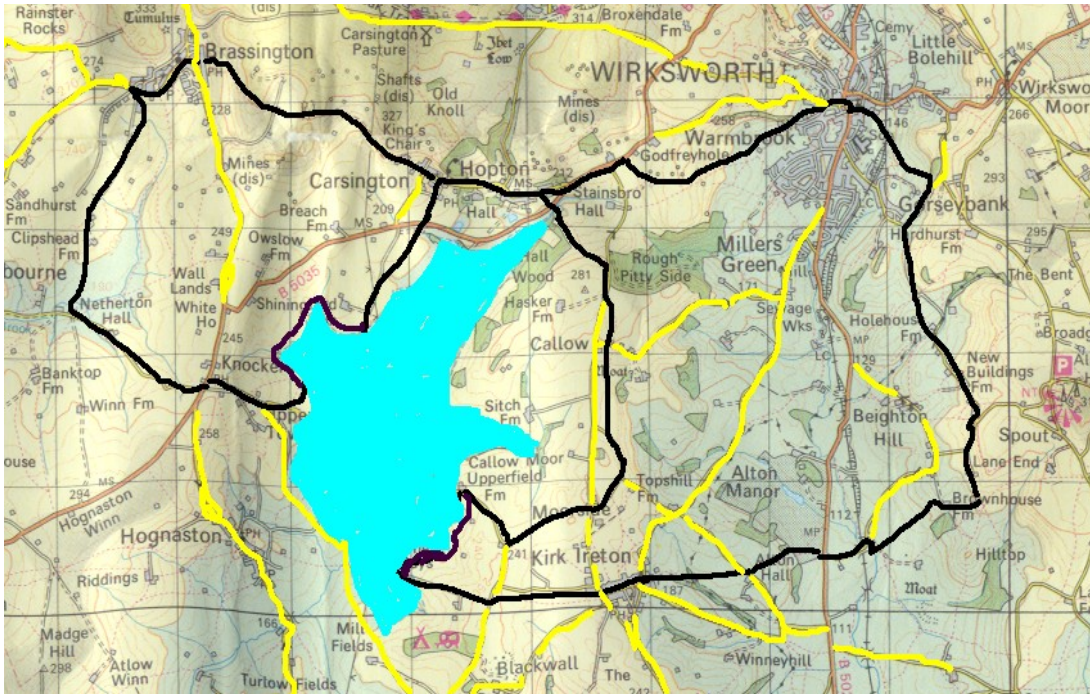


WALK 16.
WIRKSWORTH 16.
Map White Peak.
20.5miles. 6 hours.



Reproduced by kind permission of Ordnance Survey.
Crown Copyright NC/02. 30874.

Start at Wirksworth Market Place. Walk S on the B.5023 for 100 yards or so, passing the Parish church behind the shops on your left. It was well restored by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1870, too well, perhaps; but we may still see some C.13 windows. The crossing tower is C.13 below and C.14 above; it has a quatrefoil frieze instead of battlements, and supports a lead-covered spirelet. A marvellous relic rests within the church: a sculptured coffin lid of C.8. There are many Norman architectural fragments in the wall: quaint faces and figures, shafts, mouldings, and a miner with his pick and bucket. There are some fine monuments, the best being that of Anthony Lowe, 1555, made in the new style. Ralph and Anthony Gell have a tomb here.

In the 19.C Moot Hall, with the miner's arms (his scales, pick and trough) carved on the front door, is kept the standard measure for lead ore, made it is said, in the time of Henry VIII. The Great Barmote Court is still held here twice a year, the oldest industrial court in the country. There are many old buildings of interest in this fine old town.

A little further down from the church gates stands a house on your left where enough of it has been removed to reveal an old cruck. At this point, turn left and go down to the school playing fields. Before the playing fields, turn left, then right to walk to the railway line, turn right and walk along side the railway until you come to some steps over the railway at (290537). Go through a wooden gate into a field and walk 100 yards SSE uphill, railway on the right, to a gateway in the hedge in front, no stile; and so into the next field, going uphill for 150 yards to a metal gate on which is a gritstone stile. In a few yards, you come to a lane: turn left; go through a wooden slot stile next to a gate, then walk SE uphill, hedge on left. In about 150 yards, the drive (to a house) curves to the right; leave it and go straight on uphill for 100 yards to a low stone wall with a slot stile in it. Continue uphill through the next field, wall on left, trees on left, so that you attain the wall 150 yards ahead, and a slot stile in the left corner.

