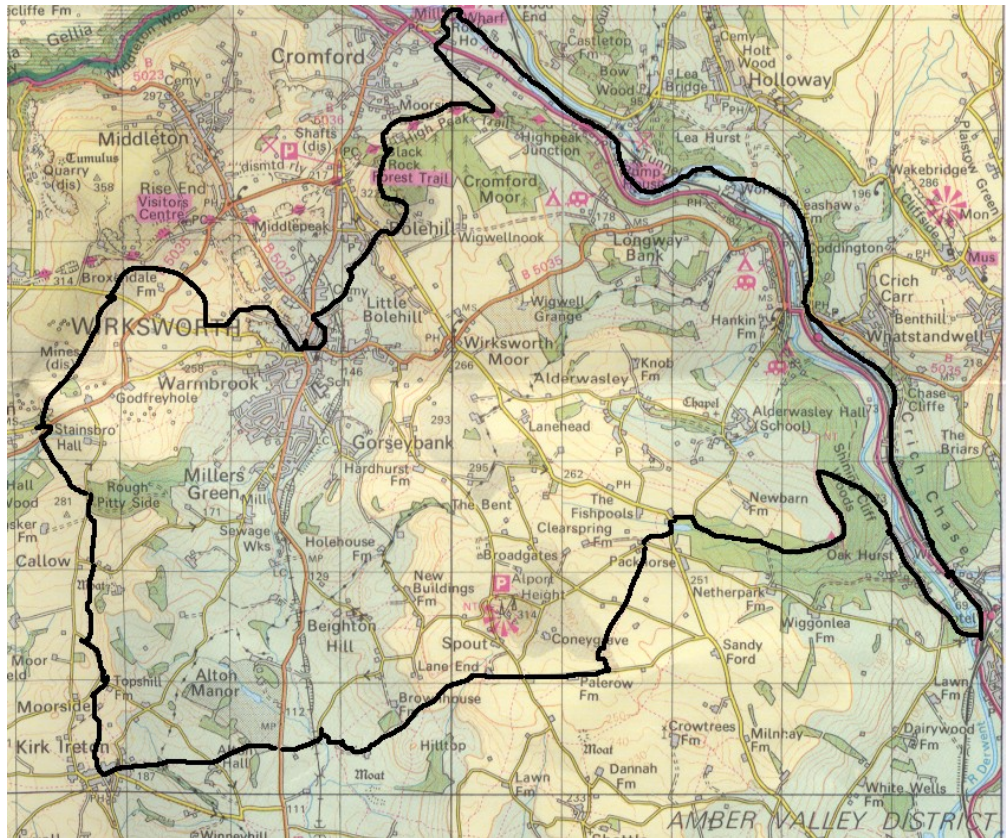


WALK. 20
CROMFORD. 20.
20 miles. 6 hours.
Map White Peak.



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Start at the official picnic area in Cromford where the canal starts (300570), though there is a free place to park at the side on Cromford Meadows. This spot, not without charm today, must have been quite beautiful when the Romans made a ford here; and not much changed when the Saxons settled in the valley, calling the place “Cruneford” (crooked ford), digging out lead as the Romans had done before them- a pig of lead was found in the churchyard, and a skeleton was dug up in Scarthin nick in 1795 with 60 small Roman coins in a good state of preservation at his head.

By the time of the Tudors, the ford had acquired a bridge not unlike the one we see today. Leland mentioned it, and what he saw must have been incorporated in the present structure, for the three arches on the downward side of the stream have the C.15 pointed arches, while those on the other side are round. In the C.15 a chapel was built in the bridge for traveller’s prayer; in the ruins that survive is a west doorway and cone window mullioned.

If this quiet spot had changed but little over the years, then all that came to an end when an ordinary-looking fellow came here, a former barber who could draw teeth, let blood and even make wigs. He could neither read nor write, but he brought with him an invention, a spinning frame that would revolutionise a cottage industry. He was Richard Arkwright; he had already met Jedediah Strutt of South Normanton who had invented the “Derby Rib Machine”, and now he was ready to start production.

