

As the lead mines became exhausted, quarrying became the main industry of the town. For over a hundred years stone was extracted, almost up to the centre of the town. Today, most of the quarries have closed but are being used in imaginative ways, for example the National Stone Centre and Stoney Wood.

The area around the Parish Church of St. Mary's is well worth exploring, with the Elizabethan Gell Almshouses and the former grammar school perfectly complementing the ancient church.

As well as many historic buildings, Wirksworth also boasts two famous ancient traditions. Spring Bank Holiday sees the town bedecked by well dressings - the art of constructing beautiful floral designs on a clay base. In September the ceremony of 'clipping' is performed by the parishoners who link hands and circle the church.

Nestling perfectly in a natural basin at the southern tip of the Derbyshire hills, Wirksworth is a small town with a rich history and proud inhabitants. Wirksworth was once one of the most important towns in Derbyshire, being the centre of the lead mining industry since at least Roman times. The Barmote Court, which still meets today in the Moot Hall, deals with lead mining matters as it has done since at least 1288 when, even then, it was described as being of great antiquity.



Greenhill



Well dressings take place in May

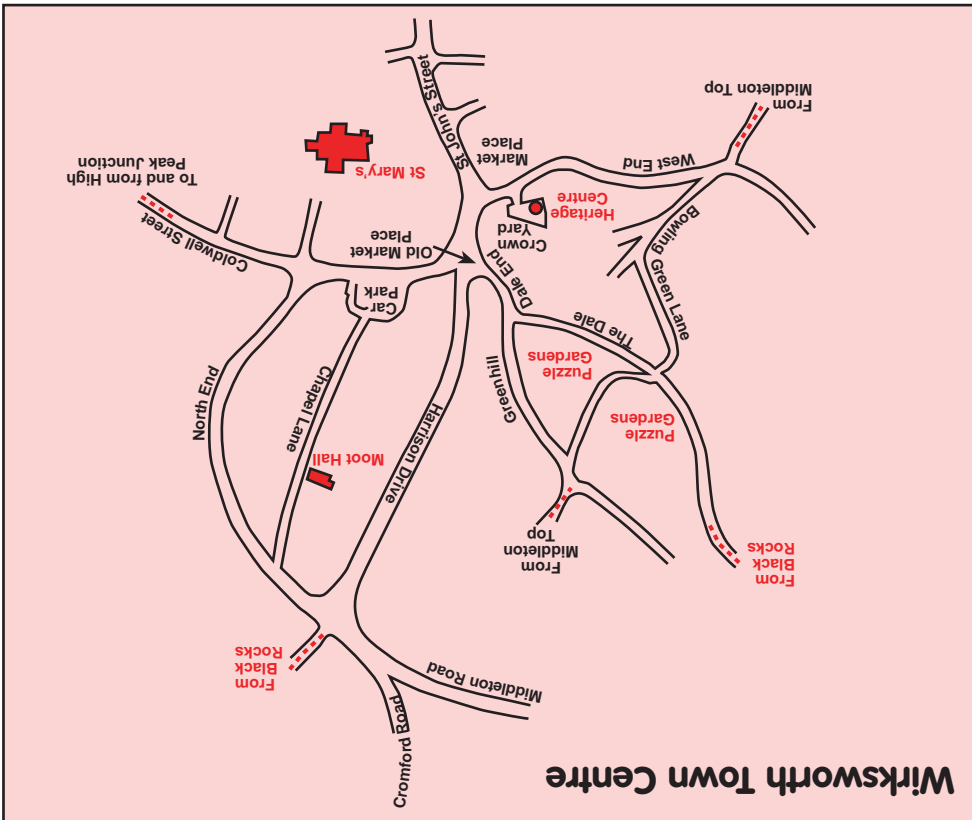
A Short History of Wirksworth



Moot Hall



Church of St. Mary's



Walking around Wirksworth

The area around Wirksworth is criss-crossed by many little-known footpaths passing through some of the most beautiful countryside in Derbyshire. This series of four circular routes is designed to introduce the casual and experienced walker to the delights of both lovely countryside and the historic town of Wirksworth.

This walk from Black Rocks is about 8 kms (5 miles) long through hilly countryside with some superb panoramic views over several counties when visibility is clear.

The route should be easy to follow, but your enjoyment would be enhanced by carrying the Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure Map 24.

