

P8 (Jackpot), Castleton.

Grid Ref: SK 10784 81792 (GPS)

Alt: 326m

Length: 1.8km+ including passages beyond the downstream sumps.

Access: Park at Perryfoot in the pull-in (SK 10085 81284) and call at Perryfoot Farm opposite. It's probably best to go round to the back door (go down the little road opposite and into the farmyard). An access fee is charged (£1.00 / caver). From the gate near the pull-in follow the path across the fields to the cave.

Introduction

P8 for its size is quite complex and it can take a good many trips to fully understand how everything fits together. Passages on different levels interconnect and pass back and forth over each other. Different streams appear and disappear. This description is based upon the "direct route", the usual and most direct route to the bottom of the cave (the Downstream Sump), with alternate routes and side passages described separately. Being an active swallet, this cave is obviously susceptible to flooding in wet weather. While few places in the cave flood to dangerous levels the amount of water that can pass through can make several sections extremely hazardous and difficult to negotiate. The Entrance, The Cascades and Idiot's Leap, all First Pitch rigs except the traverse, the Second Pitch and most of Overflow Passage can become impassable. Detailed knowledge of the cave and its hydrology can allow the experienced "wet weather" caver access to most parts via alternative routes and rigs. However, be warned! P8 is the most popular venue for "rescue due to high water" and "hypothermia".

The Cave

The small but obvious entrance to P8 lies on the southern side of the "**P8 Shakehole**". The cave was originally explored via a dug-out crawl from the base of the small crag above, now rarely used as in places it's very tight and somewhat unstable.

Following the stream underground, an aquatic 3m climb down a 1m diameter hole leads via a step into **Cascade Chamber**. Great care should be taken on the climb as algae growth on the wet limestone makes "life" slippery. The rocky floor of Cascade Chamber slopes away, with the way on to the left hand side. A crawl under (or climb over) a wedged block gives access to a junction. Right is just the lower level of Cascade

Chamber and soon closes down in boulders. Left, downstream, it the way on. 15m from the entrance a 2m climb down a cascade is followed by 10m of streamway to the head of **Idiot's Leap**, another 2m climb down but this time vertical. Twin P hangers provide and attachment for a y-hang (old rope usually in place). Above the first cascade is the upstream end of **The Flats** (see later section).

From Idiot's Leap 50m of narrow, high and meandering streamway leads to the head of the **First Pitch** (5.5m lip to floor). This can be descended via three different routes, a bolted traverse round the right wall to a ledge and a climb down (the best route in wetter conditions), or as a direct drop in the water, or via a climb up just prior to the pitch head, a longer free descent from the roof. The usual route is via the traverse clear of the water.

Just back from the pitch head on the right wall a p-hanger provides the first point of attachment. Round the corner the stream drops away down the pitch, the next p-hanger is on the right wall above. From this, the next is reached via a drop (use intermediate "butterfly") to two more giving access a ledge and another "p". From here a 4m descent can be made to the base of the pitch or the traverse can be continued across for 4m to another 'p' and the "Upper Route" (again, the better option in wetter conditions).



The "direct route" is down. From the base of the First Pitch the way on is at floor level following the stream. 23m of narrow meandering streamway (passing under a wedged rock part way along) leads to a 1m cascade, a pool, and another 1.5m cascade. Just prior to the second cascade is a 'p' in the left-hand wall. Rig from here, down into the pool below to the head of the 7m (anchors to floor) **Second Pitch**. Twin 'p's make for a y-hang.

From the 'Y' a 7m drop lands at the bottom. By ladder, you have no choice but to end up here, but if descending by rope, a forceful push of the wall 2m above the floor will access a 'coll' and a short drop into a chute, this is the place to be. If continuing to "the usual places" any kit, harnesses etc,

can be jettisoned here. Directly under the pitch the stream disappears into a small passage, soon too tight and usually sumped. The stream reappears in Overflow Passage (see later section).

The ways on are..... clockwise, up round the rim of the chamber, taking care not to slip down the 'inviting drops' to a window and short hands and knees passage to a chamber, or at floor level down the chute, into Overflow Passage (see later section). The direct route is the higher route up through the window.

