

The White River Series

Part 8 of Peak Cavern (Castleton).

See *Part 1* for an overview of the entire system, access and location.

Introduction

The White River Series was originally discovered in 1991 via a dig at the end of The Trenches in Peak Cavern but in March 1993 the end of the extension was connected to Speedwell Cavern's Block Hall. Block Hall is permanently rigged and is now the normal route into the series. This description is based upon the Block Hall route.

The Series

From the top of the last pitch in **Block Hall** a traverse across a slope leads to **Watt Passage**. Although completely open, this low crawl was not discovered until August 1992, some years after the top of Block Hall was first reached. It was only discovered because the shadow cast by a bright diving light that was seen by a second caver who was some distance away from the light source. Watt Passage starts low and gets lower as a solid gravel bank in the middle of the passage forces you against the roof. After about 25m a squeeze over a slab marks the point at which the dig from the White River Series connected. 15m of hands and knees crawling emerges in a huge passage. **The Kingdom**.

The main way on is to the right but to left The Kingdom can be followed for about 30 meters to a blank wall. A 4m climb enters a low horizontal passage and a very tight squeeze to emerge in a chamber with no way on. Back in The Kingdom, heading downstream, the blind **Vug Inlet Aven** is passed on the right. Easy walking along a huge and finely decorated passage continues for 160m to a big hole in the floor. Just prior to the hole up on the left is the start of **The Oxbow** (described later). The hole in the floor is **Nameless Pitch**, 12m deep to **Camp Chamber** (described later). A horizontal slot in the left wall directly above the hole leads to a series of drops (not free climbable) emerging in **The Buzzard's Roost**, a hole in the wall of Nameless Pitch.

The traverse over the top of Nameless Pitch is easy enough, but then so is falling down it so it's advisable to rig a traverse line. At the time of writing spit anchors dating from the original exploration were the only points from which to rig and the threads in these have been damaged. Beyond the hole the passage narrows but becomes higher. 10m on a passage with a narrow

vadose trench in the floor enters from the left. This is 10m long and links to **The Oxbow**. Half way along this in the right wall, the **Cubby Hole** accesses the top of a narrow 18m shaft that leads drops down to **Camp Chamber**. Back in The Kingdom, the way on continues in grand style with a deepening vadose trench in the floor. 25m on the downstream end of **The Long Oxbow** enters from the left and 25m beyond this a hole in the floor marks the top of **The Moose Trap** (described later).

20m downstream of The Moose Trap **Double Decker Passage** exits on the left. Surveying has shown this to be the upstream end of **White River Passage** but there is no negotiable connection. A stal blockage 75m in separates the two by approximately 10m.

Beyond **The Moose Trap** the nature of the passage changes, the roof stays the same but dry mud banks run along the sides and the only way forward is to traverse on these. Within this section are **The Crystal Pools** and great care is needed here to avoid knocking any bits of dry mud down into these rare formations. A lower section passes beneath a very small aven, beyond which, one of the "white rivers" is met. Pure white flowstone running between the mud. This leads to the biggest of the crystal pools where again, extreme care is needed to pass without causing damage. Beyond The Crystal Pools a bouldery section of passage leads after 30m to a junction. Ahead, **The Downstream Kingdom** continues (described later) and to the left is Monday 13th Passage, the original route in and the main way on.

Monday 13th Passage is a 40m hands and knees crawl on compacted dry mud ending at the head of **The 4th Pitch**, the top of **The Ventilator Series**. Directly opposite, a flowstone ramp enters from **The Source of Perfection** aven and a section of cave leading to **White River Passage** (described separately).