Whilst on the walk please remember to respect the countryside, wildlife and farmland. Stay on the footpaths, which have been waymarked in places to help you - look for a yellow arrow on a green disc bearing the legend 'Circuit Walks Around Wirksworth'. Keep all dogs on a lead.



Millstones in former quarry near Barrel Edge

Finding Out More

More information about this wonderful old town can be obtained from the Heritage Centre situated in Crown Yard just off the Market Place, phone 01629 825226.

Any Problems?

Please report any problems with this walk by calling 01629 823204 or via our website www.derbyshire.gov.uk

Follow the Countryside Code

- Enjoy the countryside, respect its life & work.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Leave all gates as you find them.
- Keep your dogs under close control.
- Keep to public paths across farmland.
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences & walls.
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Take your litter home.
- Help to keep all water clean.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Make no unnecessary noise.
- No cycling on public footpaths.

Contacts

If you need to find out more please contact 01629 823204 (Middleton Top) or 01629 822831 (High Peak Junction), alternatively Call Derbyshire on 08456 058 058.

If you have difficulty in reading this leaflet it is available in other formats. Please contact us for more details.



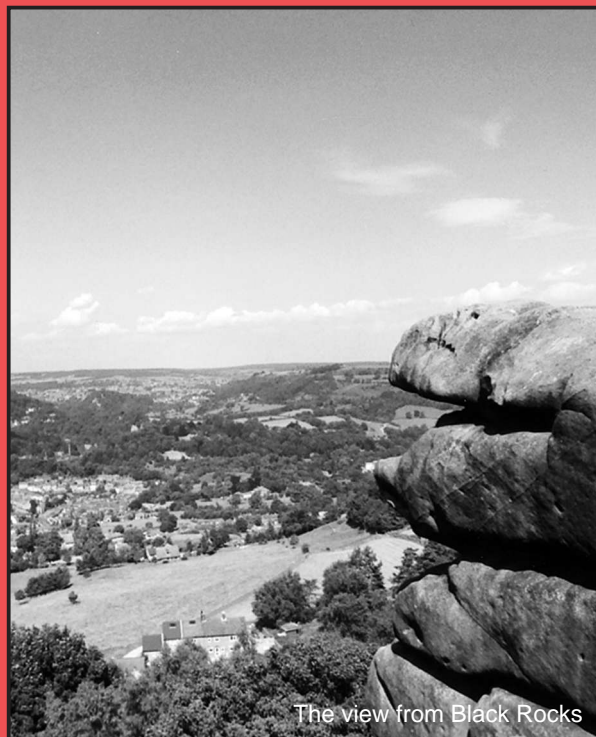
Designed and produced by Derbyshire County Council, Environmental Services Dept., Countryside Service, County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG.

Circuit Walks Around Wirksworth

3

Black Rocks - Wirksworth - Black Rocks

8 km (5 miles)



The view from Black Rocks



Improving life for local people

Black Rocks - Wirksworth - Black Rocks



The view from Black Rocks of Dean Hollow Quarry

From Black Rocks to Wirksworth

The walk begins from Black Rocks top car park, where you must find the farm gate in the top left corner. Cross over the High Peak Trail (formerly the Cromford and High Peak Railway) and take the track straight in front which curls up the hillside to the right.

Keep straight on up the hill, keeping the impressive Black Rocks to your left (if you are feeling energetic a diversion to the top of the rocks is rewarded by magnificent views, but please be careful of the sheer drops). Carry on up the track which, as it enters the woodland, curves round to the left to become a path. Go straight across the flat area and find a flight of steps cut into the hillside.

Go up the steps taking the time to look over the fence to your right. Here, now overgrown with trees, is an old quarry where stone was taken out for, among other things, millstones - one or two can still be found on the quarry floor.

At the top of the steps take the path following the fence line leading off to the right. The path heads upwards eventually leading to the trig. point at the summit of Barrel Edge. The name has nothing to do with beer, but is the local pronunciation of Barehill Edge.

The views from the trig. point are excellent. Below you lies your halfway destination - the delightful old town of Wirksworth.

From here take the well defined path along the edge which soon begins the long descent into Wirksworth. Upon reaching the outer edge of the woodland the path goes diagonally left across a small field and then straight down the next to the Bolehill Road (in this area the name bole is given to an area where lead was smelted).

