

Peak District Caving **Micro Guide**

Peak Cavern, Castleton.

Grid Ref: SK 14865 82602, Alt: 193m.

Length: (including Speedwell Cavern & JH) in excess of 17km
Vertical Range: 235m.

Access: Booking required:

Contact: John Beck, Glebe Cottage, The Hillock, Eyam, Hope Valley, S32 5RB. Email john.beck6@btinternet.com

Part 1: The Main Stream Cave (including Far Sump).

Also see:

- Part 2: Victoria Aven
- Part 3: Far Sump Extension
- Part 4: Pickering's Passage and Moss Chamber
- Part 5: The Galena Chamber Circuit
- Part 6: Lake Passage and Ink Sump
- Part 7: Treasury and the links to Speedwell Cavern
- Part 8: The White River Series

Introduction

The Peak-Speedwell System is Derbyshire's longest cave, home of the UK's biggest natural shaft and the UK's second deepest sump. This basic description of Peak Cavern is based upon the main route from the entrance to Far Sump with major tributary passages detailed in separate guides. A detailed survey is available from Hitch n Hike, published by John Beck. Some sections have yet to be added (The NCC Shafts and other developments around the Galena Chamber Circuit) and some still require some updating from John Cordingley's 1986 description.

The Cave

From the village the path leads up the right hand side of the huge vertical walled gorge and into **The Vestibule**, Peak Cavern's massive entrance chamber, some 30m wide, 20m high and 100m long. The show cave path follows the right hand wall above the terraces to the back of the chamber where shallow steps lead down to **Lumbago Walk** and the way on.

Side passages leading off from The Vestibule:

- **The Swine Hole:** Down below the terraces in the left hand (eastern) wall of The Vestibule a classic 2m diameter passage leads to the Swine Hole Sump. Underwater, a 10m dive in an easy bedding reaches an airbell. Thereafter, the passage becomes roomy and descends to 5m depth and an inlet on the right feeds water from Halfway House.

85m from base the floor becomes bouldery and a slope leads up in sunlight to surface 100m from base in the resurgence in the Peak Cavern Gorge. Diving in from The Resurgence end, a line can be followed along the left hand wall for 10m to surface in The Schoolroom, a 20m high aven, which is choked at the top.

- **The Krypton Series:** The Krypton Series is entered by ascending the 17m high aven next to the start of Swine Hole Passage in The Vestibule, which is usually overcome by a combination of extension ladders, followed by a few bolts. At the top, a steep series of ascending rifts and climbs passes a 20m long crawl on the right to a tiny chamber and mud choke. These vadose rifts eventually lead up to a roof tube extending in both directions. Traversing back over the climbs, a couple of chambers are entered followed by a tricky 4m climb down into a larger chamber. Downslope the chamber ends at floor holes dropping back into the initial rifts. Climbing up the steep calcite floor, a low tube is passed on the left (25m long to a moonmilk choke). Beyond here the chamber rises up to a choke some 50m above The Vestibule floor. In the opposite direction from the entrance climbs an uneven passage rises before dividing into a bedding on the left (too tight) and a route up to choked rifts on the right. These rifts have been smoke-tested to a tiny cave near the floor of Cavedale above, but any attempt to open up a route would need a huge operation and only produce another entrance which would have to be resealed anyway.

- **The Beer Monsters Secret Tap Room:** A short way in from the showcave turnstile an aven above the path, identifiable by the presence of a floodlight and white flowstone was entered in 1990 to access a 60m long steeply sloping passage well decorated with flowstone and gour pools.

Continuing on, **Lumbago Walk** is a wide stooping height passage that leads through to **The Great Cave**, a large chamber with slopes up to either side. Up to the right is the **Orchestra Passage** connecting to the top of **Roger Rains House**. Up to the left a passage soon ends at an aborted sandy dig. Continuing along the show cave path a walking size passage enters **Roger Rains House**, aptly named. Looking up and back, a ledge can be seen high up, which is the end of **Orchestra Passage**.

