

Buxton Circular via the Dragon's Back			Buxton Circular via the Dragon's Back & High Wheeldon		
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Buxton Circular via the Dragon's Back

Start & Finish: Buxton Station

Buxton Station, map reference SK 059 737, is 22 km southeast of Manchester, 299m above sea level and in **Derbyshire**.

Length: 26.1 km (16.2 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 785m. For a shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 7 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.

Saturday Walkers' Club: The walk is doable as a daywalk from London with a train no later than 07.20 hours.

OS Landranger Map: 119 (Buxton & Matlock)

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

Walk Notes:

This is an exciting expedition from the renowned spa town of Buxton into the remote and quiet Upper Dove Valley in the limestone area of the White Peak area, which combines extreme natural beauty with the somewhat more esoteric beauty of former or active industrial sites. Most certainly, one of a kind.

The outbound route leads to (and over) a string of magnificent hills with very fine views, including High Edge and Hitter Hill, but most impressive is the stretch along the iconic Chrome and Parkhouse Hills, former underwater atolls created about 350 million years ago, whose distinctive ridges appear as a line of pinnacles and resemble the 'plates' along the spine of a stegosaurus dinosaur. Which is why the hills are often referred to as the 'Dragon's Back'. So beautiful in fact that the return route passes them again, but from a different angle...

The more traditional dome-shaped High Wheeldon hill, with its surround views up and down Dove Dale, can be conquered on an optional extension just before lunch. Another magnificent stretch in the afternoon leads up through a quiet and tight dry valley: Dowel Dale.

In between Buxton and the Dove Valley, similarly iconic (if not similarly beautiful) active or disused industrial sites are passed, from laboratories storing and investigating hazardous substances and explosives to assorted disused quarries now housing racecourses or serving as exhibition centres or climbing venues, while Harpur Hill Quarry also has the strange attraction of a toxic lake locally known as the 'Blue Lagoon' to show for.

Walk Options:

Buses

- **Bus Lines 185, 186, 442 and Transpeak 3** stop at **Harpur Hill, Parks Inn**, a 300m downhill walk away from the outbound route at Grin Low Road (cut 3.2 km and 80m ascent); between them they provide for a frequent service Mon-Sat and an hourly one on Sun/BH.
- **Bus Line 442** (Buxton – Ashbourne, 7 buses per day Mon-Sat) **stops at all three lunch pub locations**: in Earl Sterndale, Crowdecote and Longnor.
- **The bus stop at Harpur Hill, Parks Inn** mentioned above, with frequent service, is directly on the return route (cut 3.5 km and negligible ascent).

An Alternative Route at Chrome Hill leads along the flank of the hill rather than over the top of the ridge.

A couple of Alternative Routes at Parkhouse Hill lead over the top of the ridge rather than over the saddle between the two tops of the hill or along the flank of the hill. They require Grade 1 scrambling skills and a head for heights. These alternative routes are not recommended in wet weather, as the rock will be slippery.

Cut out the diversion from Hitter Hill through Earl Sterndale and past its pub (cut 500m; at the moment the pub is closed anyway).

An Extension just before lunch leads over High Wheeldon, a distinctive dome-shaped hill overlooking the Dove Valley both upstream to the Dragon's Back and downstream further into the White Peak area (add 1.7 km and 140m ascent).

Lunch (details last updated 21/08/2021)

The Quiet Woman *Earl Sterndale, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 0BX (01298 83211)*. The Quiet Woman is located 10.6 km (6.6 mi) into the walk. The name of the pub and the image of a beheaded woman on its pub signage, are reputedly concerning 'chattering Charteris', a 12th century scold who was never content unless she was nagging her publican husband and making his life a misery. When she began to nag and complain in her sleep, too, he cut off her head with an axe. The motto on the inn sign, "Soft words turneth away wrath", seems ironic. **This pub is currently closed.**

The Packhorse Inn *Crowdecote, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 0DB (01298 83618, <https://www.thepackhorseinn.net/>)*. The Packhorse Inn is located 13.2 km (8.2 mi) into the walk. Open 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-23.00 Wed-Sun (-22.00 Sun). Lunch served Wed-Sun 12.00-14.30.

Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese *High Street, Longnor, Buxton, Staffordshire, SK17 0NS (01298 83218, <https://www.robinsonsbrewery.com/pubs/ye-olde-cheshire-cheese-inn-longnor/>)*. The Cheshire Cheese is located 14.6 km (9.0 mi) into the walk. Open 12.00-22.00 every day. Food served 12.00-16.00 and 18.00-20.00 Tue-Fri, 12.00-20.00 Sat and 12.00-16.00 Sun.

Longnor Fish and Chip Shop and Tea Room *Market Square, Longnor, Buxton, Staffordshire, SK17 0NT (01298 83317)*. The F & C Shop and Tea Room is located 14.6 km (9.0 mi) into the walk. Open over lunch 11.30-13.30 Tue and Thu to Sat.

Cobbles Coffee Shop *Bank House, Market Place, Longnor, Buxton, Staffordshire, SK17 0NT (01298 83166)*. Cobbles is located 14.6 km (9.0 mi) into the walk. Open to 16.00 Wed-Mon.

Tea (details last updated 21/08/2021)

Cobbles Coffee Shop As above. Cobbles is located 11.5 km (7.1 mi) from the end of the walk.