You have arrived at a lane. Turn right and walk about 300 yards downhill to a junction of lanes; Gorsey Bank, (trig point 292530). Turn left: walk 100 yards uphill, going S; there is a gritstone slot stile on the right which will give only 200 yards of field walking, but it is hard to resist a stile and a path. Eventually, you come to a gritstone stile in a wall now on your left, and you re-enter the lane to walk 400 yards S to a point where the lane turns sharply to the left. Go straight on to a wooden slot and bar stile. Go uphill through a field where a hedge has been removed, then go downhill, passing an isolated pair of gritstones making a slot stile to arrive at Holehouse Farm (294522) where the farm gate on the right of which has a slot. Turn left to get out into a lane. Immediately, turn right and walk 30 yards uphill to a slot stile on your right: two massive wooden uprights in a stonewall.

Walk SW through trees, a stream away down to the right, pleasant walking for about 250 yards which brings you to a wall with a slot stile in it, and so out into a field whose opposite hedge, only 50 yards away, contains a slot stile. In the next field, keep close to the hedge on the left at the top of the field. The stream is down to the right: quite picturesque. You come to a corner on the left where there is a poor stile in a wall. Over this, and make for the next wall in front, on your left. In the next field, there is a gate to the right: no stile there, but 10 yards to the left of the gate, you will find, a stile under a tree that allows you to cross a stream. You can get out on to the road here, but instead, go left to a gate where there is a poor slot stile on its left. This allows you to walk around the house to the right and come to a good little slot stile with a wooden door, and so out on to the road at 292516.

Walk SSE for 400 yards to a road junction. Go straight on for 100 yards, then, where the road turns sharply right, go straight on towards a house but take the gate to the left. This house, like a large one a few hundred yards back, is interesting: it has a few elegant features which, while not taking it up to the level of the superior manor house, raises it above the farmhouse one normally sees. They have gables, mullioned windows and ball finials. Walk SSE down to Brownhouse Farm. Do not enter the farm, but turn right when you approach the buildings, getting on to a wide track of sorts that goes through an old metal gate, no stile. Go forward for 20 yards, and, where the track goes on ahead through a gateway into a field, turn left and walk downhill SW along a wide lane, grassed over, hedge on either side. In 200 yards, go through a barricade of old gates, then down to a farm gate, through this and into a field, hedge close on right, down to a gritstone slot stile; the map indicates that the path is on the other side of the hedge. Continue through a field from which the hedge has been removed, down to the far hedge where there are remains of a wooden stile in a thick hedge; it was difficult to get through (289505).

You are now on a lane, which comes down from Norman Hill Farm, turn right and walk NW down to the road you were on earlier. This is Barnsley Lane; do not worry; you are not in Yorkshire. Turn left and walk over the railway, then you come to a road the B.5023 at 284504.

Go W across the road to a gritstone slot stile, then walk W uphill to the woods ahead; Alton Manor is on the right, which looks as though it was built in the 1600. In fact it was built in 1846 by no less a person than Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The woods have a metal estate fence around them; you will find an unusual stile: a metal slot made of a metal rod bent to make a V and stuck in the ground. Climb the bank through the trees; going a little to the left to a stile you may be able to see ahead of you. It consists of a wooden step with bars inserted in a fence. Continue W up a bank to a gate with a slot stile to the right of it, then make for the farm diagonally to the right where there is a step stile leading into the farmyard and out on to the road at (278503). The farm is Alton Hall, a C.17 building, L-shaped, like two separate buildings with arched doorways on each wing.

