

Dovedale (Ashbourne Circular)			Dovedale (Ashbourne Circular) – via Alstonefield		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
15 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	21 <sup>st</sup> Febr. 2025		15 <sup>th</sup> June 2019		
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## Dovedale (Ashbourne Circular)

**Start & Finish:** Ashbourne Bus Station

Ashbourne bus station, map reference SK 180 465, is 20 km north west of Derby, 200 km north west of Charing Cross, 118m above sea level and in **Derbyshire**.

**Length:** 20.0 km (12.4 mi). **Cumulative ascent/descent:** 543m.  
For a longer or shorter walk, see below **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 6 out of 10

**Time:** 5 hours walking time.  
For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 12 hours.

**Transport:** Ashbourne Bus Station is served by buses from all corners of the Peak District and surrounding areas, most useful are those from Derby: Line 114 Derby - Ashbourne from/to Derby Train Station (Mon-Sat, 54 mins) and Swift Derby – Mayfield – Uttoxeter from/to Derby Bus Station (half-hourly, but hourly on Sun, 37 mins journey time). A 1.1 km walk in Derby from train station to bus station is needed for the Swift bus and is described at the start of the directions and also shown on the route map. Derby Station is on the Midland Main Line from London St. Pancras, with two trains per hour Monday to Saturday, one per hour Sundays (journey time from 85 mins Monday-Saturday, much longer on Sundays).

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Take a train no later than 8.30 hours.

**OS Landranger Map:** 119 (Buxton & Matlock)

**OS Explorer Map:** 259 (Derby) & OL24 (The Peak District – White Peak Area)

### Walk Notes:

A walk from Ashbourne, a pretty market town near the Staffordshire/Derbyshire border where the Midlands' plains meet highland Britain, through the White Peak area and the Peak's most scenic and famous dale. You follow a dismantled railway line out of town and then a whaleback-shaped ridge north through a lovely pastoral landscape to Thorpe, where the isolated reef limestone hills of Thorpe Cloud and Bunster Hill guard the southerly end of Dovedale. The route initially skirts to the west of the dale around Bunster Hill to avoid the early day crowds in the dale and later climbs up the hill to stay high above the dale on an airy route before dropping down into it through woods. The core part of Dovedale, with its numerous impressive limestone ravines and cliffs, towering crags and pinnacles, arches and caves, is then walked downstream – flanked by some of the best calcareous ash woods in England – to the most iconic part of Dovedale: the picturesque Stepping Stones. A final ascent through the scenic Lin Dale with fantastic back views is followed by a long stretch back to Ashbourne along the dismantled railway line.  
Note: stretches of the path above Dovedale – at the top of a steep hanging wood – are a little exposed.

A short walk gets you straight to the Stepping Stones and you can add an easy out-and-back up Dovedale. A long walk also takes in Hall Dale and Hopedale and returns through the full length of Dovedale.

### Walk Options:

**A Short Walk** to the base of Thorpe Cloud and then along the River Dove to the Stepping Stones and the bottom of Dovedale proper is 13.8 km/8.6 mi long with 213m ascent (rated **2/10**). This can/should be combined with an (flat bar one small ascent) out-and-back up Dovedale towards Milldale hamlet with its tea option of a length of your choosing (up to 4.2 km/2.6 mi each way).

**An alternative route in the morning along an elevated path** across the nose of the ridge of Bunster Hill (rather than around the base of it) saves a bit of distance, but is only recommended in dry conditions.

**An out-and-back Extension** to the main walk from the footbridge over the River Dove north along Dovedale (flat) towards Milldale hamlet with its tea option adds anything up to 1.9 km/1.2 mi each way.

**An Extension of the main walk** up Hall Dale, through Hopedale and via Alstonefield village and Milldale hamlet creates a 26.5 km/16.4 mi walk with 772m ascent/descent, rated **8/10**.

**A variation of that extension** leads to the alternative lunch stop The Watts Russell Arms.

**A (map-led) ascent of Thorpe Cloud** in the afternoon adds 250m and 125m ascent/descent.

**Bus Line 442 (Buxton – Ashbourne) from Fenny Bentley** (1.2 km off-route, by the Coach & Horses pub) to Ashbourne (currently runs only very early afternoon Mon-Sat), cuts 3.5 km/2.2 mi.

### Elevenes/Lunch (last updated 23/02/2025)

**The Dovedale Bar at the Izaak Walton Hotel** Ilam, Dovedale, Ashbourne, Staffordshire, DE6 2AY (01335 350 981, <https://izaakwaltonhotel.com/>). The Izaak Walton is located 7.1 km/4.4 mi into the walk. Open all day every day.

**The Watts Russell Arms** Hopedale, Alstonefield, Staffordshire, DE6 2GD (01335 310 126, <http://www.watts russell.co.uk/>). The Watts Russell is located a little off-route of the extended walk. Open Mon-Wed & Fri 17.00-21.00 and all day Sat-Sun. Food served Sat-Sun, but call ahead to be sure.

**The George at Alstonefield** 1 Church Street, Alstonefield, Staffordshire, DE6 2FX (01335 310 205, <https://thegeorgealstonefield.co.uk/>). The George is located 14.3 km/8.9 mi into the extended walk. Open 12.00-14.30 and 17.00-21.00 Tue-Thu, 12.00-14.30 and 17.00-23.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-19.00 Sun. After a spell as a fine dining restaurant followed by closure, re-opened as a traditional village pub. Now for sale by Marston's, with villagers trying to arrange a community buyout. Food served, but call ahead to be sure.

### Lunch/Tea (last updated 23/02/2025)

**Polly's Cottage** Millway Lane, Milldale, Alstonefield, Staffordshire, DE6 2GB (01335 310 581, <http://www.alstonefield.org/local-business-and-craftsmen/pollys-cottage/>). Polly's Cottage is located 15.5 km/9.6 mi into the extended walk (or on out-and-back diversions from the main (after 13.0 km/8.1 mi) and short walks (after 11.3 km/7.0 mi)). Open 10.30-16.30 (at least) daily Easter – end Oct, Sat-Sun else. A lovely takeout shop selling hot and cold drinks, hot pies, sandwiches and ice creams.

