

Buxton Circular (via the Wye Valley)			Buxton to Monsal Dale (via the Wye Valley)		
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04 th Sept. 2022					
Current status	Document last updated Wednesday, 07 th September 2022				
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Buxton Circular or to Monsal Dale (via the Wye Valley)

Start & Finish: Buxton Station

Alternative Finish: Monsal Dale, White Lodge Car Park Bus Stop

Buxton Station, map reference SK 059 737, is 22km southeast of Manchester, 299m above sea level. Monsal Dale, White Lodge Car Park Bus Stop, map reference SK 168 707, is 221 km northwest of London, 167m above sea level. Both are in **Derbyshire**.

Length: 26.0 km (16.1 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 719m. For a shorter or longer walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 7 ¼ hours walking time.

Transport: Buxton Station is the terminus of the Buxton Line from Manchester, with two trains per hour Mon-Sat daytime and one per hour else. Journey time is 60 mins from Manchester and ca. three hours from London (chg. at Stockport). A faster connection can be obtained by taking a train to Macclesfield and bus 58 to Buxton. Monsal Dale, White Lodge Car Park Bus Stop is served by Transpeak 3 (Matlock – Buxton, hourly every day).

Saturday Walkers' Club: The walk is doable as a daywalk from London with a train no later than 08.20 hours.

OS Landranger Map: 119 (Buxton & Matlock)

OS Explorer Map: OL24 (The Peak District – White Peak Area)

Walk Notes:

Explore the most beautiful stretch of one of the most famous dales of the White Peak from historical Buxton. You leave town along its northerly fringes to proceed through pastures under Fairfield Low to the scenic dry valley of Woo Dale. At its junction with the Wye Valley, which will change name several times along the route, rise steeply onto the rim of Wye Dale and follow it to the junction with Great Rocks Dale, where the famous Chee Dale starts, featuring tight gorges, overhanging limestone rockfaces, submerged paths conquered via stepping stones and powerful springs surging out of the rocky ground, with the imposing viaducts of a dismantled railway line criss-crossing the route. Then go on to Miller's Dale for a riverside lunch. The return route starts along the dismantled railway line past some old limekilns and an abseiling bridge, back to Chee Dale, before rising steeply out of the dale onto some high pastures with views. You pass Britain's highest chambered tomb and its highest church spire, go through the fascinating Deep Dale (named for a reason) with its cave and pass some quiet villages to enter Buxton past two of its own railway viaducts. An Alternative Ending follows the Wye Valley further past the former Litton and Cressbrook Mills, notorious for their working conditions at the time, and through a nature reserve up to Monsal Head for tea, with its renowned views down to a wide bend in the valley and to a very pretty viaduct. A quiet stretch through Monsal Dale to a bus stop on the A6 rounds off the route. A tougher version of that alternative ending follows an exposed path high up on the other side of the valley.

Walk Options:

Some of the paths – and also the stepping stones – along the Wye are prone to being under water after heavy rain. The Monsal Trail, running through the Wye Valley along a dismantled railway line, affords escapes to a higher level in several spots. These are obvious on the route map and highlighted in the directions.

Shortcuts

- **Bus Lines 190 and 199** (Buxton - Whaley Bridge and Buxton - Manchester Airport, with at least 2 buses per hour between them Mon-Sat and one on Sundays) stop at **Fairfield, Church** and enable cutting out the urban bits at the start (cut 1.5 km). Continue in the direction of travel past the drive to St. Peter church and pick up the directions at the asterisk *****) on page 5.
- **Bus Line 65** (Buxton - Tideswell – Sheffield Interchange, with at least 5 buses per day) stops at **King Sterndale, Topley Pike** and enables a start at Blackwell Mill Cottages, near the westerly end of the Monsal Trail. The mill site is 7.5 km into the route, but the bus stop is 1.2 km away from the route, with a straightforward link route though. See the end of the main walk text for details.
- **In Chee Dale**, link to the return route without going to Miller's Dale first. Cuts 3.0 km.
- **Bus Line 65** (see above) also stops in **Miller's Dale**, just by the lunch pub (11.8 km into the walk).
- **Bus Lines 65** (see above) and **Transpeak 3** (Matlock – Buxton, hourly every day) stop at **Blackwell Turn** (15.3 km into the walk).
- **Cut out** the out-and-back to the **Five Wells Chambered Tomb**, cuts 600m.
- **Bus Line Transpeak 3** (hourly every day) stops at **Taddington, Waterloo PH**, on the long versions of the walk, and at **Chelmorton, Old Coalpit Lane**, 200m off route, 18.9 km into the main walk.

See the route map for the locations of the bus stops.

Extensions/Alternative Endings

Modest Extensions replace the post-lunch return to Chee Dale and subsequent rise onto the pastures, with either a rise out of Wye Dale straight from the lunch pub past Millers Dale Nature Reserve or by first going further down Wye Dale and rising out of it through Priestcliffe Lees Nature Reserve. Both extensions then pass through Priestcliffe and along the Limestone Way onto Sough Top.

An Alternative Ending in Monsal Dale, at a bus stop on the A6 (last departure 19.34 Mon-Fri, 19.09 Sat and 20.55 Sun, as of 08/2021), follows the very scenic Wye Valley to Monsal Head, where a steep ascent leads to a couple of tea stops and the famed view across the bend of the dale. The final stretch leads back to the river and through the widening dale. Distance: 20.2 km/12.6 mi with 536/668m ascent/descent, **6/10 rating**.

A Variation of the middle part of the Alternative Ending leads from Litton Mill onto the Monsal Trail for a short stretch to then circumvent the Litton and Cressbrook Tunnels by following an elevated and at times precipitous route with fantastic views along Miller's Dale and Water-cum-Jolly Dale. The route then re-joins the Monsal Trail through Upperdale to Monsal Head. This adds about 200m ascent, but no distance.

Elenvenses/Lunch (details last updated 05/08/2021)

Blackwell Mill Cycle Hire and Tuck Shop 8 Blackwell Mill Cottages, Bakewell Road, *Buxton SK17 9TE (01298 708 38, <https://www.peakblackwellcyclehire.com/>)*. The Tuck Shop is located 60m off route, 7.5 km (4.7 mi) into the walk. Open 09.30-17.00 daily.

Angler's Rest Miller's Dale, *Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 8SN (01298 871 323)*. The Angler's Rest is located 11.8 km (7.3 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served all day.

The Refreshment Room Millers Dale Station, Wormhill Road, *Millers Dale, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8SN (01298 871 869, <https://www.blueberryfood.co.uk/the-refreshment-room>)*. Open 09.30-17.30 daily (in winter may close earlier). The Refreshment Room is located 12.3 km (7.6 mi) into the walk.

Tea (details last updated 05/08/2021)

Beech Croft Farm Caravan & Camp Site Blackwell, *Taddington, Derbyshire, SK17 9TQ (01298 853 30, <https://beechcroftfarm.co.uk/>)*. Beech Croft Farm is located 70m off route, 15.0 km (9.3 mi) into the walk.

Their **Store in the reception** building is selling hot and cold drinks and some cold food, and has outdoor seating (some covered). It is open all day every day, and happy to sell to non-residents. The next-door **Daisies Coffee Shop** has irregular opening hours. Check their website for details.

The Waterloo Hotel A6, *Taddington, Derbyshire, SK17 9TJ (01298 852 30)*. The Waterloo is located 14.6 km (9.1 mi) and 15.7 km (9.8 mi) respectively into the long versions of the walk. It used to be tied to Robinson's but is a Free House as of 05/21.

The Church Inn Chelmorton, *Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 9SL (01298 853 19, <http://www.thechurchinn.co.uk/>)*. The Church Inn is located 17.9 km (11.1 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-20.00.

Numerous options in Buxton; some of the ones on the route are mentioned in the pdf.