Turn right: walk 30 yards NW to a sign on the left and a slot stile. Enter a field and walk W. there are several large gaps in the hedge ahead, so go into the next field, walking WSW; make for the far hedge and trees where there is a good gritstone slot stile through which you go into the trees. Turn left and descend to a good footbridge with handrail on left, and so into a field

where you walk WNW uphill, trees on left, up to the top where you turn to your left and pass through holly trees to a stone footbridge. From this point, cut the right corner and go through the hedge up on your right into a narrow field that brings you up to a gate, no stile, and into a farmyard and the road at Kirk Ireton (269502).

This old village was probably known to the Romans whose road from Derby to Buxton ran near here. It remained a place of call on ancient routes during mediaeval and later times; a document of 1502 refers to “the gate at the end of the vill of Kyrkyreton through which runs the way from le Peak to Derby”. It was included on Ogilby’s strip map of 1675 for the route from Derby to Manchester.

The church is approached through a C.18 pillared gateway. How interesting it looks: it is anything but a neat organised structure built all at one time. The Normans began the low, embattled W tower, broad and without buttresses. They built the S doorway through which you enter the small church, and you see more of their work in the S arcade whose arches are not regular. In the fine C.14 chancel, there is an ornate doorway leading into the vestry with thin shafts and the voisoirs decorated with big fleurons.

Kirk Ireton is a good example of a small stone-built Derbyshire village. Look out for Church Farm: C.17 with tiny mullioned windows which show an early date; Buxton Hall Farm with a cruck truss; and the Barley Mow Inn of 1683, a good example of the late Derbyshire style: it has gabled dormer windows with ball finials, mullioned windows, and a door with a slightly arched head. In the hamlet of Blackwall nearly a mile SW is Blackwall House built by the Blackwall family before 1623, and added to in 1736 and later. Anthony Blackwall, born in 1664, became a distinguished classical scholar. Though only 24 years of age, he became Headmaster of Derby School; later, he became Headmaster of Market Bosworth School where, it is believed, Samuel Johnson was his assistant. Blackwall was one of Derbyshire’s famous academic sons who influenced many brilliant people.

From the church, walk WSW along the main street to a road junction just beyond the Barley Mow. Bear left here, and, in 30 yards; go right at a sign and slot stile. Walk W, passing two beautiful gritstones making a useless slot because the hedge has disappeared, and continuing to the far right corner where you begin to wonder if there is any way out of here. Then, at the last minute, you see a slot stile tucked away in the corner under a large holly tree. Walk now with hedge close on your left, a towering growth of holly, up to a wooden slot ahead, again isolated because the hedge has gone. Go through the hedge in front of you and bear right, making for the far hedge, Walking WNW, to a large gap in the hedge where tractors have gone before you. In the next field, bear right yet again, and make for the far hedge, not getting as far as the corner, but proceeding to a section of fence where there are two stiles, both stepped, and about three feet apart. The next field is quite narrow: go to the slot stile made of two stone uprights, then continue WNW, hedge on left, for about 200 yards to the far hedge and a slot stile, and out on to the road at (256501).

Cross the road and proceed down a lane, going W. Proceed down the lane until a stile is reached on the left, follow the new reservoir path, it is quite easy to follow with short yellow painted poles, to Upperfield Farm at (254509).

Turn right: walk SW along this lane to a road junction at (258505) where you turn left and walk ENE to another road junction at (265508). Continue in the same direction to a road junction in 300 yards. Do not turn right, but go straight on N for 500 yards to (266513) where there is a good slot stile on the right. This takes you on to a path that goes N up to Rough Pitty Side. First, however, you walk close to the hedge on right for 200 yards or so, level going, to a slot made of two well-tooled gritstones. Next, 70 yards to a wooden slot stile; 50 yards to a gritstone slot stile, hedge still close on right; 40 yards to a hedge where there is no stile at all; 40 yards to a wooden slot stile. Depart, now, from the hedge on your right and make for hedge in front in which there is a short section of wall containing left at (267520).

To the right are Callow Hall, a farmhouse built in 1865 but containing odd bits of old masonry, but more especially a four-bay vaulted undercroft with chamfered rib-vaults springing from moulded corbels and carrying transverse arches, a mediaeval feature. To the left of the farm is a moat, which suggests an earlier building.