**The Old Dog** Spend Lane, Thorpe, Ashbourne, DE6 2AT, (01335 350 990, <https://www.theolddog.co.uk/>). The Old Dog is located 5.0 km/3.1 mi from the end of the walk. Open 11.45-late Thu-Sun in winter and daily in summer. Food served 12.00-20.00 (12.00-18.00 Sun).

**The Hut at Mapleton Lane** Mapleton Lane Car Park, Mapleton Road, Ashbourne (DE6 2AA). The Hut is located 700m from the end of the walk. Open weekends to 16.00 (winter) or every day to 17.00 (summer).

### Tea (in Ashbourne, on the optional route through town) (last updated 23/02/2025)

Too numerous to list here. Check page 12 for details.

### Tea (Fenny Bentley Ending) (last updated 23/02/2025)

**The Coach & Horses** A 515, Fenny Bentley, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1LB (01335 350 246, <http://www.coachandhorsesfennybentley.co.uk/>). For sale but still open all day every day.

### Tea (near Derby Bus Station) (last updated 23/02/2025)

**The White Horse, Noah's Ark** plus several **well-rated pubs in the Cathedral Quarter**. Several options for food in the **Derbion Shopping Centre** (formerly INTU and Westfield).

### Tea (near Derby Train Station) (last updated 23/02/2025)

**The Brunswick Inn, The Victoria Inn, The Waterfall, The Merry Widows.**

## Notes:

### Ashbourne

Ashbourne is a fine old market town in the Derbyshire Dales, close to the southern edge of the Peak District and near the county boundary with Staffordshire. It contains many historical buildings and independent shops and is famous for its annual Shrovetide football match over Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. Being the closest town to the very popular Dovedale, the town is known as both the 'Gateway to Dovedale' and the 'Southern Gateway to the Peak District'. Tourism therefore forms an important element of the local economy. The cobbled market place hosts a market every Thursday and Saturday throughout the year, complementing the wide range of individual shops in the town, which in 2005 became a Fairtrade Town. Almost one in four buildings in the town have either been an alehouse, pub or inn or were redeveloped on the site of such an establishment. 11 pubs are currently trading, a high number for a town of 8,000 people.

The Royal Shrovetide Football Match is a "Medieval football" game in which one half of the town plays the other at football, using the town as the pitch, with the goals 5 km apart near former mills on the Henmore Brook (a tributary of The Dove). Several thousand players compete with a hand-painted, cork-filled ball. The game is played by two teams, the Up'ards and the Down'ards (representing the upper and lower parts of the town, with the Henmore Brook the boundary), over two 8-hour periods (14.00-22.00 hours), subject to only a few rules. A moving mass (the Hug) continues through the roads of the town, across fields and along the bed of the Henmore Brook. That is why shops in the town are boarded up during the game, and people are encouraged to park their cars away from the main streets. If a goal is scored (in local parlance, the ball is *goaled*) before 17.30 hours, a new ball is released and play restarts from the town centre, otherwise play ends for the day. The game has been played for centuries, perhaps even over 1,000 years, and there were attempts to ban it, but to no avail. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_Shrovetide\\_Football](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Shrovetide_Football) Two short country walks have been created north and south of the town, featuring Royal Shrovetide Football Challenge Walks markers.

### Ashbourne - Buxton Railway

The Ashbourne line joined the North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) at Ashbourne, proceeding to Uttoxeter, together they ran for 54 km (33.5 mi). It was built by the London and North Western Railway using a section of the Cromford and High Peak Railway. The country between Buxton and Ashbourne was sparsely populated, and the terrain immensely difficult, but a lucrative trade in limestone developed which was one motivation for building the line. Another was rivalry between neighbouring railway companies. Despite the relatively short length of this branch line, it was deservedly popular with walkers and ramblers, enjoying its heyday in the 1930s. Apart from the elevated views over the Peak District itself, a large attraction was that it passed close to Dovedale. Nowadays all trace of the old NSR lines has practically disappeared, the track bed from Ashbourne to Parsley Hay though was acquired by Derbyshire County Council and the Peak National Park for a cycle and walking route. This, the Tissington Trail, was one of the first of such ventures in the country. Later, Ashbourne Tunnel was acquired by Sustrans.

### 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 km<sup>2</sup> (550 mi<sup>2</sup>) 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.

### Tissington Trail

The Tissington Trail is a bridleway, footpath and cycleway, along part of the track bed of the former railway line connecting Ashbourne to Buxton. It takes its name from the village of Tissington, which it skirts. Opened in 1971, and now a part of the National Cycle Network, it stretches for 21 km (13 mi) from Parsley Hay in the north to Ashbourne in the south. At Parsley Hay, it is joined by the High Peak Trail. <https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/places-to-visit/trails/tissington-trail>

### **Dove Valley/River Dove/Dovedale**

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.

The River Dove is a famous trout stream. Charles Cotton's Fishing House, the inspiration for Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, stands in the woods by the river.

Tourism started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the Victorians built the famous stepping stones across the river. There are caves such as the Dove Holes and Reynard's Cave and other attractions include rock pillars such as Ilam Rock, Viator's (packhorse) Bridge at its northern end, and limestone features such as Lovers' Leap. In 2014 a hoard of Late Iron Age and Roman coins has been discovered in Reynard's Cave. The 26 coins included three Roman coins that pre-date the Roman invasion of Britain, and 20 other gold and silver pieces of Late Iron Age date thought to derive from the Corieltavi tribe.

Nowadays, Dovedale is owned by the National Trust, and annually attracts about a million visitors.

### **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, Miller's Dale, Monyash, Youldgreave, 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.

### **Friends of the Peak District Boundary Walk**

The Boundary Walk is a 305 km (190 mi) waymarked Long-Distance Path which never strays far from the boundary of the Peak District National Park. It was devised in 2017 by Friends of the Peak District, a branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). It follows existing paths, tracks and quiet lanes, past or through dramatic crags, open moorland, quiet woodlands and some popular trails. A guide book is available. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak\\_District\\_Boundary\\_Walk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_District_Boundary_Walk)

### **peakpilgrimage.org.uk**

The Peak Pilgrimage is a 63 km (39 mi) waymarked linear Long-Distance Path through South Derbyshire from Ilam to Eyam. It was created by Eyam Parish Church and is marketed as a 'spiritual journey'.