The Parks Inn *2 Burlow Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK11 9JD (01298 72827, <https://theparksinnbuxton.co.uk/>)*. The Parks Inn is located 3.5 km (2.2 mi) from the end of the walk. Open all day Mon-Sat.

Numerous options in Buxton, either around the Market Place, or close to the Train Station. Some of the ones on the route are mentioned in the pdf.

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 Super-quarry" 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.

Dane Valley Way

The Dane Valley Way is a 77 km (48 mi) waymarked linear long-distance footpath through Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire, rising from the Pavilion Gardens in Buxton over 5 kilometres to the source of the River Dane at Dane Head in Derbyshire and then follows rights of way along or near the course of the river - generally downhill - to its confluence with the River Weaver (a Mersey tributary) in Cheshire at Northwich.

The initial section from Buxton climbs through Grinlow Woods to Solomon's Temple at the summit of Grin Hill, providing superb views across the Dark Peak. The trail crosses Axe Edge Moor (over 500m high, the highest traceable river source in the White Peak area, and the watershed between the Irish Sea and the North Sea), where the River Dane originates at Dane Head. It passes the scenic Three Shires Head (where Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire boundaries meet) with its stone footbridge and cascades. The path continues along the wooded Dane Valley through the hamlets of Gradbach, Danebridge and Winkle. It leaves the Peak District and continues through the Cheshire Plain, later involving a high degree of road walking.

HSE and University of Sheffield Laboratories at Harpur Hill

The Health and Safety Laboratory (HSE Laboratory or HSL Buxton) is a 2.2 km² research site south of Buxton. It researches new methods in industrial safety and provides training courses in subjects such as Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations and Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations. It started out in 1947 as the Safety in Mines Research Establishment and was later merged with the Occupational Medicine Laboratory and now operates as the Health and Safety Regulator HSE's science division. The University of Sheffield Research Laboratories on Harpur Hill are part of the Department of Civil and Structural Engineering and specialise in Blast and High Velocity Impact research. It is located at the site of a former RAF unit that was established as an underground ammunitions store with an extensive tunnel system to house munitions and ordnance.

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.

Dove Valley/River Dove

The River Dove is 72 km (45 mi) long and the principal river of the southwestern Peak District. It rises on Axe Edge Moor near Buxton and flows generally south to its confluence with the River Trent at Newton Solney. For almost its entire course it forms the boundary between Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

En route it cuts through a set of stunning limestone gorges known collectively as Dovedale: Beresford Dale, Wolfscote Dale, Milldale and Dovedale, i.e.: the name Dovedale is also – and now more commonly – used for just the 5 km (3 mi) stretch between Milldale in the north and a wooded ravine near Thorpe Cloud and Bunster Hill in the south, before its major tributary the Manifold River joins the Dove.

The river's name is derived from Celtic "dubh" = dark and although it is now usually pronounced to rhyme with "love", its original pronunciation rhymed with "rove".

The limestone rock that forms the geology of Dovedale (known as reef limestone) is the fossilised remains of sea creatures that lived in a shallow sea, about 350 million years ago. During the two ice ages, the rock was cut into craggy shapes by glacial meltwater, and dry caves such as Dove Holes and Reynard's Cave were formed. Around 13,000 BCE, after the last ice age, the caves were used as shelters by hunters, and Dovedale has seen continuous human activity since.

Chrome Hill/Parkhouse Hill/Hitter Hill/High Wheeldon

Chrome Hill (425m above sea) and Parkhouse Hill (360m above sea) are hills in the upper Dove Valley on the Derbyshire side of the river at the edge of the limestone area of the White Peak, at the divide with the much softer shale. Their distinctive ridges appear as a line of pinnacles and resemble the 'plates' along the spine of a stegosaurus dinosaur. Hence the hills are often referred to as the Dragon's Back.

They are remains of an ancient atoll believed to have existed during the Carboniferous period when what is now the Peak District was covered by a tropical sea. This type of hill is known as a reef knoll, a land-based landform that comprises an immense pile of calcareous material that accumulated on a previously existing ancient sea floor. Chrome Hill therefore has good exposures of fossils, but it is an offence to remove any of them. Further examples of reef knolls nearby include Thorpe Cloud and Bunster Hill in southern Dovedale.

Hitter Hill (362m above sea) and High Wheeldon (422m above sea), both further down the Dove valley, provide for excellent vantage points with views of the Dragon's Back as well as of the Dove and Manifold valleys.

River Manifold

The River Manifold is a 19 km (12 mi) long tributary of the River Dove in Staffordshire. It rises at Flash Head near Axe Edge, less than a kilometre south of the Dove itself. While initially passing through some gritstone landscape, its most picturesque sections are in limestone country, where – for part of its course from Wetton Mill to Ilam – it runs underground when not in spate. Its only major tributary is the River Hamps.

The name may derive from Anglo-Saxon *manig-fald* = "many folds", referring to its meanders.

The Manifold Trail

The Manifold Trail is a 37 km (23 mi) waymarked linear long-distance footpath from the Traveller's Rest Pub in Flash Bar to the Dovedale car park near Ilam. It follows the river Manifold from its source to its confluence with the river Dove and passes through classic White Peak limestone scenery.

It is not to be confused with the Manifold Valley Cycleway, which follows a dismantled railway line along parts of the Manifold Valley, and is also often referred to as The Manifold Trail.

