

## One of the Seven Wonders of the Peak

One of Thomas Hobbes, philosopher, 'Seven Wonders of the Peak' lies within Peak Forest parish. This is Eldon Hole.

### Eldon Hole

Eldon Hole is the largest pothole in Derbyshire. It is 33.8 metres (111feet) long, 6.1 metres (20 feet) wide and 55 metres deep (180 feet) deep.

Eldon Hole was once thought to be a bottomless pit into Hell. In 1636 Hobbes wrote how a stone dropped down the chasm *'The lowest deep descending, it broke through Hell and the centre.'* In the 18<sup>th</sup> century tourists were told about a traveller who was murdered by his guide and thrown down Eldon Hole. This was regarded as particularly horrific because of the belief that Eldon Hole led straight down to Hell.

For generations there were all kinds of myths associated with Eldon Hole. It was thought that it was bottomless by some and a story circulated that in the reign of Elizabeth I the Earl of Leicester lowered a man into its depth. He didn't reach the bottom but when drawn up he had become a 'gibbering idiot' and died a few days later. In 1770, a geologist, Mr Lloyd actually reached the bottom and confirmed that Eldon Hole was not the entrance to Hell and that it was not bottomless. However, people preferred the Elizabethan version, or another story that a goose once flew down the hole and came out in the Peak Cavern in Castleton!

Allegedly there was once a wall built around Eldon Hole which had a door built in it and people had to pay to view the hole.

It was not until the 19th century that a party of naturalists built proper staging with a windlass that the nature of Eldon Hole was finally discovered. They found that at the bottom of the shaft there was a gigantic cavern about 21.3 metres (70 feet) high and 30.4 metres (100

Fig. 19. Descent of Eldon Hole. (Milne 1813).



feet) wide with no outlet at all but full of stalagmites and stalactites. It sloped at an angle of 45 degrees and at its furthest end was 85.3 metres (280 feet) below the surface. Today Eldon Hole is regularly visited by cavers.

Many years ago it was thought that elves lived on Eldon Hill and local people said that there were 'elves on t'hill' hence the name Eldon Hill.

### **Ebbing and Flowing Well**

Whilst Thomas Hobbes, a philosopher, classified the ebbing and flowing well at Tideswell as one of his 'Wonders of the Peak', maybe he had not heard of the one in Peak Forest Parish which is similar. The ebbing and flowing well is located at Barmoor Clough near to the junction of the A623 and the A6. A spring feeds a semi-circular chain of troughs.

People used to believe that these springs ebbed and flowed with the tide, however, it seems to have had more to do with the weather. Eye-witness accounts reports were far more common after heavy rain than during dry seasons. The action was probably due to the existence of a natural underground reservoir. A natural duct opened out at a lower level, acting like a syphon to suck the water down to form a temporary pond.

The water supposedly entered the troughs at the rate of one thousand gallons a minute. The water would then ebb away through drainage outlets. The whole process lasting approximately 10 minutes.

No ebbing and flowing has been reported at either well for many years.