40m Beyond Roger Rains is **Pluto's Dining Room**, a lower and wider section of passage with a fence at the far side. This fence marks the end of the current show cave. Over the fence, the muddy remnants of the old

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show cave steps known as **The Devil's Staircase**, drop down to **The Halfway House** and the **Inner Styx** stream. Upstream is the way on but downstream to the left the passage can be followed for around 50m to a deepening canal which soon sumps. This has been dived for 50m to a silt choke. The water from here emerges from a small inlet in **The Swine Hole sump**.

From the bottom of **The Devil's Staircase** the stream can be followed upstream along a large gloomy passage through **Five Arches**. This section of the cave floods to the roof in very wet weather and a coating of mud adorns the walls and roof. It's possible to follow what's left of the original show cave path with it's little bridges over the stream but the mud can make for slippery going so it's better to walk on the gravel in the stream where possible. Five Arches ends at a large T Junction, with **Buxton Water Sump** to the left and **Victoria Aven** and the way on, to the right. Just prior to the end of Five Arches an aven in the roof marks the entry point of the **Cave Dale Vent** (see Caves of Cave Dale guide).

Left from the end of Five Arches meets deepening water and the downstream end of **Buxton Water Sump**. In brief, this is 85m long to surface in **Buxton Water Aven** followed by a further 15m dive to surface at the downstream end of the **Peak Main Streamway** (see below).

Right from the end of Five Arches leaves the stream and soon passes beneath the vast **Victoria Aven** before a stoop to the left through a knee high pool. To the right an inconspicuous passage leads to **47 Aven** but the main way on is straight on along a large gently ascending passage to a short hands and knees crawl over stones to a bouldery section with some optimistic girders and timberwork above. This is the bottom of **Mucky Ducks Aven** and **Perseverance Pot**. Ahead and down the hole is **Mucky Ducks**, a series of stoops in deep water leading to a sand bank and the fine walking sized **Upper Gallery**.

The **Upper Gallery** is generally 2.5m high and 4.5m wide, easy going with the occasional rocky section. There are a few small passages leading off but the first of note is **Pickering's Passage** (about 150m from Mucky Ducks), a 1m diameter tube up in the right hand wall leading to **Moss Chamber** and **Cohesion** (see Peak Cavern, Pt 4). Continuing past Pickering's Passage the Upper Gallery becomes more rocky and a second major passage is met in the right wall, approximately 250m from Mucky Ducks. This is **Treasury Passage**, a narrow walking sized passage leading to **Treasury Chamber**, **Treasury Sump** and **The Trenches**, leading in turn to **The White River Series**, **Colostomy Crawl** and **Speedwell**

Cavern (see Peak Cavern Part 7 & Part 8). Beyond the Treasury junction the Upper Gallery becomes lower and wider before meeting a vadose trench in the floor, which originates from a hidden the hidden **Surprise View Sump**.

- **Surprise View Sump**: This was passed by siphoning in 1986 to enter a chamber with a diggable choke. In January 2007 the sump was again passed but this time by diving - 13m long and tight. From the chamber a 3m long dig through the choke leads through to an inclined bedding plane. 2m on a restriction currently prevents further progress but a squeeze to the right may pass this. Beyond is the encouraging sound of a loud stream (1). At the time of writing (10/01/2007) this is still an active exploration site.

Traversing above the trench leads to **Surprise View**, an impressive junction with the **Peak Main Streamway**. Just prior to Surprise View a small passage enters from the right, which leads to **Main Stream Inlet** (see below) via the **Galena Chamber Circuit**, passing **Wigwam Aven**, **Wind Tunnel**, **Cadbury Crawl** and **Disappointment Rift** (see Part 5)

At **Surprise View** an iron ladder descends to the **Peak Main Streamway**. The way on is upstream but downstream follows an impressive canyon for some 300m before it blends into the roof tube to form one of the most impressive passages in the country, **The Tube**. This continues for another 100m before lowering and meeting the upstream end of **Buxton Water Sump** (see above).