Harpur Hill Quarry

Harpur Hill Quarry is a disused limestone quarry. Limestone was extracted there from 1835 to 1952. The quarry was used by the RAF as a chemical weapons storage depot during WWII, at 2.0 km² the largest such depot in the UK. Afterwards a number of captured German chemical munitions, including mustard gas and phosgene, were disposed of at the site by burning, which was only partially successful.

The depot closed in 1960 and the site is now vacant.

A small part of the abandoned quarry has subsequently flooded to become a quarry lake, known as Hoffman Quarry – or locally as the 'Blue Lagoon'. The lake water normally has a vivid blue colour due to the scattering of light by finely dispersed particles of calcium carbonate, which makes it very photogenic. Unfortunately, owing to the presence of calcium hydroxide, a caustic chemical that is leaching from the waste left from the lime burning, its water is also very alkaline, i.e.: has a very high pH of 11.3 (in comparison, bleach has one of 12.3).

Despite signs warning of the health risks, the lake became a popular tourist destination and swimming spot. To prevent this, High Peak Borough Council has repeatedly dyed the water black (in 2013, 2016 and 2020) in an attempt to deter swimmers, as the water was deemed too toxic to drain due to the risk of contaminating local water supplies.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave **Buxton Station** onto its forecourt and *turn right* along **Station Road**, opposite a **bus stop for services to Harpur Hill and all lunch pub locations**. In 40m *turn left* to cross Station Road at a set of lights and continue downhill to the right of a high stone wall, away from the road. You follow **Station Approach** and in 50m pass **Conways DIY Centre** on the left. Curve to the right with the road towards the Georgian Centre of (Lower) Buxton and cross **The Quadrant** to continue along **The Crescent** to the left of Cavendish Shopping Arcade, the **Old Buxton Baths**, with **The Slopes** rising on the left. In 50m you pass **The Buxton Crescent Hotel** on the right, by the former **Pump Room** (now Tourist Information Centre) and then **St. Anne's Well** on the left. In 25m you pass the **Natural Mineral Baths** on the right, the location of the original **Roman Baths**. In 40m, at the corner of the **Old Hall Hotel**, you cross **The Square** and continue in the same direction along **Broad Walk**, a wide tarmac path running to the left of the left-hand edge of the **Pavilion Gardens**.

Ahead in the distance, you can see the wooded **Grin Low**, the skirting of which is the immediate aim. The **Dane Valley Way** (DVW) joins unmarked out of the Gardens. At the far end of the Gardens, by a footpath signpost, cross **Burlington Road** and *turn left* along its opposite pavement. In 50m cross **Macclesfield Road** (the B5059) at a set of lights on the right and *bear left* along the pavement of **College Road** between trees, ignoring Temple Road on the right (signed 'Poole's Cavern'). In 380m at the top of the road, you cross **Green Lane** and continue in the same direction along a broad tarmac path with a footpath sign on a lamppost on the right. In 50m ignore a right forking path into a grassy area of **Buxton Country Park** and continue along the tarmac path with a school on the left behind a fence and trees on the right. In 50m the surface changes to earth and in 130m you ignore a right turn through a wall gap (an unmarked public footpath). In 60m you pass a stone gate post (without a gate) with a **Ring of Trees – Buxton Civic Association** marker on it and emerge in a grassy area.

Curve to the right through it along the trees on the right along a clear path, ignoring all forks off to the left and all turns to the right. In 300m *turn right* at a T-junction with the tarmac **Fern Lane**. In 70m go over a cattle grid and in 10m – by the last house on the right – the right-of-way *turns right* and in 20m enters a meadow at the bottom of **Grin Low** and *turns left* through it towards the farm buildings visible ahead. It is indeed easier though, and encouraged by the farm, to follow the lane as an alternative, so: **continue in the same direction along the tarmac lane**, with **Sherbrook Plantation** down below on your left, and in 300m, just before reaching **Fern Farm**, *turn right* along a car wide gravel track with a 'Footpath'-sign. In 40m the right-of-way joins from the right and you *turn left* with it. Continue along a car wide gravel track curving to the right around a horse exercise area and in 70m *veer to the left* with the track through the farmyard.

Bear right with a yellow marker on a post on the left and gently ascend with the track to the right of a wood. In 200m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate into an open grassy area, used for horse paddocks. You have a fine view of the quarry face of the disused **Harpur Hill Quarry** (limestone) ahead. In 75m go through a gate (this may be temporary) with a stile to its left, and *bear right* along a drystone wall on the left. Dead ahead you can see the curving rising road leading up the **Harpur Hill Industrial Estate**; which you will go along very shortly. To the right of that road, you can see a strangely coloured 'pond'; this is fed by highly caustic seepage from former mines. Up on the right is a wooded area this side of the top of **Grin Low** with its hilltop folly, Solomon's Temple, out of view from here. In 50m go through a gap in a collapsing wall and over a stile with a yellow marker and *veer left* down a pasture. **Axe Edge Moor** towers high up on the right.

Leave the field through a wooden gate and descend more steeply to a signpost 30m away. In 40m go over a stepless stile and down some rough steps to **Grin Low Road** and *turn left* along its opposite grassy verge. In 30m ignore a right turning car wide track (a signposted footpath) and in 40m cross over to the left-hand side and continue along the pavement there, now with a scenic dry valley to the left. In 100m *turn right* across the road and head up along the left-hand pavement of **Morland Way**, signed for 'Pet Crematorium', 'Racecourse', 'Harpur Hill Business Park' and 'Health & Safety Executive'. You follow the left-hand pavement uphill and in 250m around to the left, up **Countess Cliff**, and in 400m, where the lane turns to the right and a signposted public footpath joins from the left from 'Fiddle Street, Harpur Hill', continue in the same direction with an extra-large 'Public Footpath' sign on the right along a tarmac drive into an industrial estate.

