

**WALKING IN  
THE PEAK DISTRICT –  
WHITE PEAK EAST**



#### About the Author

Paul Besley has spent a lifetime walking through the dales and villages of the White Peak. His interest is in the human interaction with landscape. His love of the ancient – whether it is a Neolithic burial chamber, a Norman church or the medieval ridge and furrow landscape – has provided him with thousands of hours of enjoyment. His desire to pass on his experiences has always informed his writing.

He is a regular contributor to magazines. His writing has taken him across Britain and across the world, working on varied subject matter. He is a team member of Mountain Rescue and a dog handler in Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England with his Border collie. He lives in Sheffield with his wife, metalsmith Alison Counsell, and their three dogs Olly, Monty and search dog Scout.

#### Other Cicerone guides by the author

*Dark Peak Walks*

## WALKING IN THE PEAK DISTRICT – WHITE PEAK EAST

42 WALKS IN DERBYSHIRE INCLUDING BAKEWELL,  
MATLOCK AND STONEY MIDDLETON

by Paul Besley

**CICERONE**

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*In memory of Daniel Sells*

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*Front cover:* Descending a miners path into Bonsall (Walk 24)

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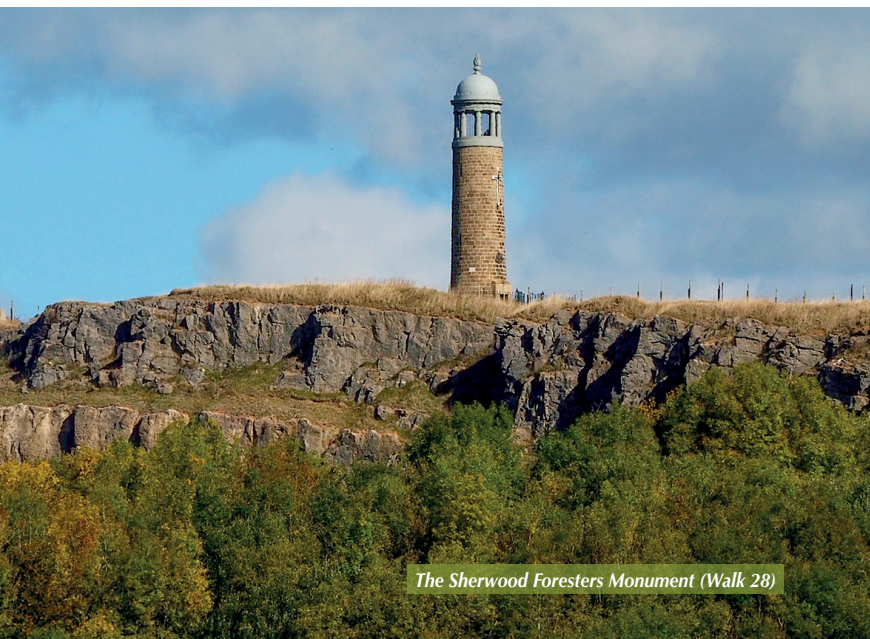
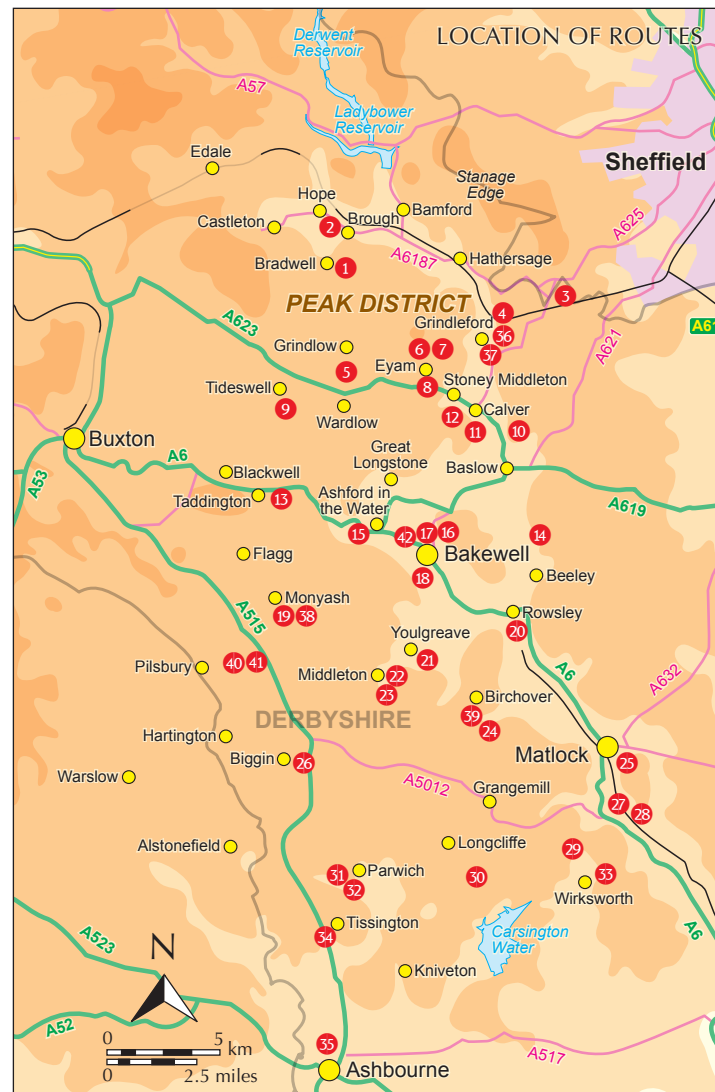
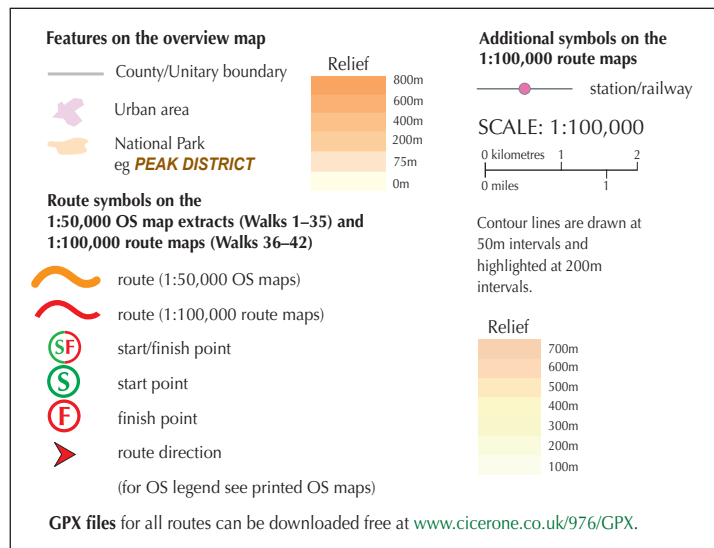
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Finally, and most importantly, my family: Alison Counsell, my partner of many years, and our dogs Olly, Monty and Scout. You all made it so enjoyable.