He built his first factory in Cromford in 1771: that is the one just up the road from the start of the walk, a huge stone gaunt building, not unlike a castle, and designed partly to keep out the turbulent rioters, the like of which he had met before coming to Derbyshire. He

needed workers, and for these he built a village. The houses are still there (North Street). So is the Greyhound 1778 in the market place, an inn to be proud of, five bays, the three-bay centre being quoined and pedimented, the door-case Roman Doric. In 1783 he built Masson Mill just up river. For the villages he also built the corn-mill in 1780, a plain building with a Venetian window. It is still there. He gave them a church, too, much altered now; and, for himself, he built Willersley Castle, though not without incident: it suffered a disastrous fire in 1790 and Arkwright never lived in it. Whatever he did for his workers, he nevertheless expected them to work all hours round the clock in shifts for him. Bray writes that he employed “chiefly children. They work by turns day and night”. Most of them were orphans; they were housed in a terrace of three-storey brick dwellings quite near the mill where they spent fourteen hours a day, six days a week.

Soon, Arkwright, a rich man with mills in Lancashire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire, was able not only to buy the Manor of Cromford, but also to obtain for it the grant of a market, and to find that not being able to read or write did not prevent him from being invited to dine at Chatsworth, and even to lend money to the Duchess. In 1786, he must have felt that his success had reached its peak when he was invited to present an address of loyalty to King George III. Arkwright returned to Cromford a Knight, and in the following year, was invited to become the High Sheriff. He died in 1792 and was buried in the church he had built.

There is more to see in Cromford: in the woods opposite Masson Mill stands Masson House where Adam Wooley lived. In 1837, he gave to the British Museum more than 50 large bound volumes of manuscripts relating mainly to the history of Derbyshire. They form one of the most important records of early lead mining in existence. The railway station waiting room, and the Station Master’s house look very obviously French. They were built in 1860 by G.H. Stokes, Paxton’s son-in-law.

Leave the car park, go left past Arkwright’s Mill (on the right), go left up a short drive for a few yards to take a narrow jitty on the right, which takes you up to the A.6. Cross this: go up Intake Lane and continue uphill as far as the woods on the right (303562). Take a path to the right and walk uphill through the woods to a stile, over this into a field. Walk uphill with the high wall on the left, good views of Matlock Bath to the NE. In 400 yards you come to another wood close to the High Peak Trail, which you enter by a good stile. Follow the good track until you come to a narrow road, turn right and walk downhill, houses on the right, turn left on to a narrow road which comes up from Cromford and walk to Black Rock Cottages. Go right here through an iron gate and go downhill with wall on right. Good views. This brings you to a corner with a stile, which takes you to some wasteland, go uphill on a wide track then curve left up some steps to the trail at Black Rocks.

Go straight across the trail, then through gap in wall and straight uphill, going E with Black Rocks showing off their climbs away to the left. Go up fairly steeply, keeping somewhat to the left, then, at the top, going right to walk SW then S with wooden fence on the right and striking views to the W. pass a trig point at (294553). Carsington Reservoir can be seen from here: descend to two stiles? (I suppose two people could get over at the same time), into a field; go S for 50 yards, then into another field. Go SW to descend very steeply through gorse bushes down to a road at (294551).

Turn right, in 100 yards go left into a narrow jitty, thread your way through houses first right then left past the Bolehill Methodist Chapel and Bolehill Institute dated 1889 still proudly showing its inscribed foundation stones. The packhorse men went this way up these steep slopes, in fact a neighbouring hamlet is called Packhorse. Later a turnpike passed through here. Continue down in the same direction on a narrow lane, then curve left to walk on a good narrow track with fence either side to a gritstone stile, and then through the middle of a field with the very English view of a squat C.14 tower and tiny spire of Wirksworth Church in the distance. Follow the track through another field down to a gate with a slot stile on its left. Go

through this over the railway line and go uphill with the churchyard on the right and a retail shop on the left, and so up to the road at (288543).