In 30m, at a three-way fork, **take the middle option** (signed '**Kiln Lane**'), to the right of **Manor Scaffolding** ('Up to the job'). In 230m, where the lane turns to the right, *turn up a step on the left* with a footpath marker and sign and in 25m go through a wooden gate by a wooden signpost ('New Footpath') and an extra-large Public Footpath sign and continue straight ahead through a grassy area with a metal bar fence on the left, in a broadly easterly direction. In 80m continue along a barbed wire topped wire fence and in 70m, there is the face of a large disused quarry on the left. In 40m pass a green-hooped post with a yellow marker. In 30m *turn right* along the fence with an extra-large Public Footpath signpost and in 20m go up a stepped path. In 60m from the top of the steps, a public footpath joins from the left through a wooden gate, and you continue in the same direction along a fence. In 250m, by a fence corner on the left, you *bear left* along a tarmac drive with an extra-large Public Footpath sign.

You pass several mysterious buildings belonging either to the **HSE Laboratory** or the **University of Sheffield Research Laboratories**, and in 320m *bear up to the left* along a car wide track with an extra-large Public Footpath sign. In 50m, where the track curves up to the left, you continue in the same direction along a clear narrow path up a slope with another extra-large Public Footpath sign. In 90m the path converges with the fence on the left as you pass a green-hooped post and in 50m you go through a wooden gate and continue in the same direction. **Buxton Racecourse** is visible ahead to the right, with **Axe Edge** towering above and behind. The twin-topped **High Edge** is looming ahead; you will go over its saddle in due course. The very top of Chrome Hill's ridge is visible to the left of High Edge, rising above a large green pasture. In 120m go over a stile by the end of the fence on the left and continue to a road through an overgrown area and a yard filled with building materials (a wooden gate on the left to a parallel public footpath would be a good alternative if you find this route impassable, it joins the road a few metres away from this footpath). Leave the yard in 80m over a stile to the right of some concrete barriers and *turn left* along the road. You have entered the **Peak District National Park**.

The edge in view ahead close-by belongs to the disused **Hillhead Quarry** (limestone). The return route will pass it. In 50m *turn right* with a signpost into **Access Land** and follow a clear path up the flank of **High Edge**. This two-topped hill was the site of two **machine gun bunkers** as part of the defences of the former **RAF Harpur Hill**. The path runs through the saddle between the tops and then descends to a stile to the right of some gates and a footpath signpost by a three-way road junction. The notable pimpled hill ahead is **Hollins Hill**, with a pre-historic tumulus being the pimple. Due W, you can see a large farm on the A53, below Axe Edge looming above it. This is **Dovehead Farm**, where the **River Dove** springs out of the hillside. At the road junction (now out of Access Land), *turn left* to cross a cattle grid. Ahead are some of the hills walked along or across in a short while: **Tor Rock**, **Chrome Hill**, **Hitter Hill** and **High Wheeldon** (but not Parkhouse Hill).

In 500m *turn right* along a gravel drive to **Stoop Farm**, a signposted public footpath, also signed 'Dog Field and Alpaca Walks'. In 100m go over a cattle grid or a stile to the left of it and *turn left* at a three-way signpost along a **Concession Footpath to Access Land** ('Glutton Bridge via Chrome Hill') with a drystone wall on the left. **Tor Rock** is rising ahead on the right. In 100m go through a wooden gate with a Concession Path marker and in 60m through another. In 140m go through another wooden gate and **[!]** *bear right* as waymarked (this is different from what the OS map shows). In 40m you start a steep descent past a marker post into the valley of the **Swallow Brook**, which flows into the **Dove** at the foot of **Hollins Hill**. Stay to the left of a walled reservoir and of Tor Rock (private) and aim for a wooden kissing gate by a two-way Concession Path signpost near the bottom of the fence on the left.

Turn left through the gate and follow a fence on the right and in 50m pass a high Concession Path marker post and in 40m cross a short boardwalk stretch. In 20m you *turn left then right* with marker posts and follow more marker posts higher up, with Chrome Hill dead ahead. Go over a short boardwalk stretch to a wooden gate and into the **Access Land of Chrome Hill**, whose jagged ridge is now rising steeply in front of you. *Turn right* with a marker post further uphill along a wall on the left. In 30m you reach a clear right turn in the path.

Here you have a choice:

For an easier route along the flank of the hill, continue ahead and follow any of several faint paths or animal trods, generally downhill. [En route, there are a couple of more chances to join the over-the-ridge route, as the first few tops are solitary and the ridge path drops back down to the level of the wall-side path.] Be mindful that the exit from the walled Access Land at the far end of the ridge is up on the right through a wooden kissing gate by a solitary tree. So, while staying low and **avoiding any path or trod that ascends the flank, also try to avoid dropping height** unnecessarily, as you will then have to re-ascend that height loss along a rough path along the far wall.

For the recommended route over the top of Chrome Hill, *turn right* and follow the path all the way to the far end of the ridge. There are a couple of chances to join the lower-level route along the wall-side path, as the first few tops are solitary and the path drops back down to the level of the wall-side path. The ridge route features at least **one cave and a rock arch** and has several **optional scrambling stretches**. The descent is easy and not particularly steep, along a grassy slope. You leave the walled Access Land through a wooden kissing gate by a solitary tree with a Concession Path signpost.