Tea Monsal Dale Ending - located 2.8 km from the end of the walk (details last updated 06/09/2021)

Hobb's Café Tearoom Monsal Head, *Derbyshire, DE 45 1NL (01629 640 346, <https://www.hobbscafemonsalhead.co.uk/>)*. Open Thu-Sun 11.00-16.00.

Monsal Head Hotel and Stable Bar Monsal Head, *Derbyshire, DE 45 1NL (01629 640 250, <http://monsalhead.com/stable-bar/>)*. Open all day every day. Food served all day every day.

Notes

Buxton

Buxton, a spa town in Derbyshire on the edge of the Peak District National Park, is the highest market town in England, some 300 m above sea level. Sights include Poole's Cavern, a limestone cavern, St Ann's Well, fed by a geothermal spring bottled by Buxton Mineral Water Company, and Georgian buildings around Buxton Crescent, including Buxton Baths. Also notable is the Opera House.

The area has been inhabited for at least 6,000 years: a settlement at Lismore Fields was rediscovered in 1984. The Romans developed a settlement known as Aquae Arnemetiae ("Baths of the goddess of the grove") and linked it to South Yorkshire via Navio in the Hope Valley to the Templebrough fort.

Built on the River Wye and overlooked by Axe Edge Moor, Buxton became a spa town because of its geothermal spring, which emerges at a steady temperature of 28° C.

The Buxton lime industry has been important for the development of the town and it has shaped the landscape around the town. Limestone has been used in several ways over the millennia: quarried as building stone, heated to produce lime (or 'quicklime'), a base for either lime mortar (a mix of lime, sand and water) for building or as a soil improver in agriculture. And before electric lights, lime was even burnt to light theatrical shows, putting the stage performers 'in the limelight'.

Modern quarrying is a high-technology industry using advanced machinery, supplying concrete and cement to the construction industry. Several active limestone quarries are still located close to Buxton, including the "Tunstead Superquarry" in Great Rocks Dale. It is the largest limestone quarry in the UK, producing 5.5 million tonnes p.a., a quarter of which is used by the cement works on site.

The Peak District (National Park)

The Peak District is an upland area at the southernmost end of the Pennines.

The Peak District National Park is one of the UK's most popular, and is located within the boundaries of five counties (Derbys., Ches., Staffs., Yorks. and Greater Manchester). Founded in 1951, it was the first national park in England. The Park spans an area of around 1,440 km² (550 mi²) and – despite its name – its terrain consists mainly of rolling hills, farmland, moorland and some gritstone escarpments (the "edges"). It is however significantly higher than much of the terrain in the surrounding area.

The Peak District is formed almost exclusively from sedimentary rocks dating from the Carboniferous period. They comprise the Carboniferous Limestone, the overlying Gritstone and finally the Coal Measures, though the latter occur only on the extreme margins of the area. In addition, there are infrequent outcrops of igneous rocks including lavas, tuffs and volcanic vent agglomerates.

The northern Dark Peak (whose geology is gritstone) is one of the most famous landmarks in the Peak District National Park, known for its exposed and isolated tracts of moorland, as well as its expansive rolling plateau which is covered by cotton grass bogs and heather moorlands. The soil of the area is composed of moorland peat which provides the perfect environment for the plant life in the area. The areas to the flanks of the high moorland host numerous copses which are composed of Oak and Birch.

The southern White Peak (whose geology is mainly limestone) is another distinctive area within the park due to its gently sloping Limestone plateau, crisscrossed by the Limestone Dales. The Dales provide the areas' drainage and vary in steepness throughout the area.

Wye Valley/River Wye

The River Wye is a 24 km (15 mi) long river in the Peak District, and is one of the major tributaries of the River Derwent. It is predominantly a limestone river, although the furthest source originates on the (gritstone) Axe Edge Moor west of Buxton. Another arm off the moors flows underground through Poole's Cavern in Buxton before rising at Wye Head and flowing through the Pavilion Gardens, where the two arms join. It then flows east through the limestone dales of the Wye Valley and through Ashford-in-the-Water and Bakewell and joins the Derwent at Rowsley, just after the Wye's main tributary, the Manifold, has joined.

Pennine Bridleway

The Pennine Bridleway is a 330 km (205 mi) waymarked linear Long-Distance Path and National Trail from Carsington Water, Derbyshire, to Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria. In its southern part, it follows the High Peak Trail along the track bed of the former Cromford and High Peak Railway. The idea for it was launched in 1986 by Mary Towneley, who rode on horseback 402 km (250 mi) from Corbridge, Northumberland to Ashbourne, Derbyshire. It took a mere 9 years for the trail to be approved.

It is not to be confused with either the Pennine Way or the Pennine Cycleway.

Limestone Way

The Limestone Way is a 74.7 Km (46.4 miles) waymarked long-distance footpath in Derbyshire. It runs through the limestone scenery in the heart of the White Peak area of the Peak District, from Castleton south through Peak Forest, Millers Dale, Monyash, Youlgreave, Matlock, Parwich, Tissington, Thorpe, Lower Ellastone and finishing in the Dove valley at Rocester over the county boundary in Staffordshire. It originally ran only to Matlock, but was diverted to its current, longer route to join up with the Staffordshire Way.

Miller's Dale Station/Monsal Trail

Millers Dale railway station was built in 1863 by the Midland Railway on its extension of the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock and Midlands Junction Railway from Rowsley. It served an important junction where passengers for Buxton joined or left the trains between London and Manchester. For such a rural location, it was unusually large; indeed, it was one of the largest stations on the line and was one of the few stations in England to have a post office on the platform. Millers Dale also sent dairy, agricultural and quarried products from the surrounding areas to the major cities. Much of its activity though was concerned with the connecting service to and from Buxton. Traffic for Buxton actually followed the main line north for 2.3 km, before diverging at Millers Dale Junction, beside Blackwell Mill Halt. The growth of traffic led to the building of a second (the northerly) viaduct; this is now Grade II listed. The station closed in 1967.

The Monsal Trail is a 13.7 km long, very popular and easily accessible, traffic free route for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair users through some of the Peak District's most spectacular limestone dales. It runs along the former Midland Railway Line between Topley Pike Junction at Blackwell Mill in Chee Dale and Coombs Viaduct at Bakewell, via Millers Dale and Monsal Head and includes six (lit) tunnels.

For more information, check SWC Walk 310 – Monsal Trail.

Five Wells Chambered Tomb

Reputed to be the highest megalithic chambered tomb in Britain, Five Wells chambered tomb stands 427m high on the crest of a limestone plateau on Taddington Moor, overlooking the fertile Wye valley. It is one of about 300 such tombs in England, which were constructed and used during the Early and Middle Neolithic periods (3400-2400 BC). All are considered nationally important, as being one of the few types of Neolithic structure to survive as upstanding monuments, and due to their rarity.

Five Wells includes a roughly circular burial-mound of 23m by 22m, surviving to a height of about 1 metre. Originally the mound would have been higher, but most of the surface stone was robbed from the 18th century onwards for wall-building. Visible today are the remains of two limestone orthostat chambers (i.e.: with a large slab-like upright stone), situated back-to-back and orientated east-west with approach passages leading from the western and eastern edges of the mound.

Midshires Way

A 362 km (225 mi) waymarked linear Long-Distance Path from Bledlow, Buckinghamshire to Stockport, Greater Manchester, linking the Ridgeway National Trail with the Trans Pennine Trail across the shires of Middle England.

Deep Dale/Thirst House Cave/Topley Pike Quarry

Deep Dale is a short steep-sided gorge in a plateau of farmland south east of King Sterndale, just outside of Buxton. Wye Dale and the River Wye are at the foot of the valley to the north. The valley is dry over the summer but has a winterbourne stream, fed by the Deepdale Side Resurgence spring and another spring by Thirst House Cave further up the valley.