Turn left on the main road then immediately go left down a road for a few yards then take the narrow road to the right going uphill through houses. At the top notice the Moot Hall, on the right, rebuilt in 1814. It is the place where the Barmote is held and where is kept a massive brass dish used for measuring lead. An inscription on it states that it “was made the iijj day of October iijj year of the reigne of Kyng Henry VIII (1513).....This dish to remayne in the Moote Hall at Wyrkysworth hanging by a cheyne....” Lead has been mined here since the days of the Romans who probably worked the surface veins. Deeper workings came later, though some existing workings are of great antiquity. It is said that the lead in the coffin for the body of St Guthlac came from here. In the C.9, the lead mines here belonged to the Abbey of Repton, and it seems that they produced a great deal of lead. Repton Abbey was destroyed by the Danes in 874, so the Manor of Wirksworth and its lead mines came in to the hands of the Danish King Ceolwulf. The doomsday survey of 1086 lists 7 lead works in Derbyshire; three of these were in Wirksworth. At one time, they all were leased to William Peveril, the illegitimate son of William the Conqueror.

The usual process of smelting the lead was to build a crude wall of stones on hilltops so that the prevailing wind could force a draught through a channel to the interior of the bole, consequently, the name “Bole Hill” is found quite frequently, one of them being on the walk (292550).

Carry on past the Moot Hall through a car park then right into Wirksworth market place. There is a long list of ancient buildings to see here, but, undoubtedly, the foremost is the church of St Mary, built to an ambitious design in the shape of a cross. The tower is C.13 below and C.14 above; it has a frieze instead of battlements and a lead spike instead of the usual spire. One need not be unduly lugubrious to admire the tombs and monuments in the church. Here, there is a fine group of C.16 monuments: brass portraits of the Blackwalls 1525; an incised alabaster slab to Ralph Gell, his wives and children of Hopton Hall. There is a tomb chest of Anthony Gell 1583, a good alabaster effigy. He founded the almshouses and grammar school. There is an inscription to Sir John Gell, the Parliamentarian General, and a monument to Sir Philip, the last baronet who died in 1719. The best monument in the church, however, is a tomb chest of Anthony Lowe 1555, which is completely in the Renaissance style. The chest has a fine panel of kneeling children, and an effigy in armour and helmet, a skull under his feet. There are short fluted Corinthian pilasters and a cornice. Anthony Lowe’s home was Alderwasley: he served four monarchs.

In the churchyard lies an unmarked grave visited by many. In it: lies Elizabeth Evans, George Eliot’s Aunt. It is claimed that Wirksworth was the Snowfield of “Adam Bede”, and the existing Methodist Chapel was that in which Elizabeth preached. The cottage where Elizabeth and her husband Samuel lived still stands a mile south of the town.

But the oldest and most famous relic of the past is the Anglo-Saxon coffin lid of the C.8. It was found near the altar, upside down over a vault in which lay a perfect skeleton, perhaps that of an important saint. It has 40 figures, all from the life of Christ, carved on it. In addition to this treasure, there are a large number of Norman architectural fragments embedded in the walls. One of them is a miner with a pick and bucket. They are regarded as important evidence of the former church on this site.

Cross over the road from the Red Lion pub, and go up a road round the corner to the right from the fine Symonds House No 15 that is Georgian with five bays and a striking pediment doorway. There are several fine buildings in this area, one of them being the registered office of the Derbyshire Buildings Trust. In about 40 yards from No.15, go left at a junction and proceed up between old houses, one of them bearing a plaque stating that it had been restored by the Derbyshire Historical House Trust. The road climbs all the time, passing an immense quarry close to the left, and eventually comes to a sharp U-turn to the right. The quarry has extended here and so old maps may not show the new path. So now leave the lane at

this point to go S along a narrow rough lane to curve through a tunnel which goes under a quarry road, a deep quarry to the left and the right; go up and curve to the right, over a stile, then walk E along a path which runs at the side of a road on the left, through several fields, then when a hedge stops progress, turn right to walk N with hedge on the left, quarry on right. Carry on through a stile then uphill to a stile then angle left NW through two stiles and out on to a road. Cross the road, go WNW through two fields then just before you reach a piece of waste land, turn left to go SSW to a stile in the facing wall, then angle right through a stile in the right wall then over another facing stile with the wall close to the left, and out on to a road at (269545). Look behind to see Middleton Top Engine House; this housed a steam engine that used to pull the wagons up Middleton Incline that was too steep for locomotives to go up