Having left the Access Land, you follow a permissive path past or over the lower part of Chrome Hill's ridge (the route of the permissive path is not marked, indicating that the land owner probably doesn't mind where you walk, but the OS map has it as running to the right of the diminutive ridge) and in 300m you descend to the road between Chrome and Parkhouse Hills. Go over a stile onto the tarmac lane by a cattle grid on the left. The return route will go up the lane to the left towards **Dowel Dale**. *Turn right* along the lane.

In 40m, by a 'No Parking' marker post on the left, you have four choices:

- **For the easiest route**, also the only one avoiding a 230m stretch along a busy road, mostly without a pavement or a verge, continue in the same direction along the lane past a 'Path to Hollinsclough' sign and in 230m, where a signposted Byway Open to All Traffic from '**Hollinsclough**' joins from the right along a car wide gravel track, you *turn left* into **Access Land** along an unsigned public footpath across the grassy lower flank of **Parkhouse Hill**. In 300m go through a metal field gate **out of**

the Access Land and continue in the same direction across a pasture, initially with the boundary fence on the right. In 280m go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate to in 50m reach a road through a wooden gate by a footpath signpost. Cross the road and go up some steps and through a wooden gate.

- **For the recommended non-scrambling route** (with finer views than the easiest route), *turn left* without a clear path back into **Access Land** and follow any route to a point where the left-hand field wall crosses the saddle between the two tops of **Parkhouse Hill**. Where, in 340m, *turn left* through a wooden gate in the wall with a Concession Path marker and *turn right* steeply downhill, broadly along the wall on the right, but cutting an initial corner of the field. [The other top of Parkhouse Hill is also Access Land, so if you have spare energy, climb up it for fine views.] You have a rockface up on the left and head for the bottom-right corner of the walled Access Land, by **Glutton Farm in Glutton Dale**. **Leave the Access Land** through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate and follow a car wide track to the left of the farm buildings (a public footpath joins from the left). In 80m go through a metal field gate this side of the farmyard and *bear left* to a road. *Turn right* along the road, initially with a narrow grassy verge, in 50m without one. In another 180m *turn left* up some steps and through a wooden gate by a footpath signpost.
- **For the easier of the two scrambling routes**, *turn left* without a clear path back into **Access Land**. [The first pinnacle at the foot of the ridge – the aptly named **Sugar Loaf** – is not a scrambling route, but a climbing adventure. Avoid.] In 40m *turn right* up a clear path to join the ridge and walk up it steeply. The unavoidable scrambling section comes just beneath the summit. There are others that can be skirted to the right, most interesting is the scramble along the arête. The descent on the other side is steep but walkable down a grassy slope with a slippery zigzag path near the bottom. Walk **out of the Access Land** through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate, with a Concession Path marker pointing left, and immediately *turn left* through another wooden gate through a wide grassy area between fences towards **Glutton Farm**. In 200m go through a metal field gate and through the farmyard with several more gates to a road. *Turn right* along the road, initially with a narrow grassy verge, in 50m without one. In another 180m *turn left* up some steps and through a wooden gate by a footpath signpost.
- **For the harder of the two scrambling routes**, continue in the same direction along the lane past a 'Path to Hollinsclough' sign and in 50m *turn left* to continue to the right of the first pinnacle at the foot of the ridge – the aptly named **Sugar Loaf** – up a slippery and steep chute between rockfaces. [Sugar Loaf itself is not a scrambling route, but a climbing adventure. Avoid.] In 50m continue up a clear path up along the ridge and walk up it steeply. Pick up the text in the easier scrambling option above.

You *bear up to the left* along a clear grass path up the flank of **Hitter Hill** and in 150m *turn right* with the path towards a wooden kissing gate in a drystone wall (i.e.: different from what the OS map shows).

Here you have a choice:

To avoid the detour through Earl Sterndale and its pub (currently closed), *turn right* up to the top of the hill. From the top, you get fantastic views back to the Dragon's Back, Hollins Hill and High Edge, and on to High Wheeldon with its trigpoint. The recommended **lunch pub in Crowdecote** nestles at the bottom-right foot of that hill. The low ridge on the right separates **the Dove and Manifold Valleys**, and the high ridge beyond that is the

MorrIDGE, separating the White Peak area from the Staffordshire Plain and the market town of Leek. Continue in the same direction (150°; the route from Earl Sterndale joins from the left) and leave the walled Access Land over a stepped gap with public footpath and **end of Access Land markers** and pick up the text below at the double asterisks ******).

For the detour through Earl Sterndale and its **bus stop for services to Buxton or on to Crowdecote and Longnor** as well as its pub (currently closed), go through the gate **out of Access Land** and follow a clear path through a pasture to a metal field gate opposite 80m away. In the next pasture, *bear right* through it towards its bottom-right corner, and in 100m pass a walled corner on the left. In another 140m go through a stepped gap to the right of a metal field gate onto a road, with the bus stops away to the left. In 50m ignore a left turning lane by the walled village green with the village church away to the left. In 40m you reach **The Quiet Woman** on the right.