### **The Sabrina Way**

The Sabrina Way is a waymarked 327 km (203 mi) new addition to the National Bridle-route Network, developed for The British Horse Society. It runs from Gloucestershire through five counties to Derbyshire, and provides a link between the Ridgeway and the Pennine Bridleway.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

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### Derby Train Station to Ashbourne Bus Station:

Arriving at **Derby Station**, leave the station to the left in the direction of travel from London, signed '**Main Exit**'. *Bear right* along the forecourt to the right of a bus stop.

- **Line 114 to Ashbourne:** If your train connects best with the slower of the two bus lines to Ashbourne, line 114, this departs from **Bay S1**, the first on the left.
  - **Buses to Derby Bus station:** Lines 1A, 1C, Sky Link and U1 go to the Bus Station, this may be faster than walking. Check the schedule at the first bay, **S1**.
  - **Walk route to the bus station (1.1 km):** For the Swift bus, cross **Midland Road** at a set of lights (with the recommended late tea stop **The Brunswick Inn** a few hundred metres away down the right) and continue along the pedestrianised **Midland Place** between **The Merry Widows** and **The Waterfall**. You pass **The Victoria Inn** and in 30m continue along a residential road. In 50m, where it turns to the right, you *bear left* away from the road. In 50m *bear right* along **Park Street** and follow this road (which changes names en route) for 400m to a T-junction with the busy **A601** (Traffic Street), opposite the very large **Derbion Shopping Centre** (you pass the **Vedi Vegetarian Deli** en route). *Turn right* along the A road and in 150m at a four-way junction by **Derby Theatre** on the left, *turn left* at a set of lights to cross the road and continue along **Morledge**. The road passes under a multi-storey car park and directly after that you *turn right* towards **Derby Bus Station**. The Swift bus to Ashbourne usually departs from **Bay 2**.
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Alighting from the bus at **Ashbourne Bus Station** (a rather grand name for two small bus stands on just one side of **King Edward Street**), continue in the direction of travel along the left-hand pavement of the street, signposted 'Leisure Centre' and 'Tissington Trail'. Cross over to the right-hand side of the road and in 150m by the **Station Hotel** on the left, cross **Station Road** at a set of lights and continue through some metal barriers and down a short tarmac path. In 20m by a town map, you *turn right* across a concrete bridge over **Henmore Brook** and continue along a wide tarmac path on the line of the long-dismantled **Ashbourne - Buxton Railway** line.

In 80m go under a bridge carrying **Church Street** (some of the later tea options are along that street) and in another 50m enter the **Ashbourne Tunnel**, an extra-high and well-lit Victorian tunnel, built wide enough for two tracks at the time. With a bit of luck, you hear a sound installation along the way (of an oncoming steam train). In 350m emerge from the tunnel and continue in the same direction through a gap to the right of a metal barrier and in 25m pass a car park. In 50m pass a toilet block, open 08.00-18.30 (-17.00 in winter) with some **Peak District National Park** signage (although the boundary of the National Park itself is some way ahead), then **The Hut at Mappleton Lane** and a cycle hire station, and continue in the same direction along the (now) gravel-and-earth trail, from here on branded the **Tissington Trail**. This trail is a **shared cycle-/footpath and bridleway**.

You walk along the wide track, raised high above the surrounding landscape, as it nears the valley of the **Bentley Brook**. The hill ahead a little to the left is **Callow Hill**, crossed soon enough. In 230m, as the former railway viaduct over the brook has long been dismantled, you go through a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate and drop down to the brook to cross it on a bridge, en route going through metal bike barriers. Rise again on the other side of the brook, again walking through bike barriers and then a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate. In another 15m ignore the



first of two footpaths down to the left by a two-way signpost, down some steps towards a stile in a fence line at the bottom of the railway dam.

In another 40m **[!]** *turn left* down some steps with the second, here unsigned footpath to a stile in a fence line at the bottom of the railway dam and – once over the stile – *turn right* with a signpost in a sloping pasture, effectively the **flank of Callow Hill**. You are initially walking parallel to the Tissington Trail on the right, but in the far field corner *bear up to the left* towards the top right corner and leave the field in 75m through a car wide gap in the boundary growth and over a stile to the right of a metal field gate. *Turn left* steeply uphill along a tarmac drive to **Callow Top Farm and Caravan Site** with a stream to the left and in 170m ignore a left-forking drive. In another 120m – at the top of the rise – where the lane turns left, you *fork right* along a grassy path to the left of a wooden fence and in 20m go over a stile into a pasture and *turn right* through it.

You now walk along the top of this whaleback-shaped ridge for 1.0 km in much the same direction through numerous pastures, often with some fine views on the left across the **Dove Valley** or on the right into the valley of the **Bentley Brook**.

**In more detail:** In 100m go over a stile in the far-right corner; in 150m go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate in the far-right corner; *veer left* in the next field (345°) and in 90m pass a redundant stile in a tree line; in 25m go over a stile in a hedge; in 60m go through a stone squeeze gate and a wooden gate in a tree line; in 80m pass a redundant stile in a tree line; follow a right-hand field boundary and in 130m go over a stile in a tree line (an unsigned footpath has joined from the left); in 70m go over a stile in a tree line; in the next large field head for the far-left corner and in 250m – at an unsigned four-way footpath junction – go over a stile to the left of a wooden field gate to leave the field.

Ignore a hard-left turn through a wooden gate into **Hinchleywood**, cross an occasional stream by a small pond on the right and *turn right* in the neighbouring pasture along its right-hand boundary (due N). In 90m leave the field over a stile to the left of a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction along the right-hand boundary past a large barn on your right. You have good views ahead a little to the left of the rounded **Thorpe Pastures**, and – to its left – the conical **Thorpe Cloud**, the Peak District's very own 'Matterhorn', with **Bunster Hill** to the left behind, both flanking the southerly end of **Dovedale** and the **River Dove**. In 110m go through a wooden gate and *veer left* through the next pasture, heading towards the corner of a field hedge (320°).

