

The Galena Chamber Circuit & The NCC Shafts. Part 5 of Peak Cavern (Castleton).

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

Introduction

This guide is based upon John Cordingley's 1986 guide book "The Peak Cavern System - a Caver's Guide". The Galena Chamber Circuit forms a loop to the north away from the Main Streamway from Surprise View to Main Stream Inlet and Squaw's Junction further upstream. It was originally explored from each end before finally being connected. It is here described collectively from Surprise View. Since 1986 there have been a number of developments in this area including the discovery in July 2001 of The NCC Shafts, a large vertical complex connecting Disappointment rift, Galena Rift and Rocky Tube.

Description

The notable inlet just before **Surprise View Pitch** rises up a couple of steps to a junction. To the right is mud-choked close to the mud-choked recess off the Upper Gallery traverses. On the left is a scalloped canyon beneath a roof tube: the passage at first being walking sized. There are a couple of blockages of mud creating a short crawl beneath and an easy squeeze at roof level. The liberal coating of greasy mud in this area means that the caver must be careful to avoid a face-first landing in the pool beneath! At a junction near these two obstacles a passage on the right leads to an abandoned muddy dig with the remains of old wooden rail tracks leading into it. Beyond the greasy roof squeeze easier going in a stooping height phreatic tube leads to a step over muddy rocks into **Galena Chamber** about 90m from Surprise View.

Here, the large aven rising to the left has been scaled up the muddy flowstone wall leading to a short length of passage which ends at a calcite choke. Small fragments of galena (lead ore) in the fill beneath the flowstone give this chamber its name and indicate the presence of a mineral vein. Immediately to the right in **Galena Chamber** (from the point of entry) is a deep blue pool, choked at the bottom. This is normally static but any overflow from it flows via a tiny hole back down the passage to Surprise View. The way out of the chamber is an obvious tube at roof level reached by a tricky 5m climb in two steps at the extreme north west corner (to the right). At the top a short traverse back leads to a fine view down into

Galena Chamber and the tiny hole in the left wall (fixed knotted rope) is **Wind Tunnel** (described later).

In the opposite direction various passages present themselves after a short distance. To the right is **The Rocky Tube**, a squeeze through into an easier crawl passing a small aven and ending at another small aven after 15m (3). On the 30th January 2006 this was ascended to a small passage leading off at the top. This is 4m long and breaks out into the bottom pitch of the **NCC Shafts** (described later). At the base of the NCC Shafts a very small hole at floor level provides a visual connection with the bottom of the pitch in Rocky Tube.

Straight ahead is mud-choked whilst on the left are two alternatives. The first is a high narrow rift leading to Galena Rift and EMT Aven (described later). The way on is the other passage on the left, a low but easy squeeze (well lubricated by mud) into a short crawl emerging 3m up the wall of **Wigwam Aven**, where the descent to the floor is helped fixed knotted handline.

At the same level in the right wall is **Cadbury Crawl**, a passage which has been extensively dug ending in a sloppy laminated clay choke very aptly described by the name of the passage. **Wigwam Aven** itself has been climbed for 20m to a squeeze into a tortuous crawl (**The M1**) emerging in the 30m long **Disappointment Rift**. At the end of the rift 20ft of passage to a balcony in the side of a large shaft system (**The NCC Shafts** (described later)).

At the base of **Wigwam Aven** an uneven muddy crawl continues to a junction. To the left, 20m of hands and knees crawling leads to a junction with a larger tube carrying a sizeable stream (see below). To the right (at the first junction) a crawl enlarges passing several inlets spurring in on a prominent bedding plane. This is **Main Stream Inlet** and the crack has been cemented (4) to collect the water into a system of pipes, which was used to wash out various mud-choked passages in the area. Just past here, a low muddy 50m long crawl can be followed in the right wall which emerges in the roof of **Main Stream Passage** next to **Window Dig** (not far upstream of Lake Passage).

Back at **Main Stream Inlet**, following the stream reaches a junction on the left, with the left hand passage forming the crawl after **Wigwam Aven**. Beyond, a stooping height tube leads to a dramatic entry into **Main Stream Passage**, halfway up the wall at **Squaw's Junction**.