The Ventilator

The descent of The Ventilator Series is generally undertaken as a pull through. The 4th Pitch is 20m deep landing on a 2-3m wide ramp. Uphill soon ends at the base of the original 4th pitch at the top of which is **White River Passage**. Downhill the ramp leads past more flowstone formations to the head of **Fever Pitch**. The rift passage continues beyond, ascending for about 25m to a point where it closes in with no way on. **Fever Pitch** starts as a protected traverse on small foot and hand holds to a short aid section before reaching a Y-hang pull through. A 15m descent lands directly above the short 3.5m **Second Pitch**. At the foot of this a steep loose slope, **The**

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Terminator, leads down for 10m to the top of the **First Pitch**. The Terminator was an apt name at the time of its discovery as originally it was a mass of delicately poised boulders that if disturbed, would have without doubt, terminated anyone on the pitch below. Thankfully, it was intentionally rumbled to the floor. The first pitch involves a descent of 16m to a now bouldery floor. A narrow passage back under the pitch soon closes down. Across the other side of the chamber is the way out. A small muddy tube in the floor marks the 1991 breakthrough point. From here a body sized forty-five degree slope leads down to a junction. Down to the right (if you were head first on your stomach) is a "feet first" climb down and the way on. The crawl to the left leads to a small muddy chamber, **The Front Room** with no way on. The climb down, although only 3m deep, should be undertaken with care as it's slippery and there are all sorts of old bits of digging equipment and an old bit of ladder that if used to cushion a fall would hurt! A 4m crawl joins the section of passage between **Liam's Way** and **The Trenches** in **Peak Cavern**. Left goes to **Speedwell Cavern's Lower Bung Streamway** via **Liam's Way** and **Colostomy Crawl** and right, via a squeeze, leads to **Peak Cavern** via **The Trenches** and **Fawley Tower**.

Downstream Kingdom

Following The Kingdom downstream from **Monday 13th Passage** the going becomes lower. 250m of passage including a blocked oxbow finally become too small for further progress.

White River Passage

An exposed traverse (requires rigging) over the top of **The Ventilator's Fourth Pitch** gives access to a flowstone ramp and the base of a small but finely decorated aven, **The Source of Perfection**. Just beyond, a major 3m diameter passage is entered. To the right, through a now ruined crystal pool, several bends are passed to a flowstone blockage after 80m. Left leads over the top of **The Original Fourth Pitch** into **White River Passage**. A river of pure white flowstone runs along the floor. 50m on **Deep Thought** enters from the right. Ahead **White River Passage** continues for 30m becoming lower and ending in a flowstone blockage. This is undoubtedly the same passage as **Double Decker Passage** (see The Kingdom).

The Moosetrap

The Moosetrap Series has often been described as a "classic Yorkshire pothole in the middle of a Derbyshire cave". A series of six classic waterfall pitches descend 75m (250ft) to a sump. P1 4m, P2 6m, P3 27m, P4 19m,

P5 9m and P6 7m. For a detailed rigging guide see the CCPC Rigging Guide available from Hitch n Hike or the CCPC.

Description Notes:

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Surveys:

- The White River Series (from Hitch n Hike)
- Peak Cavern (from Hitch n Hike)
- Moosetrap Inlet Sump: Descent #184 (p17) Jun./Jul. 2005.
- Estimated Survey #101 (p14) Aug./Sep. 1991.

Further reading:

- Caves of the Peak District (p70), DW Gill & JS Beck 1991, now out of print ISBN 1-85568-034-3.
- Classic Caves of the Peak District (p67), Iain Barker 1997, now out of print ISBN 1-86126-058-X

Entries in Descent Magazine:

- #99 (p10) Apr./May. 1991 (Dig in The Trenches).
- #100 (p16) Jun./Jul. 1991 (Breakthrough in The Trenches).
- #101 (p14) Aug./Sep. 1991 (news of discovery).
(p20-22) (exploration report)
- #102 (p14) Oct./Nov. 1991.
- #103 (p8-9) Dec./Jan. 1991/92.
- #104 (p10) Feb./Mar. 1992.
- #105 (p14) Apr./May. 1992.
- #183 (p10) Apr./May. 2005 (Moosetrap Inlet).
- #184 (p17) Jun./Jul. 2005 (Moosetrap Inlet).
- #186 (p15) Oct./Nov. 2005 (Moosetrap).

Entries in Cave Diving Group Newsletters:

- #104 (p19) Jul. 1992 (Moosetrap Sump).

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Amendments:

Amendments and additions can be sent to:-

caveguides@peakdistrictcaving.info (any information regarding access or safety issues is automatically passed on to the Derbyshire Caving Association).

WARNING!

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