Thirst House Cave's name is derived from Th'Hurst House as it was earlier called Hob Hurst House, named after a goblin believed to live in the cave (but not to be confused with Hob Hurst's House prehistoric burial mound on Beeley Moor near Chatsworth). The cave is 58 metres long.

Deep Dale, together with Topley Pike, is an SSSI and a Nature Reserve, overseen by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Without sheep grazing, the native grasses of meadow oat and carnation sedge flourish. The limestone cliffs are an attractive habitat for kestrels and jackdaws. The crags of carboniferous limestone in Deep Dale are popular with rock climbers. There are four buttresses along the valley with many climbing routes.

Topley Pike Limestone Quarry is adjacent to the northern end of the dale. A drystone wall runs along the length of the floor of the dale and marks the boundary of the mining rights.

The footpath through the lower section of Deep Dale is closed from 2017 until 2026 for natural restoration, following the removal of a large spoil tip (waste from the quarry). A diversion is in place to the east.

Peak District Boundary Walk

Created by the Friends of the Peak District, the Peak District Boundary Walk is a 305 km (190 mi) waymarked circular long-distance footpath which broadly follows the boundary of the National Park along existing footpaths, tracks, quiet lanes, former railway lines and a canal towpath. A guidebook and an extensive website help in breaking the journey into stages. <https://www.cprepsy.org.uk/peak-district-boundary-walk-2/>

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave **Buxton Station** onto its forecourt, with a **bus stop for services to Fairfield** 50m away on the left, and one **for services to Topley Pike opposite**, and *turn right* along the building this side of **Station Road**. In 60m *turn right* at the station building corner, passing the impressive Grade II listed **Fan Window**. In 25m, at the far end of the station building *turn right* along a signposted public footpath along tarmac, with a wood on the left and the railway tracks on the right. In 280m *turn right* with the path by a row of cottages ahead and in 20m *turn left* with it to pass those cottages. In 70m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Lightwood Road** and over 65m go under three railway bridges in quick succession (one the Buxton – Manchester passenger line, the other two connecting the quarries in the area to the mainline). In another 35m *turn left* into **Hogshaw Villas Road** cul-de-sac. In 90m cross the **Hogshaw Brook** and continue in the same direction up an earth bank through trees, signed **Hogshaw Nature Reserve**, and in 30m cross the **Hogshaw Recreation Ground** diagonally to the far-left corner.

In 80m leave the Rec along a narrow path through grass and in 15m continue along a car wide gravel track. In 25m ignore a gravel track to the left uphill and in 150m the track descends to the level of the **Nun Brook** away on the right and in 50m you *turn right* to cross the brook on a two-railed footbridge. You follow a clear path a little to the right, uphill to the left of some allotments, then some houses, ignoring a couple of residential streets to the right en route, and with pastures on the left. On the right, early on, you can see **Grin Low** on the far side of town, with the prominent landmark of **Solomon's Temple**. On the left behind, later on, **Brown Edge** with its transmission mast dominates the view across the Nun Brook valley, with **Corbar Cross** also visible dead behind. In 170m from the brook, you *turn left* with the path and in 30m *turn right* with it. In 40m at a four-way path junction, continue in the same direction and in 35m enter the churchyard of **St. Peter, Fairfield**. *Turn right* towards the church, in 90m pass the church to the right, and in 100m reach the **A6** at a T-junction with a **bus stop for services from the Railway Station** away on the right. *Turn left* along the road.

*) In 40m *turn right* to cross the A road at a median and *bear left* along **Waterswallows Road** (signed Wormhill), with **Fairfield Common** on your left and houses on the right. In 250m you pass a pub, **The 19th Hole**, whose name refers to the **Buxton and High Peak Golf Club** on the left on the Common. Ignore a right fork and continue along the road, in 100m passing the club house down below on the right. In 80m ignore a tarmac path from the right and in 60m, where the road curves to the left, you *fork right* along **Lesser Lane**. *Turn to the right* with the lane in 40m and in 25m continue along it on gravel, in 35m passing a sign for C & G Mycock's **Home Farm**. Ignore Dakin Court turning right and follow the car wide drive between drystone walls to the farm, contouring the flank of **Fairfield Low**, with a shallow grassy valley on the right and a large industrial estate beyond.

In 350m go through a field gate and then through the farmyard and in 50m go through the left of two metal field gates and along a car wide track between drystone walls. In 40m *turn right* with the track on the level along a fenced path, ignoring an unmarked public footpath ahead through a metal field gate. You head towards a fenced area with some limestone outcrops, the top of the **Access Land of Cunning Dale**. In 270m go through a narrow gap to the left of a metal field gate into a pasture and continue in the same direction towards a fence corner.

In 40m, where a public footpath joins from the right out of the dale over a stile, you *turn left* this side of the fence and in 140m at the very top of the fenced dale on the right, you continue in the same direction for 40m to a stepped gap in a drystone wall and a wooden gate. The views in the back are to **Axe Edge Moor** and **Burbage Edge**.

You *veer left* and in 50m enter the next pasture and in 50m another one. In 60m go through a crumbling wall into another pasture and continue to its far-right corner, gently downhill. The tall chimney visible ahead sits in the **Tunstead Works** 'super-quarry'. In 160m *turn right* into the narrow corner of the field and leave it through a wooden gate. *Turn left* to a tarmac lane and in 40m *turn right* along it. In 20m, *turn left* along a car wide track between drystone walls, a signposted public footpath along the fringe of the **Peak District National Park**. The track gently descends towards **Woo Dale** and in 500m you continue in the same direction with a footpath sign on the right and a yellow marker on the left through a metal field gate into the grassy dry valley, where the (private) track bears to the right. In 230m you go through a (broken) metal field gate with two yellow markers into the **Access Land** of the widening dale, in the process entering the National Park.

Here you have a choice:

To avoid a steep ascent from the bottom of Woo Dale to the upper fringe of Wye Dale (50 height metres over 240m), *veer left* with a track to **Hardybarn Lane** and *turn right* along it. In 800m pass a farm to its right and continue in the same direction along a car wide grassy track past a bridleway signpost in 20m. In 15m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and in 60m you reach a path fork at the top of Wye Dale, with the **River Wye** steeply below. *Turn left* towards the field corner and pick up the text at the double asterisk **) below.

For the Main Walk route, *curve to the right* with the path and follow the tranquil and very scenic, deepening, grassy U-shaped valley down to its junction with the **River Wye** in 1.2 km, with **the busy A6** audible the other side of the river. By a three-way bridleway/footpath signpost on the left, *turn up steeply to the left* (50m height over 240m distance) with the bridleway and follow a zigzagging track uphill to the top of Wye Dale near a drystone wall at a faint three-way path junction. *Turn right* towards the top-right field corner.

) In 50m go over a stile with a two-way signpost ('Wye Dale') and follow the upper boundary of the next steep pasture gently uphill. In 40m the path levels out with first views on the right across the dale of the upper parts of the very large **Topley Pike Quarry and as you proceed through the large field, you'll get to see more of the quarry site. The notable top on the other side of the valley on 145° is **Chelmorton Low**, passed in the afternoon. Initially you follow some animal trod but then **[!]** *veer right* to in 280m pass a corner of a drystone wall and follow the wall to its right-hand side (the obviously used onwards path ahead into the next field is neither a right of way nor is the field Access Land). In 20m you pass a footpath marker post and in 70m you can appreciate how large the quarry is. The A6 ahead can be seen to be heading up to the right out of the valley. In 130m ignore a wooden field gate on the left and in 10m *turn up to the left* with the wall. In 50m go over a stile by a two-way signpost and *turn right* along the wall ('Wye Dale'). In 130m go over a stile and continue in the same direction along the wall, in 50m with the most complete views of the quarry yet, as well as of the **railway line in the valley**, connecting the quarries in Great Rocks Dale (just ahead) with the mainline at Buxton.

