it suddenly increases to comfortable walking size at a point where a passage joins from Missed Chamber in the Fossil Series on the left. This is **Westway** and continues to a point where the stream disappears down a tight passage on the right towards the first downstream (too tight) sump.

Ahead an obvious route over boulders continues via a short crawl to the 2024 Extensions.

Fossil Series

*Left at Second Junction quickly arrives at **Bowen Chamber**. The way ahead continues as varied going to where the passage splits at a drop. Over the drop ends too tight very close to an inlet downstream of Donna's Delight. Down the drop ends in boulder chokes close to the Surprise Passage beyond Donna's Delight.*

*Immediately right at Bowen Chamber is a hands and knees crawl to an ascent to **Missed Chamber**. It is possible to descend on the right at the far end of this chamber to the Westway streamway.*

*Following upstream from Bowen Chamber a drop on the right leads to **East Inlet**. This low streamway reaches **Donna's Delight** a 60m long canal with ducks under rock flakes. At the end is a very low duck to enter **Surprise Passage**. The route continues via **5-Hour Dig** to more varied passage before entering the large and unstable **Breakdown Chamber**. Beyond ends in strongly draughting boulder chokes.*

Entrance to 2024 Extensions

There are now three routes into the new (2024) extensions.

The 'trade' route, known as the **Stretcher Hole**, is a large hole found by looking up sharp left. This enters **NIRA (Not in Redhouse Anymore)**.

For added 'fun' there are the alternatives of the **C-Section** and the **Original** route. These can be reached by continuing straight on beyond the climb to Stretcher Hole. The C-Section is a climb up a slot directly straight on. The Original route is via a flat-out crawl just before the C-Section slot. Descend a drop and perform a yoga manoeuvre to further tight crawling to an ascent through boulders 10m downstream of the C-Section. If you want a classic 'original' hard trip go in and out this way and via the 229 series!

NIRA

NIRA is a large passage, typically 4m wide and 10m high. To the east (left) it terminates after 50m at a large cross rift. To the right is too tight. To the left leads via a flat-out crawl to **Crack in Black**.

Crack in Black comprises 250m of large passage, well decorated in places, which terminated in a boulder choke. **Note, just before this choke is an extremely unstable section where the wall is becoming detached. If this fell, cavers would be trapped beyond.**

The terminal choke was dug open on Good Friday, 2026, to another 70m of mostly large passage **Pâques Passage**. This ends at a varved mud flow with an impressive calcite choke – **The Altar**. **Do not proceed beyond the tape.** There is a good view from the tape to the Altar.

Back at the 2024 breakthrough, to the west (right) the main route continues for a 150m via climbs and descents over huge boulder piles to terminate at the Rhinestone Junction. To the left is the **Rhinestone** (a tall leaning, pillar) terminating in a choke shortly beyond (currently an active dig). To the right is a descent under a boulder pile (**Toto Underpass**) to a continuation of the main passage. (Originally this was accessed via a loose climb to a technical 9m pitch (**Toto's Pitch**)). The on-going large passage rises and descends over more boulder slopes to a further junction – **Dorothy's Dilemma**. Both routes – left and right – reunite.

The left route is via an ascent, traverse, and descent via an exposed 7m climb – rope required (see topo). To the right a descent down large boulders (**stay to the left of the tape as the boulders to the right are extremely unstable**) reaches the Redhouse stream. Upstream a crawl leads to a sump (**Not Farr Sump**), whilst a dry passage just before the sump on the right ends in chokes below the approach passage above. Downstream after a short crawl the passage enlarges to where the left-hand route joins.

Route to Tiff's Treat

The ensuing passage increases massively in size, gradually rising to a peak where the original explorers halted at the start of **Tiff's Treat** (marked with boulders in a 'T'). There are GCRG cave rescue bags left here – **please do not touch unless in an emergency**. The view onwards is of a huge passage descending into the blackness.

