

Limestone & Lead Rakes - A Walk in the White Peak

Continuing our series on favourite walks and places, Andy Tickle (Branch Senior Countryside Campaigner) takes us walking in the Peak Park's 'Vision Project' area.

A good day's walk contrasting the best of classic dale and moorland White Peak landscapes. Loads of wildlife and historic interest are the icing on the cake!



Wardlow from the edge of Longstone Moor

From Cressbrook Mill head north up the road and bear right for Cressbrook Dale. The road terminates at Ravensdale Cottages, architectural gems nestling under the imposing crags where falcons breed and rock climbers dangle. From here a rough and often muddy path enters the magical dale where the rocky woodland is covered in a verdant carpet of moss and lichen. Cross the river and then bear right up the eastern hillside which brings you to more open ground and views of the widening valley, criss-crossed by old lead mines. Passing a new 'dew pond' on the right (constructed as part of the Peak Park's Vision Project), cross a stile to follow a narrow walled lane into Wardlow. The fields on both sides form part of an ancient enclosure pattern known a fossilised strip system.

Once in the village turn right along the road until a footpath on the left crosses the fields towards Longstone Moor. Just before the next road, the covered shafts of Stadford Hollows lead mine (a scheduled ancient monument) can be seen. On the other side of the road a path leads diagonally over the Moor passing much disturbed ground - the hillocks of waste left by the old leadminers. These now form an amazing 'lead rake' landscape with special flowers such as 'leadwort' and mountain pansies. The Moor is also famed for its heather which rarely grows in limestone areas. Small ponds also dot the Moor and are home to great crested newts. Once over the crest of the Moor a great view east along Longstone Edge can be had though, for some, the huge open cast pits - where fluorspar is mined - detract from the vista. After crossing Watersaw Rake, a steep and slippery descent through Black Plantation leads, via Dale Farm, to Little Longstone. A short stretch of road to Monsal Head is followed to a welcome downhill climax to the route, over the Monsal Head viaduct and following the Monsal Trail to cross the river and millpond weir by Water-cum-Jolly. Turn right to get back to the starting point. A welcome cup of tea is often available at the strange troglodytic shop/café behind Cressbrook Mill.

Walk Information:

Length: approximately 8 miles / 4-5 hours

A varied circular walk with some rough going.

Start Point: Cressbrook Mill (SK 173727 - OS White Peak Explorer Map, OL24)

Buses: 4, 173 from Bakewell; 65 from Sheffield; 66, X67 from Chesterfield. Some limited parking at roadside. Can also be started at many other points around the circuit.

Variety of pubs along the route - some requiring a small diversion. The Three Stags Head in Wardlow Mires (weekends only) and the Pack Horse in Little Longstone are favourites! Cafe behind Cressbrook Mill in season.