Wind Tunnel:

Through this passage and various arduous digs a route was forced connecting with Speedwell's Colostomy Crawl in 1984 (1), making it the first and for a long time, the only dry connection between the two caves (2). In 1990 it was bypassed by the much larger and easier passage of Fawley Tower.

From the north west corner of **Galena Chamber** a tricky 5m climb reaches a traverse heading back over the top. A tiny hole in the left wall (fixed knotted rope) marks the downstream end of Wind Tunnel.

The first section is flat-out, but soon the gradually ascending crawl develops a more tubular cross-section, with frequent bends and a narrow vadose slot in the floor. This floor slot can make life difficult but the skilled caver will make best use of all the available space and soon reach a 20m high aven (too tight at the top). Water falling down this is joined by the trickle coming down the continuing crawl and drops into a constricted passage becoming too tight straight away. Beyond the aven, whilst still low the crawl eases slightly with no floor slot, but various shallow pools make progress wetter. Eventually after a total of about 90m, a T-junction with a much larger passage, **The Trenches**, is met (see Part 7).

Galena Rift and EMT Aven:

Survey: Descent Magazine #146 Feb./Mar. 1999 (p12).

Opposite Rocky Tube the narrow Galena Rift leads to a 6m climb up rigged with a fixed rope (care!). This enters a short section of passage to a chamber with an aven rising above. A small opening at the top of the aven leads to the M2 and subsequently the NCC shafts (described later). Beyond the aven, a 30m crawl reaches a boulder choke. Keeping left a route up through the choke reaches a squeeze past a boulder into the base of EMT Aven.

In EMT Aven, a very muddy slope ascends 4m the base of a 5m pitch to a loose 3m boulder slope and a rebelay. A traverse line across the slope leads into a 3m high rift which eventually reduces to a flat out crawl. This is Focal Recall leading via a squeeze into a steeply ascending rift passage to emerge in the NCC shafts. Back at the rebelay, an easy 7m ascent up a slope leads you to the base of the 15m No Shreddies Till Sheffield Pitch at the top of which a large steeply ascending passage reaches a calcite choke. Just before the choke, a 10m pitch up a narrow tube leads to a bedding plane choked with clay, two passages head in opposite directions. This point is at a similar level to the White River Series.

The NCC Shafts:

Disappointment Rift gives way to a well developed ascending passage with a muddy slope to Mega Tsunami, a 7m long "egg timer" shaped passage traversed at the higher level to emerge at an eye hole overlooking the NCC Shafts. A 6m pitch descends to **The Balcony**. From here the main way on is down but above is the **Aven Series** (described later) and also from here.....

- A low crawl at floor level is 6m long to **Robbie's Pitch**. This is 7m deep constricted at the top landing in a very muddy rift. Short climbs lead down into **Glyn's Gloom Room** and the **M2**, a 5m long and very tight sloping crawl to the head of a 4m pitch dropping into **Galena Rift** in the **Main Stream Inlet Series**.
- Upslope from **The Balcony** (SE), a 1.5m climb up to the right reaches a window into a major vein cavity. From here a 6.5m pitch descends to a short level section to a descending slope to a crawl, 6.5m long to a 3m pitch down into steeply descending phreatic rift. This is 10m long to a vertical joint followed by **Focal Recall**, an awkward squeeze through a bedding at floor level. The passage beyond increases in size, sloping upwards over a rocky floor to emerge at a window in the NE wall of the **EMT Aven**, near the base of **No Shreddies Till Sheffield Pitch**.

From **The Balcony** a 2m climb down to the NW reaches the head of the **Second Pitch**. A traverse across the left hand wall here leads to The Traverse of the Spods described later. The Second Pitch drops 17m via a deviation to a sloping ledge leading immediately to the **Third Pitch**. This is 13m deep landing at the head of a very steep 10m slope to a rock ridge. Down to the left a short climb leads to a flat ledge followed by a 10m pitch landing on a sandy floor next to a static pool. Right from the rock bridge provides an alternative descent.

In the NW wall a low opening gives access to a very muddy 4m pitch with coral evident in the walls. At the bottom a slope leads down to a conclusive mud choke, with no chance of extension. This point is 40m below the eye hole from Disappointment Rift.

