



Introduction

Caving is a great opportunity for young people of all age groups to get really muddy and squirm around in tunnels and chambers with their friends. This facility is purpose designed and built to offer a sense of the caving adventure in a convincing but ultimately safe environment. Designed by one of Britain's most famous cavers the entire facility is permanently circulated with fresh air and cavers are in fact never more than 2m underground except for in the main chamber, and rarely any less than 2m down. The facility is essentially an outer ring from which various tunnels can be accessed, each offering its own particular caving challenge. The age and confidence of participating groups will dictate which parts of the system can be attempted.

Risk Control Measures (see attached Risk Assessment)

The cave system is a purpose-built entirely man-made feature designed to give a real experience of natural cave systems and their various technical challenges, whilst retaining complete control of safety.

The safety measures are an integrated net of practised and rehearsed procedures from initial booking through to the activity itself and are maintained by trained and experienced Leaders.

All activities undertaken within the Caving System will fall within this net as set out under the operating procedures detailed herein.

Filtering

- The centralised booking system acts as a coarse filter for participants; it covers the nature of the caves, likely conditions and gives advice on clothing and the physical requirements for caving.
- The Senior Cave Leader is responsible for ensuring each booking has sufficient and appropriately qualified instructors to cover each session, Cave Leaders are trained in the cave system, qualified by experience and will have First Aid training. Groups will not enter the caves without trained instructors.
- Access to the system is controlled, with only Level 3 Cave Leaders having access to keys to the container and cave system itself.

Before use

- The cave system is managed before every use: the nominated Cave Leader opens up the system, including the Main Chamber entrance/exit and notes the conditions underground as being usable or not. The system has sophisticated air circulation engineered in and it is immediately apparent that fresh cool air is circulating.
- The Cave Leaders log the condition of the Caves, the nominated partner, the number of individuals in the party, and their age group, and the number of hours booked for that



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party.

- The Senior Cave Leader will provide sufficient appropriate helmets for the activities and these are checked for serviceability before every use. Each helmet has its own head torch attached and these are similarly checked for serviceability before every use: there are new batteries to hand as necessary.

Briefing

- On arrival each party receives a formal briefing. This will vary depending on the age group but will always cover a brief history and orientation of the system, risk, clothing, safety equipment, normal caving procedures, behaviours required from individuals and the importance of team work, and self-management. This last point is to explain to groups the effect of adrenalin (increased breathing, increased awareness, increased heart beat) as the body prepares for adventure-and how it differs from fear - plus the likely effect on nervous individuals of shouting/squealing; the unhelpful nature of gasping at slugs and spiders; plus, how to act as a good team member under adrenalin-fuelled conditions.
- The Leader will also ask if anyone has special medical requirements or medicines – such conditions as heart abnormalities, obesity, stress induced fits, frequent dizzy spells, extreme asthma, pleurisy and certain types of Anaphylactic shock (APS) will normally preclude that individual entering the cave system, however food induced APS will not usually preclude an individual from caving.
- Claustrophobia is for the Leader to decide on because in young people it is often claimed but rarely genuine: a genuinely claustrophobic individual will immediately begin to show symptoms on entry to the system; these are likely to include difficulty breathing: a sense of being suffocated; panting; rising panic building to hysteria and a blind rush for exit. Genuine claustrophobes are unlikely to volunteer for caving.
- The Leader will also ask the participating party leader about any individuals likely to find caving particularly challenging. Such individuals will be positioned thoughtfully within the party, either alongside the Assistant Cave Leader or Cave Leader. Age is not necessarily an issue either for adolescents or geriatrics, but there are written guidelines for age which should be carefully balanced before being overruled. In difficult cases Leaders should attempt to contact the Senior Cave Leader before overruling standard procedures.
In all cases the final decision and responsibility to allow an individual into the system or not lies with the nominated Leader.
- After briefing individuals are issued with safety helmets and have the opportunity to change clothing if required, take a comfort break, empty pockets, remove spectacles, etc. The party will then be led to the chosen entrance where 'numbering off' will be explained and rehearsed (to give the Leader confidence that every member of the party is present even when the Leader cannot see each individual) and access procedure will be demonstrated.



Session progression.

- Once entry procedure is complete all groups will undertake the easier features of the system, i.e. the 'Balcony' and ladder; or the 'Balcony' and reversed to the 'Outer Ring', and then into the 'Main Chamber' (MC) via the 'Slide'. Correct ladder procedure will be explained and demonstrated before being attempted by any of the caving party (3 points of contact, foot position, 'footing' ladders, one-at-a-time, no hands on rungs).
- The 'Keyhole' may then be undertaken including negotiation of the 'Tester Hole'. The 'Tester Hole' is the narrowest diameter tunnel in the complex and successful passing through this gives the Leader confidence that all personnel will be able to manage any other challenge without becoming stuck.
- **Failure to pass through the 'Tester Hole' will preclude that individual from the more technical features including the Squeeze, S Bends and the Sump!**

Caving Centre Rules

This 'cave system' has been constructed for use by Young People and Adults from all age groups of the Scout and Guide Associations and other youth organisations. Every person using this facility must adhere strictly to the following rules.