In 80m go over a stile into a wood and *bear right* with the obvious path, in 80m with a wall on the left. In 100m *turn left* with the path through the wall and in 40m *curve to the left* with the now meandering, prone-to-be-overgrown, path through a lightly wooded area for 250m to the edge of **Great Rocks Dale**, where you *turn right* with the path. You descend steeply towards the level of the railway. *Turn right* along a fence and in 50m cross a deep cleft on a bridge. You have the railway line on the left and in 50m continue downhill between walls and in 15m *turn left* with the path to go under the railway. On the far side, *turn left* and in 20m pass a footpath marker post. In 50m pass the **Blackwell Mill Pumphouse** and in 90m you emerge in an open area by the river, with some (private)

benches on the left and **Blackwell Mill Cottages** ahead. By a three-way signpost by a two-railed bridge over the Wye, the **Pennine Bridleway** (PBW) joins from the right and is a **link to the start of the Monsal Trail**, and the short start route from the bus stop at the car park at Topley Pike Quarry with it. The **Blackwell Mill Cycle Hire and Tuck Shop** is away to the right. Continue ahead with the PBW along a gravel path to the left of the Wye ('Chee Dale'). The truly remote and quiet part of the Wye Valley is about to commence.

***) In 180m the PBW forks up to the left and you *fork right* on the level, staying close to the river (water levels permitting) for the next 4.5 km, to lunch in Millers Dale. **In more detail:** in 70m you continue with a high brick wall on the left and in 70m go down some steps almost to the water level under the viaduct of a dismantled railway line (the Millers Dale to New Mills and Manchester line). In 90m go through a wooden gate and in 300m (unseen from the path, the dismantled line already walked under has joined the Monsal Trail at Millers Dale Junction) you go over a stile just before another viaduct, which carries the **Monsal Trail**. On the far side of the viaduct, a stepped path on the left is a **link to the Monsal Trail**. In 120m the path leads up some steps to overcome a rockface close by the river bank and in 200m you have a sheer rockface overhanging the river on the left.

Part of the path here leads over **stepping stones** for 50m, which are well polished and can be **very slippery when wet**. In 250m there is another overhanging limestone wall, this time leaving enough space for a path. In 60m *turn right* over a two-railed footbridge to continue on the right-hand riverside, going up some steps, and in 20m by a three-way signpost, another stepped path on the right is a **link to the Monsal Trail**. Continue in the same direction along the river below and in 50m go under the viaduct and down some steps and in 20m cross another two-railed footbridge to get back to the left-hand riverside. In 25m another overhanging rockface necessitates the use of stepping stones (again 50m of it). The next stretch of path is quite rough and close to the water, with the slippery rocks and some tree roots affording all concentration and the rocks being a popular climbing site.

Chee Dale widens out, with **Chee Tor** rising on the right, and you have a couple of stretches of boardwalk to go over, then you go up some steps to overcome another protruding rockface (that almost requires scrambling skills) and eventually you *turn left* with the path away from the Wye to skirt around a lively tributary at the bottom of **Flag Dale**. This stream is fed by the resurgence of the **Wormhill Limestone Springs**, which jut out of the underground rocks. They are said to be the largest of the springs along the Wye. You cross a bridge and follow the rough path to the right, in 20m go over a second bridge over a tributary stream (fed by springs), then go over a boardwalk, then up over a rockface and through trees again, then over a few more boardwalk sections in the open dale and eventually you get to a two-railed concrete bridge over the Wye on the right by a three-way signpost ('Blackwell' to the right, 'Miller's Dale' onwards) and a public footpath joining from the left a few metres ahead along a duckboard (from 'Wormhill').

Here you have a choice:

For a Shortcut, cutting the stretch to and from Millers Dale (out-and-back on different routes) as well as the lunch stops there, *turn right* over the bridge ('Blackwell') and *bear left* on the other side along a clear path. In 80m by a three-way signpost, *bear right* ('Blackwell'). Pick up the directions below at the quadruple asterisk ****).

For the Main Walk, continue in the same direction to the left of the river ('Miller's Dale') along the duckboard, immediately ignoring the signposted left turn to Wormhill. In 250m, by a low wooden barrier, *turn left* up some steps to continue at a higher level (the lower path is very prone to being flooded) and in 100m re-join the water level. In 50m you get fine views ahead of a stretch of the Wye with several rapids, as well as of the next railway

viaduct and in 30m pass a stepped path on the left, a **link to the Monsal Trail**. You continue under the viaduct, with a dedicated **abseiling area** on this side of the bridge.

In about 400m you pass a little stone building with unknown purpose on the left and in 170m pass an info panel on water voles and in 40m a wooden sculpture of one. The path now rises gently to the end of the nature reserve in 140m and you go through a stepped wall gap, where a path comes down from the left (another **link to the Monsal Trail**). *Turn right* to a footpath signpost by a minor road at a bend, leading on the right to a main road. **The onwards route** to the lunch pub leads underneath the magnificent Millers Dale viaducts but **involves 230m along a busy road without a pavement**. Therefore...

Here you have a choice:

To avoid the un-paved road walking, *turn up to the left* with the minor road and in 120m and in another 40m you go under two railway bridges. A left turn leads to the post-lunch onwards route and to **The Refreshment Room** at Millers Dale Station. **For the lunch pub** and the Extensions and the Alternative Ending in Monsal Dale, **continue uphill** and in 120m by **Glebe Farm**, where the road turns to the left, you *turn right* with a footpath signpost ('Millers Dale') along a path between fence and wall. In 30m go through a wooden kissing gate into the **Access Land of Monk's Dale Nature Reserve** and continue in the same direction along a wall on the right. In 120m go through a wooden gate and follow a zigzagging path down to the main road by **St. Anne's Church, Millers Dale**. Cross the main road, with a **bus stop for services to Sheffield** (this side) or **Buxton** (opposite side) on the left, and *turn left* along a quiet side road ('Litton Mill (only)'). You pass some benches in a walled enclosure on the right by the remnants of the **Miller's Dale Meal Mill**, as well as the fenced **St. Anne's Well** and in 90m reach the **Angler's Rest**.

For the easier and more scenic route, *turn right* down to the main road along a pavement and *turn left* along the main road along the opposite pavement, with the **River Wye** on the right. You pass a bus stop and in 170m the pavement discontinues as you approach the magnificent railway viaducts. In 230m, by **St. Anne's Church** on the left and with a **bus stop for services to Sheffield** (opposite side) or **Buxton** (this side) a little ahead on the main road, *fork right* along a quiet side road ('Litton Mill (only)'). You pass some benches in a walled enclosure on the right by the remnants of the **Miller's Dale Meal Mill**, as well as the fenced **St. Anne's Well** and in 90m reach the **Angler's Rest**.

After lunch you have a choice:

For the Extensions or the Alternative Ending in Monsal Dale, pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extensions** or **Alternative Ending**.

For the Main Walk, *turn right* to re-trace the morning route to the main road and in 90m *turn right* across the road and continue up a narrow tarmac path to the left of **St. Anne's Church**, a signposted public footpath with a **Limestone Way** marker. In 50m go through a wooden gate into the **Access Land of Monk's Dale Nature Reserve** and *turn left* uphill through it. In 120m in the top-left corner, leave the area through a wooden kissing gate and continue along a path with a wall on the left and a farm fence on the right. In 40m go over steps to cross a drystone wall and *turn left* down a tarmac lane at a bend by **Glebe Farm** on the right. In 130m ignore a signposted footpath joining from the right down some steps and immediately *bear right* along the drive to the car park at **Miller's Dale Station**. In 60m you reach the station with **The Refreshment Room** on the right. Continue in the same direction onto the former railway tracks and *turn right* along the further one of them, signed 'Refreshments 1 ¾ miles, Wye Dale - Monsal Trail' (or *turn left* briefly onto the viaduct for a view down into the valley).

