

FACT SHEET 10:



Castleton

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Castleton

The village of Castleton lies at the western end of the Hope Valley, one of the more populated parts of the Peak District National Park [PDNP Fact Sheet]. It is 10 miles from Buxton, 16 miles from Sheffield and 27 miles from Stockport.

Castleton has been an established tourist centre for more than 400 years. **Peak Cavern** was described as one of the 'Seven Wonders of the Peak' in the 17th century and was visited by Mary Queen of Scots. There are many places of interest to attract tourists. Some of the most popular attractions in the Peak District National Park are in or near the village, for example **Treak**

Cliff Cavern, Speedwell Cavern, Blue John Cavern and **Peveril Castle**. The show caves alone attract many thousands of visitors every year.

Castleton is also popular as a base for touring in the Peak District National Park and for active sports such as rock climbing, caving, horse riding, hang gliding, cycling and walking.

Geology

Castleton is on the boundary between the Dark Peak and the White Peak [Rocks and Minerals Fact Sheet]. The ridge to the north marks the beginning of the gritstone and shale beds of the Dark Peak rising to the high moorland plateau beyond. The instability of the shale layers can be seen in the massive landslip at Mam Tor. The village itself sits on the shale/clay floor of the Hope Valley, while to the south and west lies the limestone of the White Peak.

Around 360 million years ago the Peak District was covered with a shallow tropical sea. Over millions of years, the remains of shellfish and other sea creatures, such as crinoids ('sea lilies') and brachiopods, were compressed into limestone. The fossilised remains of these sea creatures can be seen in the limestone rock. In some areas coral reefs were formed and these became the reef limestone in the Winnats Pass.

Movement under the Earth's surface pushed the rocks upwards causing cracking. Surface water trickled through cracks in the rock, dissolving the rock to form an underground

cave system. Around 200 million years ago hot fluids, forced into the cracks in the rock, crystallised to form veins of minerals such as galena (lead ore), barite and fluorspar. A decorative form of fluorspar, known as Blue John, was discovered by the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago. For centuries it has been mined to make ornaments and jewellery. The blue and yellow banded stone is named after the French words 'bleu' and 'jaune'. Castleton is the only known place in the world where Blue John is found.

History

The earliest known settlement in the Castleton area was the hill fort on the top of Mam Tor. The fort itself is Iron Age, although it is believed settlement began in the Bronze Age, around 1400 BCE. Even earlier traces of Stone Age people have been found in caves on Treak Cliff.

There is a local tradition that Odin Mine, at the foot of Mam Tor, was worked for lead in Saxon times (around the 10th or

11th centuries). Peveril Castle, which was built on top of the hill above Cavedale by William Peveril in 1080 was mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. The village of Castleton, which takes its name from 'castle town', was laid out in a grid pattern at the base of the hill.

From the 12th century, Castleton was the centre of a massive hunting forest – the Royal Forest of the Peak. In the 13th century it became a market town. It was also on the packhorse route bringing salt from Cheshire to Sheffield. The men who led the packhorse trains were called 'jaggers'.

The building of the turnpike road from Sheffield to Sparrowpit, passing through Castleton, in 1759 made access to the village easier and was an important early link between Sheffield and Manchester. By the mid-19th century the Wellington express coach stopped twice a day at Castleton on its journey between Sheffield and Manchester.

The railway line between Sheffield and Manchester calling at Hope was opened by the Midland Railway in 1894, clearing the way for even more tourists to visit the area.

Early industry

The earliest industries in Castleton were farming [Farming Fact Sheet] and **lead mining**. Most of the farms were built on the sunny south facing slopes of the gritstone ridge (running from Mam Tor to Losehill) and the shale valley floor. The farms are mostly mixed dairy and sheep with cows in the valley and sheep on the slopes. The climate and soil is not suitable for arable farming.

Lead mining was important in Roman times, with a good road (Batham Gate) between the Roman fort at Brough and the spa town of Buxton. Lead mining was at its height in the 17th and 18th centuries and the industry has helped to forge today's landscape. Many of the lead mining landscapes around Castleton are of **national importance** for their archaeological, geological and ecological value.

As lead mining declined towards the end of the 19th century, the waste materials ('gangue') thrown away by the miners became important. Fluorspar was one of these and is still

mined today for use in the chemical and steel industries. From the mid-17th century a village of rope-makers lived in the entrance to Peak Cavern, making and supplying rope for Castleton's lead mining industry. When lead mining died out at the end of the 19th century so too did the rope-making. Early industries in the village included a saw mill and a corn mill. The latter was first mentioned in 1472. As well as grinding corn it weighed pigs for the local community. Nineteenth century industries included a candle factory, a cotton mill and a needle-making factory.

The garland ceremony

The ancient Castleton Garland Ceremony is celebrated on Oak Apple Day (29 May). It is thought to be an echo of a pagan rite, revived to commemorate the restoration of Charles II

to the throne (who, legend has it, hid in an oak tree to escape Cromwell's forces after the Battle of Worcester 1651).

