

## Citation

**County:** Derbyshire

**Site name:** Poole's Cavern and  
Grin Low Wood

**District:** High Peak

**Site ref:** 15 WNF

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended.

**Local Planning Authority:** Derbyshire County Council, High Peak Borough Council

**National grid reference:** SK 050724

**Area:** 39.6 (ha) 97.9 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey sheet:** 1:50,000: 119

1:10,000: SK 07 SE, SK 07 SW

**Date notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1963

**Date of last revision:** -

**Date notified (under 1981 Act):** 1990

**Date of last revision:** -

### Other information

Site boundary amended by deletion and addition.

### Description and reasons for notification

The Poole's Cavern and Grin Low Wood site lies immediately to the south of the town of Buxton. Poole's Cavern itself has formed within Carboniferous limestone and is of national importance for its cave features. Since Victorian times the cavern has been open as a show cave.

Above ground, the whole area is overlain by spoil from lime burning in the formerly extensive lime kilns. Soils are therefore thin with a high calcium content and support a number as small scattered open spoil areas of greater botanical interest. The greater part of the site is densely wooded, the majority of which is known to have originated from plantings in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### Geology

Poole's Cavern itself represent the only significant length of accessible cave passage within the karst catchment area of Stanley Moor. The main passage is unusually large and is a classic example of phreatic enlargement of a close joint system with solutional undermining and collapse. Poole's Cavern contains clastic sediment deposits which incorporate both vertebrate remains and stalagmite layers. This sequence preserves a valuable record of climatic and geomorphological change in this area through the Pleistocene.

#### Biology

Scattered throughout the wood are a number of areas of vegetated spoil that have remained unwooded. The vegetation of these spoil areas is similar to calcareous grassland. It is very herby-rich with a quite remarkable diversity of species; although the exact cause of this richness is not known. Most prominent among the herbs are devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* together with other calcicolous plants such as spring sedge *Carex caryophyllea* carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum* and thyme *Thymus praecox*; and particularly good and attractive populations of fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. The complete species list for the spoil areas includes 11 species of local distribution within Derbyshire, for three of which, creeping willow *Salix repens*, marsh hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa* and northern marsh-orchid

*Dactylorhiza purpurella*, this is their only site on limestone. The latter species is at the southern edge of its British distribution. A single juniper bush *Juniperus communis* grows on one of the areas of spoil in its only site in the county. Other plants of restricted distribution include a good population of mountain everlasting *Antennaria dioica*, flea sedge *Carex pulicaris*, grass-of-parnassus *Parnassis palustris*, moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* and frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*. Taken together these open spoil areas are considered to have a unique and important assemblage of species within the context of Derbyshire.

The surrounding woodland is dominated by beech *Fagus sylvatica* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* so that, apart from the areas where the canopy is more open, the shrub and ground flora layers are relatively poor. All of the eastern arm of the woodland, however, is more open and is developing through natural regeneration of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* into a more semi-natural structure; it is here that globe flower *Trollius europaeus*, melancholy thistle *Cirsium helenioides* and green hellebore *Helleborus viridis* are found.

Limited survey of the cavern during winter has revealed that it is being used as a winter roost site by at least two species of bat, natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and daubenton's *M. daubentonii*. Additionally, a summer roost of whiskered bats *M. mystacinus* has been known for some time from the cave entrance.

The invertebrate fauna of this unusual site has been little studied but is known to include a nationally rare species of beetle *Phyllotreta tetrastigma*.