Turn right back on yourself and go through a metal field gate between the pub's main building and a shed to the right into a yard. *Turn left* through the yard towards a wooden gate 40m away to the right of a metal field gate and then go up through two pastures back onto the **Access Land of Hitter Hill**. From the top, you get fantastic views to the Dragon's Back, Hollins Hill and High Edge, and on the left to High Wheeldon with its trigpoint. The recommended **lunch pub in Crowdecote** nestles at the bottom-right foot of that hill. The low ridge ahead separates **the Dove and Manifold Valleys**, and the high ridge beyond that is the **MorrIDGE**, separating the White Peak area from the Staffordshire Plain and the market town of Leek. *Turn left* from the previous direction (150°) and leave the walled Access Land over a stepped gap with public footpath and **end of Access Land markers**.

******) You follow the wall on the left and in 70m *bear right* downhill with a two-way signpost ('Longnor'). In 220m go through a wooden gate and *bear left* through a pasture to the left of a tree, aiming for some buildings on the far side of the field. In 100m go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate onto a lane and *turn left* along it. In 30m go through a wooden field gate into a pasture. You follow a Public Road along the left-hand boundary of a few pastures (partly as a separated track), with the ridge extension of Hitter Hill running parallel on the left, and in 280m enter **Underhill's** farmyard. On the far side of the farm, the track continues as a tarmac drive, and in about 250m it turns left to a road through the gap between **Aldery Cliff** (the far end of Hitter Hill) and **High Wheeldon**.

At the left turn, you have a choice:

For an Extension over the top of High Wheeldon (add 140m ascent and 1.7 km distance), *turn left* with the tarmac drive. In 220m continue in the same direction uphill along a road at a T-junction and in 270m – by an ex-quarry on the left – *turn right* over a low wall and a stile to the right of a wooden field gate with a yellow marker into **Access Land** and follow a left-hand wall uphill along the left flank of **High Wheeldon** hill past a National Trust sign. In 450m, where the public footpath turns left through a wooden gate, you *turn right* back on yourself, very steeply uphill towards the obvious top of the hill. In 120m you pass the outcropped top and realise it is in fact a false summit, with the trigpoint now visible 80m away though. There are fabulous views to be had from the summit, up and down the Dove Valley, to the high moors and of several quarry faces sticking out above the high pastures. Quite some way down to the right is the (gated) **Fox Hole Cave**, which is believed to have been used as early as the Upper Palaeolithic Age (40k years ago).

Turn left from the uphill route along a clear grass path along the ridge (155°). In 130m go over a stile in a wall with a concession path marker (white arrow on black) and continue along a wall on the left through a large dropping pasture. In 240m, when level with a second perpendicular drystone wall in the field on the left, *fork right* down towards a stile

in a drystone wall 90m away. In the next large dropping pasture, continue in the same direction towards the first of three concession path marker posts, all in the same direction (160°): you go through a dip and cross a crumbling wall to re-ascend to an extra-high marker post in 60m; in 100m pass another one and then a third one, this one of normal height. At the bottom-right field corner, **leave the Access Land** through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate and *turn right* downhill along **Tagg Lane** towards **Crowdecote**. In 200m you have a fantastic side-on view of Chrome and Parkhouse hills and of Hollins Hill to the left of them. In 250m ignore a lane joining from the right. The Main Walk route joins along it. Continue downhill to **The Packhorse Inn** in 30m. Pick up the directions one paragraph below.

For the Main Walk, straight to the pub in Crowdecote, continue in the same direction along a grass path and in 50m continue in the same direction over a stone slab stile with a footpath signpost, where a bridleway turns right. In 100m go over a stone slab stile and continue in the same direction with a fence on the left. The path veers a little to the right and in 100m you pass a marker post. In 110m go over some steps to the right of a metal field gate (with fine views back to Chrome and Parkhouse Hills) and follow a car wide farm track past **Meadow Farm** to **Crowdecote** village (often spelled Crowdicote). At a T-junction with a tarmac lane, *turn right* along it and in 100m at another T-junction, *turn right* downhill. In 30m you reach **The Packhorse Inn**. The **bus stop for services to Buxton** is just outside the pub, but without any sign: you have to wave down the bus.

For the walk, continue in the previous direction past the pub, further down into the **Dove Valley**, in 40m ignoring a public bridleway from the left. In 50m you cross the **River Dove** on the road and cross **into Staffordshire** in the process and start a prolonged ascent along the road up the edge ahead. In 230m by a cottage on the left, you go over a brow and then through a shallow dip where in 80m a footpath joins from the left over a stile. In 450m at the top of the rise up the edge by a T-junction with a road along the ridge, *bear right* ('Longnor ¼', 'Leek 11'). The valley on the left is that of the **River Manifold**, the main tributary of the Dove and also originating on **Axe Edge Moor**. The hills visible behind, broadly southerly, further down the White Peak area, are located around Ecton, Wetton and Alstonefield (SWC Walk 326 Dovedale – Ashbourne Circular).

There is a milestone on the left-hand side of the road en route ('Longnor ¼', 'Monyash 4 ¼') and in 200m you enter the **Top o' th' Edge** part of **Longnor** village and follow the road gently downhill. In 130m a public footpath joins from the left from 'Brund', **The Manifold Trail** runs along it. In 60m you pass **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese** and in another 60m the **Longnor Fish and Chip Shop and Tea Room** on the right. In 25m you have the **Crewe and Harpur Arms**, an ex-pub converted to self-catering accommodation, on the left and **Cobbles Coffee Shop** on the right. There is also a toilet block and the village store on the market place. At the junction with the **B5053**, opposite another ex-pub, and with a **bus stop for services to Buxton** on the left, *turn right* uphill, direction Buxton.