The king, wearing a conical garland of flowers, and his consort ride through the village from pub to pub with a train of dancing children. The garland is later hoisted onto the church tower.

Castleton today

Castleton's buildings are largely built of local limestone. There are fossils in the limestone that can easily be spotted in many of the buildings. Older cottages are roofed with gritstone slates. Blue slate imported

from Wales when road and rail transport improved in the 19th century are used on newer houses or to replace the old gritstone slates.

The oldest part of the village has been designated a Conservation

Area, which recognises its historic importance. Conservation projects in the past have included tree planting, removal of overhead wires and renovation of the Market Place. Several buildings are classed as Listed Buildings because of their architectural and historical importance.

Village facilities and services

SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS

Grocer	One general store selling a range of basic goods
Butcher	Nearest in Hope
Baker	Nearest in Hathersage
Supermarket	Nearest in Chapel-en-le-Frith
Chemist	Nearest in Hathersage
Bank	Nearest in Hathersage/Chapel-en-le-Frith
Medical centre	Nearest in Hope
Post office	In village
Police	Nearest police station in Chapel-en-le-Frith
Church	Church of England and Methodist churches in village
School	Primary school in village. Secondary school (11-16 years) in Hope
Village hall	In village
Library	Mobile library visits once a fortnight
Petrol	Nearest petrol station in Hope

SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS

B&B/guest house	16*
Camping/caravan site	2
Youth hostel	1
Outdoor pursuits centre	1
Tourist/gift shops	About 16
Cafés	4
Visitor centre	1

PEOPLE

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2007*
Bamford	1099	1077	1078	1057	1089	836
Castleton	650	608	586	701	689	694
Hathersage	1382	1476	1410	1416	1352	1739
Hope	771	794	843	912	900	746

Unlike villages in many rural parts of Britain, the population of Castleton is bigger now than it was 50 years ago, with tourism providing a livelihood for many local people. Most farmers supplement their income by providing B&B or other goods and services for visitors.

The largest non-tourism related employer is Lafarge Cement UK which owns the Hope cement works. It employs around 200 people. **Wearns Cambion Ltd**, an electronic components manufacturer, employs around 70 people. The Peak District National Park Learning and Environmental Conference Centre at **Losehill Hall** employs 43 permanent staff

plus a number of seasonal staff.

Castleton residents who do not work locally commute to nearby towns and cities such as Sheffield, Manchester, Buxton, Bakewell and Chesterfield.

TRANSPORT LINKS

The A6187 road, passing through Castleton, runs the length of the Hope Valley but has been closed to the west of Castleton since 1979 following a major landslip at Mam Tor. Winnats Pass remains the only road to the west. Use is restricted to light traffic, so heavy vehicles no longer pass through the village.

Currently, the Peak District National Park's only passenger railway service runs approximately hourly from Sheffield to Manchester stopping at Dore, Grindleford, Hathersage, Bamford, Hope, Edale, Chinley, New Mills and Stockport. Hope station is a little under three miles from Castleton.

There is a weekday bus service to and from Sheffield which runs approximately hourly. There are also extra buses to and from Bakewell [Bakewell Fact Sheet] on market day (Monday) and for school pupils, as well as special buses from surrounding towns and cities on summer Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Tourism: Boon and blight

Tourism [Tourism Fact Sheet] provides essential income for many Castleton residents. However, it can be difficult to balance the needs of residents with those of visitors, 80% of whom are day visitors who tend to descend on Castleton on summer Sundays.

The large number of tourists visiting Castleton can cause problems both to the villagers and to the tourists themselves.

Many footpaths around the area, especially Winnats Pass and the footpath to Mam Tor, became very badly eroded. Improvements such as surfacing paths in local stone or re-routing certain paths were completed in 2004.

Traffic congestion [Traffic Fact Sheet] is a big problem. There is a large car park, with space for up to 10 coaches, and public toilets. However, at peak times, such as the Christmas lights switch-on or the Garland Ceremony, the parking provision is not enough and traffic congestion can cause noise, nuisance and frustration for both

residents and visitors, spoiling the character of the village.

The importance of tourism to the local economy therefore needs to be balanced against the dangers of over-commercialisation and the adverse effects of ever-increasing visitor numbers.

The Tourist Information and Visitor Centre opened in July 2004 next to the main car park. It includes a museum telling the story of Castleton, a refreshment kiosk and a shop. In 2008 the centre had 185,000 visitors.

“Castleton should be given a wide berth on a Saturday or Sunday in summer. On those days it overflows with the tripper, for whom it lays itself out to provide, and its streets are apt to be uproarious until the last brakes have gone singing down the vale.”

This was written in 1905 (by John B. Firth in Highways and Byways in Derbyshire), but with the substitution of cars and coaches for ‘brakes’ could easily have been written today. It shows that tourism is far from being a modern invention.

Further information

- **Highways and Byways in Derbyshire,**
John B. Firth, Macmillan
- **Visit Castleton**
- **Friends of the Peak District**