
A21 D300 Conisbrough Caves East

Site information

Site name: Conisbrough Caves East

Site key: D300

Grid reference: [SK 523 992] (west end)

Site type: cave

Local authority: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, South Yorkshire

Site dimensions: **Site owner:** Various

Conservation status: Regionally Important Geological Site **Date:** 17/5/97

Field surveyor: Tony Gibbs, Derbyshire Caving Association **Date:** 1997

Stratigraphy and rock types

Time unit: Permian **Rock unit:** Cadeby Formation, Zechstein Group

Rock type: Dolostone **Details:**

Site map

(Figure 106) — D300 Conisbrough Caves East

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Site description

The 1997 RIGS Survey included an assessment of cave systems along the Don Gorge by Tony Gibbs of the Derbyshire Caving Association. The notes from this survey are included below. On 4th March 1997, accompanying Tony Gibbs, the following notes were made:

The entrances to Nearcliff Wood Rift were located at [SK 52739 99519], halfway up a steep slope in the quarry face. These comprise small openings and do not appear to be easily accessible. At [SK 52761 99540], the entry to Windy Cave is at the base of the quarried face and again comprises a small hole. Access to the caves is along the towpath to the south of the River Don (nearest points of access unknown). High Rift Cave is at [SK 52737 99231] and is approximately 13 m up a steep sided railway cutting. Accessible by climbing or abseiling with ropes only. Ranch Rift Cave occupies a similar position down the face of the cutting and access is equally as difficult. Flat Roof Cave is apparently used as a Den and access is considered to be difficult, especially in wet weather.

Badger Cave [SK 532 992] See also High Cave. Entry No. 54.

Altitude: 60 m Length: 12 m

Description: Entrance now covered by tipping. Possibility of re-opening needs investigating. Tight entrance about 14 m west of High Cave was a drop of 1.2 m into a passage and low bedding chamber. Higher passage with avens and draughting tubes ended at a choke. Entrances now covered by tipping (1994).

Main points of interest: Slip rift development, bedding plane enlargement, an unusual combination of development types and palaeontology.

Windy Cave [SK 527 996] Altitude: 30 m Length: 10 m

Description: No known restrictions. Quarry location. Entrance is in same quarry as Nearcliff Wood Rift Cave. It lies in an area of Limestone debris under a large overhang. A crawl into a 2 metre high rift which lowers to a crawl and choke. Checked by T.Gibbs, 10/01/93.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development, bedding plane enlargement, unusual combination of development types and palaeontology.

Nearcliff Wood Rift Cave [SK 527 995]

Altitude: 40 m Length: 88 m Depth: 12 m

Description: Possible threat from quarry tipping. About 400 m North of East end of disused railway viaduct in old quarry, are two entrances, difficult to locate. Follow path under railway to path slanting up on right over old tips. Follow this path back towards the railway, to branch path on left into thick woodland. With luck the entrances will be found nearby, near foot of scarp.

Lower entrance is 10 m down bank from upper entrance. The crawl into the upper series enlarges to 4.5 m climbable drop into chamber (rope useful) with three routes leading off. First is high level link to upper entrance passage. Second is lower and leads to other entrance. Third is the lowest, reached by a further 4.5 m decent, and ending in a choke after a further link to the lower entrance. Bolts were in place for handlines in 1994.

Main points of interest: Major slip rift development, extensive and complex underground system and palaeontology.

Ranch Rift [SK 528 993] Altitude: 60 m Length: 26 m

Description: See Ranch Rift. Suspected wrong spelling of Ranch Rift as described in YSS 1, and therefore described in full under Ranch Rift Cave.

Main points of interest: See Ranch Rift Cave.

Ranch Rift Cave (SK 528 993] Altitude: 60 m Length: 26 m

Description: Care is needed on the approach. The entrance is on the north side of a disused railway cutting about 25 m east of the main A630 Doncaster to Sheffield Road. It can be approached from above, but it is better located from below first. It can be approached with more difficulty from below. Either approach requires care and/or a rope. Slope down from entrance into 6 metres high rift which closes to squeeze to narrow rift, widening and ending at loose boulders.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development and palaeontology.

Overhang Cave [SK 528 993] Altitude: 60 m Length: 8 m

Description: A steep approach, which is awkward in wet weather. At top of fault above Short Rift Cave, left of overhang at top of slope. Approach as for Short Rift Cave. Roomy entrance lowers and enters small chamber with two choked passages in right wall.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development and palaeontology.

Flat Roof Cave [SK 528 993]

Altitude: 60 m Length: 6 m

Description: Used as Den by local youngsters. Much altered from original description. A steep approach, which is awkward in wet weather. Not listed in Northern Caves Volume 1, 1988. Approach as for Short

Rift Cave. Description had changed in 1994. Situated to the left of Short Rift Cave on the far side of a short exposed ledge. Twin entrances are now one (left) which had been enlarged when visited in 1994.

