

Bogg Hall Cave

A guide by York Caving Club

Directions (grid reference SE 709 865)

Park up in the village of Keldholme, near the bridge over the River Dove. Change discretely into wetsuits so as not to shock the local residents!

Introduction

Bogg Hall is the resurgence for Hutton Beck, which sinks into Excalibur Pot one mile to the north and in the next valley to the east. Bogg Hall is also the resurgence for water sinking in the River Dove, the subterranean route of which is not yet completely understood.

Bogg Hall is a superb afternoon trip, providing a short, memorable and unique caving experience!

No prior permission is required for a trip down Bogg Hall.

Weather precautions

Bogg Hall is a very wet cave, and the passages in The Drain will sump with only a 20 cm rise in water levels. It is not known how quickly Bogg Hall responds to rising water, but it is wise to only descend if the weather during the previous week has been reasonably settled.

Tackle requirements

Oh My Ears and Whiskers (dry entrance): 12m handline or 7m ladder belayed from tree.

If planning to dive the resurgence sump entrance, this involves a single 15-18m dive (although can be done as two shorter dives separated by a cross-rift half way). Note that the in-situ dive line is not maintained in any way and should not be considered an alternative to laying your own line. Nobody has dived Bogg Hall for decades, so the state of the sumps is not known!

The sumps are not free-divable!

Other Information

Wetsuits are absolutely essential for a trip down Bogg Hall (and hoods are a nice treat).

The Jurassic limestone of Bogg Hall is very sharp and gritty, and good gloves are essential. It is highly recommended to wear an oversuit over your wetsuit if you value your neoprene!

For a Bogg Hall or Excalibur Pot survey, see www.yorkcavingclub.org.uk

For an excellent pub afterwards, go to The Crown at Hutton-le-Hole.

Navigation

A return trip to The Font should take about an hour.

At the junction in Keldholme near the bridge, walk up the road towards Hutton-le-Hole for 200m and through an overgrown gate on the left just after the sawmill building. The metal entrance hatch is underneath a large tree a short way down the slope only 20m from the gate (it may be covered by leaves). The sump entrance is in the river 20m further down the hill and is for divers only. Belay a 12m handline or 7m ladder from a small tree and drop down the oil drum to a cramped earthy chamber. Continuing downwards, a narrow slot drops into a small wet and gloomy passage.

The low wet crawl (left, as you face away from the entrance slot) is the quickest route onwards, however the most enjoyable route is right into the deepening water of the main river passage. The sump to the surface is passed on the right. Ignore this and follow the obvious main passage round to the left, through chest-deep water, to reach a junction with a large submerged block.

Left returns to the entrance, however, the way onwards is right into the beginning of The Drain, a series of narrow, wet passages. After 10m of aqueous progress a tall chamber is reached where a block lies across the water level. Climb over and return to water level and continue straight ahead for a further 5-6m to reach a junction with The Duck on the right hand side.

The Duck is an elongated slab jammed across the passage at water level. It is possible for thin cavers to slither over the top of this slab, although this is usually less than graceful. The quickest method however is to remove helmet and take a short, feet first duck underneath it (taking care upon surfacing not to bang you head on the roof). From here the cave starts to get exciting!

A few metres beyond The Duck is the first particularly narrow part of The Drain. This triangular shaped passage, with only 20-30cm airspace, appears intimidating, but it bells out nicely below the water level allowing plenty of room for your body and legs. Progress through here is best made feet first with helmet held out ahead of you. After approximately 5m of wet progress a tiny chamber provides a slight respite. The way onwards is the first right through a further 4-5m of narrow and nerve-wracking wet passage to emerge into the relative splendour of the main river passage.

There are several other (even more hardcore) routes through The Drain that may be navigated in low water conditions, and it can be exciting to go exploring!

The main river passage is a splendid wide wet passage, initially stooping but then increasing to stomping, past several fallen blocks, then returning to stooping again. A junction is passed but it is arbitrary which way is followed as they soon re-unite only 10m before the floor disappears and you find yourself (now floating) in the terminal sump chamber, The Font, with 18+m of water below!

The Font is home to some very exciting cave fish, and a waterproof camera can yield some good results. One can also enjoy a poke about in the muddy digs up through blocks at the far side of the Font. The highest point in these boulders has been found using a ferret tracker (and subsequently walkie talkies) to be only 3m from the surface, on the steep sided bank of the River Dove. Digging a connection however would have no merit other than to potentially flood the nearby field!