

## J.H. (James Hall's Over Engine Mine)

### Castleton, Derbyshire.

Grid Ref: SK 13503 82007, Alt: 427m.

Length: >17km including Speedwell Cavern, Peak Cavern and Titan.

Vertical Range: 190m (625ft) to the Boulder Piles in Speedwell.

Access: Call at Rowter Farm for permission, small fee charged (£2 per caver at the time of writing). No access during lambing (April 1st - 30th).

### In Brief

Part mine, part natural, very deep. A fine 50m mine shaft drops into the 200m long, and in places awkward, cartgate passage to reach another 50m shaft that descends to **The Workshop** and the start of the natural cave. A short section of passage follows to the head of the 80m **Leviathan** shaft. At the bottom are connections to **Speedwell Cavern** and **Peak Cavern's Far Sump Extension**. Only to be attempted by experienced and fit parties.

### Introduction

J.H. has been known to cavers for some considerable time, referred to in the past as **TSU63** due to the mark on the lid that was fitted to it by the Technical Speleological Unit in 1963. Little progress was made until 1993 when a concerted effort pushed through seven boulder chokes to the final breakthrough point and the discovery of **Leviathan**, a massive natural shaft located above the **Boulder Piles** in **Speedwell Cavern**. J.H. was now over 600ft deep. Digging continued at the bottom and a connection was finally made with **Speedwell Cavern**. The mystery of the **Boulder Piles** had been solved. Attention turned to the small innocuous sump opposite the Speedwell connection. With the water diverted down into Speedwell this was dug out and finally connected to **Peak Cavern's Far Sump Extension**.

J.H. is a sporting trip and has become one of Derbyshire's classics but it's depth has caught out more than a few resulting in parties either overdue or requiring assistance due to exhaustion. During the descent the impression of depth is hard to grasp. To sum it up, it's 600ft deep, almost twice the depth of Gaping Gill and from the bottom it will take a fit team over two hours to make the ascent to surface and some sections can be very hard work when transporting rope bags. By prior arrangement through trips exiting via Peak Cavern can be made, a descent of 230m (760ft) traversing several kilometres of passage. This should only be undertaken

by parties familiar with all sections of the trip. Do not enter J.H. in the hope of blindly finding your way through. There is more than 17km of passage to get lost in! In wet weather the pitches can become impassable and the dam and pipework in Leviathan can be overpowered resulting in the connection to Far Sump Extension being flooded and cut off.

### Location

The entrance lies on land belonging to Rowter Farm.

### Description

A fine 50m winding shaft descends past worked out stopes to land in The Cartgate. This can be followed for a short distance to the west but the way on is to the east. From the bottom of the shaft the passage is followed for 200m, walking, stooping, traversing and crawling to a very narrow descending slope with a cobbled floor. A short distance on is the top of **Bitch Pitch**. This is a very narrow pitch with multiple rebelayes and deviations. Easy enough on the descent but a "bitch" to ascend if tired and hauling kit. At the bottom of **Bitch Pitch** a passage to the west can be followed for a short distance but to the east is **The Workshop**. A fine worked out chamber with some interesting artefacts. From here, although modified by miners, the passages are generally all natural.

Below **The Workshop** is **Leviathan** and there are two routes down into it. The original route starts as a low crawl on the far right of **The Workshop**. This curves round and descends a loose rock slope (care!) to the head of **Leviathan's first pitch**. This is 40m deep and is extremely wet after rain. At the bottom of the pitch a ledge overlooks the bottom section of **Leviathan**. From the ledge the usual route is via a traverse round onto an adjacent ledge to a climb down a hole (handline useful). At the bottom of the climb a short descend leads into **The Tea Rooms**. A chamber in the side of the main shaft with some interesting artifices. From **The Tea Rooms** a rock slope down to the right reaches the head for the final 30m pitch. This is a fine free hang landing at the base of **Leviathan**.

The alternative route from **The Workshop** is more intricate but avoids the water. A climb down a slot in the floor reaches a slope descending to the west. A hole in the left wall marks the first pitch. 10m down this small shaft breaks out into the side of the main shaft and eventually land on the ledge by the hole above **The Tea Rooms**.

At the bottom of **Leviathan**, the slope down leads to the connection with **Far Sump Extension**. In the opposite direction, a climb up under huge stemples reaches a stooping height decent to a draught door. Below this iron ladders lead down to a short crawl and a descent under a choke to emerge at **The Boulder Piles** in **Speedwell Cavern**.

#### **Description Notes:**

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#### **Surveys:**

- J.H. has it's own dedicated survey showing both the plan and cross section. The complex is also included with the main Peak Speedwell survey. Both are published by John Beck and are available from Hitch n Hike.
- Descent Magazine:#126 (p12) Oct./Nov. 1995.

#### **Further reading:**

- Crewe CPC Rigging Guide (topo) available directly from CCPC and local caving shops.
- Classic Caves of the Peak District (p89), Iain Barker 1997, now out of print ISBN 1-86126-058-X
- Selected Caves of Britain & Ireland (p127-8), D Marshall & D Rust 1997.

#### **Entries in Descent:**

#110 (p15)	Feb./Mar. 1993.
#116 (p19)	Feb./Mar. 1994.
#117 (p17)	Apr./May. 1994.
#119 (p9)	Aug./Sep. 1994.
#120 (p9)	Oct./Nov. 1994.
#121 (p12)	Dec./Jan. 1994/95.
#122 (p9)	Feb./Mar. 1995.
#124 (p10)	Jun./Jul. 1995.
#126 (p12)	Oct./Nov. 1995.
#129 (p18)	Apr./May. 1996.
#131 (p9)	Aug./Sep. 1996.
#132 (p9)	Oct./Nov. 1996.
#133 (p13)	Dec./Jan. 1996/7.
#134 (p13)	Feb./Mar. 1997
#136 (p14)	Jun./Jul. 1997

#### **Entries in CDG Newsletter:**

#121 (p25) Oct. 1996 (J.H. connection with Stemple Highway)

#### **Amendments and additions** can be sent to:-

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

## **WARNING!**

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

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### **CAVE RESCUE**

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

*Professional caver training is available from*

**www.OutdoorInstruction.co.uk**