The second entrance has been virtually obliterated in by the excavations. The entrance opens out into a small chamber 4 m long by 3 m wide and 1.2 m high and choked at the far end. The roof still contains some small, inactive formations.

Main points of interest: Unusual bedding development, spaeleothems and palaeontology.

Short Rift Cave [SK 528 993]

Altitude: 60 m Length: 15 m Depth: 2 m

Description: A steep approach, which is awkward in wet weather. On the south side of the disused railway cutting diagonally opposite High Rift Cave is an exposed fault. The cave entrance is high up this fault and the climb requires care if wet. Small entrance near top of fault is followed by a 2 metre drop into a 2.5 metre high rift with a boulder roof and ending in a choke. At the lowest point and in the floor a strong draught was noticed on 20/08/94 by T.Gibbs and party.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development, palaeontology and fault.

High Rift Cave [SK 527 992] Also Known As Conisbrough Cave No. 1

Altitude: 60 m Length: 27 m

Description: Steep approach needs care, especially in wet weather. On the north side of cutting near large viaduct on north west side of A630 road. Entrance just west of the road bridge and is reached by scramble up cutting side. Just inside is a short climb down to a floor of higher fissure with a boulder roof. Fissure closes down to a small chamber and ends at a choke. Tight squeeze on left enters bedding chamber with no way on.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development, interesting bedding development at end and palaeontology.

High Cave [SK 532 992] Also Known As Conisbrough Cave No. 2.

Altitude: 60 m Length: 30 m

Description: Lost to tipping. Possibility of re-opening needs investigating. See also Badger Cave (Entry No.36.) and Connection Cave, lost to same tipping. The entrance is high up on the south side of railway cutting 400 m east of the bridge on the A630 Doncaster to Sheffield Road. Roomy entrance with large slab led to chamber with low choked chamber off to the Right. Ahead is a further chamber with various digs and small aven and crawl to flowstone choke at far side. Left is the excessively low bedding plane link with Connection Cave. About 3 m east of main entrance is tight entrance and tortuous passage linking with first chamber in main cave. Now covered by tipping.

Main points of interest: Slip rift development and bedding development/enlargement.

Connection Cave [SK 532 992] Connects with High Cave.

Altitude: 60 m Length: 7.5 m

Description: Lost to tipping. Possibility of re-opening needs investigating. See also Badger Cave and High Cave, lost to same tipping. Connection Cave is 10 m east of High Cave and led to low bedding passage as described under High

Cave.

Main Points of Interest: Bedding development/enlargement and part of larger system.

Sandy Hole [SK 533 992] Altitude: 60 m Length: 9 m

Description: Lost to tipping. Possibility of re- opening needs investigating. Entrance obliterated by tipping by council. Located on the south side of a disused railway cutting about 500 m east of the main road bridge and east of High Cave. There is small tube which became too tight.

Main points of interest: Bedding development/enlargement and phreatic development.

As a geologist, apart from providing evidence of rifting, cambering and slumping during the formation of the Don Gorge, there appears to be no great merit and the entrances viewed seem more fit for animals than for men. For full details relating to the RIGS Site Assessment, it is recommended that Derbyshire Caving Association are approached for this very specialist information.

RIGS assessment of site value

Ratings: 1–2 very poor; 3–4 poor; 5–6 acceptable/useful; 7–8 quite good; 9–10 very good/excellent; N/A not applicable; D/K don't know

Access and safety

Aspect/Description/Rating

Road access & parking Parking near water tower east of Conisbrough on Doncaster Road. 2-3 vehicles with care. Rating: 4

Safety of access Along very muddy pathways frequented by BMX and trail bikes. Rating: 4

Safety of exposure Rock faces are highly brecciated and have inherent structural instability. Rating: 3

Permission to visit Not applicable N/A

Current condition Some of cave entrances have been covered by landfill. Rating: 5

Current conflicting activities Landfill

Restricting conditions Considered to be moderately hazardous locations, with poor access and potentially unstable rock faces

Nature of exposure Cave entrances in old quarries and railway cutting

Multiple exposures /prospect for trail

Notes For specialist cavers only

Culture, heritage & economic

Aspect/Description/Rating

Historic, archaeological & literary associations None known. Rating: 0

Aesthetic landscape Old quarried side of gorge now heavily overgrown with biological interests. Rating: 6

History of earth sciences Good location for studying rifting, brecciation etc associated with formation of Don Gorge. Rating: 6

Economic geology One of numerous old quarries along the Don Gorge but no details known. Rating: 5