In 100m pass the hedge corner, stealthily entering the **Peak District National Park**. *Veer right* down the now sloping pasture (350°) towards its far narrow end, where it meets a tarmac lane. In 380m you go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate onto the lane and *turn right* along it. In 25m, about 40m before a T-junction with the busy **Spend Lane** (with 'Spend' standing for 'a fenced strip of land'), you *turn left* with a footpath signpost through a stone squeeze gate to the right of a metal field gate and cross a small pasture. In 20m walk through a gap in a fence line (a missing field gate) and continue in the same direction through a larger pasture along its upper end. In 75m cross an often-muddy area by a seasonal stream and in 50m pass **Spendlane Farm** away on your right, ignoring a footpath from the right over a stile.

*Veer away* from the upper field boundary and head for a gap in a drystone wall 150m away, 20m to the right of a metal field gate to the right of a small wood. In the next field there is an unmarked footpath fork: ignore the right fork to the far end of this long field, and *fork left* to an initially unseen wooden gate 10m to the left of a metal field gate (300°). In 70m you go through the gate and *bear right* through the next field to its far-right corner. In 450m leave the field through a stone slab squeeze stile (with a metal gate on the far side) to the left of a metal field gate and cross a farm track and *veer right* across the brow of this field in 70m, close to a drystone wall corner. Continue

in the same direction to the bottom right field corner, steeply downhill, with **Thorpe village** perched on the top of the coming re-ascent on the left.

In 150m walk through a thicket and then through a wooden squeeze stile and a wooden gate with a yellow marker. Continue down some steps and cross a brook over a plank bridge to re-ascent steeply up a pasture. In 70m go through a wooden gate (slightly impeded by a tree) onto a path at a T-junction by a footpath signpost with **Limestone Way** and **Friends of the Peak District Boundary Walk** markers. *Turn left* along the path. In 40m pass another signpost with a **Royal Shrovetide Football Challenge Walks – “Up’ards”** marker with **St. Leonhard’s Church, Thorpe** up on the right. Here **[!]** *turn hard right* back on yourself along the churchyard wall, which curves up to the left. In 25m *turn left* into the churchyard through a metal gate and follow a tarmac path around to the entrance door on its left-hand side (usually open). Leave the churchyard through a metal gate onto **Church Lane** at a bend and *turn right* along it, with a high stone wall on your left. In 40m pass the *village hall* and ignore a right turning lane downhill by a small green.

The lane continues as **Digmire Lane** and in 130m by an **ivy-clad barn with a clock tower**, where the lane turns to the right, you *bear left* with a footpath signpost through a stone squeeze gate (with the Manor House now on the left) and along a narrow path between houses. In 30m go through a wooden gate into a pasture and continue in the same direction through a few pastures: In 70m cross a farm drive with wooden gates in hedges on either side; in 30m go through a wooden gate then a drystone wall squeeze gate; in 120m go through a wooden gate to the right of some farm buildings and follow the farm’s drive. In 30m walk through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction to the right of an open shed and in 20m through another metal field gate into a large pasture. **Thorpe Pastures** and **Thorpe Cloud** are close-by to the right, **Bunster Hill** lies ahead. In 70m you pass a perpendicular collapsed wall away to your right and start a gentle descent towards a point well to the left of a solitary ash tree.

In 170m you leave the field through a wooden gate in a drystone wall 70m to the right of its left corner and find yourself on top of a steep field with a **rather majestic view**: the pasture slopes down into the **Dove Valley** with the aforementioned hills ahead, and the (tributary) **Manifold Valley** stretching out into the distance on the left beyond **Ilam village**. Descend the slope to a road, just to the right of the buildings of **Thorpe Mill Farm**, by a footpath signpost. *Turn left* along the road across a cattle grid with a wooden gate to its left, then past the farm buildings and in 90m ignore a footpath from the left through a wooden gate by a signpost. In 20m, just *before* an arched stone bridge across a side stream of the Dove, you *turn right* with a footpath signpost along a grass path and in 20m *turn right* through a wooden gate into a pasture and *turn left* along its left-hand boundary and with the stream on the left. In 160m in the far-left corner of the field, go through a wooden gate and continue in the same direction through the next field, now with the **Dove River** on your left [spot the **millstones used to stabilise the opposite bank!**].

In 100m go over a concrete bridge across a streamlet and through a wooden gate and *bear right* through the next field towards the corner of a wood. In 100m *turn left* with the footpath through a narrow fence gap into the trees, now with a river meander to the left (and a large car park beyond it). You follow the path through the wood for 120m and through a wooden kissing gate and *veer left* through another field to its left corner in 120m, at the base of **Thorpe Cloud**. [‘Cloud’ derives from Old English ‘clud’ = mass of rock, you can see why it’s called that!] Leave the field over a stile onto a path junction by a **National Trust Dovedale** sign and by a railed footbridge across the river, with **Bunster Hill** beyond it.

## Here you have a choice:

**For the shortest version of the walk**, continue in the same direction **into Access Land** along a rough footpath upriver between Bunster Hill and Thorpe Cloud with the river on your left and Thorpe Cloud's scree slopes on the right, and in 530m pass the famous **Stepping Stones** (avoid trying them out when they are submerged). You can either *turn right* here for an optional ascent of Thorpe Cloud, or 30m further pick up the return route at a signposted right-turn towards a wooden gate (your direction 'Thorpe'). **Ashbourne** is 6.7 km/4.2 mi and 90m ascent away without going up Thorpe Cloud. **But first** you should explore Dovedale on an out-and-back up the dale as far as you like and your time allows, maybe even as far as **Polly's Cottage**, the tea option **in Milldale hamlet**, 4.2 km/2.6 mi away (go over the packhorse bridge and towards a bend in a road, Polly's is in a corner cottage a little away to the left).... Pick up the directions below at the triple asterisk **\*\*\***), but *turn right* not left!

**For the main walk and the extended walk**, *turn left* across the bridge and – after giving some attention to a (seasonal) National Trust info box and an info panel and map of Dovedale – *turn left* along an earthen path to the left of a tarmac lane. In 75m go up some steps on the right onto the lane.