There are several info panels dotted about the area, and in 150m you ignore a crossing path. In 60m a broad track joins from the right behind from the car park and you *bear left*. Continue between trees and in 200m pass remnants of a railway water tank on the left. In 60m by a three-way signpost, a signposted Concession Path forks up to the right to the top of the upcoming very impressive limekilns, which you pass in 100m. These kilns served the now disused **East Buxton Limeworks**, which are just behind the rise on the right. In 130m, just before a viaduct over the Wye River, ignore a path to the right down to the river level ('Concession Path to Chee Dale'), and cross the viaduct.

You pass the dedicated abseiling area on the right side of the bridge and in 80m on the far side, with **Chee Tor Tunnel** visible about 100m ahead, *bear right* with a signposted public footpath ('Blackwell', 'Chee Dale') through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate. Follow a gravel path and in 60m go through a gap to the right of a wooden field gate into a large meadow sloping down to the river, back in **Chee Dale**. In 50m ignore a faint grass path and in 65m at a three-way signpost, *turn left* uphill ('Blackwell'), ignoring the continuation to a bridge across the Wye.

****) In 30m *bear up to the right* steeply and in 40m *turn right* further uphill with a marker post. Higher up, the path becomes indistinct and turns left (ignore a right fork), parallel to the top of a large spoil heap on the left (from the tunnel build). In 120m leave the hillside through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and follow a couple of marker posts to the top-left corner of the grassy hilltop with some fine views on the right back up the dale and leave the pasture in 165m through a wooden gate in a drystone wall into a large pasture. Continue in the same direction across the field corner to in 80m follow the right-hand wall and in 30m pass a marker post. Continue along the wall to the top-right field corner in 180m. Ahead on the left, a transmission mast is visible on **Sough Top** (160°). You will now gently ascend to that height level, if not to Sough Top itself... Closer by on the left, the rising parallel ridge is **Priestcliffe Low**; the long circular walks pass by it. *Turn right* with a marker post to leave the field in 30m through a metal field gate (Axe Edge Moor is visible ahead). Follow a car wide farm track in 20m to the left and head for **Blackwell Hall Farm**, en route going through a couple of metal field gates.

At the far end of the farmyard by a three-way footpath signpost, ignore the left forking farm drive and *fork right* across gravel and past a marker post through a stepped wall gap into a spinney. In 40m go through a wooden gate into a pasture and *bear right* across its corner to a wooden gate in a drystone wall in 50m. Continue in the same direction through the next field and in 120m go through a wooden gate by a signpost and *veer left* with the path. In 80m go over a stone slab stile to the left of a wooden field gate onto a tarmac lane in **Blackwell-in-the Peak** and *turn right* along it. In 50m the lane starts to gently rise and in 50m you find a wooden gate on the right, this is the entrance to **Beech Croft Farm's Caravan and Camp Site** on the right. The well-worth-a-stop store (with outside seating) can be found in the reception block 75m away to the right, with a café to its left.

In 90m *turn left* with the lane and a PBW signpost ('High Peak Trail 3 ¼'), where a track joins from the right from Chee Dale. In 300m cross the **A6** carefully with a PBW signpost, with a **bus stop for services to Buxton** away on the right on the far side of the road. You rise gently up towards the obvious ridge ahead and in 400m *turn right* with the PBW at a T-junction with **Senners Lane**, a Restricted Byway. You have five views back from here to the nearby **Priestcliffe Low**, but also on (55°) to the transmission mast on **Sir William Hill near Eyam**, and (on 350°) to the far tops of **Rushup Edge and Kinder Scout**. In 100m, by the entrance gate to **Carlton Hill Landfill** site (an ex-quarry), *turn left* with the PBW through a metal field gate and uphill along a car wide track. As you rise higher up the track, there are fine views in the back to the higher parts of **Buxton with Combs Moss** rising to the right of the town. At the top of the rise, you go through a metal field gate at

Pillwell Gate (on the OS map) and *turn left* through a wall gap then a wooden gate with a signposted Concession Footpath to '**Five Wells Chambered Tomb** only'.

In 140m go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate with a concession path marker and *veer right* and in 140m *turn right* through a wooden gate in a drystone wall with another one, and *turn left* towards the site of the large cairn 25m away. From this remarkable site with its two stone-lined chambers (despite there being only a few of the megaliths still in situ) in its commanding position overlooking the Wye Valley, on 20° you can see the top of the chimney of the **Hope Cement Works** in the Hope Valley, with **Stanage Edge** visible to the right of it. Return to the track at Pillwell Gate and *turn left* along it. In 100m you go over the brow of this gentle rise, now with far views south over the **White Peak** area, but without any obvious landmarks. In 280m ignore a public footpath joining from the left from **Five Wells Farm** and in 20m a signposted bridleway turns right through a wooden gate to 'Chelmorton'. Intriguingly, there is another bridleway turning in the same direction another 30m along, just before a signposted public footpath (the route of the extensions) joins from the left out of a large field (and ultimately from Sough Top) over a stone slab stile. *Turn right* along either of the bridleways.

*****) The two bridleways run either side of a somewhat disturbed, marked depression in the grassy area, these are the overgrown remains of **Grove Rake**, former **lead mining works**. In 230m the two bridleways join at the far end of the mining works and you now can see about a handful of large quarries in the distance, south of Buxton. Some of those are passed on SWC Walk Buxton Circular via the Dragon's Back. In 100m the path starts to descend, now with the weathervane of **St. John the Baptist Church** in **Chelmorton** visible ahead (reputedly the **highest church with a spire in England** - if not the highest church; but in any case: in **Derbyshire's highest village**, at 368m above sea. Today's bells come from the church at **Derwent**, flooded by the Ladybower reservoir in the 1950s.). **Chelmorton Low** rises to the right of the village and you drop down to the village and in 250m pass the church tower on the left, with the **golden locust weathervane** now clearly visible, a reference to St. John who, according to the Bible, ate them.

Pass **Bank Pit Spring** on the right with its info panel and *turn left* with a tarmac track down into the village, where the bridleway turns up to the right onto Chelmorton Low. In 40m you pass **The Church Inn** on the right and then the entrance to the churchyard on the left. In another 80m, where a road joins from the left, you **[!]** *turn right* along a car wide gravel drive, a signposted public footpath (also signed for **Shepley Farm**). The **Midshires Way (MW)** has joined along the road from the left and you are now following it for 5.5 km to the outskirts of Buxton. In 250m, at Shepley Farm, *bear left* with the track to the left of the large farm, soon passing a footpath marker post. In 220m go through a gap to the right of a metal field gate and in 260m you reach the **A5270 Old Coalpit Lane**. The last **bus stop for services to Buxton** can be found 200m along the left.

Cross the road a little to the left to continue along a gravel lane signed for **Burrs Farm, [!]** ignoring the more obvious signposted public footpath a little to the right. **Caxterway Lane** (as per the OS map) is also a public footpath. It is a rather lofty, obstruction-free route with fine views to higher ground in all directions. In 475m you ignore the drive to **Burrs Farm** on the right and in 140m pass the renovated **Topley View Farm** on the right. In 110m, where the lane starts to curve to the right, **[!]** you *turn left* over an easy-to-miss stone slab stile in a drystone wall and *turn right* in the pasture, aiming well to the right of a clump of trees (310°) to cut the field corner. In 70m leave the field over a stone slab stile, cross a car wide farm track and enter a field over a stepped wall gap and continue in the same direction through three pastures gently downhill, separated by drystone walls with stone slab stiles after 50, 80 and 200m respectively. In the fourth pasture, *bear left* with a marker post and in 50m go through a wooden gate at the top of **Deep Dale**.