Tiff's Treat to Lower Streamway and Mindless Optimism

Tiff's Treat passage descends steeply and is easiest if traversed to the right going in and central on return. At the first low point to the left is a very unstable and tight route to rejoin a short section of the streamway before that passage sumps. The main route continues past **Easter Island** (with a nose rock formation on the right that looks like a Moai idol).

Lower Streamway

Just beyond the next low point, part way up the next climb, is a passage on the left which is the entrance to the **Lower Streamway**. Belay to the two fixed anchors on the left-hand wall and descend a short drop attached to the rope taking care not to go down the steep slope. Traverse

across to a Y-hang. Descend 3m to a re-belay, to an impressive free-hanging pitch to the Lower Streamway. *(Note there is a lower passage to the left of the start of this route that leads to a passage overlooking the pitch part way down).*

After two tricky climbs along the 100m of large passage, the next 8m pitch is reached – a traverse over a slab to a drop into a chamber. At floor level to the right is a duck - **Donald Duck** - which exits under a cascade. Beyond the streamway soon opens up into an impressive canyon with attractive rivulet cascades. After a further 100m the passage ends in a boulder choke. Aven to the right stretch far upwards terminating under the fossil series above.

Mindless Optimism

The main trunk passage continues upwards where it initially appears to terminate. The way on at the top is to the left which rapidly descends. Stay to the right across a narrow traverse going up then down a 2m climb. This drops to a chamber. To the left via a slot leads to **Dan's Passage**, but the main way on is up a 3m awkward climb up a sloping rock, to a short crawl opening into blackness. *At a taped triangle to the left is where a route connects with Dan's Passage.* Beyond, in the main route, after a short distance is **Mindless Optimism**. This is a major junction for several routes and is characterised by impressive views to the north and west.

Cryogenic Causeway

From Mindless Optimism an obvious large passage ascends to the left (west). This ends at a climb down where the rock changes abruptly to the attractive white Crease Limestone. This is the start of **Cryogenic Causeway** - 650m of mainly walking size passage that splits into two equally large branches (**North** and **South**) all terminating in boulder chokes. The series is characterised by the floor deposits of cryogenic calcite and mud casts, and the remains of three sets of bat bones. There is a strong, cold draught throughout this series.

Dan's Passage

A slot descends to a sloping rift with fine mud deposits on the right. Shortly a junction is reached. To the right a traverse across a pit, leads to a too tight crawl on the left and a climb to a series of rifts which emerge just before Mindless Optimism.

To the left, after a few metres a sloping rift on the right connects through to Pissimism near the Bowling Alley. Straight ahead terminates in a too tight rift.

Pissimism, The Mines of Moria and the Marble River

From Mindless Optimism and to the left of the approach to Cryogenic Causeway, hidden behind a large boulder, is the entrance to **Pissimism**. A descent through boulders leads to a bifurcation. The left route incorporates a couple of narrow passages to arrive at the Bowling Alley on the right and the connection to Dan's Passage straight ahead. The Bowling Alley is a mainly stooping passage with a sloped roof.

Back at the original junction, the route to the right is generally large but incorporates an awkward traverse.

Both routes unite at a small chamber. Beyond which there is a further bifurcation. The right route passes taped areas with many gypsum crystals (**Gypsum Boulevard**) and a gypsum filled side passage on the right (taped) - **Low Five**. *Low Five starts walking past gypsum crystals and a single selenite needle on the left (taped off – care). The way on quickly descends to crawling of various heights before ending in a too tight boulder choke.*

The left route at the previous junction is an oxbow which rejoins the main passage shortly after Low Five.

The main route continues to a T-junction, where the height increases dramatically. (At the start is a crawl to the right which is an oxbow that joins to the right of the T-junction). At the T-junction, right quickly chokes beyond the crawl oxbow. Left continues to **Climax Corner** with its attractive mud and flowstone formations. Here, on the left is a 5m climb down to the **Mines of Moria** – a series of varied passage over 600m in length. To the left is **Moria South** which is taped after a short distance. **Do not cross as** beyond the passage shortly ends below the large passage above. There is a draughting rift to the right before the end which has been enlarged but is still too tight. To the right below the 5m climb is **Moria North**.