Across the chamber to the south a low impenetrable hole visually connects through to the end of the Rocky Tube. 10m above this a small opening leads to a 4m low crawl to a 45' slope and a 10m pitch down into a small chamber at the end of the **Rocky Tube**.

- **The Traverse of the Spods** is entered via a traverse along the left hand wall from the head of the 1st pitch, a 3m traverse leads to an abseil underneath a rock arch before climbing back up the left hand wall to reach a passage. This point is 12.5m above the head of the 2nd pitch. From here a rocky slope leads to a calcite slope to a small passage with several dried up gourd pools and a well decorated calcite blockage. Above the blockage is a short rift passage leading to two ways on: at low level the passage soon ends whilst at high level a squeeze beyond calcited boulders in a roof tube into an aven, 2m long by 0.45m wide climbed for 10m to a small chamber, above closes down while a small 3m long passage at 45° leads to the base of another aven that chokes after 6 metres. From the base of the roof tube an awkward climb enters **Tikka Passage**. A 4m long tight crawl enters a rift where it is possible to turn round. Beyond, the crawl continues as before for 12m to a 5m high rift, choked with boulders at high level, showing no prospect for further exploration.

- **Mummy Inlet** is entered by traversing out across the south wall into the rift to a small muddy ledge. Above this a 2m long squeeze reaches a 4m high rift. Below it closes down but back under the point of entry a small hole leads back through to the main shaft. Across the rift behind a pile of boulders is a fossil gourd pool and a tiny hole that at times omits a slight draught. Above the rift a 0.6m dia. tube ascends vertically for 8m before closing down

The Aven Series is accessed from a smooth deep ledge on the north side of **The Balcony**. A fixed rope ascends 6m to another ledge on a level with The Eye Hole. From the ledge an 8m pitch ascends to a rebeley adjacent to a ledge. From here there are three routes. Stepping off the rope onto the ledge a 6m ascending pitch reaches another ledge and a 2m climb (handline) to a bedding. Right is choked after 5m and left ascends to a blockage and a voice connection with Mark & Angela's Passage.

Back at the rebeley an overhanging pitch for ascends 14m to a flowstone slope and **Mark & Angela's Wedding Present Passage**. Heading NWW 10m of mud floored passage, 2m high by 2m wide, reaches an 8m long crawl, passing a bat skeleton in the floor, to a choke. This is at the same level and his heading for the Kingdom in the White River Series.

The 3rd route from the rebeley involves reaching across to the south-east wall to a fixed rope. A 10m ascent up the south-east wall reaches a rebeley followed by a handline climb up a gully entering a passage. A climb at the back of the chamber gains a 6m passage choked with alcite. There is a low dig on the right hand side but no draught is detectable.

Description Notes:

The Galena Chamber Circuit: Based upon the description in John Cordingley's 1986 book, "The Peak Cavern System - a Cavers Guide". Adapted for this guide by Shaun Puckering.
The NCC Shafts: Written by Wayne Sheldon in 2006 and edited for this guide by Shaun Puckering.
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References:

1. Cave Diving Group Newsletter No.56, pp24,25
2. Technical Speleological Group Journal No. II, pp16-18.
3. British Speleological Association Bulletin (new series), No.3, p9
4. P.B. Smith, personal communication

Surveys:

- A complete survey of the Peak Speedwell System is available from local caving Hitch n Hike. T: 01433 651013 www.HNHoutdoors.com
- Galena Rift: Descent magazine #146 (p12) Feb./Mar. 1999.

Entries in Descent:

#136	Jun./Jul. 1997	p14
#146	Feb./Mar. 1999	p12
#154	Jun./Jul. 2000	p17
#160	Jun./Jul. 2001	p10
#161	Aug./Sep. 2001	p10
#162	Oct./Nov. 2001	p14
#188	Feb./Mar. 2006	p14
#189	Apr./May. 2006	p12 & 13
#194	Feb./Mar. 2007	p11
		Galena Rift.
		Disappointment Rift.
		Galena Chamber Aven.
		Disappointment Rift.
		Disappointment Rift.
		NCC Shafts.
		NCC Shafts & Rocky Tube.
		Tikka Passage, NCC Shafts.

Amendments:

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

WARNING!

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

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