Cross the road, look for a stile in the wall, walk SSW with the wall on the left to the facing wall, over this then look for a stile on the right; still in the same direction through a stile in the facing wall, then S to another facing wall going down into old lead mining workings with hillocks and depressions all over the place, thread your way through these first S then SSW to a facing wall, through a lane then SW with trees to the left to a facing wall then S through two stiles in the wall corners then down the next field to the right hand corner and out on to a road at ((263534).

Bear right on the Hopton road for 100 yards, then opposite a house with a multi-sided end take the wide gravel track to the left for 50 yards to a five bar gate and out on to the road. Cross with care (vehicles go very fast here). Through another gate then take the wide gravel track down then up with Carsington Reservoir to the right. This was built to take water from the River Derwent at times of plenty along a tunnel built from Ambergate, and return it in times of scarcity to the Derwent to be used at Long Eaton and surrounding places. Look for a wooden stile to the left in some bushes, through this and walk through the field SE to a farm gate on the right, through this or over because the farmer mostly ties the gate tightly with nylon string, then uphill SSE to a facing stile hidden by a hedge, through this then very steeply uphill with wall on left to the top, then angle right along the top going nearer to the wood on the right. All the time the stile is near the corner and leads out on to the road. Before entering the road look back especially in autumn, to see a marvellous view of Hopton Carsington and the meadows.

Go right on the road; walk S uphill; Rough Pitty Side Woods to the left in 200 yards, where the trees end at a metal gate, go through a slot made by two carved, rounded gritstones into a field, walking SSE close to the hedge on the left which brings you to another pair of carved gritstones and access into a field, walking in the same direction downhill to a gate and slot on its right and out on to a road at (267520). This little area is called Callow. Cross the road to a gritstone slot stile on the right of a gate, then go downhill through a field. Away to the left is Callow Hall with its moat; it was built in 1865 but contains odd bits of Gothic masonry, one feature being a vaulted undercroft of four bays with chamfered ribbed vaults dating from the C.13. There is also a mediaeval fireplace supported on columns with cushion capitals. The remains of a moat lie to the west. What a fascinating piece of history! What is their story? Will it ever be solved?

Continue downhill then uphill to a short piece of wall in a hedge where you will find a gritstone stile through which you enter a field, cutting the left corner and going up to the far corner to a poor wooden slot stile in a hedge. Keep close to the hedge on left, and, in 50 yards, come to a hole in a hedge, no stile at all, but a good one in the next 50 yards, keep going S through a poor stile then a good gritstone then 150 yards to reach a road at (266513).

Turn left and walk SW on this Halfmoon Lane for 600 yards, past a lane to the left marked Idridgehay, and at a gate at (266508); on the left there is a poor gritstone slot stile through which you go into a field walking SE close to the hedge on the left. This area is designated Moorside on the map. Go downhill, a high holly tree on the left, to a slot stile, then turn right and walk SW along a lane for 20 yards, then turn left through another high quality gritstone slot stile, and down some steps into a field. Go S through the middle of this field to a

stile ahead made of wooden pieces against a low wall, and this brings you into a field close to another high holly hedge on your right until you come up to a pair of gritstones showing excellent craftsmanship in carving- all this for our guidance. The new wooden stiles cannot equal these; neither will they last as long. From this stile, walk with hedge on left to a stile in a corner in front where a few pieces of wood stand near to a pair of gritstones. Go another 50 yards with the hedge close on the left when you will come to a neat pair of gritstones through which you go to your left in to a field used for football. Keep close to the hedge on your right which brings you up to a gate with a slot on its left, and so down to the road in Kirk Ireton at (267502).