Go straight across the road and up a short drive to a gate with a wooden stile on its left and into a field; go uphill, hedge on the right, and up to a good gritstone slot stile; then follow the hedge on right to its far corner and another slot stile, and so out on to the road at (266525). Turn right and walk N along the road for 200 yards where there is on the left a sign and a gritstone stile through which you go into a field, walking NW to the far hedge which you accompany on your left steeply downhill to a stile in the corner; the view ahead is very impressive. Go into the next field to a gate in the facing fence, through this, no stile, then angle left NNW to a wooden step stile and on to a lane. Bear right on this, curve around to the left, then through a facing gate and out on to a road at (262532).

Cross the road to a gate, through this and walk up a track and out on to a road. This is Hopton; across the road is a peculiarly shaped end gable of a house, three sided. Turn left on the road past the almshouses founded by Sir Philip Gell in 1719 for two men and two women. They are one-storeyed with a central gable; the windows are mullioned; notice on the front an old shaped stone, much weathered (could this be from a monastery?). Nearby is the Tudor Cottage, a C.17 house. Walk W along the road passing the road on the right. Then look to the right: just past the cottage there is a dome-shaped structure looking like a giant beehive; this is a ice house belonging to Hopton Hall: if you look inside it be very careful: it is quite deep. On the left is the crinkle-crankle wall; built to catch the sun and protect fruit grown along side it. Just past this you can see Hopton Hall, the hall is Elizabethan but altered in the C.18.

This little village is the home of the Gells who have made a place for themselves in our history. Sir John Gell was a Parliamentary General in the Civil War. His doublet and relics are still there in the big house. Sir William Gell was a classical scholar; born in 1777; he travelled much in Italy and was a close friend of Byron, Moore and Sir Walter Scott. Sir Phillip Gell built the Via Gellia in 1791 as part of the Nottingham to Newhaven Turnpike. His main purpose was to allow him to connect his lead mines with his smelting-house and canal at Cromford. He gave us a road of scenic beauty, from a dale that was not negotiable.

Carry on the road past the Miner's Arms in Carsington then in 50 yards angle left, keeping on the road going now SSW down to the B.5035. Cross this and into a car park slightly to the left. Go out of the car park still going SSW on a shingle path that follows the reservoir. Past Shiningford Farm on your right, then curve around two large water inlets into a large car park at the reservoir visitor centre. Take the route to the right out of the car park, then go right on a road that eventually goes W to the Knockerdown Pub on the B.5035 at (233518).

Bear left and, in 50 yards at (232517) turn right and walk W, then NW towards Bradbourne along a rural road for about 1000 yards to a sign and a gritstone stile on your right at 222523. Netherton Hall is nearby. Go over the stile, walk NNW keeping close to the farm down to a wooden slot stile in a wire fence. Cross over a small brook, then walk N through a field, Crowtrees Farm away to the left, go up to a metal gate in hedge ahead and a slot with bars in it. Continue N through the middle of the next field, making for Clipstead Farm ahead which stands above you. Go for the top right corner near to which stands two trees under which is a slot in a fence; then bear right to walk NE, farm on left. It has unusual windows. The next stile is found in a hedge to the right of the orchard. Continue in the same direction for 40 yards across the next field to the far hedge where there is a wooden sleeper to walk on, and a slot stile. In the far hedge there is an open gateway to go through; in the next field walk N to the far hedge; difficult stile (few people seem to walk this section). In the next field, bear to the left NW, keeping some trees to your right, going uphill through a broken hedge, then in 30 yards N to a concreted drive at (224533). The dearth of good stiles in the last few fields is disappointing. Walk NNE along this drive to Brassington.

This spot has seen travellers pass through it from ancient times. The Romans came here; mediaeval routes came through here; in Stuart times, the King's Highway through Brassington placed burdens upon its inhabitants: in 1663, the Court Leet directed that "everie one everie yeare scowre their ditches adjoyneinge to the King's Highway before the first day of May or else forfeite 12d". The packhorse men passed through: a "Jagger Waye" is referred to in a document of 1592. When the turnpikes came to Derbyshire, one of the first sections to be completed, in 1738, was that from Shardlow to Brassington. Unfortunately, the Earl of Egmont travelling by private coach along this route from Derby to Brassington in 1744 found "all the road entirely bad". It took him 5 hours to cover the 16 miles, and was forced to spend the night at Brassington. Others found the road near the village to be "monstrous hilly"; and the Brassington turnpike was still being mentioned in the Derbyshire Mercury in 1780. By 1817, it was virtually abandoned, so the Hulland Ward to Brassington end of the turnpike was officially "disturnpiked" in 1827 for the reason that "this road led to no City Town or Place of importance".

