

Eldon Hole, Peak Forest, Derbyshire.

Grid Ref: SK 11612 80896 (GPS)

Alt: 415m

Length: 200m

Vertical Range: 85m

Access: Eldon Hole now lies within a CROW (Countryside Rights of Way) area so there is no restriction to access. Prior to CROW the landowner has always been accommodating to cavers and requested that all gates should be left as found, that no litter should be left and that dogs should not be taken to the site.

Introduction

A classic open vertical pothole. Eldon is a wide 55m deep rift open to the surface. At the base is a continuation to another large chamber and a number of pretties. A useful SRT training and rigging trip, Eldon is also a pleasant evening trip, and can accommodate a number of teams due to the four possible main shaft routes. Eldon is rumoured to have once connected to a stream way, which may provide a link to Peak Cavern, and as a result has always been a popular, though difficult place to dig. As with all open pits, dead creatures are a common occurrence, meaning hand washing is vital on return. Eldon hole is marked on the modern OS Dark Peak Explorer Map.

Location

Eldon Hole can be accessed from:-

- The end of the track up from **Peak Forest** (SK 11732 80365). At the request of the landowner please park before the last gate, not beyond (1), and leave room for farm vehicles to pass and access gates. From the gate a 0.6km walk veering left and following the wall reaches the hole.
 - From the **Eldon Hill** track (SK 12272 81352). A longer but pleasant walk round the eastern side of Eldon Hill.
- The hole itself is surrounded by a fence with a stile and gate at the southern end. The chasm is roughly 6m wide (E-W) by 26m long (N-S). Both the north and south end have steep slopes heading down while the east and west sides are vertical. Much of the top is overgrown with grass and trees, especially in summer, meaning the visitor must be weary of their location in relation to the hole at all times.

The Cave

Four descent routes are possible. These are generally regarded as North, South, East Wall and West Wall. East Wall and West Wall are near Vertical while North and South are a mix of protected slopes and shorter pitches. Currently only one route is described here (the West Route) but the others will be added to this guide in due course.

The West Wall route begins with a very wide Y-hang off two metal steaks, creating a protected descent to the edge of the hole, and a short drop to the first rebelay. The steaks are 5m apart so although the protected decent is only 7.5m in length, 20m of rope is required. This drops to a single P-anchor rebelay just over the lip of the hole. A further 6m pitch requiring 9m of rope leads to a Y-hang off two P-anchors. From here a 45m pitch drops to the floor of the shaft. An optional single P-anchor rebelay/deviation is available 25m down. The whole pitch can be rigged comfortably with 80m of rope, and the hole is 55m deep where the floor is met.

The base of the shaft is 11m long by 6m wide, with overhangs above on three walls. The floor is a mix of cobbles, mud and rotting biomass, and is not desperately pleasant. On the eastern side, at the base of the slope, a small entrance is seen. Much rusty metal is located around this entrance, and it has been known to become blocked by snow for a surprisingly long time during and after the winter months. Please be aware of the fragile nature of this slope and try not to disturb the material in place.

A 5m crawl descending at a 45 degrees leads away from daylight to the large and impressive **Main Chamber**, still on a cobble floor with dimensions of 14m by 11m, which is up to 40m high in places. On the left as you enter the chamber is a slope leading to a wet tight and muddy (possible) dig. On the right are two digs, one of which is quite extensive leading about 10m down in steps with a total length of 25m. Some of the moves needed to climb out of the dig are sporting. Straight ahead at the bottom of the slope, is a pull through which ascends to **Miller's Chamber** and **Damocles Rift**. This is a 19m ascent and requires a 45m rope.

Miller's Chamber

Once up the pull-through pitch (which has a number of rub points so beware) a fixed traverse line rigged on natural belays leads to the very attractive and 'sparkly' **Miller's Chamber** containing a large amount of stal, flowstone and gour pools. A plaque on the right is dedicated to George Cooper 1946 -1985. Miller's Chamber is 8m square at the widest point and

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about 20m high. A small fossil inlet passage up a slope on the right is choked by stal and due to the aesthetics of the slope it is asked that you do not look. A fixed rope heads up into the roof to **Damocles Rift**. Behind the rope to the left is a calcited choke, which looks promising from below but does not go. Straight ahead a boulder choke is encountered with two routes in. The lower level goes about 15m through boulders to possible tight vertical squeeze in a rift. The higher route follows the line of a wire up some sporting free climbs past some dodgy metalwork, to a continuing tight crawl.

Damocles Rift

From **Miller's Chamber** a 13m ascent up a fixed rope, passing a deviation at 9m reaches a traverse on natural belays to an interesting move through a couple of windows into **Damocles Rift** with dimensions of 3m by 6m and a height of 10m. This is very attractive with a number of formations present, including very large stals, gour pools, huge curtains, and a massive amount of flow. A roped sporting 8m climb lead to a further 5m easier unroped climb which is exposed. This leads to a final level of attractive chamber with a squeeze to a further 2m by 1m rift which calcifies down and in to a dead end. Turning round just before the squeeze offers a beautiful view of the whole chamber.

NOTE: As with all fixed ropes and aids extreme caution is advised, as the age, condition and safety of these is not known.

Description Notes:

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References:

1). John Smith, 8th December 2006, pers. comm.

Surveys:

Basic A6 plans in:-
Caves of the Peak District (p68), DW Gill & JS Beck 1991
Classic Caves of the Peak District (p59), Iain Barker 1997
Descent #82 (p32-34) Jun./Jul. 1988 (History of early exploration).

Contacts:

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Further reading:

- Caves of the Peak District (p69), DW Gill & JS Beck 1991, now out of print ISBN 1-85568-034-3.
- Classic Caves of the Peak District (p56), Iain Barker 1997, now out of print ISBN 1-86126-058-X



Entries in Descent Magazine:

- #82 (p32-34) Jun./Jul. 1988 (History of early exploration).
- #90 (p5) Oct./Nov. 1989 (bolted sport climb in the entrance shaft!).
- #94 (p13) Jun./Jul. 1990.
- #95 (p18) Aug./Sep. 1990.
- #96 (p24-25) Oct./Nov. 1990.
- #112 (p18) Jun./Jul. 1993.
- #119 (p9) Aug./Sep. 1994.
- #121 (p12) Dec./Jan. 1994/95.
- #149 (p30-31) Aug./Sep. 1999.
- #150 (p26-27) Oct./Nov. 1999 (historical informaton).

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.