

Sidetrack Cave, Eldon Hill Quarry, Castleton.

Grid Ref: SK 11680 81521

Alt: 388m

Length: 479m.

Access: Eldon Hill Quarry is part of the Castleton SSSI and exploration/digging activity needs to be logged. DCA has installed a box over the wall next to the entrance gate (clamped to a bar with the key on a chain tucked out of sight in one end of the bar). Inside is a logbook, some pens and a survey of the quarry, showing all the known caves and digs. Cavers are asked to record their visits naming the site visited. New sites should be given a name and added to the survey. By request of the farmer all vehicles must be parked on the lane. Vehicles are not permitted in the quarry. The gate must be kept fastened and access left clear at all times. Visitors accept and understand that they enter and explore the quarry entirely at their own risk and should carry proof of valid Public Liability insurance cover. Dogs not permitted.

Introduction

Sidetrack Cave lies in the now abandoned Eldon Hill Quarry. It's a long crawl that intersects a much larger, and finely decorated passage. A highly significant cave in a somewhat "blank" area of hill. The existence of a cave at this location has been known about since 1994. Blasting revealed a large 4m dia. section of passage, named Alsop's Cave (after the quarryman who found it). This was explored at the time and a short period of digging managed to push over the mud floor to a point where long term digging tactics would have been required. A smaller passage left the main route to the right. Although it was smaller, this looked promising, again mud filled with an airspace but it had a draught. This was named "The Escape Route" as it was hoped it might escape the confines of the quarry. Eldon Hill was still a working and time would not allow for further exploration. Over the next few years the rock face was worked back as far as was possible, to a point only a few meters from the Eldon Hill track. Once operations ceased the site was "investigated" again. Alsop's cave was still obvious, with the entrance worked back to a point close to the limit of the 1994 exploration, well beyond the point where "The Escape Route" had branched off. A careful search of the terrace to the left revealed the clay sediment filled cross section of a passage 40m away. The Escape Route was still there. In August 2002 a short period of digging revealed an airspace, a draught, and soon after, a gap above the mud large enough to squeeze over.....

The Cave

The entrance lies on the upper terrace on the northern side of the quarry just below the Eldon Hill track. There are two entrances on this terrace, 20m from the Western end is the large 4m dia. fossil phreatic passage of Alsop's Cave, choked a few meters in, and 40m further along, is the smaller entrance to Sideltrack, 1.8m wide by 1.3m high.

From the face 6m of stooping reaches a raised mud floor marking the start of a flat-out crawl. This is confined for the first 11m but then widens, with the continuing passage still flat out but roomier. 10m on there's a small passage on the left but this is nothing more than a landmark, marking a point 27m from the entrance. After another 62m, still flat out, the next landmark is reached, "Little & Large's Airbells", 89m in. Here, you can stand up, you won't be going anywhere if you do but at least you can! 16m Beyond (105m from the entrance) a junction is met, right is a dig while left is the way on. The dig fills with water completely in wet weather. From the junction, the crawl becomes roomier and continues for another 82m to emerge in the side of a much larger passage, The Litton Stroll, 187m from the entrance.

This can be explored left and right with a total length of around 170m. Left, downstream, 55m of walking, stooping and crawling through fine formations (care!) leads to a crawl terminating at a mud and stal choke 75m from the junction. This point is approximately 20m from the limit of exploration in Alsop's Cave. Had the dig in Alsop's Cave continued this would have been the breakthrough point.

Back at the junction, right heads upstream, again stooping and walking, for 50m to a junction with a small passage at floor level on the left, The Flat Out Walk. Continuing along the main passage a 9m high aven is reached after another 12m. Beyond 16m of crawling leads to a narrowing where the passage takes the right hand wall to end 17m on in a mud choke, 95m from the junction.