The crawl from the window emerges in a flat floored chamber (this is the bottom of the Upper Route Second Pitch / Old Iron Ladder Pitch). Continuing on, a scramble over fallen blocks (with flutes of eroded limestone) leads for 6m to a multiple junction. The Direct Route is to the left along the narrow crawling and stooping **Gour Passage**. the pitch down to the right here drops into "Overflow Passage". Ahead another pitch drops into Overflow. To the left at the pitch-head a 70cm dia. tube links to Gour Passage. Above the start of Gour Passage a 5m slippery climb ascends to emerge in the floor of High Level Passage 47m upstream of Mud Hall.

Taking the direct route, **Gour Passage** is 24m long, narrow and stooping to a 2m climb down into **Mud Hall**, 15m long and 6m wide. Immediately on the right, **High Level Passage** goes off accessed via a scramble under a big wedged boulder. Opposite High Level Passage, Up to the left, a 45' slope leads for 12m to a horizontal flat out mud crawl ending at a dig after just a few meters. Crossing Mud Hall, 6m along on the right in the floor, a small hole leads to a low 3m crawl and 4m pot connecting to **Overflow Passage**. The main way on is across Mud Hall to a 2m climb down into a high canyon passage. 7m on this intersects a high vadose passage running from right to left, this is the "Lower" or **Main Streamway**.

Heading downstream there are two options, either drop 2m into the water, or traverse. Take the lower route in the water and you'll get wet, take the traverse, you'll stay dry (unless you slip and then you'll get wet). The traverse leads for 15m to a point where the stream runs over a natural 'dam' and boulder floor. 4m on, up above to the right, is the entrance to **Ben's Dig**. This is accessed via a rope climb 4m further on. Continuing on, a wider boulder strewn passage leads after 10m to a 5m climb down (on the left). The route back under the climb is blind. Ahead the passage continues, descending for 8m on a rocky floor to the streamway. 43m further on, a flowstone cascade on the left marks the start of deeper water. 9m beyond the passage closes down, but to the right, is **Downstream Sump 1** (Sump A/V).

The high section of passage prior to the Downstream Sump, with its walls sloping up to the left, is known as **Tow'd Man's Rift**. This can be ascended via a slippery climb to the vandalised "**Stalagmite Grotto**" on the right and a low crawl keeping left leading to **Christmas Aven**.

Heading upstream from the Mud Hall / Lower Streamway junction a 1.5m wide by 3m high stream passage leads for 31m to the **Upstream Sump B/III** (Top Sump). 16m from the junction a passage up on the left is **Sand Passage**, initially 1m high by 1.5m wide. Opposite this, a climb up to an ascending passage leads up at 45' for 13m to a muddy, silty and stony, dig. 4m beyond the Sand Passage junction another passage goes off, this time to the right, to Sump C/II and the link to **Overflow Passage** (see later section).

Downstream Sumps (Sump A/V) & beyond

The downstream sumps were first explored in 1965. Since then eleven sumps have been discovered. 1-5 lead downstream to 6 (an impenetrable outlet). Past 6 the normally static sumps 7-9 were pushed upstream. Beyond 9 a short section of open passage was discovered to a pitch and sump 10, dived but too tight to push. The nature of the sumps vary greatly, at times some block with silt while others open. To get all 8 sumps to the end passable is rare. In times of drought, sumps 1-3 have dried out allowing non divers access to the iron ladder at the start of Sump 4. Visibility in the sumps is generally poor.

Sump 1:

32m long, always poor vis. with a silty floor. The line is old, slack and stained the same colour as everything else (silt coloured). A 3m descent is followed by 29m of reasonably roomy passage to surface in an airbell.

Sump 2:

30m long, very much like sump 1, ends in another airbell.

Sump 3:

23m long, like the previous sumps and can be constricted at the downstream end.