This is **Access Land** and a Nature Reserve managed by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. You can see a corresponding wooden kissing gate at the top of the far side of the valley, as well as the path leading to it. Take a steep zigzagging path down to the dale bottom, en route passing a side entrance to **Thirst House Cave**. At the bottom of the drop, you find an info panel explaining why the lower part of the dale is closed to walkers until 2026. The **main entrance to the cave** is 70m to the left on an out-and-back. Pass a marker post with a **Friends of the Peak District Boundary Walk** marker on the reverse, then crossing a winterbourne stream under a tree, going over a stile with a MW marker and re-ascending on a clear path *bearing right* up the opposite dale wall. At the top go through the wooden kissing gate out of the Access Land into a large pasture and follow its right-hand boundary gently uphill. In 250m in the far top-right corner, go through a wooden gate and continue to the top-right corner of the next field, aiming to the left of a house. In 100m leave the field over a stile and in 40m go through an overgrown area and in 30m over a stone slab stile. In 10m go through a wall gap onto a tarmac lane, leading on the right to **The Church of Christ, King Sterndale**, with some fine tracery windows (especially on the far side).

Turn left along the lane lined by impressive mature trees. In 80m, by **The Old Vicarage** on the left, you *turn right* with a marker post through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and follow a left-hand pasture boundary to the far corner with some very scenic clumps of mature trees scattered about. In 200m, by some markers on the left, ignore a right forking public footpath. In 160m go through a metal kissing gate and through a wall gap and follow a right-hand field boundary. In 160m continue in the same direction where the wall and fence bear to the right and cut the field corner and in 90m go through a gate into the next pasture. *Bear right* along the right-hand field boundary and in 100m *bear left* with the boundary wall, away from the wood on the right. In 110m ignore a metal field gate on the right into a neighbouring pasture and in 120m go through a wooden gate in the far-right field corner to then aim to the right of the large **Highcliffe Farm**.

In 160m go over a stone slab stile onto a grassy area with some benches by a tarmac lane in **Cowdale**, having now left the **Peak District National Park**. *Turn right* with a marker and in 40m *turn left* through a wall gap with a high marker post and through a lightly wooded area. In 30m go over a stone slab stile and in 15m through a wooden gate into a large pasture. The 'Please keep to the Public Footpath' sign is apposite in this case, as – further along and away to the right – is a steep drop into a **disused quarry** (now grazing land, a pretty sight actually). Continue in the same direction to the left of a fence and in 230m the quarry site is just 20m away to the right. Go over a stile to the left of a (missing) field gate and in 180m over a stile to the right of a metal field gate. Follow a right-hand field boundary and in 330m leave it over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and follow a track. In 100m cross to a signposted four-way junction and in 20m pass **Staden Farm** and in 25m go through a metal field gate and rise to a brow in 50m along a car wide track.

One of the magnificent viaducts in and around Buxton is now visible ahead (this one for the other quarry branch line not yet passed on this walk), with parts of the town beyond and Grin Low and Burbage Edge visible above the town. In 70m ignore a metal field gate on the right and a track curving left into trees and continue in the same direction along a descending grassy path with a wall on the right. In 100m go through a metal field gate by a marker post and 250m at the bottom of the descent, you go through a metal field gate into a tarmac farmyard and *turn right* down its drive, passing **Duke's Drive Farm Shop**. In 200m you reach **Duke's Drive**, a busy road by **Lime Tree Holiday Park** on the left and *turn right* along the pavement. In 15m *turn left* to cross the road and up some steps by a footpath signpost and through a wooden gate into a pasture and go uphill along its left-hand boundary. In 100m go over the brow and in 50m through a collapsed wall, with fine viaduct views over to the left (ignore an unmarked left-forking footpath through a missing field gate), and continue in the same direction towards a fenced area down by the

audible Duke's Drive and A6, in another 100m going through another collapsed drystone wall. The path converges with the field boundary and Duke's Drive beyond and in 190m you go through a wooden gate onto the road.

Turn left along the opposite pavement and in 70m pass a bus stop sign on the A6 below. In 40m *turn right* across the A6 this side of a roundabout by a median and *turn left* along the A road, immediately crossing the entrance to a large supermarket. In 30m pass a service station and at the far end of its yard, *turn right* along a tarmac path towards a **Bridge on the River Wye**. On the far side, *turn left* and in 25m pass a welcome sign for **Ashwood Park**. You now head for the far-left corner of this narrow park, at each fork forking left to stay close to the river. In about 400m, in the far corner, with **The Wye Bridge House** (Wetherspoon's) away on the right, *turn left* over one of two footbridges 50m apart and cross the A6 to the other side and *turn right* along its pavement. *Curve to the left* with the road to go under a railway viaduct in 30m (with **The Railway at Buxton** pub on the right) and continue in the same direction at a roundabout. In 40m continue along the traffic-calmed part of **Spring Gardens**. You pass a few **cafés, pubs, tea rooms and bistros** and in about 300m reach **Terrace Road** at a T-junction, opposite the **Cavendish Shopping Arcade**, and with the **Terrace Road bus stop** away on the left. *Turn right* along the road, passing some restaurants and a wine bar and *turn right* along **Station Road** at a four-way junction to reach **Buxton Station** in 100m.

Link Route from Topley Pike Bus Stop and Car Park

Continue in the direction of travel (coming off the bus from **Buxton**) and in 60m, opposite the entrance to Aggregate Industries' **Topley Pike Quarry**, *turn left* along a signposted public bridleway with a **Friends of the Peak District Boundary Walk** marker into **Wye Dale Car Park**. In 80m continue through a (missing) car gate with a **National Cycle Network Route 680** sign. [The residents of the cottages at the end of this track are allowed to drive cars down the track.] The track down the wooded Wye Dale always stays close enough to the **River Wye** that it is never out of earshot and mostly in view. Twice you go under some railway viaducts of the active freight line connecting the quarries in **Great Rocks Dale** to the mainline at Buxton, and in 850m you ignore a 'Concession Footpath to the Monsal Trail' on the right up onto a third viaduct, this one being the dismantled former mainline from Buxton to Miller's Dale. In the following open part of the Dale, where Great Rocks Dale joins, in 120m you pass the **Blackwell Mill Cycle Hire and Tuck Shop**. Just beyond it, *turn left* at a three-way junction to cross the Wye to **Blackwell Mill Cottages**. The Main Walk route joins from the left.

Turn right with the **Pennine Bridleway** (PBW) and a '**Chee Dale**' signpost and pick up the directions above on page 7 at the triple asterisk ***).

Extension I

Turn right out of the pub, re-tracing the pre-lunch route. In 40m *turn left* along a narrow unsigned path past the fenced **St. Anne's Well** and in 30m cross the Wye River over a two-railed footbridge and *turn left* on the far side. In 80m start to ascend through a wood. In 40m cross the **Monsal Trail** and continue in the same direction past a Derbyshire Wildlife Trust sign for **Millers Dale Quarry Nature Reserve** and in 15m go up a stepped section of the path and in another 50m you leave the wood through a wooden gate and *bear left* uphill through a grassy area and in 160m reach the fenced disused **Millers Dale Limeworks Quarry** (this is only one part of the quarry, the larger one is on the other side of the dale) and *turn left* with a clear path to skirt around the rim of the quarry, in 50m *turning right* for an even steeper ascent, now with a sturdy metal fence on the right.

At the top of the steep rise, go through a metal gate within a metal field gate and *veer right* along a fence. In 120m go over a stone slab stile and *bear left* up a pasture. In 30m you pass a fenced disturbed area on the left; this is an **airshaft of a disused leadmine**. In 100m go through a squeeze gap and continue in the same direction further uphill. In 80m, at the top of the rise, go through a wooden gate with a yellow marker into a pasture and continue downhill along the left-hand boundary, with fine views ahead of **Priestcliffe Low**. In 170m, by a yellow-topped post, *turn left* over a stone slab stile in a drystone wall and *turn right* along the right-hand boundary of the neighbouring field, go through a shallow dip and in 150m in the far-right corner leave the field through a stepped wall gap and a wooden gate by a footpath signpost into another pasture.