Upstream from Surprise View the streamway maintains impressive proportions. After about 175m the first major inlet comes in from the right, at the impressive **Squaw's Junction**. This inlet leads to **Main Stream Inlet** and then right, back to **Surprise View** (see above) via the **Galena Chamber Circuit** (see Part 4). The left-hand branch in Main Stream Inlet turns into a low and muddy crawl emerge next to **Window Dig**, bypassing a section of the main streamway.

Continuing on up the Main Streamway from Squar's, **Lake Passage** is soon met on the left, a major inlet leading to **Lake Sump** and **Ink Sump** (see Part 6). Ignoring Lake Passage and continuing up the streamway a passage up in the left wall links back to Lake Passage, further on (about 200m from the Lake Passage junction) a wet weather inlet can be seen up on the right (not obvious when dry). This is the aborted **Window Dig**, a 70m long crawl to a silt blockage with an airspace above. A low crawl to the

right of Window Dig is an alternative, muddier and smaller, route back to Squaw's Junction.

Continuing upstream from Window Dig, **Maypole Inlet** is passed but not seen, as it's 12m up in the right-hand wall. Maypole is almost certainly the same passage as Fawty Tower and The Trenches (described in Part 7). There used to be an iron ladder here but this was removed after the lengthy digging project was aborted.

Beyond Maypole, the way on is up a boulder pile and under a jammed rock (big). At the top of the boulder pile a handline leads up left to **Picnic Dig** and a dry sandy chamber containing an old food dump.

The main passage starts to widen and enters **Boulder Hall**, up to 7m wide and almost 40m long. Up in the right wall but not obvious, are a series of avens leading up to **Crystal Inlet**. This well decorated passage is on the same horizon as the main passages of the White River Series and is similar in nature but is choked some 50m short of connecting.

At the end of Boulder Hall is a climb down leads back to stream level. The streamway continues for a short way before ending at **Far Sump**, the original way in to **Far Sump Extension**.

the 385m long Far Sump was first passed in 1980 and has always been considered by most as a serious undertaking, though for many years it was trade route for those involved in the exploration of Far Sump Extension. In 1996 a dry bypass was discovered from JH. From base a low silty sump 6m long leads to Brown's Chamber, a 12m long canal ending at the start of sump 2. Underwater a muddy slope leads down through a low arch to a 1m high by 1.8m wide passage reaching a maximum depth of 7m. The nature of the sump changes little and for the first diver on the way in, visibility can be reasonable. For any following divers, and anyone on the return, visibility is usually zero. At 285m from base there's a small airbell and at 370m from base, just prior to the end of the sump, a large underwater inlet comes in from the left which has been explored for around 65m (425m from Base), which is currently being dug (3). Straight on the main passage gently ascends to surface in Far Sump Extension, 385m from base.

Other Notes:

- 88m upstream from Surprise View on the north wall of the streamway is an inlet up on a shelf. A 17x17cm passage (too tight to enter!) omits a small stream. This is the outlet for the water that sinks down the rift in the floor of the halfway chamber in Wind Tunnel.

- 11m further upstream (99m from Surprise View) on the south wall of the streamway is another inlet up on a shelf that omits a small stream but its way too tight to enter.
- 9m further upstream (108m from Surprise View) and again on the north wall of the streamway is an impenetrable inlet on a shelf that issues a small stream. This is the outlet for the water that sinks at the base of Wigwam Aven.
- The Picnic Dig - Boulder Hall Oxbow: From the Picnic Dig food dump a delicate and slippery climb down accesses a ledge above the main streamway. On the opposite side is a window into a 1m high fossil phreatic passage 6m above the floor. This can be reached from the ledge using a 3m rigid ladder. 18m of crawling passes old digging buckets to a step up into a 10m long flat out section. The continuation gradually increases in size before reaching a cross rift in the floor. This drops down to the left at 45°, tight in places, to a small chamber. A window in the rift looks out into the Main Streamway and is obvious from below. Continuing on across the rift 10m of hands and knees crawling reaches a junction. To the right is a small passage with stalagmites, bypassed by an excavated passage to a small passage becoming too tight over solid rock (this has been smoke tested to the Oxbow). Stepping up to the left, a low excavated section of passage reaches a step down after 4m into hands and knees crawl, 4m long to a junction. On the right is a small inlet (smoke detected from the small passage near the formations) while on the left is a 1m diameter window 5m up the north wall of Boulder Hall. The total length of the passage in this oxbow is approximately 50m (2).