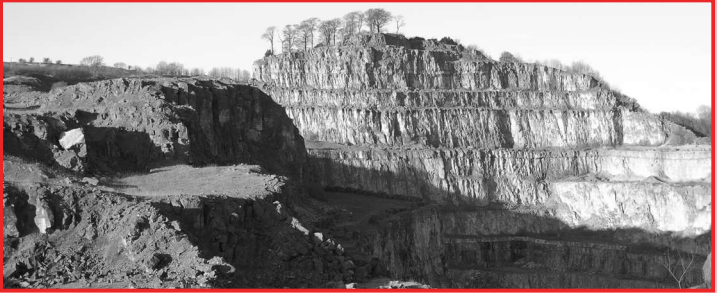
Very carefully cross the road and then turn right down the hill for about 75 metres where a small gap in the wall can be found. Descend a few steps, go through a stone stile and follow the path steeply downhill passing to the right of the short row of terraced houses, continuing down until a wider lane is met. Keep on downhill taking the most obvious route passing Bolehill Methodist Church on your right, using the handrail if conditions are slippery under foot.

At the junction cross the road and go down the track opposite, past the red brick Bolehill Institute. Follow this track as it turns into a fenced path. Continue to follow the path as it curves to the left past some farm buildings on the right until it finally emerges into a field. Here the path cuts diagonally

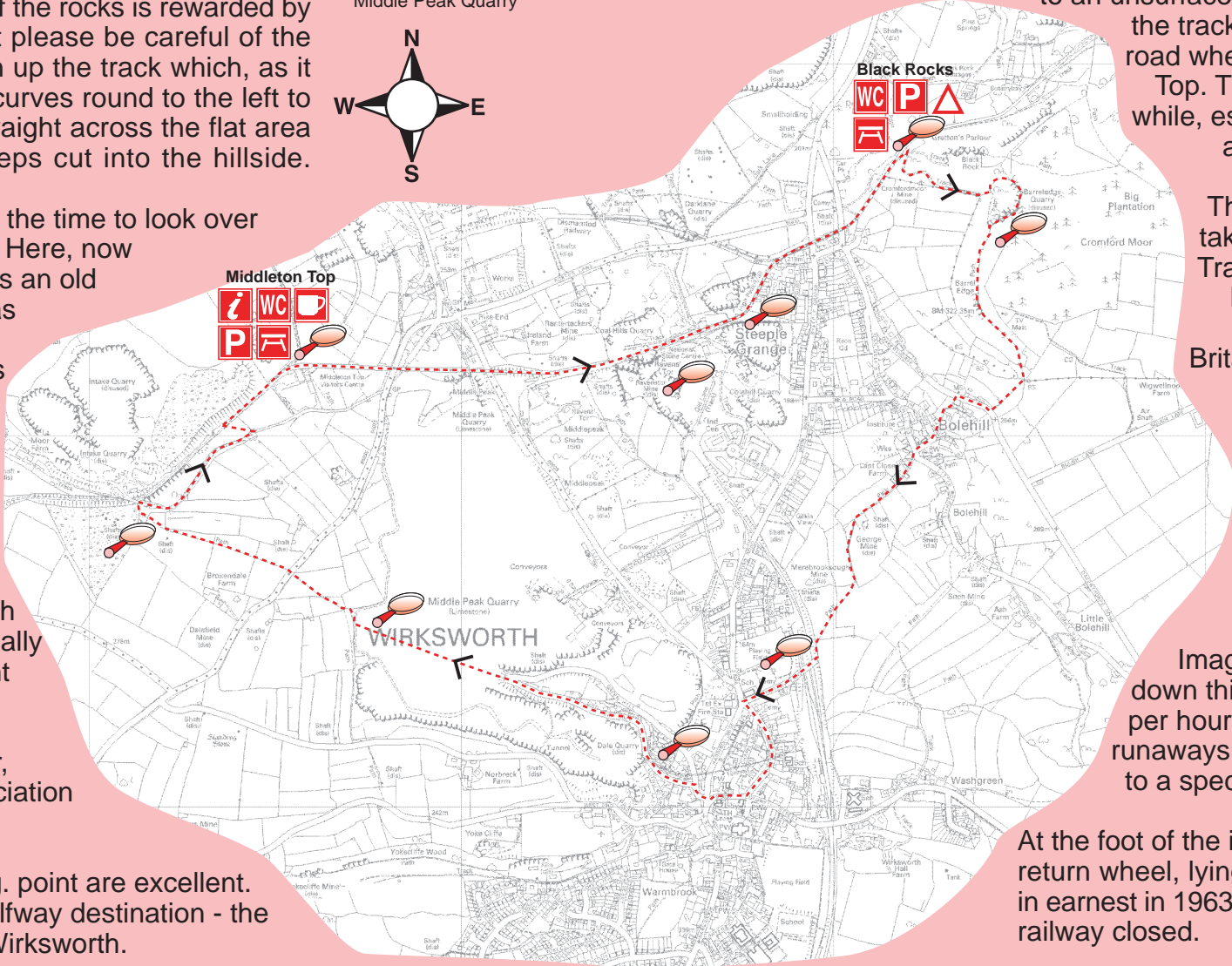
right on a well defined path across two fields and then left for a short way until the bridge over the old railway is reached. This was a Midland Railway branch line which in its later years carried solely limestone from Middle Peak Quarry (you will encounter this again later).