Moria North begins in what feels like a relict streamway passage, passing areas of sand and cobbles on the floor. A tight oxbow is passed on the left which rejoins at the next corner which turns sharply left. Here the passage changes in character to a tall rift which requires a few climbs and traverses to progress along. After roughly 100m, the passage changes character again into a larger walking passage with a number of side passages to both the left and right. The beds in this area dip steeply (35°) to the west (left), so that the side passages to the left all drop quite steeply until mud blockages are met. Passages to the right all become too tight very quickly. The main passage ends at a very low crawl which pops out into an enlargement just big enough to fit 2 people in – ironically named **St Paul's**.

Beyond Climax Corner, the main route becomes increasing large and more boulder filled. The only passage off the next section (on the left) is a low arch under the left-hand wall which gives access to **Stoop Loop**. A short stoop quickly regains height where a blind chamber can be entered on the left. Descending the rift ahead a window high on the left connects back to the blind chamber. Beyond a U-bend the passage continues upslope to a wider cross-rift. Left is blind and the way on is to the right which continues to an area of breakdown. On the left at floor level, a climb under/between boulders gives access to pair of parallel rifts. A downhill squeeze in the final rift leads to the base of a short tight climb, from which the continuing rift eventually connects back to the main passage between Boulder Land and Snow Flake Passage. .

Beyond a particularly large bouldery section (**Boulder Land**), a traverse on right and the entrance from Stoop Loop, the passage narrows to a high rift with a floor completely covered in white 'snowflake' calcite crystals – **Snow Flake Passage**.

NOTE at this point the passage is taped off with signs and NO ACCESS is permitted beyond to preserve the unique floor deposits beyond. The series has only been visited twice for survey and photography using the same footsteps without boots for several sections.

Beyond Snow Flake Passage the floor changes to fine cracked mud and reaches a boulder floored chamber. The obvious passage up on the right is a bypass which avoids an awkward traverse straight ahead (required to protect the floor). The bypass and traverse rejoin in a large chamber, at the end of which is the start of **Pringle Passage**. This section is extremely vulnerable as the floor comprises of large calcite flakes and it too wide to traverse. It was originally passed crossing from the left and progressing on the right in single footsteps to minimise damage.

The floor changes to extremely fragile calcite floating on water that breaks with minimal weight. Eventually, 200m before the passage terminates the **Marble River** is reached where the floor becomes solid and has the appearance of a marble tabletop. It is followed along a fine vadose canyon. The passage terminates in calcite flow, very close to the terminal point of Flow Choke Passage in Slaughter Stream Cave. To the left at the start of the solid floor is an ascending rift - too tight at the top.

We're Off to See the Wizard (WOTSTW)

Head north at Mindless Optimism, staying to the right of the taped path. After a dip down, a rift to the right is passed, which terminates at a 4m climb. *This climb is the main route into the Lhasa Rift series.*

Straight head the passage leads to **Wizard Junction**. To the left is a scramble up to **We're Off to See the Wizard (WOTSTW)**, 250m of large passage formed in Crease Limestone characterised by a floor covered by mud casts and cryogenic calcite. Just after the multi-coloured roof of the **Gobstobber Chamber** the passage terminates in a marl choke.