## Here you have a choice:

**For a shorter and steeper continuation** (recommended **in dry conditions only!** and not for vertigo-affected walkers; also: this route does not pass **The Dovedale Bar at the Izaak Walton Hotel**), follow a permissive path, signed '**Alternative Route**', steeply uphill within the **Access Land of Bunster Hill**. You follow the left-hand boundary of the hillside with pastures to the left of it, steeply up. In 150m the gradient eases a little and in another 200m the path levels out. In 270m you go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate with a **National Trust in the Peak District Concessionary Path**-sign and follow the drystone wall around to the left. In 125m go through a wooden gate in a fence line and still follow the wall.

In 370m, where the wall and fence turn sharply to the left, and 20m after a footpath joins from the left over a stile, you *fork right* with the footpath (signed '**Viewpoint**'), steeply uphill towards a clear gash in the descending ridge ahead. In 150m you pass through the gash (the 'Viewpoint') and *turn right* on the other side with a very narrow track carved into the very steep slope (the lower of two tracks). The track contours the hillside, which drops down to the left for a substantial height. This is why the route is not recommended in wet and slippery conditions. In 420m by a wooden gate in a drystone wall the longer route comes up from the left. *Turn right* up the hill, this side of the wall. Continue four paragraphs below ("In about 200m at the brow of the rise ...").

**For the longer but far less steep continuation** (which passes **The Dovedale Bar at the Izaak Walton Hotel**), *turn left* along the lane past a car park with a **Refreshment Kiosk** (open Feb-Nov: at least Easter – Oct daily, else weekends only) and a toilet block and *turn right* through a wooden gate or over a stile either side of a wooden field gate by a two-way signpost, your direction '**Ilam and Alstonefield**'. You follow a tarmac then gravel car wide drive and in 50m *fork right* along a narrower path leading to some steps and through a wooded strip with a Peak & Northern Footpaths Society signpost. In 60m go through a wooden gate into a pasture and follow an initially clear path gently uphill towards a large building. *Veer right* further up the field and in 110m there is a stile 40m away to the left, leading to **The Dovedale Bar at the Izaak Walton Hotel** (entrance for walkers to the bar area is at the other side of the building and around to the right, **not through the hotel reception**).



Continue in the same direction and in 70m go through a wooden gate in a drystone wall with [peakpilgrimage.org.uk](http://peakpilgrimage.org.uk) and footpath markers on the reverse. In 40m you go through a wooden gate in a drystone wall and *veer left* along the left of two footpaths to the lower-left field corner, with the **Manifold Valley** away on the left below. In 250m you go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate, passing a **National Trust Bunster Hill – Peak District** sign, and continue in the same direction through the next pasture. In 270m you go through a squeeze stile or a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate **into Access Land** and continue in the same direction, ignoring the signed 'Alternative Route' up to the right. The path runs high above the road and the **Manifold River** below and in 125m you ignore some steps down to the left towards a gate by the road on the fringes of **Ilam village**, and instead **[!]** in 30m *turn up to the right* along a car wide track, signed '**To Stanshope**', steeply up the hill side.

In 60m, the track briefly runs close to the wall on the left and in 300m you reach a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate in a drystone wall. Here you can **either** *bear right* with a permissive path along the wall and follow it for 430m steadily uphill to the far lower corner of the walled area (en route passing St. Bertram's Well, named after an 8<sup>th</sup> century Mercian Prince, then hermit), **or** follow the public footpath through the gate out of the Access Land and *veer right* uphill through two pastures in this shallow valley and in 350m *turn right* through a wooden gate in the fence line beyond the here collapsed drystone wall and *turn left* to the lower corner of the walled area.

**In either case**, in the far lower corner of the walled area of **Bunster Hill's** flank, *turn right* with the wall, steeply uphill (35°). In 60m by a wooden gate on the left, the steeper and shorter alternative route over Bunster Hill joins from the right along a narrow path. Continue steeply uphill. In about 200m at the brow of the rise by a lone tree on the left, where the wall bears right further uphill, **[!]** *turn left* through a wooden gate in the wall (leaving the **Access Land**) to *turn right* further up the hill in the neighbouring pasture, aiming for a clump of trees at the top of the rise (25°). Near the top corner of the field, *turn right* through a metal field gate about 40m to the right of the field corner. *Turn left* at a three-way wooden signpost, your direction '**Ilam Tops**'. [This is the **highest point of the main walk** at 306m above sea.] In 30m (**spot the dewpond**, at the junction of four walls on the left), the track continues as a clear car wide farm track, and in 60m you have a row of tall trees on your left.

In 120m, where a footpath joins from the left at a T-junction with a farm track and by **Ilam Tops Farm** to your left, you *turn right* along the farm track, soon with views on the right of the top of Thorpe Cloud. In 50m you go over the top of the rise and should have first views across **Dovedale**. In 150m go over a cattle grid by a wooden field gate with a yellow marker to its left and follow the track towards a cottage. In 40m, just before reaching **Air Cottage**, *turn right* through a wooden gate by a two-way footpath signpost, your direction '**Dovedale**'. In 20m go through a wooden gate, in 30m pass a footpath marker post and in 20m, by another marker post, *turn left*. In 50m *turn left* by a two-way footpath signpost, contouring around a small rock face below Air Cottage. For the next 1.0 km you walk in a northerly direction above and along the top of **Dovedale Wood**, before descending steeply through the wood into the valley.

**In more detail:** in 80m pass a marker post; in 30m the path starts a small ascent, passing a couple of marker posts; in another 200m continue in the same direction across a sloping pasture towards the upper corner of a wood. In 150m go through a wooden gate into the very steep **Dovedale Wood (Access Land)** with a signpost ('Dovedale') and continue in the same direction, with a barbed wire fence a little to the left and passing a National Trust 'Please Keep to the Path' sign. Foliage permitting (i.e. in winter), you can spot some large rockfaces to the right below across the Dove in Dovedale: the **Pickering Tor** area. In 320m the path veers to the right by a fence corner a little ahead and then veers left again to follow the fence. In 80m, by a low

wooden sign, a precipitously steep eroded public footpath (more like a gully) descends down to the right: **ignore** and *turn left* ('Alternative Route via Steps').