Having surfaced beyond "3" a high rift passage is entered [photo]. After 30m this closes down but a 1.7m diameter heavily scalloped tube [photo] to the left just before the end marks the way on. Steadily descending, this reaches a small pot equipped with a short iron ladder after 25m. In high water conditions Sump 4 will back up considerably, by up to 8m.

For a detailed description of sumps 4 to 10 and the dry cave between refer to the CDG publication "The Derbyshire Sump Index"

Upstream Sump B/III (Top Sump)

This is the main inlet for the Main Stream Passage and has been dived to a constriction 45m from base at a depth of 27m. In drought the first section of the sump as dried up allowing non divers access to the first section.

Sand Passage

Sand Passage starts off 1m high by 1.5m wide but soon lowers. 9m along on the right a small body sized tube links back to the streamway. 6m on the passage dips to a muddy constricted duck, 35cm high by 55cm wide. Larger passage ascending beyond leads after 15m to a sump which can be baled. This is a tight body sized tube leading to a slope terminating at **Sump E/IV** (Sand Passage Sump), 1m long, 1.5m wide and choked at a depth of 4m. (1)

Reference: 1. Derbyshire Sump Index.

Sump C/II Passage

This leaves the Main Streamway 15m upstream of the Mud Hall junction. A step up to the right enters a narrow stooping height passage. after 3.5m a body sized tube on the right links to **Overflow Passage**. 1.5m further on is **Sump C/II**, a flooded pot in the floor. This has been explored in very dry conditions by non divers. A 1.5m drop to a mud and sand floor passes under a low arch, 1.5m wide by 1m high. Just beyond the arch, on the right, a low passage with a mud and sand floor descends but is usually too tight to enter (this is thought to connect to **Sump D/I** at the end of Overflow Passage). 5m beyond the arch after a sharp right-hand bend a 3m deep pot leads down to a 2m slither dropping into a stream. The stream issues from an impenetrable slot and runs off down a narrow stooping height passage which can be followed for 20m to **Halley's Sump**. This is a flooded pot that has been dived in zero visibility to a small hole. The diver who explored this tried to enlarge the hole by kicking rocks and gravel through which made the hole bigger but resulted in the sump backing up rapidly! (1) This point is 29m in from the normal start of **Sump C/II**.

References:

1. K. Bertham, *personal communication*.

Curious Sink

Curious Sink lies in a pool directly underneath the entrance to the Sump C/II Passage. In normal conditions it is below the main stream water level and can't be seen. In drought it is exposed. A 1m dia. tube descends for 8m via a squeeze on a left hand bend to a tight muddy chute to a small pool. In November 2003 it was completely blocked by silt 4m in.

Overflow Passage

From the coil above the base of the 2nd Pitch a climb down over dry cascades reaches the start of Overflow Passage. After 7m of narrow going a junction is reached. Down to the right a 1m drop lands back in the stream (dries in dry weather) and a 2m climb up enters a narrow passage. Both routes lead to the same place. The stream can be followed upstream for a few meters before becoming too tight. Downstream passes a water level duck down through a hole to the right or a dryer squeeze to the left emerging after 5m in a small but high chamber. A 3.5m climb up above the point of entry gains the narrow passage mentioned before. 4m above the shaft reaches a window at the start of **Gour Passage**. Immediately to the left, a 0.8m diameter outlet passage soon becomes too tight. From the chamber the main route continues for 7m to a flat out (and usually wet) grovel through to a hands and knees crawl. 11m on this enlarges into a stooping height passage. 9m beyond the enlargement a low passage on the left is an oxbow. 6m after this the main route enters a tiny chamber, where the oxbow re-enters. The climb above, tricky at the top, accesses a 3m crawl to emerge in **Mud Hall**. Back in the stream 8m of small passage is followed to a junction. Ahead, 10m of passage terminates in Sump D/I. Left, enters a body sized tube, 14m long emerging in the Lower (Main) Streamway.