Turn left and walk downhill past the C.18 gateway to the church whose interesting and irregular group of buildings shows that additions were made in different periods. This quaint church was begun by the Normans. They built the tower, which has been much altered since; it is embattled, low, broad and unbuttressed. They built the S doorway through which you enter the church, and the S arcade with circular piers and lopsided arches. In the fine C.14 chancel, there is a doorway, not six feet high, with a slender pillar on each side and flowers in the moulding of the pointed arch.

This is considered to be an interesting stone-built village. Church farm is C.17 with tiny mullioned windows. Buxton Hall Farm has a cruck truss. The Barley Mow Inn of 1683 is a good example of the late Derbyshire Jacobean style, with gabled dormers with ball finials, mullioned windows, and a door, which retains its slightly arched head. Where the road goes to the left around the church, go straight across the road and down a lane between buildings to a poor slot and bar stile in a fence, and down through a field, the side of a towering hedge, walking NNE down to a brook. You can go straight ahead into a field, but it is wise to walk to the right with hedge on left to a little footbridge in 20 yards, then go left up a bank to two good gritstones, then into the field and walk in the same direction as before towards Alton Hall and Alton Farm (278503) which is a C.17 building, L-shaped, each wing having an arched doorway. Turn right at the stile and road, and, in 50 yards, turn left and go through farmyard 20 yards to a stile made simply of a stone for a step and a pole for a handhold in a fence. Go 40 yards E to another similar stile in a fence (not on map), then continue up to trees and down the other side to a farm gate with a slot stile on its left. Go E down through trees to an unusual slot stile in the estate fence below: a metal V made of iron rod. Enter a field, Alton Manor away to the left, a house built in the Elizabethan style in 1846 by Sir G. C. Scott, and go E to a good slot stile made of two well-made gritstones and out on to the road junction at (284504)

Cross the road and walk E down Barnsley Lane, over the railway, then, in 100 yards, turn right up a farm drive that takes you up to Norman Hill Farm at (292503). Go left through the farmyard, walking between the rusting remains of many old cars to a farm gate, no stile, two railway vans to the right, and the farm to the right of that. Go straight uphill NE through the middle of the field to a farm gate, then continue uphill in the same direction to the right of Brownhouse Wood; a steep pull up. In the fence at the top go in to the next field continue in the same direction NE and walk through field with hedge on right to a gritstone stile in the corner; they lean to the right so you have to lean appropriately to get through. Continue in the same direction for 200 yards where there is a disused slot stile, then with a massive holly hedge on your right, go round to the right then E and down to a small stream. On the other side of the stream, on the right, there is a gritstone slot stile, unusually wide, through which you enter a field and climb uphill fairly steeply. Keep close to the hedge on the right until it brings you to a farm gate with a slot stile on its right; then in the same direction, wall on right continue to a slot stile made by two massive grits. In 200 yards, you come to a small slot stile with wooden door and so out on to the road at (306510).

Cross the road and walk E along Palerow Lane for 750 yards to a copse of trees on your right. Opposite this on the left, is a good gritstone slot stile in a wall. Go through this and walk NNW to what is marked on the map as Coneygrave Hillock. Go through a gritstone slot stile in a wall and enter a narrow area, wider than a lane, going N for a short distance, the area

widening, and with wall on right turning away through a right angle. Turn with it and walk NE to the opposite wall where there is a gate near the far corner, and access through a slot stile at the side of it. Ten yards on there is another gate with slot stile from which you walk NNE across this big field to a stile near the far right corner. In the next field, cut the left corner and make for a stile made out of two large gritstones; then go forward down to a wall containing two gritstones and out on to a road at (316517). Cross the road to a gritstone slot stile: enter a field and walk close to a wall on the left, level going through a long narrow field down to yet another gritstone stile from which you go through an open field keeping in the same direction to the far corner ahead where there is a gritstone slot stile (not quite as far as the corner). Walk N now, keeping close to the wall on your left until you arrive at a farm gate: your gritstone slot stile is on its left, and out on to a road at (317522).

