

Speedwell Cavern, Castleton.

Part 5: Whirlpool Passage.

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

Whirlpool Passage

This is the obvious inlet passage to the right at **The Whirlpool** and is entered by a short swim followed by a mantleshelf move up into the streambed. Easy walking ensues for the next 70m but the unwary caver may well be in for a shock. This is because the **Whirlpool Rising** sump further upstream often has a siphon effect in fairly wet conditions. This causes pulses of what appear to be flood waters at intervals of typically 8-10 minutes. The most dramatic pulses observed can produce a 60cm rise in water levels in just a few seconds!

The first side passage is a very wet crawl on the left, linking through to the roof of **Main Stream Passage** just downstream of the **Boulder Piles** (see pt.1). Another short crawl just beyond on the right is the **Troubled Waters** connection to **The Assault Course** (see pt.3).

40m further there is some evidence of mining activity in the form of various small stopes in the roof (with a tiny sumped tube away to the right which possibly connects with the **Assault Course**). Beyond here the roof is lower with hands and knees progress being made awkward with an uneven cobbly floor. Eventually **Whirlpool Rising** is met (a 1.5m diameter sump pool supplying the stream) and the passage above has been modified by mining to a dead end after 40m.

The rising itself has been dived to 7m depth, emerging after 45m in a large airbell known as **H.M.S. Belfast**. The next sump is 20m long and 5m deep to enter a second airbell, **H.M.S. Edinburgh**. Both of these airbells can be reached via a sinuous crawl entered at roof level just beyond **Whirlpool Rising**. Continuing underwater, a passage generally 5m deep leads to a pot in the floor down to a boulder choke at a depth of 9m which is the source of the water. Directly above this and 123m from base is airspace in Mary Rose, a rift airbell developed in **Faucet Rake**. The continuing sump is low and silty to the limit of exploration at a very low junction, 20m further (1). The main Speedwell water sometimes emerges from these sumps (when it is not coming from **Main Rising**) and more details are given in the hydrology section.

Just beyond **Whirlpool Rising**, up in the right hand side of the roof is a discreet hole which leads up into a narrow aven which after a 8m free climb reaches a "corkscrew" series of bends. Beyond the corkscrew, a very small passage continues to ascend at 45 degrees, as yet unexplored (2). Be warned though, two cavers have already got stuck attempting to pass the bends....

Description Notes:

Based upon the description in John Cordingley's 1986 book, "The Peak Cavern System - a Cavers Guide".

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Copyright: www.PeakDistrictCaving.info

References:

1. Cave Diving Group Newsletter No.68, p21
2. Shaun Puckering, pers. comm.

Surveys:

Main Peak Speedwell system survey available from Hitch n Hike
T: 01433 651013 www.HNHoutdoors.com

Entries in Descent Magazine:

#118 (p8) Jun./Jul. 1994 (Troubled Waters).

Entries in CDG Newsletter:

#60 Jul. 1981 (p29) Whirlpool Rising.
#89 Oct. 1988 (p30) Whirlpool Rising.
#91 Apr. 1989 (p18) Whirlpool Rising.
#118 Jan. 1996 (p24) Whirlpool Rising.
#121 Oct. 1996 (p25) Whirlpool Rising.

WARNING!

Caving and exploring mines 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.