

Giant's Hole, Castleton, Part 1:

The Entrance to Garlands Pot, including Upper East, Upper West and the Upper Stream Passage.

Grid Ref: SK 11942 82685 (GPS)

Alt: 375m. Length: >3km. Vertical Range: >120m

Access: No prior permission required but a £3 per caver fee is charged, payable at "booth" in the parking area (31/03/2008).

Also see:-

Part 2: Garlands Pot and The Crabwalk to Sump II and the Eating House, and The Upper Series including the connection to Oxlow Cavern.

Part 3: The lower reaches - Eating House to East Canal.

Introduction

Giant's Hole is another of Derbyshire's classics consisting mostly of large passage. A complex system connecting through to Oxlow Cavern and Maskhill Mine to the South. The Entrance Series is easily accessible making it a favourite with novices and groups. The stream that flows into the entrance can be followed through the cave, bypassing three sumps, to the East Canal, Giant's Hole's terminal sump. There are several major tributary passages and a high level fossil series that provides an alternate route through the cave and makes up part of the classic "round trip". East canal has been dived to a depth of 24 m in drought (but water levels are normally much higher). The connection to Oxlow Cavern is a serious undertaking and many cavers have underestimated the difficulty of the passage.

Location

The entrance lies on Peakshill Farm land, above and to the West of Castleton. The track to the farm leaves the B6061 midway between the top of Winnats Pass and Perryfoot (SK 1164 8202). At the bottom of the valley the track reaches a gate to the right of which is an obvious "parking area" (SK 1162 8255). The cave is 340m up the valley. From the parking area head East keeping right of the wall (passing Giant's Cave on your left) and continue until you reach the obvious entrance on the right. This is an impressive 10m high, 15m wide opening in the hill with a stream flowing into it.

The Cave

The impressive swallet entrance leads into a roomy stream passage . Just

inside is the remnants of an old gate and a step down. Immediately on the right is a 4m climb to an ascending crawl, this is 10m long passing a squeeze to end at a mud choke. Staying with the stream, 39m from the entrance a void and wooden beam in the roof marks the 3m climb up to the **Upper West** and **Upper East** passages (described below). Continuing on 54m of walking with the occasional stooping reaches a junction with a passage up on the left. Ahead the stream passage continues for 8m to **Sump 1**, 101m from the entrance, now choked with rocks and cobbles. This was originally dived to an airbell 21m from base (1).

Left at the junction a step up enters a walking height passage that rounds a prominent right-hand bend and descends. 14m from the junction "the old column" is passed on the left. Beyond the passage continues to descend passing a small blind inlet up in the roof on the right 37m from the junction. Soon after the passage levels out followed by more stooping to reach **Base Camp Chamber** 103m from the junction (196m from the entrance). This is 8m long, 3m wide by 9m high with a stream entering from a bedding on the right. This is the same stream that sinks back at **Sump 1** and it comes in via the **Upper Stream Passage** (described below). Beyond **Base Camp Chamber** 11m of roomy passage reaches **Boss Aven**, another impressive chamber, 10m long, 5m wide by 15m high. At the point of entry, a flowstone cascade on the left marks the climb up in to an adjacent aven. Beyond **Boss Aven** 31m of walking and stooping reaches **Garlands Pot**, 256m from the entrance. To the left above Garlands Pot, a crawl leads to the blind **October Aven**.

Garlands Pot is 7m deep and leads to "the rest of the cave". This is equipped with resin anchors in the left hand wall although a line of natural anchor points on the right hand wall can be used to traverse around and down to a ledge above the continuation of the streamway below. The bottom of the pitch is some 4m in diameter. In all but dry weather spray from the waterfall reaches most of it.

Upper West Passage

39m from the entrance a 3m climb up in the roof accesses two passages. From the top of the climb a very low crawl on the left is the start of **Upper East Passage**. To the right of this a short stooping height passage passes a 5m deep hole on the left that drops back down to the stream. This is equipped with twin P-hangers. Right here a mud floored passage is 4m long ending in a mud choke. Ahead is **Upper West Passage**. 46m of walking and stooping reaches a junction and lower going. The left and right

passages unite further on, left is 12m of hands and knees crawling up a slope to the convergence, right is 10m of crawling and stooping. Beyond, 12m of crawling reaches a small low bouldery chamber. Left here a crawl up over boulders terminates in a rocky blockage 10m in, 85m from the streamway.