Cross the road to a small slot stile in the opposite wall and enter a field turning right to cut the right corner and make for a gritstone stile. Continue NNE through a field to a slot stile in the middle of the far wall, then on to a stile that brings you out on to a road at (319523). Turn left: and walk 150 yards N to a road junction: turn right and walk 200 yards E to a gate on the right and a good wooden step stile over which you go in to a wooded area. There is a pond nearby; avoid this by walking E through trees, and keep roughly E on high level ground for about 750 yards until you come to a high wall on the left and a wide slot stile in fence. There is a wide track, here, which leads away down S through the trees. Ignore this, and continue on the high level track that follows a wall close to the left. There are several ways of traversing Shining Cliff Woods; this one keeps to the top as far as possible.

In about 650 yards just past the Youth Hostel on the right, the path turns left N to follow the wall for 600 yards until a stile is reached in the left wall at (333529). From this point a good path goes W to Alderwasley, but do not take it, instead, go right down a track going E through the trees until you come to a wide track going N to S. Originally the walk went north through the woods to a mill and caravan site, but access is disputed, so turn right and walk S through the old Wire Works, up a track on to a road which you take with trees either side, down to a road at (347514). Turn left over the River Derwent passing the cricket field on the left and a fine built church on the right. Turn left on to the A.6. Walk past the Hotel on left, over the River Amber then in 100 yards cross the road and turn right up a narrow lane under a railway bridge and on to the Cromford Canal. The canal was built by William Jessop a local businessman with the help of Benjamin Outram from Butterley Ironworks. He was encouraged by Richard Arkwright. He needed to get his goods out of the area, a costly job to send packhorses across the hills, but he eventually fell out with the builders. In 1789 the authorization went through parliament, the canal was to be 14 miles long, from Cromford to Codnor Park where it would join up with the Erewash Canal. It was to have 3 aqueducts and 4 tunnels, (the one at Butterley was 2 miles long), and fourteen locks all in the Butterley area. In 1794 the canal opened; in 1797 the first passenger boat service operated from Cromford to Nottingham 38 miles, costing 25p first class and 15p second class. In 1900 the Butterley tunnel collapsed, so the canal became uneconomical, and the tunnel too costly to repair. In 1937 the canal closed. Turn left and walk along the canal for a mile and half to Whatstandwell at (330543).

The name takes us back to 1390 when a John de Stepul (there is a place of that name N of Wirksworth) agreed with the Abbot of Darley Dale to build a bridge over the River Derwent near to a house belonging to Darley Abbey. Its tenant was Walter Stonewell whose name was corrupted to Whatstandwell

Carry on N on the canal. In 400 yards the canal enters a tunnel, then in another 400 yards the canal goes over the Derwent by means of an aqueduct built by William Jessop in 1792, ashlar faced, a single span of some beauty. It is interesting to remember that it was rebuilt at the engineer's own expense after the first one collapsed. In a further 300 yards, cross the canal by a wooden bridge. In 1802 a branch was built from here through Lea Wood to what is now Smedley's Mills; it was built by Peter Nightingale the father of Florence to get his goods

cheaply to the rest of the country. He owned the mill that is now Smedleys. Walk with the canal on the left. Note on the right the pump house, a fine piece of Victorian architecture, built in rough stone with pediments and voissoired-arched windows. The tall, elegant chimney has a cast-iron capping. The purpose of the pump house was to lift water from the river to the canal in times of drought; they used a notable beam engine of 1849 made by Graham and Co., Milton Iron Works. It may be seen in operation by a steam piston operating a pump by means of a large beam. (It is well worth a visit, because this type of engine helped to build prosperity in Victorian times). A little further up on the opposite side are the Wharf Sheds, formally the railway workshops. Nearby is the start of the High Peak Trail now used as a walking pathway but was the start of a railway that took goods to and from the canal to Ashbourne and Buxton, and the farms and quarries on the way. The first section was too steep for locomotives so the wagons had to be pulled up the incline by a steam-driven haulage by a rope, the wheelpit and catchpit to stop runaways are still there. Continue on the canal for 800 yards and so back to the start.

CHECKED 10 March 2003