Into Wirksworth town

A short walk over the bridge and uphill will take you past the factory shop and to the main road. Turn left here, but do not take the larger road. Instead walk down the smaller street - North End - and then turn right after about 275 metres at the next main junction. The town centre is now very close with the old market place lying uphill straight in front of you, identified by one of the distinctive blue and white street name signs located above the shop fronts. This area was the original market place, which was much bigger before the main Cromford road was driven through.



Middle Peak Quarry



- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|----------------------|
| | Information | | Walk |
| | Toilets | | Start/finish |
| | Refreshments/Snacks | | Direction of walk |
| | Parking | | Features of interest |
| | Picnic site | | |

Returning to Black Rocks

When you are ready to leave the town find Dale End, which is situated at the end of the old Market Place close to the bus shelter. The entrance is little more than a gap between the buildings and is identified again by a distinctive blue and white street name sign well above head height. Go up here for a few metres, then turn left up The Dale (the road straight ahead is Greenhill - this whole area is a maze of houses and alleyways known locally as Puzzle Gardens - a nightmare for postmen).

Follow the road up The Dale until all the houses are left behind. At what at first appears to be the top of the road, go up the steep steps straight in front of you and through a kissing gate. Now follow the

fenced path along its length. You are now on a spectacular restored public footpath which gives you some idea just how much stone has been extracted from the area. Take time to look to your right for a fantastic view of the impressive 420 metre high cliff face which has been created by the quarrying activity - you are surrounded by Middle Peak Quarry, which in turn is surrounded by lovely countryside.

The path now turns right at the gate across the field to a 'knee-trapper' or 'granny-stopper' stile - the other apt name for these stiles in the dry stone wall. From here go diagonally across two more fields up to the road.

Cross the road very carefully to the stile opposite. Straight ahead now over two fields until you emerge into an area scarred by the characteristic humps and hollows of 'T'owd Man' - the Derbyshire lead miner who once extensively worked here. Keeping this disturbed ground to your left look ahead to find a stone stile which has no purpose as the wall to the left has been removed.

The final stile of this walk lies straight ahead. Go over this, up the steps and up a short slope to an unsurfaced road. Turn right and follow the track until it becomes a surfaced road where you turn left to Middleton Top. This is a good place to stop a while, especially if the Visitor Centre and Engine House are open.

The last part of your walk now takes you along the High Peak Trail, which is built on the track bed of the old Cromford and High Peak Railway - one of Britain's most unusual railways.

The Engine House contains the only surviving beam engine which was built to raise and lower wagons up and down the incline. You must now walk down the incline which is 647 metres long at a 12% gradient.

Imagine wagons passing up and down this hill at a sedate eight miles per hour, unless of course they were runaways, which travelled at 140 mph to a spectacular doom at the bottom.

At the foot of the incline you will find the cable return wheel, lying in its pit, which last turned in earnest in 1963 and finally in 1967 when the railway closed.

Pass on now above the National Stone Centre which is open all year (an ideal place for a cuppa and to explore the Story of Stone Exhibition). Around the bend on your left is the Steeple Grange Light Railway - well worth a ride if it is open.

From here follow the trail straight ahead. There are excellent views to the north and east, including the imposing Black Rocks towering above your starting/ finishing point.



Steeple Grange Light Railway