At the start of WOTSTW is an awkward 4m climb to the right to enter **Into the Void**. *This starts as a traverse in Crease limestone past many fossils (Paleo Paradise) to a chamber. Beyond the passage terminates to the left in a choke. To the right, an awkward traverse drops into further passage. The way on is to the left and then right via a crawl at low level. The series terminates at a chamber with a set of bat bones. A lower route contains a large geode and ends in chokes both ways.*

Lhasa Rifts

Above a 6m climb, from Mindless Optimism, is a chamber. To the right is a series of rifts and a loop, all terminating in chokes. To the left, a large passage with bends and a couple of blind rifts to the sides, crosses a boulder filled cross-joint. The passage reaches a boulder which is climbed to a small chamber. Above and to the left is a 3m climb to the Wicked North. To the right is a passage to a complex area. One tight (and taped) route terminates at a calcite flow - **The Forbidden Pool – which must not be crossed**. The other side can be reached from below Falky's Folly.

Wicked North

Straight ahead at Wizard Junction leads to the **Wicked North** and the **Wicked Pitches of the North**. At the start, the passage size reduces considerably but remains largely walking/stooping. The first passage to the left is an oxbow and the next side passage to the right leads via a 3m climb down into the Lhasa Rifts. The main way continues to an obvious junction. Right drops away to the **Folly route**, whilst straight ahead is the **Wicked route**. The latter starts with over an awkward climb up, to relatively easy going to terminate at a pitch – the **Very Wicked Pitch of the West (VWPOTW)**. A high exposed traverse leads to a Y-hang and a fine 20m free-hang. CARE as loose boulders abound at the start of the traverse and 2/3^{ds} of the way down.

Before the pitch to the left is a rift, and shortly beyond a right branch, which is the route into the High North – an interesting series of interconnecting rifts, some tight, all ending in chokes.

Back at the previous junction, on the right the Folly route immediately begins with **Falky's Folly** – a descending rift to a tricky 3.5m climb down followed by a 3m climb up. Beyond a passage on the right leads to the original route to the Lhasa Rifts. *This part of the Lhasa Rifts splits after a short distance. The passage to the left ends at a calcite flow (the passage beyond terminates). Do not cross the tape. To the right the passage ends at The Forbidden Pool – which must not be crossed. The other side can be reached from Mindless Optimism.* Straight ahead, some awkward climbs and traverses lead to a 12m pitch – the **Wicked Pitch of the North**. The pitch (12m) is rigged off a short traverse to a Y-hang on the left and further Y-hang at a re-belay 3m down. Both north pitches land in a massive passage with routes leading off to the west and north.

BELOW the Wicked Pitches

Frosty Freeway

To the west a large gypsum encrusted passage splits at a junction. Straight ahead continues with varied going to end at a draughting choke which is very close to a point in the main north passage. To the left, enters **Frosty Freeway**, a fine passage with masses of gypsum crystals on the floors and walls. This terminates in a massive boulder choke below Mindless Optimism, just before which is an impressive array of gypsum flowers (**CARE !**).

March Madness

To the north is a descent down an unstable gypsum crystal lined boulder slope to enter a fine, high passage that continues over boulder piles and traverses with fine scalloping.

At a point where the floor drops down a climb, the way on is a traverse to the right. *The lower route connects via some varied and generally smaller passage to the lower series below Calibration Chamber.*

Shortly, **Calibration Chamber**, is reached. The main way on is via a hands and knees crawl to the right which crosses over a deep rift to enter walking passage. *The obvious passage to the left out of Calibration Chamber descends a climb to enter a lower passage (Lower March) at the base of the rift above. This eventually ends in breakdown, with the lower route prior to Calibration Chamber entering part way along from the right. If one stays at high level it is possible to enter a passage heading west that ends at a mud choke. Just prior to the end is a choked alcove which is presumed to connect with the series to the north of Frosty Freeway. High level to the right connects to the deep rift on the main route.*

The main north passage (**Higher March**) is walking with a few climbs and boulder obstacles until a loose slope up enters a small chamber. Ahead is a short crawl through a rock tube to a junction – **Matt's Rifts**. *Left drops down a 2m and then a 6m climb to a route that connects with the Calcite River.* The main way to the right continues until there is a rift that drops to the left, noticeable by a fine calcite flow down the left wall. This is **Consolation Climb**.