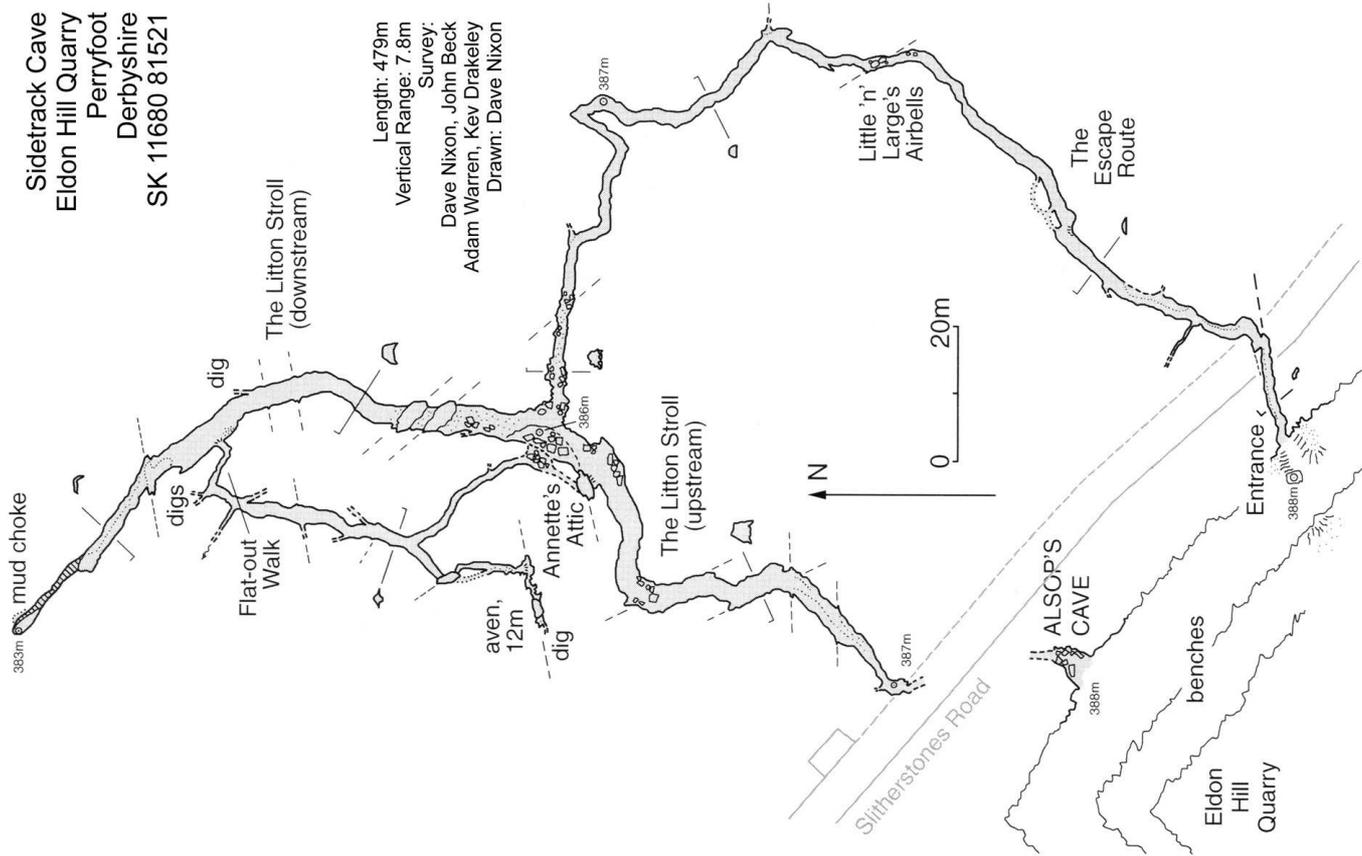
The Flat-out Walk constitutes around 100m of passage, mostly crawling in squallid mud. 45m in a junction is reached (Tigs and Togs). Left leads to a choke after 20m, very close to Anette's Attic in the Litton Stroll. Right reaches a small unstable aven after 16m where, to the right, a tricky, narrow and tight section of passage reaches a 12m high aven and a boundary dig.

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Sidetrack Cave
Eldon Hill Quarry
Perryfoot
Derbyshire
SK 11680 81521



Length: 479m
Vertical Range: 7.8m
Survey: Dave Nixon, John Beck
Adam Warren, Kev Drakeley
Drawn: Dave Nixon

Description Notes:

Written February 2004, Shaun Puckering & Frag Last.
This Edit: 31st August 2016.
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Surveys:

Descent magazine #124 (p10) Jun./Jul. 1995 (Alsop's Cave).
http://w01-0504.web.dircon.net/surveys/cave_survey_sidetrack_cave.jpg

Entries in Descent Magazine:

- #122 (p9) Feb./Mar. 1995 (Alsop's Cave).
- #123 (p13) Apr./May. 1995 (Alsop's Cave).
- #124 (p10) Jun./Jul. 1995 (Alsop's Cave).
- #168 (p11) Oct./Nov. 2002 (Alsop's Cave).
- #169 (p15) Dec./Jan. 2002/3 (Alsop's Cave).
- #169 (p26-27) Dec./Jan. 2002/3 (Sidetrack Cave).

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

Anyone using this guide does so at their own risk while understanding and accepting that, although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the writers and/or contributors can not be held responsible for any outcome however linked to this text. Do not rely on this description as it may contain errors. Your safety and the safety of those around you is your own responsibility. The existence of this guide does not imply a right of access to the cave. An access agreement may or may not be in place with the land owner. Liability Insurance linked to a Landowner Indemnity Clause may be required.

CAVE RESCUE

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

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