In 170m by a backwards pointing sign to 'Ilam' ignore a stile leading out of the Access Land 10m away on the left and continue in the same direction to begin the descent through **Hurt's Wood** (bluebells in season), initially down a stepped section with a railing on the right. The path bends left and then curves right by a steep wooded gully. The path now zigzags down through the wood, with occasional stepped sections, a few times bouncing again against the steep wooded gully, with **The Dove River** becoming more and more audible. Eventually you reach the valley floor at a T-junction with a path by a three-way signpost and the river in a meander some 30m away.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For an extension up along Hall Dale and through Hopedale, to lunch options in Alstonefield and a longer route back down along Dovedale**, *turn left* along the path, signed 'Stanshope 1 ¼' and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension** (adds 6.3 km/4.0 mi and 234m ascent).

**For the main walk**, *turn right* along the path, signed 'Dovedale 200 yds'. In 50m you have **Ilam Rock** dead ahead 130m away, the first of many limestone reef outcrops along Dovedale. *Turn left* across a two-railed **Ilam Rock Bridge** to the easterly bank of The Dove. [The footpath coming down the wooded hillside from the upper path joins from beyond the rock.] It is another 9.0 km/5.6 mi back to Ashbourne, including some ascents (Lover's Leap and up Lin Dale). **If you have time and energy** left, *turn left* for an easy out-and-back up the dale, maybe even as far as **Polly's Cottage**, the tea option in **Milldale** hamlet, 1.9 km/1.2 mi away (go over the packhorse bridge and towards a bend in a road, Polly's is in a corner cottage a little away to the left). Else, *turn right* in a broadly southerly direction through the mostly very narrow wooded valley, with the river on your right, signposted 'Dovedale Car Park 1 ¾'.

**\*\*)** You now follow a good path, engineered in places, for 2.3 km/1.4 mi downstream **through the core section of Dovedale** past several notable rock formations, arches and caves **to the famous Stepping Stones**.

**In more detail:** in 50m on the left pass the bottom of **Pickering Tor** with a cave leading into it; In 90m pass some plaques on the left on the rock face, commemorating **F.A. Holmes** who was instrumental in securing Dovedale for the National Trust; in 200m go through a wooden gate, leaving the Access Land; in 60m the path narrows to lead down some steps and continues **along an engineered causeway** past a steep rock face; in 40m by a stream out of a trial mine, the valley narrows dramatically between vertical crag walls and you commence along a raised boardwalk for 70m; in 40m there is another boardwalk section after which the valley opens out a little with a steep rock face (**Tissington Spires**) at the upper end of the valley on the left-hand side; in 100m a clear path rises up the left towards the natural arch of **Reynard's Cave**, just before a stepped section, and in 80m it re-joins from the left.

In 200m you have another impressive limestone stub across the river and **Jacob's Ladder** buttress above on the right and in 150m pass one of several weirs in the river, built to retain sufficient water levels for fly fishing all year round. In 150m you go through a wooden gate **back into Access Land** and in 25m **[!]** *fork left* along a path slowly rising away from the river. You now – initially gently – ascend **Lover's Leap** headland, after 110m along rock slabs as the gradient increases (first built by Italian prisoners of war), in another 120m reaching the top of the rise, by a slightly higher rock outcrop away to the right (the **Twelve Apostles** rock towers can be seen from it,

across the river amongst the trees, as well as the top of **Thorpe Cloud**), and a bench on the left, where a path joins down the wooded valley wall.

The descent back to the river starts with a stepped section and you reach the river level after about 200m. In 100m the path leads over a little rock face after which the dale widens out even more to a more classic U-shaped look of a wooded glen with views ahead first to the **Thorpe Pastures**, higher than **Thorpe Cloud** which comes into view as you approach a sharp right turn. At the right turn in the valley you go through a stone slab squeeze gate or a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate by a two-way signpost ('Milldale 2 ½', 'Thorpe ¾') and have the famous **Stepping Stones** 30m away on the right (avoid trying them out when they are submerged).

\*\*\*) **For an optional route to the top of Thorpe Cloud** (adds 250m and 125m ascent/descent [**map-led**]), you pick up the clear path turning to the left just before the Stepping Stones and follow it to the top. There you *turn left* steadily downhill towards the upper easterly corner of the fenced area, go over a stepless stile and pick up the route in the next paragraph ("...continue with the path where the fence turns away...").

**Else** *turn left* with the signpost to a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate 50m away and follow a clear path *to the left of a collapsed wall and a fence line* up **Lin Dale** (the name suggests that flax has been grown here in the past) between Thorpe Cloud on the right and Thorpe Pastures on the left. You walk up this beautiful dale for 600m (passing **a spring en route** about 350m up the dale, gushing out of the base of Thorpe Cloud into cress beds, and with an **MOD Rifle Range** boundary away on the left higher up the dale) and continue with the path where the fence turns away to the right. In another 200m the path levels out where tiny **Hamston Hill** rises on your left (with fantastic views back to **Dovedale**, **Bunster Hill** and **Thorpe Cloud**).

You pass an ex-quarry on your left with three trees growing in its semi-circle. In another 50m cross a car wide track (**do not** follow it to the right to a car park by a cottage!) and *veer left* now with a drystone wall off to your right, heading for a two-storey house. In 50m you pass a MOD warning sign and in 120m pass the rear entrance of the **Dovedale Suite** of **The Peveril of the Peak** hotel (**HF Holidays**, the West German football team stayed here before the 1966 World Cup and trained on one of Ashbourne's town football pitches). In 150m *turn right* by a **National Trust Thorpe Pastures**-sign and by a two-way signpost through a stone slab stile in a drystone wall. *Turn right* with **The Limestone Way** and the **Friends of the Peak District Boundary Walk** through a pasture to a gate and in 40m go through the wooden gate in a drystone wall and *veer left* in the next pasture. In 60m go through gaps in a fence and a wall onto a road at a bend, with the hotel's drive turning right. *Turn left* along Wintercroft Lane, uphill along the right-hand pavement for the last significant ascent of the day.