In 80m, just after passing **The Old School House** on the right by **Church Street**, *fork right* along **Lane Head** (i.e.: do not *turn right* along Church Street). In 90m *turn right* up some steps along a signposted public footpath through a belt of trees and in 35m pass a two-way signpost to *turn left* and immediately *turn right* and continue with a wall on the right and a hedge on the left initially. In 50m go over a stile with a yellow marker and continue in the same direction uphill along a right-hand field boundary. In 130m leave the field over a low wall and a stile and *bear left* with a grass path along the top of a sloping wood. Head gently downhill, in 20m entering the wood and descending to the far-right bottom corner of it, at times with views of **Parkhouse Hill** on the right. In 250m leave the wood through an extra-tight squeeze gate onto the drive to **Underhill Farm** on the right, and *turn left* along it.

In 150m, by **Underhill Cottage**, where an unmarked public footpath joins from the left behind, *fork to the right* of the cottage along a grassy track with a hedge on the left. In 40m, this curves to the left and in another 60m:

- **the right-of-way** *bears right* off the track downhill past an electricity mast with a yellow marker to converge with the line of trees at the bottom of this sloping grassy area (Under the Hill), and in 280m it *bears left* uphill along a tarmac drive to in 80m pass **Yewtree Grange** (farm) on the right. This is overgrown, and leads through some boggy ground and has no evidence of a path on the ground;
- the clearly **also well-used alternative** is to stay on the grassy track and in 260m by **Yewtree Grange** (farm) *turn left* uphill along tarmac. Technically though, this is trespassing.

In 80m ignore a footpath turning left at a signpost and continue steeply up to the level of the **B5053**. In 130m go over a cattle grid and in 30m *turn right* along the B road. On the right you can see Hitter Hill and High Wheeldon. In 250m, about 50m before the road curves right downhill, *turn left* with a footpath signpost along the second of two gravel drives close to each other, going over a stile to the right of a metal field gate. You walk between high hedges, which are soon framing the view out to **Chrome Hill's ridge**. In 100m pass **Little Nab End** farm on the right and where the drive turns down to the right to another farm, you continue in the same direction through a wooden gate and along a fenced path. In 50m go through a squeeze gate into a large pasture and *bear right* downhill to a footbridge across the **River Dove**.

In 270m cross the river to **re-enter Derbyshire**. You continue in the same direction (340°) to a wooden gate (initially out of sight), 50m to the left of a metal field gate, en route crossing a farm track up from a ford across the river leading to that field gate. Go through the gate by a footpath signpost and *turn left* along a tarmac lane. In 15m ignore a left turning car wide gravel track, signed for '**Hollinsclough**', and continue up the tarmac lane ('Chrome Hill'), passing **between Chrome Hill on the left and Parkhouse Hill on the right**. In 180m you pass a 'No Parking' marker post and in another 70m a second one, passed earlier on the outbound route. In 60m cross a cattle grid or a stile to its right and continue along the road towards **Dowel Dale**. In 400m go over a cattle grid by **Dowall Hall Farm** on the right and follow the road up through the dale.

In 100m you pass a metal gate on the left, from where a path leads in 20m to the fissure-like entrance to the Scheduled Monument that is **the palaeolithic Dowel Cave** high up on the left (the main passage is about 7m long which then narrows for a further 3m before becoming impassable; headtorch recommended; follow the bottom of the rockface up to the right to get there). In 250m, you *turn left* with the road further up the dale and in 60m a signposted footpath joins from the right through a wooden gate. In about 400m, where the road veers to the right near the top of the dale, you get fine views behind to the tops of **High Wheeldon** (hill) and **Hitter Hill**, nicely framed by the steep walls of the dale. In 140m the road *veers to the left* away from the shallow top of the dale and in 180m you *turn right* with the road over a cattle grid or a stile to the right, with **High Edge** visible ahead now. In 60m continue in the same direction past a sinkhole on the left and in 30m pass a footpath signpost and continue along a wall, where the road turns to the left.

In 70m *bear right* with a footpath signpost across the drive to **Greensides Farm** and continue to the left of a walled wooded area with a high footpath marker post. In 100m at the far end of the walled wood, *turn right* briefly and then curve to the left to skirt around a depression (a limestone sinkhole) in this large pasture. You aim for a couple of signposts (350°), with a large farm building still further to their left. In 80m you cross a signposted footpath, by going through a wooden gate, and continue in the previous direction with

High Edge rising away on the left, towards a marker post 100m away, in the middle of a couple of wooded areas ahead (330°).

Past the post, *veer right* a little (340°) and in 150m pass another marker post, now aiming for a wooden gate in a fence at the right-hand corner of the walled wood in 130m. The right-of-way now veers to the right away from the wood (due N) and in 120m, by a marker post when about level with the far end of the wood, you *veer left* to head for a wooden gate to the left of a lone tree. In 110m go through the gate onto a tarmac lane and **out of the Peak District National Park**. *Turn left* along the lane and in 20m *turn right* with a yellow marker on a wooden barrier over a stone slab stile to the left of a locked metal field gate. You now follow a rough path parallel to – but well to the left – of a car wide track occasionally visible on the right (340°), soon going along the remnants of a drystone wall.