Notes

Education and science

Surface processes Rifting, slumping and cambering. Rating: 8

Geomorphology Gorge and rift cave formation. Rating: 7

Sedimentary Large scale sedimentary structures associated with slumping. Rating: 7

Fossils Possibility of fossil remains in fissure deposits associated with cave formation. Rating: 0

Igneous Not applicable. Rating: 0

Metamorphic Not applicable. Rating: 0

Tectonic: structural Cave formation associated with slumping and rifting. Rating: 8

Minerals Not applicable. Rating: 0

Stratigraphy Not applicable. Rating: 0

Notes Caves have limited specialist interest but important for demonstrating rifting and slumping

Geodiversity value

Caves are of specialist speleological interest but associated breccias, rifts and slump structures are very interesting. Rating: 8

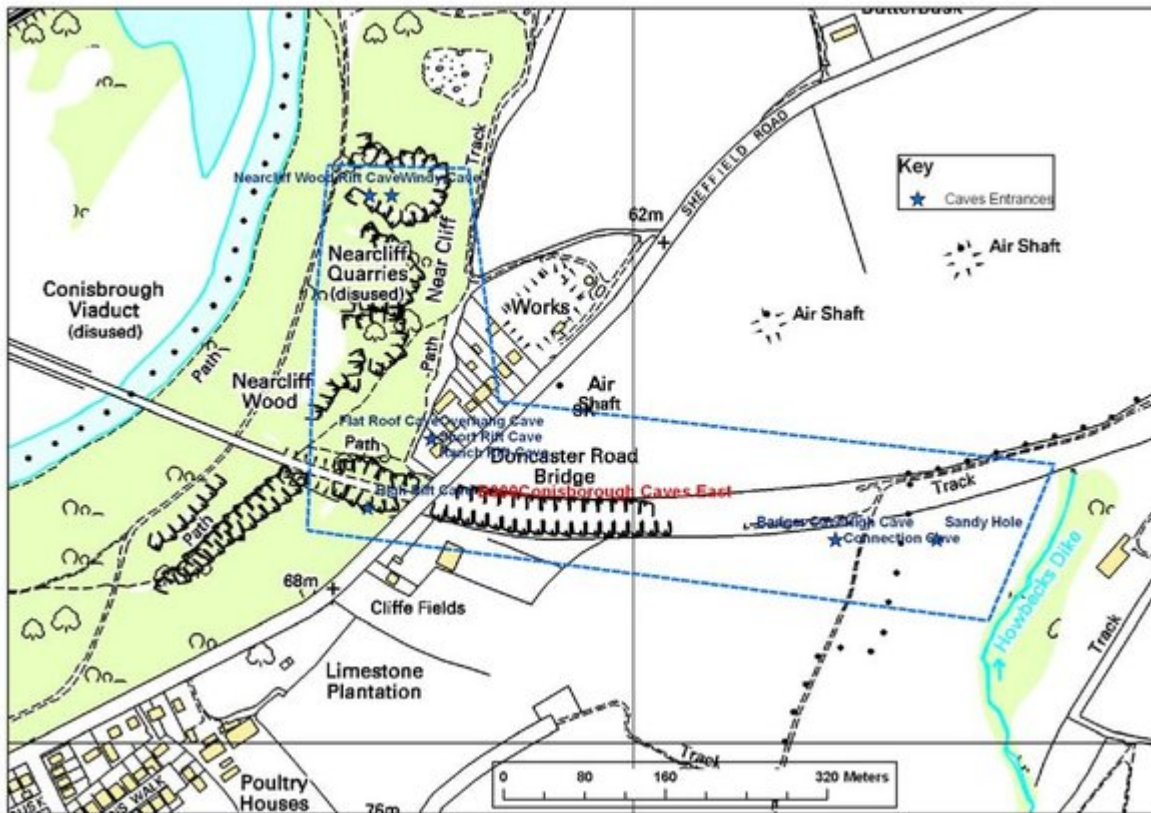
Site photographs D300 Conisbrough Caves East

(Figure 107) General view of entrances to Nearcliff Wood Cave. [SK 52734 99519].

(Figure 108) Entrances to Nearcliff Wood Cave. [SK 52734 99519].

(Figure 109) Entrance to Windy Cave. [SK 52761 99540].

(Figure 110) Entrance to High Rift Cave. [SK 52737 99231].



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(Figure 107) General view of entrances to Nearcliff Wood Cave. [SK 52734 99519].



(Figure 108) Entrances to Nearcliff Wood Cave. [SK 52734 99519].



(Figure 109) Entrance to Windy Cave. [SK 52761 99540].



(Figure 110) Entrance to High Rift Cave. [SK 52737 99231].