High Level Passage

From Mud Hall a scramble under and over boulders enters a large passage. After 46m, beneath a jammed block, two deep holes in the floor lead down, the first is a 13m pitch down into **Overflow Passage** (just beyond the first squeeze/duck). The second is a 5m climb down to the start of **Gour Passage**. 9m beyond the holes a 3m climb up enters a wide passage. 5m on, a balcony overlooks the head of the "Upper Route 2nd Pitch" which can be gained via an airy traverse protected by natural belays and p-hangers.

1st to 2nd Pitch, Upper Route

From the 6th p-hangar on the 1st Pitch traverse a 4m ledge skirting the right hand side of the chamber reaches another "p". From here a low scramble over fallen slabs enters 12m of crawling and stooping to gain the roof of the 4m deep stream canyon. A careful traverse along the left hand side leads to the "**Bad Step**". To the right, under a jammed block, is **Stalagmite Passage**, and to the left past a large rounded stal, the Upper Route continues. 8m of traversing over deep holes in the floor reaches a window between two stal columns. From here, there used to be an iron ladder that descended down through the hole to the left but now, two p-hangers provide a y-hang over a 6m pitch which lands in the chamber

above the Direct Route (stream) 2nd Pitch. Access to the pitch head is best protected from natural rock belays further back.

Stalagmite Passage

To the right at the "Bad Step" a reasonably sized passage leads for 36m to a bouldery ramp. Up to the left an exposed climb up on a false floor enters an ascending passage which closes down. Continuing on 20m of ascending passage ends at a stal blockage.

The Flats

A 2m climb up above the 1st Cascade (below Cascade Chamber) rises into a wide, stooping height passage that curves round to the left. After 11m a choke is met with a way on to the right. 14m of small twisting crawl ascends to a blockage. Back in the bouldery passage, 7m from the initial climb, a roof level slot on the right leads to the head of a 5m pitch but a hole in the floor bypasses this via a 5m climb down into a small chamber. On the far side of the small chamber a 7m pitch drops back down to the stream below Idiot's Leap.

Original Entrance

The original entrance is just below a small crag above the main swallet entrance. Very tight and unstable in places, is drops into the streamway just below Cascade Chamber.

Description Notes:

Written: November 2003 by Shaun Puckering and Malc Whitehead with additions from Tim Webber.
Last update: 26th January 2007.
This edit: 19th December 2010.
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Surveys:

- A survey, published in 2006, is available from Hitch n Hike at Bamford (see contact details below).
- Descent #91 (p28) Dec./Jan. 1989/90 (Downstream Sumps 1-4).
- Classic Caves of the Peak District (p140-143), Iain Barker 1997, now out of print ISBN 1-86126-058-X

Further reading:

- Crewe CPC Rigging Guide.

Entries in Descent:

- #46 (p43) Sep./Oct. 1980.
- #47 (p5) Jan./Feb. 1981.
- #48 (p15 & 37) Mar./Apr. 1981.
- #65 (p7) Aug. 1985 (Ben's Dig).
- #86 (p15) Feb./Mar. 1989 (Ladders beyond the downstream sumps).
- #90 (p10) Oct./Nov. 1989 (Sump observations in drought).
- #91 (p28-29) Dec./Jan. 1989/90 (Sumps in drought)
- #96 (p13) Oct./Nov. 1990.
- #105 (p14) Apr./May. 1992.
- #119 (p9) Aug./Sep. 1994 (Sump 9).
- #130 (p15) Jun./Jul. 1996 (Downstream sumps to sump 10).
- #153 (p12) Apr./May. 2000.

Entries in CDG Newsletter:

- #60 (p22-23) Jul. 1981 (Downstream Sumps).
- #70 (p21-22) Jan. 1984 (Downstream Sumps).
- #74 (p28-29) Jan. 1985 (Downstream Sumps).
- #89 (p30) Oct. 1988 (Climbing the rift between downstream 3 & 4).
- #91 (p16) Apr. 1989 (Halley's Sump)
- (Downstream Sumps)
- (Upstream Sump B).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Downstream Sumps, to 9).
- (Downstream Sumps, to 9).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Downstream Sumps).
- (Halley's Sump & Far Canal Sump)
- (Downstream Sumps, to 10)
- (Upstream Sump)

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)

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