In 250m, at the top of the rise you have last views back to **Thorpe Cloud** and **Bunster Hill**. In 110m you pass **Dovedale Garage** on the left, encompassing **Pipes in the Peaks**, home of one of the **Mighty Compton Cinema Organs** (open on concert days). In 100m you reach a four-way road junction with **Spend Lane** by **The Old Dog**. Cross Spend Lane and continue in the same direction along the narrower **Narlow Lane**, signposted 'Tissington, Newhaven, Buxton'. In 100m, where the road turns to the left by a green, you *fork right* with a minor lane, a cul-de-sac, signed as leading to a car park and to **Station House B&B**. In 150m a signposted footpath forks to the left ('Fenny Bentley'). This is the **Route to Fenny Bentley for a bus to Ashbourne** (1.2 km away, at 13.46 Mon-Sat (02/25), see the directions below). In another 7#40m you pass the B&B. In 40m pass a car park on your right by a **Tissington Trail** sign and an **L&NWR.v.C.** boundary post. In 10m *turn right* along the dismantled railway line walked along at the start of the walk, **all the way back to Ashbourne** (4.5 km/2.8 mi away).

**In more detail:** in 150m pass a 'Ashbourne 2 miles' sign and in 80m cross a signposted footpath; in 270m go under a bridge; in 340m cross a farm track on a bridge; in 430m cross a signposted footpath; in 470m **leave the National Park** (by a field boundary on to the left); in 200m cross a farm track on a bridge by a large farm on the right; in 340m cross **Spend Lane** on a bridge; in 850m cross the drive to **Callow Top Farm** on a bridge. Now **the outbound route** runs parallel to the right in a sloping pasture and in 230m it joins from the right. Now re-trace the morning route through the dip where the trail crosses the **Bentley Brook**, past the cycle hire and the toilet block and **The Hut at Mappleton Lane** to enter the **Ashbourne Tunnel**.

In Ashbourne, **the direct route to the bus station** turns left along King Edward Street (there is a large Sainsbury's away to the right along the road). **Or – for a little tour of the pretty town centre and for all tea options** – *turn hard left* back along yourself up **Station Road**. In 100m you reach **Church Street**. There are interesting buildings along the left, some proud Georgian architecture, almshouses, an old grammar school and **St. Oswald's Church**, with its very fine 65m spire.

**For tea options, turn right.** You pass **House of Beer, Café Impromptu, Cornerstone Coffee House, The Bank, Machine Inn, Blarneys, Poms** and **The Greenman** by its famous and rare 'gallows' sign across the road. *Fork left uphill* here along a cobbled pedestrianised lane past **The Horns** and **Lamplight**. In 30m on the **Market Place** you find **Ye Olde Vaults, Queen's Vaults, The White Swan, The George & Dragon** and **Friend Café & Tearoom**. *Turn right* downhill past a fish & chips and **The Flower Café** and at a T-junction *turn right* again. You pass **Smith's Tavern, Beaumont's** and **BEAR** (and **f'coffee** down an alleyway on the left), then a **Costa Coffee** (and **Jack Rabbits** down an alleyway on the left), then **The Greenman**. *Turn left* down **Dig Street** and pass **The Coach & Horses** and **The Bridge**, then cross the **Henmore Brook**. *Turn right* by **The Little Shed Coffee Shop** along **King Edward Street** to the Bus Station (that's 20m before **The Wheel Inn** and then **Star Anise**).

## **Route to Fenny Bentley for a bus to Ashbourne**

Follow the grassy path between trees downhill and in 100m go under the railway bridge carrying the **Tissington Trail**. In 70m go through a wooden gate and cross the **Wash Brook** on a railed concrete slab bridge. *Veer right* in a sloping pasture to a wooden gate 30m away. Ascend through the next pasture on a clear path (170°) with the brook on the right below. In 150m in the top left field corner, you *turn left* through a wooden gate into a large pasture, ignoring a wooden field gate ahead. Follow a right-hand field boundary gently uphill initially and in 80m go over the brow of this field (last back views from here to Thorpe Cloud and Pastures). In another 100m go through a set of wooden gates in a hedge and continue in the same direction gently descending into the **valley of the Bentley Brook** through a pasture, towards a protruding hedge corner.

In 180m continue with the hedge on the left and in 100m go through a narrow metal gate and *veer left* along a fenced path with a hedge on the left. in 80m go through a narrow metal gate onto a tarmac lane and *turn left* along it. In 100m *turn right* along a signposted narrow footpath (with the signpost hidden by an electricity pole) with a low stone wall around a house on the right and a fenced paddock on the left (about 30m **before St. Edmund, King and Martyr Church!**). In 75m continue in the same direction along a gravel path by a four-way footpath signpost, now with a school on the right and in 90m go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate and cross the **Bentley Brook** on a bridge by the A515. The **bus stop for services to Ashbourne** is opposite and the **Coach & Horses** pub 30m away to the right.



## Extension (add 6.5 km/4.0 mi and 263m ascent/descent)

In 190m go through a squeeze stile in a drystone wall and in 20m *turn left* with a public footpath signpost ('Stanshope 1') away from the river, up through the tight **Hall Dale**, squeezed in between steep valley walls. You have a drystone wall on the left and in 270m go over a stile in a drystone wall. The gradient eases and in 120m the area to the right opens out a little, now with just a few trees growing on the steep grassy slope. In 70m the trees on the left discontinue as well as you pass some blackthorn bushes. You have a tight part of the valley visible ahead where it bears to the right and in 100m walk through a small area of limestone scree. In 100m go through a wooden gate in a fence line (ignore the permissive path joining from the left over a stile). In 40m walk through a chasm, with the rock closing in from both sides, and in 70m the area widens again.

You continue gently uphill and in 350m go through a squeeze stile in a drystone wall and a wooden gate, **leaving the Access Land**, and through a pasture along its left-hand wall. In 30m ignore a left-turning footpath through a stone slab stile in the wall into the NT's **Allan's Bank** and in 20m continue over a stone slab stile and go through the next pasture towards a large farm at the top of the rise. You have good views back down Hall Dale to the narrow part of the valley. In 150m by a corner of the drystone wall on the left, you cross a public footpath and in 30m go through a squeeze stile in a drystone wall by a footpath marker post and continue in the same direction. In 125m go over a stone slab stile in a drystone wall and cut across a field corner and in 40m go through a wooden gate and turn left by a three-way signpost ('Footpath to Stanshope') at a T-junction with a farm track. In 100m *turn right* at a junction with a tarmac lane.