Over the next 250m, you go through three pastures in the same direction, curving ever so slightly to the right and aiming for some farm buildings in the semi-distance. Leave the field through a wooden gate and then a squeeze gap in a drystone wall and *veer right* through the next field, aiming clear to the right of the farm buildings. In 60m leave the field over a stone slab stile by a footpath signpost and *turn left* along a gravel car wide farm track towards **Priestcliffe** village. In 75m pass a farm on the right and in 20m from the end of the concrete farmyard, you reach the village by a two-way signpost, where another car wide lane joins from the left from the direction of 'Brushfield'. *Bear right* along tarmac and pick up the directions below in Extension II at the asterisk *).

Extension II

Turn left out of the pub, continuing in the direction of the pre-lunch route. Continue along the tarmac lane with the Wye on the right and some high limestone crags on the left, a very popular but challenging climbing venue. In 750m, the wooded **Ravenstor** forces the lane and river to *turn to the right* and in 170m they *turn left* again. In 90m, by a footbridge across the Wye away on the right (that's 60m before a private car wide lane rises on the left behind you, signed as access to a Youth Hostel), *turn right* and in 50m cross the river and ascend steeply on the far side along a stepped path. As you ascend through a lightly wooded area, you get fine views further down the Wye Valley. You go up some more steps to cross the Monsal Trail and continue in the same direction a signposted public footpath to 'Priestcliffe'. Go up some steps and through a wooden gate with a Derbyshire Wildlife Walk sign into **Priestcliffe Lees Nature Reserve** and further up a steep stepped path through a wood.

In 90m go through another wooden gate and *bear to the right* with the path, now with a gentler gradient. In 130m go through a drystone wall gap and a wooden gate. In 50m you emerge from the wood and keep ascending steeply along a clear path, with two more marker posts visible ahead in 30m and in 60m. You then aim for the house visible at the top of the rise (**Lees Farm**), pass another marker post en route and *turn right* at the house along its garden wall. In 20m *turn left* along the house and in 40m *turn left* through a wooden gate out of the nature reserve onto the gravel drive of the house and *turn right* along the drive. In 440m *bear right* along a Public Road at a bend (**Bulltor Lane** on the left, **Broadway Lane** to the right). In 100m the lane levels out in this dry valley and in another 150m it starts its ascent towards **Priestcliffe** village. In 170m ignore a signposted left turning bridleway to continue in the same direction. In 180m you pass the first house on the left and in 50m a signposted footpath joins from the left and in another 20m a track joins from the right behind, signposted to 'Millers Dale'. This is Extension I. Continue in the same direction along tarmac through the village.

*) In 20m you pass **Lydgate Farm** on the right and in 30m *veer right* on the level, ignoring a left forking lane downhill. Continue along Priestcliffe Road out of Priestcliffe, with **Priestcliffe Low** rising on the right. Having ignored a couple of left turning public footpaths into pastures en route, in 700m you cross a lane (signed for Priestcliffe Ditch and Blackwell to the right and Taddington to the left) and continue in the same direction. The **Limestone Way** (LW) has joined from the right. In 340m you cross the **A6**, to a **bus stop for services to Buxton** and **The Waterloo** pub opposite, and continue in the same direction to the left of the pub with the LW along a car wide gravel track, gently uphill. This is **Sough Lane**, a Restricted Byway, and it rises up to **Sough Top**. In 20m you pass a two-way LW signpost and in 75m go through a metal field gate.

In 380m go through a wooden field gate and continue along the track. In 65m *turn left* with the track further uphill and in 80m ignore a right forking public footpath by a medium height marker post and in 80m the track levels out to continue between drystone walls. In 70m you go through a gap to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along the level fenced track, with the large **Fivewells Farm** away to the right and the top of **Sough Top** on the left. In 240m go to the side of a collapsed metal field gate and, at a footpath crossing, *turn right* over a stone slab stile into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary. In 370m you go over a stone slab stile into the next pasture and in another 110m into another and cross it in the same direction. In 150m go over a stone slab stile onto **Pillwell Lane** and *turn right* along it (the **PBW** runs along the lane). In 15m a signposted bridleway turns left through a wooden gate. Intriguingly, there is another bridleway turning in the same direction another 30m along signed for 'Chelmorton'. You leave the PBW and *turn left* along either of the bridleways. Pick up the directions in the Main Walk text at the quintuple asterisk *********).

Alternative Ending at Monsal Dale

Turn left out of the pub, continuing in the direction of the pre-lunch route. Continue along the tarmac lane with the Wye on the right and some high limestone crags on the left, a very popular but challenging climbing venue. In 750m, the wooded **Ravenstor** forces the lane and river to *turn to the right* and in 170m they *turn left* again. In 90m, ignore a footbridge across the Wye away on the right and in 60m a private car wide lane rising on the left behind you, signed as access to a Youth Hostel, to continue down the dale. Limestone crags overlook the valley for a stretch but eventually the scenery opens out and the lane veers away from the river. You pass a car park on the left, where a public footpath joins out of **Tideswell Dale** along a car wide gravel track and in 35m you ignore a public footpath forking steeply up to the left. In 150m pass **Brook House**, the first house in **Litton Mill** hamlet, and in 70m you reach a two-way signpost on the right ('Monsal Trail to Miller's Dale' or 'Cressbrook').

Here you have a choice:

For the more strenuous route along an elevated and at times precipitous path and the busy Monsal Trail, *turn right* and in 35m cross a mill leat and then the Wye on a two-railed bridge and *turn up to the left* along a railed path through a steep wood. Pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Elevated Route to Monsal Head**.

For the quieter and less strenuous route, continue in the same direction through Litton Mill hamlet, and in 40m through the gate of the **Litton Mill** with a Concession Footpath sign and marker on the right. [Litton Mill had been uneconomical almost from the start due its isolated location and increased costs of transport, combined with a lack of local workforce. Even when resorting to indentured labour – often of orphaned children, mostly from London, under terrible conditions – the mill struggled.] You walk past the now residential buildings and in 150m at the far end of the main building, *bear right* with the track and in 20m cross the mill stream on a car wide bridge. The track turns left to continue further down **Miller's Dale** as a raised track between river (higher) and millstream (lower), largely under trees, with occasional glances possible through the canopy up the dale sides. In 50m pass a metal field gate through a gap.

In 160m you pass the first of many weirs as the river level slowly drops to the millstream's level, and in 100m you cross the millstream over a steel plate bridge where it joins the Wye. In 20m pass a sign for **Cramside Wood Nature Reserve** and in 70m an info panel on it. In 225m, shortly after another weir, you pass some rusty remnants of a small mill. The path then veers away from the river for a stretch in a left bend, with some steep slopes visible ahead, including the path of the elevated route. In 400m, at the start of **Water-cum-Jolly Dale**, a Concessionary Footpath forks steeply up to the left, this is **useful if the following stretch is flooded**. The river appears to be more like a pond hereabouts, as it is held back by weirs for Cressbrook Mill and fills a wider area.

In 170m you pass a red brick building of unknown former purpose and follow the mud and flood-prone path (the worst bits can be skirted along higher paths on the left) through the widening and bending dale, with some very fine views in all weathers. In 250m an impressive limestone bluff commences (often frequented by climbers) and in 100m you ignore a bridge on the right over millstream and river, by **Cressbrook Mill**. [The housing at this former textile mill was so poor, that – after protests by the workforce – the owners built the model village that became Cressbrook. The once private estate became a public village when the mill went bankrupt in 1965.]