In 120m at the far end of the wall, you *bear right* in a northerly direction and in 35m cross a sunken grass track and in another 15m cross the gravel track and continue along a grass path of sorts up a gently rising pasture (due N). The path eventually heads for a fence corner not initially visible at the top of the rise, with a bridleway track visible late on away to the right – marked by occasional wide wooden posts. Behind the fence lies the disused **Hillhead Quarry** (limestone; nowadays an occasional venue for trade exhibitions for the quarrying, construction and recycling industries). Continue in the same direction towards a footpath marker post 50m ahead, still uphill and in 50m *turn right* through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate out of the fenced field and *turn left* along a Public Road that joined up from the left from the direction of High Edge, with **NCN Route 68**.

You descend from **Staker Hill** with the footpath and bridleway along the broad track, with a new housing estate, the latest expansion of Buxton, visible below and **Mam Tor** dead ahead in the distance (28°), and the disused **Harpur Hill Quarry** nearby on the left. In 70m continue in the same direction more steeply along the fence on the left where the cycle track loops to the right, but in 200m after the track re-joins from the right, do *turn right* with the track (the continuation of the public footpath as shown on the OS map, is very rough to nigh on impossible to walk along). In 170m *turn hard left* back on yourself along a level car wide track, part of **NCN Route 68**. In 120m go through a set of metal gates 15m apart, in 40m pass a metal field gate on the left and in 20m go through another metal gate. The track now heads for a very large spoil heap and in 200m curves around the right of it.

In 75m a dismantled railway line joins from the right behind to run below and to the side of the track and in 120m you get fine views of **Fox Low** (hill) rising on the right beyond the Harpur Hill suburb of Buxton, and in another 70m of **Lower Buxton** with its dominant Dome (340°) with the **Combs Moss** upland moor rising behind the town (SWC Walk 384). In 50m you have a high concrete wall on the left, part of the quarry, and in 220m there is a gap in the fence on the left. A left turn through this into the disused quarry brings you in 230m to the **Blue Lagoon**, full of its toxic water. This is **not a right-of-way**, but the quarry is also a popular climbing venue so the path can probably be deemed a permissive access. In 50m go through a metal gate with several warning signs on the reverse about the dangers of entering the water at the quarry. [From here (on 25°) you can still see **Mam Tor** and – to the left of it – **Grindslow Knoll** on Kinder Scout.]

In 130m *turn hard right* back on yourself downhill, with an NCN 68 marker, ignoring the faint path continuing ahead. The track curves to the right and after 130m of descent, an unmarked public footpath joins from the left (from the industrial estate walked through in the morning) and in 30m you ignore a left turn down a narrow path to some houses. In 160m the track meets **Grin Low Road** by **The Parks Inn** on the right and a **bus stop for services to Buxton** to the right of that at the junction with **Burlow Road**. *Turn left* along

Grin Low Road along its left-hand pavement. In 75m you cross **Fiddle Street** and cross to the other side of Grin Low Road at a convenient point to continue downhill along the right-hand pavement, with a deep valley below. In 220m you pass **Morland Way** on the left-hand side. You walked up this road in the morning.

You now re-trace the outbound route for 1.3 km. **In more detail:** in 120m cross over to the left-hand side roadside to continue along its grassy verge and in 50m ignore a left turning track with a signposted footpath leading along it; in 30m **[!]** *turn right* across the road and up to a late-seen footpath signpost and enter a pasture; you walk uphill through a few pastures and then along a wide grassy path through paddocks to continue downhill to the left of a wood; follow the track through **Fern Farm** and *turn right* onto **Fern Road**; *turn left* along the road and in 300m – by a first house – you go over a cattle grid; in 70m ignore a grass path joining from the left (the outbound route).

In 250m – at the far end of the grassy triangular area – another footpath joins from the left and in 70m you *turn left* along the pavement of the **A515 London Road** into **Higher Buxton**. In 150m, by a **bus stop for services to Lower Buxton**, *turn right* across the road and along **Heath Grove** and in 30m *turn left* along a tarmac path to the left of some large playing fields. In 100m, where the path veers to the left, you continue in the same direction across grass to in 70m pass just to the left of a fence end and cross **Byron Street** to *turn right* along its opposite pavement. In 25m *turn left* through bike barriers and along a tarmac path which in 20m continues as **New Market Street**. In 140m cross the B5059 **Dale Road** and continue in the same direction along **Market Street**, and in 250m emerge back on the A515 in the centre of Higher Buxton, opposite the **Market Place**, with the **Town Hall** and the **Market Cross** in front of it dominating the square on the right. There are plenty of **pubs, cafés and restaurants** around the square.

Cross the road and then cross the market place diagonally to the right to continue along **Eagle Parade/Hall Bank** to the left of the Town Hall. In 150m at a four-way road junction by the **Old Hall Hotel** opposite, *bear right* along **The Crescent**, with **The Slopes** rising on the right. In 40m you pass the **Natural Mineral Baths** on the left, the location of the original **Roman Baths**, just before **The Buxton Crescent Hotel** on the left and **St. Anne's Well** on the right, followed by the **Pump Rooms**. In 75m you reach the **A515 Terrace Road**.

For Buxton Station:

- either cross the road and go up to the left along **Station Approach** to a set of lights across Station Road;
- or *turn left* along the road past **several cafés and restaurants** and *turn right* to cross the road at some lights and *turn right* up along **Station Road** to a set of lights 110m away.

The station is 30m further along Station Road on the other side of the road.