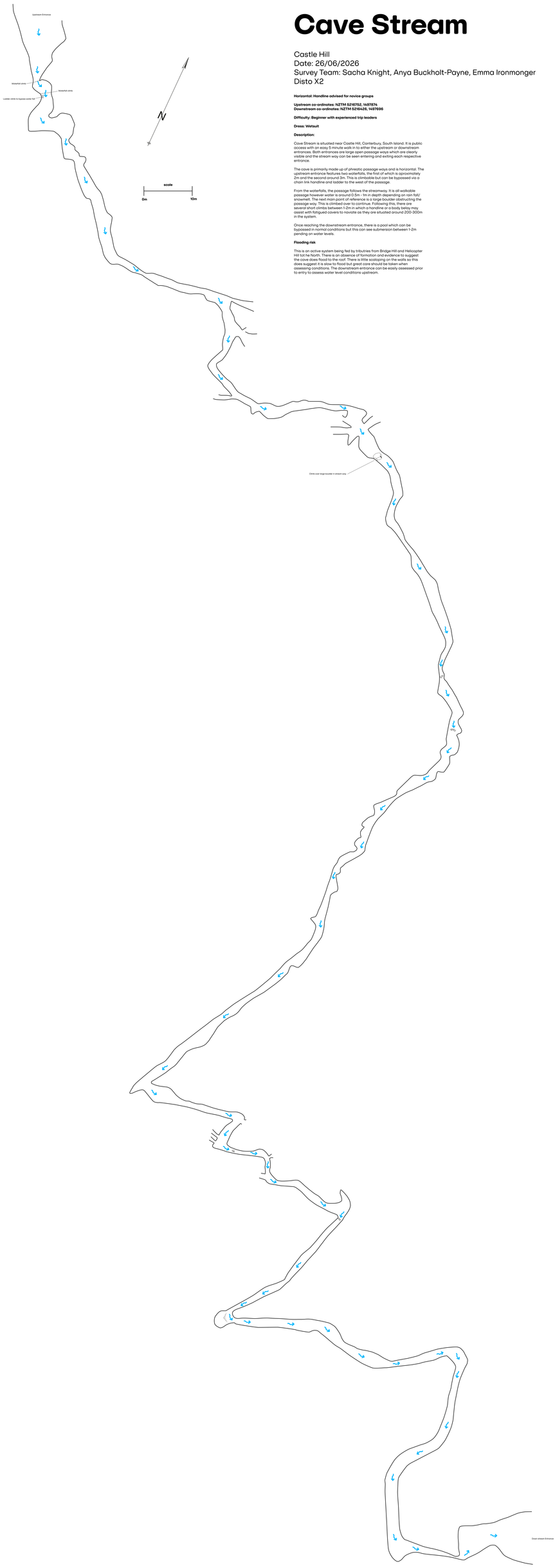

Cave Stream

Castle Hill
Date: 26/06/2026
Survey Team: Sacha Knight, Anya Buckholt-Payne, Emma Ironmonger
Disto X2

Horizontal: Handline advised for novice groups

Upstream co-ordinates: NZTM 5216752, 1497874
Downstream co-ordinates: NZTM 5216426, 1497696

Difficulty: Beginner with experienced trip leaders

Dress: Wetsuit

Description:

Cave Stream is situated near Castle Hill, Canterbury, South Island. It is public access with an easy 5 minute walk in to either the upstream or downstream entrances. Both entrances are large open passage ways which are clearly visible and the stream way can be seen entering and exiting each respective entrance.

The cave is primarily made up of phreatic passage ways and is horizontal. The upstream entrance features two waterfalls, the first of which is aproximately 2m and the second around 3m. This is climbable but can be bypassed via a chain link handline and ladder to the west of the passage.

From the waterfalls, the passage follows the streamway. It is all walkable passage however water is around 0.5m - 1m in depth depending on rain fall/ snowmelt. The next main point of reference is a large boulder obstructing the passage way. This is climbed over to continue. Following this, there are several short climbs between 1-2m in which a handline or a body belay may assist with fatigued cavers to navigate as they are situated around 200-300m in the system.

Once reaching the downstream entrance, there is a pool which can be bypassed in normal conditions but this can see submersion between 1-2m pending on water levels.

Flooding risk

This is an active system being fed by tributries from Bridge Hill and Helicopter Hill tot he North. There is an absence of formation and evidence to suggest the cave does flood to the roof. There is little scalloping on the walls so this does suggest it is slow to flood but great care should be taken when assessing conditions. The downstream entrance can be easily assessed prior to entry to assess water level conditions upstream.