Continuing past Consolation Climb, the passage passes an oxbow and a number of small side passages. One of these to the left leads via a very tight squeeze to a technical 5m climb to join the passage below Consolation Climb, prior to the White Forest.

The main passage before Consolation Climb lowers over mud floors to emerge at a junction. Straight ahead is a fine vadose canyon with cracked mud floor, pools, and beautiful wall scallops all in Crease Limestone – **The Chocolate River** – which terminates in a flat out mud crawl, too tight at the end. Just before the start of the Chocolate River is a tube to the left – **The Poop Chute**. *This ends too tight and slippery and is extremely difficult to reverse.*

To the right before Chocolate River is a well decorated, mainly crawling passage – **The Burrow** - over calcite plates and past sections of cryogenic calcite. This eventually splits with all ends mud choked.

Lower North West

This can be reached via Matt's Rifts or Consolation Climb.

Consolation Climb is a 12m climb down. This can be rigged as a pitch or a tricky free-climb. There are 3 fixed anchors in place. **Beware of the extreme large and loose rocks on the righthand wall at the top of the climb.** Part way down is a narrow section which is very difficult to free-climb on return, particularly when tired.

At the base, 'upstream' (east) soon enters the **Calcite River** – a fine hands and knees passage with a calcite 'river' and smooth mud banks. **(Please keep within the tape)**. *This eventually ends in a boulder choke which, if dug, would connect with the lower series beyond Calibration Chamber.* Before the end are two routes to the right which connect via oxbows. An awkward route straight ahead terminates in a 6m climb which connects with Matt's Rifts.

'Downstream' (west) of Consolation Climb, the passage size increases and passes initially over a calcite floor and fine formations high above. After a drop over a large boulder it passes a couple of boulder filled chambers to the start of the **White Forest**. This section of the cave contains some of the finest formations in the country and **extreme care should be taken when passing beneath the low hanging formations, along the walls and over the floor.**

The initial section starts as an impressive calcite flow to the right before a short flat out crawl - **CARE - as above there are helictites in the roof beyond.** The passage is then walking past an abundance of formations on the right – **stay to the left** - to a point where a large boulder is met. This must be passed **under and to the right** to climb up (**care past the stalagmite bosses**) to further amazing formations. After a further boulder pile with an oxbow to the right, the character changes again, with the route becoming a large canyon with some wading through water to end at a chamber with gour pools formed from the too tight roof inlet on the right. Ahead is a body-sized hole – **The Howling Hole** – which was originally enlarged to pass. Beyond the passage size increases dramatically and a taped path over calcite gour leads to a stream inlet from an aven. *This has been climbed to a fine further pitch up terminating in unstable boulders.* The main passage, now with a stream leads to a blind 8m pitch – **La Gloriosa** – which is traversed on the right.

The passage continues large but becomes wider and lower beyond a junction to the left – **Mudnificent Desolation** – *a small streamway to a blind hole and a traverse to a large unstable chamber with a stream inlet, and a climb down to mud-filled terminal rifts.*

Just beyond Mudnificent Desolation is the start of **Call of the Crow** and the radio location point tied-in close to Symonds Yat Swallet. Beyond some fine flowstone and floor deposits, one encounters an 11m pitch to the left – **Wild West Pitch** – the passage at the base quickly becomes too tight. At the top of the pitch is a too low passage festooned with straws **that must not be entered.** Dead insects and snails have been found in this area to the right.

Beyond the top of the pitch the route splits. The way to the left ends in a choke with many straws. Beyond, the passage ahead, now much lower, again splits. To the right is a tall rift, too tight after a short distance. Straight head passes through the Crow End Dig. To the right ends in a dig with an ascending too tight rift. Straight ahead the crawl becomes very wet and is extremely well decorated (**CARE!**). This ends at a beautifully decorated pool – which is blind beyond. A tiny hole in the roof has been smoke tested to connect to Yat Door cave in the side of the Wye Valley, 17m above.