Continue towards the mill buildings, with the mill leat on the left, and in 50m pass a castle-like **Victorian Folly** and follow a fenced path past the main building (now residential and holiday lets) in 90m to **Cressbrook Road** running down from **Cressbrook Dale**, and *turn right* along it. A large lake is hidden from view on the left, this is fed by the stream out of Cressbrook Dale and joins the Wye 40m along. In 40m pass the gated entrance to Cressbrook Mill (private) and in 600m pass **Upperdale Car Park**. In 75m continue in the same direction at a four-way junction of lanes, with the right turn leading across the Wye up to the Monsal Trail. The dale widens out and in 70m you can see some buildings at the rim of the dale ahead; they are the pub and café that are **the tea stops on the walk**. In 75m you pass a drive to some holiday lets and in 320m, just before the lane starts its steep ascent to the rim of the dale, you *fork right* with a public footpath signpost along a car wide drive to **Netherdale Farm**.

In 70m by a right turn to a bridge over the Wye, you have a choice:

To cut out the ascent to Monsal Head including its tea options and superlative views, *turn right* and in 50m cross a raised railed footbridge and *turn left* along the riverside path, in 20m ignoring a right forking bridleway up to the Monsal Trail. Follow the public footpath around the bend in the river and under the **Headstone Viaduct** and into a large riverside meadow to continue through it. The Main Extension Route comes down on the right from the Monsal Trail. Pick up the directions below at the double asterisk **).

For the Main Extension Route, continue in the same direction to the left of the farm buildings and ascend through a wood, in 90m with views on the right of the magnificent **Headstone Viaduct**. In 240m you pass a bench where a path joins up from the right below. This will be the onwards route after visiting Monsal Head. Continue uphill along a stepped section and eventually you will emerge on the road up out of the dale, opposite **Hobb's Café Tearoom**, with the **Monsal Head Hotel** and its **Stable Bar** to the left.

*) Descend the stepped path you came up along and in 50m by a bench *turn left* and in 140m you reach the **Monsal Trail** by the **Headstone Tunnel** on the left. *Turn right* to cross the **River Wye** on the viaduct and at the far end of the viaduct, *turn left* at a four-way signpost through a wooden gate with a bridleway ('Brushfield'). *Turn down to the left* immediately along a permissive path down to the riverside meadows and *turn right* through them. In 330m continue between trees. In 100m go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate out of the trees and in 50m you pass a picturesque stepped weir and in 100m ignore a footbridge over the river on the left. In 90m continue along a gravel path to the right into trees, with a steep wooded slope on the right. You follow this clear path, ignoring all faint turns, for 1.2 km through the slowly left turning **Monsal Dale**, with a wooded slope on the right and the steep **Fin Cop** (hill) rising opposite (its Iron Age hillfort site is not noticeable from here though).

There are a couple of minor ascents, several sections through a clearing and several sections where the river turns away in a bow, but the onwards route is always clear. At a (misleading) footpath signpost, about 30m after passing a pond on the left, ignore a hard right turn uphill through the trees as well as a right turn ('Brushfield Hough') and *bear down to the left* 'White Lodge and A6'). Also ignore an indistinct right fork a little further along (that is what the 'A6 only' sign refers to and would be the best route to the bus stop, but it is overgrown, rutted and difficult to follow) and in 20m use stepping stones across a streamlet. You follow the path in 60m to the A6 and go up some steps and through a wall gap onto its grassy verge. *Turn right* along the verge and in 110m pass a footpath joining from the right (the overgrown route), opposite a milestone on the left ('London'). In 60m you reach the **White Lodge Car Park bus stop for services to Buxton** across the road, with a scheduled journey time of 34 minutes.

Elevated Route to Monsal Head

Turn right with the path along the flank of a cliff and at the top of the rise walk parallel with the **Monsal Trail** for a short stretch and *turn left* by a three-way signpost onto the dismantled railway line, with a bridge over the Trail about 50m to the right. *Turn left* and in 310m, at a three-way signpost just before the **Litton Tunnel**, *fork up to the left* along a gravel path along a wooden railing with a **Path to Access Land** marker. In 50m go over a stile into **Access Land** and follow a clear path along a fence on the left. You have partial views in the back to Litton Mill and fine views up the Wye Valley. In 30m *fork right* steeply uphill, ignoring the level left fork. In 60m at a T-junction with a level path, *turn left* along it (there are fine views to be had 30m to the right though). You pass a couple of caves and in 20m ignore a right fork steeply uphill.

Curve to the left with the path with a steep drop on the left (if you find this uncomfortable already, **please turn around and follow the Monsal Trail** to Monsal Head, because there will be more exposed sections along this route). In 100m you are **level with Litton Mill and a straight view up Miller's Dale**, with the chimney in the Tunstead Super-quarry beyond it, and with **Combs Moss moorland plateau** near Buxton rising behind. In 30m pass a fenced shaft on the left and in 80m the path turns to the right around the tip of the promontory, with the **Cramside Wood Nature Reserve** on the opposite side of the dale below. The slope on the left is now less precipitous, a good time to relax and enjoy the views. The path straightens out and starts to descend in the general direction of a stretch of the **Monsal Trail visible ahead**, between the Litton and Cressbrook Tunnels. The slope on the left is still less severe than on the first stretch.

In 250m you walk along a walled area of apparent spoil heaps, possibly debris from the tunnel construction or an old mine. In 80m go over a stile with an Access Land marker and follow a fence on the left. In 30m the trees on the left discontinue and you are now walking some way above – and parallel to – the Monsal Trail below. In 80m you can see the waters of the River Wye below and in another 50m, at same height across the river on a plateau overlooking the valley, get first part-views of **Cressbrook Hall**, an imposing 1835 Tudor-style mansion now primarily used as a wedding venue. In 60m you follow a fence on the left for a short stretch while curving to the left above the entrance to the **Cressbrook Tunnel** and entering **Water-cum-Jolly Dale**.

The path then splits, and you could follow either fork, but the recommended one is the right fork so that you stay at the higher level. The path rises gently and in 60m you can see the lower path, which will be visible most of the way until the tip of the promontory. The path rises further, in stages, and in about 130m it levels out. In another 125m the top of the hill is just to the right a little higher and makes for **a very good vantage point**, although you'll get the same views from the path once you have rounded the bend in 50m. The Wye Valley widens out at this point and you can see more of the water than before, as well as a limestone crag face on the far river side and parts of the imposing **Cressbrook Mill** complex, including its **Victorian Folly** of a tower.

In 70m, all of Cressbrook Mill is now in view, and you get vistas down dale all the way to **Monsal Head**, with the buildings at the rim of the valley being the pub and the café that are **the tea stops on the walk**. The path then starts its gentle descent and in 110m you can see the lower path again. In 110m the two paths merge and in 80m you go through a wooden gate onto the Monsal Trail by an info panel on Cressbrook Mill and with the **Cressbrook Tunnel** on the right. *Turn left* with a signpost ('Bakewell'). You walk between trees for 400m, after which you get views across **Upperdale** again, with a rockface on the far side of the dale, and in 70m you can spot some buildings below in Upperdale hamlet. In 130m you pass the remnants of **Monsal Dale Station** and in 90m pass its ex-sidings on

the right. The Trail then crosses a car wide bridleway on a bridge; this comes up from Upperdale and meets the Trail in 30m by a redbrick former signal box (presumed).

In 130m, by a three-way signpost, ignore a gravel Concession Footpath forking left up to a bridge, from where a public footpath leads into the valley to Netherdale Farm. In 50m go under the bridge and in 275m you reach a four-way signpost on the right. The final stretch of the route will turn right here with the bridleway and then fork down to the left immediately along a permissive path to the river meadows. But not before first crossing the Headstone Viaduct and walking up to Monsal Head with its **tea stops and venerated views**. So, cross the viaduct and on the far side, by a three-way signpost just before the **Headstone Tunnel**, *turn up to the left* to Monsal Head through the steep wooded slope with the drop on the left. In 140m at a T-junction by a bench, *turn up to the right* along a stepped section and in 50m you will emerge on the road up out of the dale, opposite **Hobb's Café Tearoom**, with the **Monsal Head Hotel** and its **Stable Bar** to the left.

Pick up the text above in the Alternative Ending at Monsal Dale text at the asterisk *).