1) No person will enter the system unless they...

- Have received full instruction and briefing from the appointed suitably qualified instructor
- Are equipped with the necessary protective equipment, which is a safety helmet and headlight and are wearing suitable clothing* as required for those sections of the system they are to use.
- Are accompanied by the instructors and have been told that they can enter the system.

2) The maximum number in any group entering the cave system is 10 persons and all groups will do so under the supervision of approved instructors.

3) Whilst there are no physical restrictions on which features of the system can be undertaken, instructors will determine the most suitable route and features according to the age, ability and confidence of the group within the time available.

4) No one will undertake 'The Sump' unless in possession of a complete change of clothes / footwear

5) Once in the system 'Cavers' will stay in their party with their instructors and the proper equipment will be used to tackle each hazard as it encountered; this includes ladders where necessary. All pitches over 2m must be undertaken under the direct supervision of the instructors.



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6) Persons using the sump must have two instructors present, one either side of the sump to effect quick rescue if required.

7) Normal entry and exit for the system is via hatch 3 on the outer ring or hatch 7 for those undertaking advanced entry. Emergency exits are via any hatch or from the ramp leading from the main chamber.

* suitable clothing i.e. old clothes which can get wet and dirty, long sleeves, long trousers, sturdy footwear or wellingtons. Remember this clothing will get wet, dirty and scuffed so do not wear anything you might want to wear elsewhere.

**Cavers using the 'sump' will require a complete change of clothing as this feature involves either partial or complete immersion in water.

ALL PERSONS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS AN INHERENT RISK IN USING THE 'CAVES SYSTEM' AND WHILST WE DO OUR UTMOST TO REDUCE THAT RISK TO THE MINIMUM ANY PERSON WHO, IN THE OPINION OF AN INSTRUCTOR, IS NOT BEHAVING IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER OR WHO FAILS TO FOLLOW A DIRECT INSTRUCTION, WILL BE REQUIRED TO EXIT THE SYSTEM IMMEDIATELY AND MAY BE BARRED FROM ANY FUTURE USE OF IT.



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Risk Assessment

Risks Arising and Hazards Identified	Persons at Risk	How is the risk controlled What further Controls Are Needed	Person Responsible for controls
Unprepared for activity: personal Injury.	Participant(s)	Follow booking routine. Arrive in good time for briefing. Listen to safety brief, collect equipment and use as directed. Groups separated according to ability. Follow trained Cave Leader. Use ladders as briefed with safety 'footing' Man-made facility; not possible to remain lost.	Cave Leader And adults with group
Panic due to environment, getting 'lost'	Participant(s)	Pre-assessment by Instructor with advice from Group Leaders Discuss 'natural fears' beforehand Listen to safety Brief. Listen to Instructors guidance. Follow Instructors. Work as a Team.	Cave Leader
Uneven, slippery environment and hard construction tunnels causing slips and trips.	Participant(s) and Instructors	Decent footwear, long sleeves, proper technique (crawling) Head torch and approved helmet Group Challenges according to age group. Use ladders as briefed with safety 'footing'	Cave Leader And adult with group



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Hypothermia (Winter)	Participant(s) and Instructors	Short routes, sessions less than 1 hour. Fire at changing facility to warm up at, on completion. Bring change of clothes; Cavers will get very wet. Plenty of shelter with hot water for washing in washing areas.	Cave Leader and adults with group
Bad Air/Suffocation/toxic gas	Participant(s) and Instructors	Man-made facility, maintained by Service Crew. Purpose design to allow free air circulation at all times; cool breeze can be felt underground. Lift access covers and allow 20 minutes venting.	Cave Leader
Disease from environment	Participant(s) and Instructors	Normal hygiene is sufficient in the Caving complex. Avoid rubbing eyes, or placing fingers in mouth. Wash properly on completion under supervision of group Leaders.	Cave Leader
Bites, stings: Cave complex has multiple air vents allowing access to insects and spiders	Participant(s) and Instructors	Bites/stings very rare; far less than normal risk of wasp sting due to perpetual darkness of tunnels. Wear proper clothing and boots. Avoid provoking insects/spiders Anti-histamine in First Aid kits	Cave Leader
Falling into caving system	Anyone walking around the area of the caving system	All hatches should be checked to ensure they are in place and locked at the end of the session	Cave Leader



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SCHEDULED FOR REVIEW ONE YEAR FROM DATE OF ASSESSMENT