Long before the Romans came here, people lived around and about, at Rainster rocks, and the Ripley Caves, and at Hoe Grange quarry and Harboro Rocks. Brassington has preserved more than its share of old houses: the Tudor House dated 1615 is one of several C.17 houses. There are others from the C.18 built in the vernacular style with square-section mullioned windows, e.g. West End Manor 1793.

St. James is undoubtedly a Norman Church however unimpressive it may look today. It has a fine S arcade, its asymmetrically one-stepped arches similar to those of Kirk Ireton seen earlier on this walk. The W tower is Norman. High up in its wall is a stone 12" by 10" carved with a quaint figure of a man with a hand on his heart. It could be the work of a Saxon sculptor. He is the oldest inhabitant of this historic village.

Walk past the church on your left, then turn right downhill and come to the B.5035. Go straight across the road to the Tudor House, at the side of it is a footpath sign. Go E through a farmyard, then out through a slot stile into a field through which you walk E uphill to the far hedge where you will find a slot stile in a short section of wall: go E steeply uphill through the next field with the wall on your left to the top corner, through a stile and turn right then walk slightly uphill first with the wall on your left then through a facing wall into the next field then uphill SE through outcrops of limestone up to the top, passing rocks of interesting shapes, then E downhill to a farm gate with a slot on its left at (238539). Cross the lane in to the next field and make for the right hand corner where there has been an untidy stile for it seems the last 100 years. Make for the left of the rocks facing you then first E over two broken walls, then SE down hill to a large gate with a stile on its right corner, go down a farm track which leads you first SE then E again in to Carsington. Carsington Pasture is the large expanse of grassland to the left with many rocky outcrops looking like cathedral towers.

Go through a stile at the left of a gate then walk down a lane with houses on your left to join the road we were on before to proceed E through Carsington. The Roman road called "The Street" from Little Chester in Derby to Buxton passed through here. The first reference to it is found in a document in 1415. Roman remains have been found in the parkland of Hopton Hall, and a field nearby is called Brough Meadow. From minute pieces of evidence, it can be deduced that this track was in continuous use over the centuries. For instance, a "Jaggers Waye" is referred to in a document of 1592. This may have been the track coming up from White House where two fields have always been called "Jaggerways".

The small church has a few survivals from the C.14, and there is on the E wall, a sundial which bears the words: "re-edified 1648". This is generally accepted to be a remarkable survival of the late Gothic style. Only the W end of the church was altered in C.19. Two interesting windows have been dedicated to the memory of the Gells; one of them has all the names of their women from 1452 to 1862; the other has the names of all the men from 1404 to 1926. An item in the register tells of Sarah Tissington who was born without arms but who

learned to knit with her feet, an art not unknown to some unfortunate people today. Walk along the road E through Carsington and Hopton for about a mile joining the main road; take care for 100 yards, past a road on the right, then at a point (268535) opposite a farm, go through a gate no stile into a field, walking SE, hedge close on left through three fields to the third field corner, gate no stile, through which you go into an area where you turn sharp right to another gate in 5 yards, on the left is an awkward stile, "always has been" negotiate this and out into a lane. Turn left and walk uphill for about 150 yards to a seat on your right and a good step stile on your left where the lane levels out. Walk now NE downhill through Yokecliffe Rake Mines, to a stile in a hedge; through this carry on through the next field to a stile at the left of a small building. Go through this into a narrow lane, which takes you around and between some new houses into a housing estate.

Turn left and walk through the houses, take the second left uphill then first right to a lane which takes you back in to the centre of Wirksworth and back to the start.

Checked New Year's Day 2003