Upper East Passage

From the top of the 3m climb a flat-out crawl on the left leads for 12m through pools. Up to the right a body sized hole enters **Upper East Rift**. Ignoring this and continuing on a descending squeeze drops into a wet crawl emerging in larger passage after 12m. From here 21m of walking passage narrows and lowers to a crawl. 14m on there's a hole in a false floor. Both upper and lower routes terminate after 2m, 61m from the main stream.

Upper East Rift

A 2m climb up through a body sized hole (average body size!) enters a roomy rift. Ahead the passage reaches a 2m deep slippery pot after 10m. Beyond the pot a 9m long dug out crawl ends in a mud choke. The rift above the "body sized hole" can be climbed for 4m to a 1m diameter roof tube, ending at a mud choke 6m in. At the start of the roof tube a low crawl on the right can be followed for 4m to the head of a 6m deep pot. Right here a crawl links back to the rift above the "body sized hole". The pot can be free climbed with care to emerge in **Upper East Passage** below the "body sized hole"

Upper Stream Passage (aka The Wet Inlet)

Immediately on the right in **Base Camp Chamber** a 4m climb up reaches a roomy ledge. 8m on, passing a spout on the right a step up enters a very narrow and winding canyon passage. 10m upstream is the upper end of the spout. 19m from the start is an extremely narrow section, 2m long and only negotiable by those of slim build, soon followed by another. These can be bypassed by climbing above and traversing. 50m on the passage ends at an impressive 2m diameter sump pool, 82m from **Base Camp Chamber**. This is the downstream end of sump 1 and is usually crystal clear. This has been dived to 3m depth to a choke (2).

4m prior to the sump a 2m climb up reaches a higher level passage. This can be followed over the sump for 8m to a flowstone cascade. A 5m vertical climb up past wedged rocks leads over a "fine pair" of stalagmites into a finely decorated chamber, 5m long, 2m wide by 5m high. Sadly, in 2010 this was severely vandalised. All routes out of the chamber are blocked by flowstone.

From the ledge (2m above the stream 4m before the sump), a horizontal traverse can be followed back downstream for 10m to a small ledge with four pools followed soon after by a short section of false floor. The traverse continues at roof level (care!) for 15m to a wider section that's 3m long. The drop here is over 4m so a traverse line is advisable. Beyond the hole the 1.4m dia. roof tube goes right and leaves the canyon. This is 20m long and rejoins the canyon just upstream of **Base Camp Chamber**. Across and left here enters a small chamber. To the left a 30cm high by 70cm wide ascending crawl over flowstone reaches a sharp right-hand corner followed by a squeeze to reach a flooded dig 10m in.

Right from the small chamber the roof tube again leaves the canyon. The last hole in the floor is a 10m pitch back down to the ledge above **Base Camp Chamber**. This is equipped with twin P-hangers and maillons for a pull-through descent (26m rope required). The roof tube continues, enlarging and becoming a traverse in a fossil vadose canyon over water to reach a stal blockage after 23m. The underwater continuation (**Top Sump**) has been pushed by divers for another 3m to another stal blockage (3).



Description Notes:

Written: March 2004, Shaun Puckering, Malc Whitehead and Frag Last with the main stream route from Tim Webber and Brendan Sloan
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References:

1, 2 & 3). CDG Derbyshire Sump Index



Surveys:

Available from Hitch n Hike.



Further reading:

- Crewe CPC Rigging Guide (topo) available directly from CCPC and local caving shops.
- Caves of the Peak District (p85), DW Gill & JS Beck 1991, now out of print ISBN 1-85568-034-3.
- Rocks & Scenery of the Peak District (p80), Trevor D. Ford 2002 ISBN 1-84306-026-4.
- Limestones and Caves of the Peak District (p163, 234, 237-8, 242-3, 248, 337 & 339), Trevor D Ford 1977, out of print ISBN 0 86094 004 1 (paper) & 005 X (cloth)



Entries in Descent Magazine:

- #101 (p15) Aug./Sep. 1991 (Basecamp Chamber).
- #102 (p14) Oct./Nov. 1991 (Basecamp Chamber).
- #112 (p18) Jun./Jul. 1993 (Basecamp Chamber).
- #160 (p28-29) Jun./Jul. 2001 (Historical information).



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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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CAVE RESCUE

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