Description Notes:

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Major Surveys:

Available from Hitch n Hike 01433 651013 www.HNHoutdoors.com



Surveys in Descent Magazine:

#46	Sep./Oct. 1980	(p37)	(Far Sump).
#46	Sep./Oct. 1980	(p37)	(Ink Sump).
#48	Mar./Apr. 1981	(p11)	(Far Sump passed).
#187	Dec./Jan. 2005/6	(p14)	(White Feather Aven, in Far Sump) (Far Sump Inlet).

Surveys in CDG Newsletter:

- #60 Jul. 1981 (p24) (climbing The School Room).
(p25) (Buxton Water Sump).
(p13) (Far Sump Inlet).
(p14) (Brown's Chamber - new line).
- #138 Jan 2001

References:

- 1.) John Cordingley, pers. comm. 10/01/2007.
- 2.) Wayne Sheldon, pers. comm. 29/12/2006.
- 3.) John Cordingley, pers. comm. 25/01/2007.

Further reading:

- Crewe CPC Rigging Guide.
- Peak District Sump Index, R.L. Carter & J.N. Cordingley 1994, published by the Cave Diving Group.
- Caves of the Peak District (p93), DW Gill & JS Beck 1991, now out of print ISBN 1-85568-034-3.
- Classic Caves of the Peak District (p144), Iain Barker 1997, now out of print ISBN 1-86126-058-X
- The Peak Cavern System - a Caver's Guide, John Cordingley 1986, now out of print ISBN 0-948152-01-X
- Rocks & Scenery of the Peak District, Trevor D. Ford 2002 ISBN 1-84306-026-4.
- Limestones and Caves of the Peak District, Trevor D Ford 1977, out of print ISBN 0 86094 004 1 (paper) & 005 X (cloth)

Entries in Descent Magazine:

- #44 (p33) Jan./Feb. 1980 (diving resumed after 9 years).
- #45 (p12) Mar./Apr. 1980 (diving in the Resurgence, Swinehole, Treasury & Ink Sump).
- #46 (p36-40) Sep./Oct. 1980. (Far Sump passed).
- #48 (p10-14) Mar./Apr. 1981 (Buxton Water Inlet).
- #51 (p13) Mar./Apr. 1982 (Climbing in The Vestibule).
(Maypole).
- #84 (p8) Oct./Nov. 1988 (Peak Cavern roundup).
- #93 (p12) Apr./May. 1990 (Beer Monsters Secret Tap Room).
(Secret Sump).
(Window Dig).
(Water levels).
(Buxton Water Sump).
- #96 (p13) Oct./Nov. 1990
- #98 (p12) Feb./Mar. 1991

- #129 (p18) Apr./May. 1996 (Swine Hole Sumps).
- #151 (p10) Dec./Jan. 1999/00 (Buxton Water Aven).
- #157 (p14) Dec./Jan. 2000/01 (Far Sump Inlet).
- #160 (p10) Jun./Jul. 2001 (Far Sump Inlet).
- #164 (p13) Feb./Mar. 2002 (Bell House Aven - The Vestibule).
- #186 (p14) Oct./Nov. 2005 (Seebackroscope Aven, nr Window Dig).
(The Great Cave).
- #187 (p14) Dec./Jan. 2005/6 (Halfway House Sump).
- #188 (p14) Feb./Mar. 2006 (White Feather Aven, in Far Sump).
- #189 (p13) Apr./May. 2006 (White Feather Aven, in Far Sump).
(Halfway House Sump).
- #190 (p15) Jun./Jul. 2006 (Styx Inlet Sump).
- #193 (p13) Dec./Jan. 2006/7 (Styx Inlet Sump).
(Styx Inlet Sump).