**For the Watts Russell Arms pub**, *fork left* uphill with Stanshope Lane, in 70m going over the brow of the rise; ignore all ways off for 850m (a footpath on the left in 100m, one on the right in 160m, a footpath crossing in 280m) and *turn down to the right* along a signposted footpath between drystone walls (can be overgrown and will be slippery after rain) down to the pub in 80m. [Alternatively continue along the road and turn right at the next junction.] Out of the pub turn right uphill along a road, ignore the left turn immediately and follow the road gently uphill for 900m to the outskirts of Alstonefield, ignoring all ways off. Continue three paragraphs below: "Immediately turn right again..."

**For the Main Extended Walk Route**, *fork off to the right* along a tarmac cul-de-sac to the right of a small triangular green (30°). In 65m pass **Dovedale Cottages** at Church Farm and rise gently with the track. In 100m it levels out and you have views ahead of several green hills, with the most prominent one – almost a mini-Thorpe Cloud – half left ahead on 325°, this is **Wetton Hill** (371m above sea). In 50m ignore a signposted public footpath through a wooden gate by **Grove Farm** on the right and continue along the now gravel track between drystone walls. In 20m you can see the church tower in Alstonefield ahead, on the other side of Hopedale. In 30m you get unimpeded views on the left of Wetton Hill and start the descent into **Hopedale**.

At the bottom of the drop by a signpost with a **Sabrina Way** marker, *turn left* along a tarmac lane and **[!]** in 15m *turn right* through a gap in a drystone wall into **Access Land**. Ignore the signed right turning 'Alternative Route Avoiding Steep Slope', and *turn up to the left* along a faint path **up the steep slope**, with a wall away on the left and soon *bear right* with the wall. The alternative route joins in 40m or so and you keep rising up with the wall on your left, en route ignoring another concession route avoiding some steepness. At the top of the walled Access Land, you go through a wooden gate and continue along a left-hand pasture's boundary, with the church tower now dead ahead. In 80m go through a wooden gate with a bridleway marker and *turn left* in a pasture with its boundary wall. You gently ascend the field (with fantastic views back) and in 200m leave the field over a stone slab stile to the right of a metal field gate. Continue in the same direction at a bend of a car wide track by a four-way footpath



signpost on the right (direction 'Alstonefield'). In 190m *turn right* in the village along a road at a T-junction. The Watts Russell Arms route joins from the left.

Immediately *turn right* again, signposted 'Ashbourne 7' (and indeed signposted 'Ashbourne 7 ½' on the other side of the road!). In 40m continue in the same direction to the right of a little green, ignoring the left forking main road, signed for 'Ashbourne'. In 130m pass the **Old Post Office and Stores** on the left and in 40m find **The George at Alstonefield** on the left by the village green. You ignore a right turning footpath and continue along the lane to the right of the green and in 30m *turn right* at a T-junction with a road, passing some attractive Holiday Cottages and **Alstonefield Manor**. In another 90m pass **St. Peter's Church, Alstonefield** and *bear left* with the lane. In 50m you pass an 'Unsuitable for Motor Vehicles' road sign and in 70m ignore a left-turning footpath over a drystone wall. In another 70m *turn right* with a signposted footpath through a gap in a drystone wall to the left of a metal field gate and then a wooden gate and follow the left-hand pasture's boundary, slowly converging with it.

In 250m, about 40m before the far field corner, *turn left* through a gap in a drystone wall and then a wooden gate and cross a smaller pasture diagonally to in 150m leave it through a squeeze stile and continue in the same direction through a large pasture, with fantastic open views across zigzagging drystone walled pastures and into **Milldale on the left and into Dovedale on the right**. In 70m you start the very steep descent along an electricity line towards **Milldale hamlet** visible down below and in 140m go through a wooden gate and then a gap in a drystone wall and continue in the same direction to the bottom-right corner of this field. In 120m ignore a footpath turning right out of the field and go through a wooden gate in a hedge with another footpath to continue through a small grassy area by a cottage on the left. You *bear left* to go in 25m through a metal gate to the right of the cottage's driveway gates.

*Turn right* along a tarmac lane by a footpath signpost and in 25m *turn left* down some steps to a lower-lying road and *turn right* along it, now with the **Dove River** on your left. In 60m where the road turns right, you'll find the early tea stop **Polly's Cottage** away on the right in a corner cottage. Continue in the same direction towards a packhorse bridge with signs for 'Dovedale' and 'National Trust Information Barn'. Ignore a signposted right-turning footpath ('Impassable After Heavy Rain') and in 30m cross the **Viator's Bridge**, made famous in Izaak Walton's 'The Compleat Angler', and *turn right* through a wooden gate into **Access Land** ('Dovedale Car Park 3'). You now follow a good path, engineered in places, for 4.2 km/2.6 mi **through Dovedale** past several notable rock formations, arches and caves **to the famous Stepping Stones**.

**In more detail:** in 130m you pass the first of many weirs on the right. In 200m go through a wooden gate and continue along a paved path through a narrow section of the valley. In 60m go through a wooden gate to the left of a stile (with a '**Danger of Rockfall**' sign) and in about 500m go through a wooden gate to the left of a stile. In 180m you pass **Nabs Spring** (on the OS map) and in 20m go through a wooden gate, now with a rock tower 80m ahead on the other side of the river. In 60m ignore a signposted footpath turning left up a grassy slope ('Alsop-en-le-Dale 1 ¾') with first views of the **Dove Holes**, caves hollowed out when water was filling the valley. The path rises over a rocky protuberance, at a narrow point of the valley, and in 180m it curves to the left. You can see a drystone wall on the other side of the river, this is where the ascent up Hall Dale began earlier. Continue with a steep wooded slope on the left (bluebells in season) and in 220m go through a wooden gate. In 70m by a slight left turn, you get views of **Ilam Rock** rising majestically on the other riverbank and a three-way signpost by the wooden footbridge that carries the main walk route over the river.

At the bridge continue along the river ('Dovedale Car Park 1 ¾') and pick up the directions in the main text at the double asterisk \*\*).