Entries in CDG Newsletter:

- #55 Apr. 1980 (p16-17) (Far Sump).
(p19-21) (Swinehole & Resurgence).
(p20) (Buxton Water Sump).
- #60 Jul. 1981 (p23) (climbing The School Room).
(p23) (Buxton Water Sump).
- #70 Jan. 1984 (p24-26) (Far Sump & the discovery of FSE).
(p22-23) (Far Sump).
- #74 Jan. 1985 (p30) (Halfway House Sump).
- #98 Jan. 1991 (p21) (Buxton Water Aven).
- #103 Apr. 1992 (p43) (Torricellian Chamber, Buxton Water Sump).
(p43) (Frank's Pool, Perseverence Pot).
(p44) (Styx Inlet Sump).
- #104 Jul. 1992. (p44 & 45) (Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
(p46) (Buxton Water Aven).
(p18) (Buxton Water Aven).
(p18-19) (Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
(p19) (Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
- #108 Jul. 1993 (p19) (Styx Inlet Sump).
- #112 Jul. 1994 (p20) (Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
- #116 Jul. 1995 (p27) (Resurgence).
- #119 Apr. 1996 (p28) (Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
(Swine Hole Sump C)
- #120 Jul. 1996 (p26) (Lumbago Walk Sump).
(Devil's Kitchen Sump).
(Perseverence Pot Sump)

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- #122 Jan. 1997 (p12-14)
(p14)
#123 Apr. 1997 (p9-10)
#127 Apr. 1998 (p12)
#130 Jan. 1999 (p18)
#132 Jul. 1999 (p9)
#138 Jan. 2001 (p12-15)
#157 Oct. 2005 (p10)
(p11)
#158 Jan. 2006 (p19)
(p20)
(p20-21)
(p21-22)
#159 Apr. 2006 (p31)
(p32)
(p33)
#160 Jul. 2006 (p12)
(p12-13)
(p13)
(p14)
(p14-15)
(p15)
(p15)
(p15-16)
(p13-14)
(p14-16)
(p19)
(p20-21)
(p21)
- (Lumbago Walk Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Treasury Sump) & (diesel pollution in Peak)
(Torricellian Chamber, Buxton Water Sump).
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump).
(Resurgence - pollution).
(Far Sump Inlet & Brown's Chamber line)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Halfway House Sump)
(Buxton Water Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Buxton Water Sump)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Halfway House Sump)
(Far Sump - White Feather Aven)
(Main Rising)
(Halfway House Sump)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Buxton Water Sump - line notes)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Ink Sump - Doom's Retreat)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Buxton Water Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Ink Sump - Doom's Retreat)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Surprise View Sump)
(Buxton Water Inlet Sump)
(Far Sump Inlet)
(Lumbago Walk Sumps)
(Styx Inlet Sump)
(Surprise View Sump)

📌 Abbreviations:

- GPS = Positional data derived from Global Positioning System.
TBC = To be confirmed.
CRoW = Site lies within a designated Countryside Rights of Way area. See the note at the end of this guide.

📌 Clubs:

- TSG = Technical Speleological Group.

- CDG = Cave Diving Group.
SUSS = Sheffield University Speleological Society.
CCPC = Crewe Climbing and Potholeing Club.

📌 Amendments:

Amendments and additions can be sent to:-
caveguides@peakdistrictcaving.info (any information regarding access or safety issues will automatically be passed on to the management of Peak Cavern Ltd and the Derbyshire Caving Association).

WARNING!

Caving and exploring mines can be dangerous and fatal accidents can happen, especially if you are not sufficiently trained.

Anyone using this guide does so at their own risk while understanding and accepting that, although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the writers and/or contributors can not be held responsible for any outcome however linked to this text. Do not rely on this description as it may contain errors. Your safety and the safety of those around you is your own responsibility. The existence of this guide does not imply a right of access to the cave. An access agreement may or may not be in place with the land owner. Liability Insurance linked to a Landowner Indemnity Clause may be required.

CAVE RESCUE

In case of accident telephone 999 and ask for Cave Rescue.

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