The Sherwood Foresters Monument (Walk 28)





*The Cork Stone, Stanton Moor (Walk 20)*

## INTRODUCTION



*Always take time to rest and enjoy the view (Walk 21)*

Walking in the White Peak landscape is a restorative experience. The gentle rolling hills, the long sinewy dales, the green grass and white limestone flecked with the vivid eye-catching primary colours of wildflowers – all fill the mind and body with a sense of wellbeing. Time is the essence of this landscape and it should be spent wisely and slowly in order to capture all it has to offer.

Although formed during the carboniferous period, the human hand is prominent in the White Peak. The

green pastures, so essential for the sheep that inhabit much of the countryside, are man-made; their development dependent on the many limekilns that still dot this landscape. The limestone walls that are so evocative of the area tell a story of continuing development of common lands for private use. The green lanes crossing the plateau and dales show how humans moved between the isolated villages and areas of work.

White Peak villages are beautiful. These small isolated communities are



## GEOLOGY

little changed even with the arrival of the car. Many have churches that date back to Norman times, often retaining original medieval features. These are wonderful buildings, full of local and national history and are a delight to visit on a hot summer day.

If there is one piece of advice I would give walkers it is to take your time. This is not a landscape of the arduous epic. It is a land of mystery, story and magic. I once led a group of people into a White Peak dale after snow had fallen all night long. As the morning winter sun tried to spread a little warmth, we stood at the entrance to a long, narrow valley. The only sound to be heard was the crystal-clear stream babbling along the floor of the dale. The landscape was covered in a thick blanket of snow as though some magical hand had folded bright white meringue across the dale. A single robin worked its way over the peaks and folds, its red breast vivid against the pure white landscape. All was quiet and, perhaps because of that, we entered the dale in silence, continuing our solitary contemplations as we moved through this real-life Narnia. At the end we emerged onto a road so deep in snow the hedgerow had all but vanished. We never said a word but, as we looked at one another, we knew we had just experienced something personal, something magical, and that it was ours alone to keep. I hope you find your own special corner of this magical landscape.

The Peak is formed of a gritstone cap, interspersed with shale, mudstone and coal, that sits above a limestone bed. These two geological features form the two areas commonly known as the Dark Peak and the White Peak. The Dark Peak landscape of gritstone is often joined by peat moor and bog, particularly on the northern and eastern fringes, but outcrops of gritstone do appear as far south as Matlock. Walkers in the White Peak will experience a limestone landscape laid down around 360 million years ago when the area was covered in a tropical sea. The sea creatures that lived and died formed the limestone bed that is almost 2000 metres thick in some areas. Over the millions of years that followed, the White Peak developed two distinct types of landscape: the limestone plateau and the limestone dales.

One of the three main types of limestone found in the Peak District, 'shelf limestone' has the greatest depth in all the area. The rolling landscape of rounded hills and convex slopes running down to rivers at the bottom of the many dales is indicative of this type of geological structure. The second type, 'basin limestone', can be found in the southern area of the Peak. It is much darker in colour and has significantly less depth than shelf limestone. Both shelf and basin limestone are subject to weathering and erosion, which are often seen today in the deep pitting on the surface of the rock. The final type is

'reef limestone', formed from settlement within the tropical ocean. This limestone holds the fossil record of billions of creatures and has escaped much of the erosion seen in the previous types. It is very hard wearing, evidenced by the many reef knolls that populate the southern part of the White Peak, the best example being Thorpe Cloud at the foot of Dovedale. This fossil record of crinoids, known locally as 'Derbyshire screws', can be seen in the walls, stiles and footpaths that have given human shape to this landscape.

Other types of limestone occasionally emerge from the land. Dolomitized limestone gave rise

to the oddly placed tor at Harboro Rocks. Volcanic rock, locally called 'toadstone', is often associated with the ancient watercourses. Ashford Black Marble, a very dense, finely grained limestone, is found in only a few quarries around Ashford in the Water. Once worked, it produces highly decorative ornamental pieces.

On the northern and eastern fringes, the gritstone layer is still much in evidence, producing the long 'edges' that sit above the valley floor, then occasionally surfacing as seemingly isolated tors, such as the ones found at Robin Hood's Stride near Harthill, and Black Rock near Cromford.



*Looking across 60 million years, gritstone to limestone*

The White Peak is rich in mineral deposits of copper, fluorspar, calcite and particularly lead. The minerals sitting in veins that run through the limestone bed to great depths have been mined since well before Roman times. In the 19th century these geological features formed the basis of a huge mining industry in the White Peak. Villages such as Bonsall, Wirksworth and Winster were important mining centres. Today the mining is all but gone, although the towns and villages still retain the buildings and grandeur that resulted from the wealth the industry brought to the communities. It also provided the beautifully walled lanes enjoyed by walkers today that were originally access tracks to and from the mines. Fluorspar is still mined at Glebe Mine in the north of the limestone plateau, the mineral being important in the production of chemicals and metallurgical goods. To see an excellent example of what the mines used to look like, visit the Magpie Mine near Sheldon (Walk 19).

Any visitor to the White Peak will see the giant limestone quarries that abound on the plateau. Although these have only scratched the surface of a 1.2 mile (2km) limestone bed, they are still significant holes in the ground. They cater for our seemingly endless need for road stone, building materials and cement and it is perhaps worth reflecting on how our own needs affect the landscape that we seek to enjoy.

### PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

The White Peak is a rich tapestry of interconnecting habitats, from managed pasture, steep limestone slopes and ancient woodland to meadow, watercourse and roadside verge.

This landscape hosts a wide variety of plants and animals, some of which are location dependent and some are important for their rarity. Until the Middle Ages the landscape remained essentially untouched, except in the immediate environs of hamlets and villages. The surrounding land was used for crop production on the feudal ridge and furrow system, whereby each member of the community was responsible for a strip of land and the production of crops for the landowner and fellow villagers. The introduction of sheep onto the land caused a change in its management. Farmers built limekilns and spread the lime onto the surrounding fields to encourage the healthy growth of grass for grazing. Today many of the limekilns survive and offer an important record of the land's use.

Successive Enclosure Acts and the management techniques brought in by the monastic landlords changed the way in which the land was used. But the slopes that bounded the dales were too steep for crops and remain untouched, except for the few sheep that chose to graze there. A diverse collection of plant life thrives on these slopes, including cowslip, wild thyme and early purple orchid, as well as the rare Jacob's ladder.



*Wildflowers are abundant in the White Peak*

Where sheep cannot gain access, the slopes are covered in rich ferns. Meadows grown for winter feed provided a rich habitat for oxeye daisy, buttercup and knapweed. In the 20th century these meadows fell out of favour and many were destroyed or cultivated for crop growing. Today their significance to local and national wildlife has been noted and meadows are making a comeback in the Peak. A wonderful example of their importance has been the support they have provided the curlew, a bird that has seen a steep decline in recent years.

The Enclosure Acts brought about a fragmented landscape, delineated by limestone walls that often separated livestock from vital water sources. The ingenious solution was the dewpond. These large, circular,

man-made ponds, shaped like a desert bowl, collected and held rainwater to be used by stock. They were an important part of the highly managed farming process. But as sheep farming declined the dewponds fell out of use and into disrepair. Some are being rehabilitated as they provide a perfect habitat for the great crested newt.

Drive along any road in the White Peak and you will see a wonderful display of plant life in the verges. The profusion of colour in spring and early summer, such as the purple meadow cranesbill, is often a good indicator of an old route, especially if accompanied by ancient hawthorn hedgerows.

To the north and east lie the gritstone and peat fringes. Here you will find the wonderful heather, spectacular in August with its vivid pink

## INTRODUCTION

The walks covering the northern section of this guide place you at the boundary of two very different landscapes. The walks straddle the edge of both the Dark Peak gritstone landscape of the high moorlands of the north and the pastoral farming landscape of the limestone White Peak. The communities that developed in the gritstone of the northern area are large and more concentrated in the valleys. These were formed 300 million years ago as the land mass was travelling north and the great river that we now know as the Rhine spilled out its sandy sediment into the delta that was to become the Derwent Valley.

Walking along the moorland paths above Eyam will give you a sense of what it is like to walk in the high moorlands of the Dark Peak that you can see wrapping around you to the north and east. There are some beautiful ancient woodlands to walk through, welcome on a hot day in late spring or early summer when the air is thick with the aroma of wild garlic and woodland bluebell. The walks around Grindleford and Longshaw are particularly good for this.

To the west you get your first taste of the deep limestone dales that thread through the White Peak. Towering limestone cliffs march along

almost vertical slopes to give a feeling of enclosure and seclusion as you walk beside a crystal-clear stream. The dales are full of wildflowers in spring, rafts of colour heralding the rebirth of nature.

Evidence of ancient history seems to increase as you progress south through the area. Stanton Moor has a wonderful stone circle and so many other ancient sites that it attracts a large gathering during the summer and winter solstice. Ancient artefacts abound in the area and make for an interesting focal point for a walk. The great estate of Chatsworth with its grand house and gardens set in Capability Brown parkland is a magnet for people interested in art and cultural history. The house contains many precious works of art while the gardens, planned by Joseph Paxton of Crystal Palace fame, are a pleasure to sit and relax in.

The largest town in the White Peak is Bakewell, a must visit on a Monday when the traditional market is in full swing. This is a farming community so, along with the stalls selling everything from original Bakewell pudding to wooden clothes pegs, you will find prize sheep and cattle being auctioned.

## WALK 1

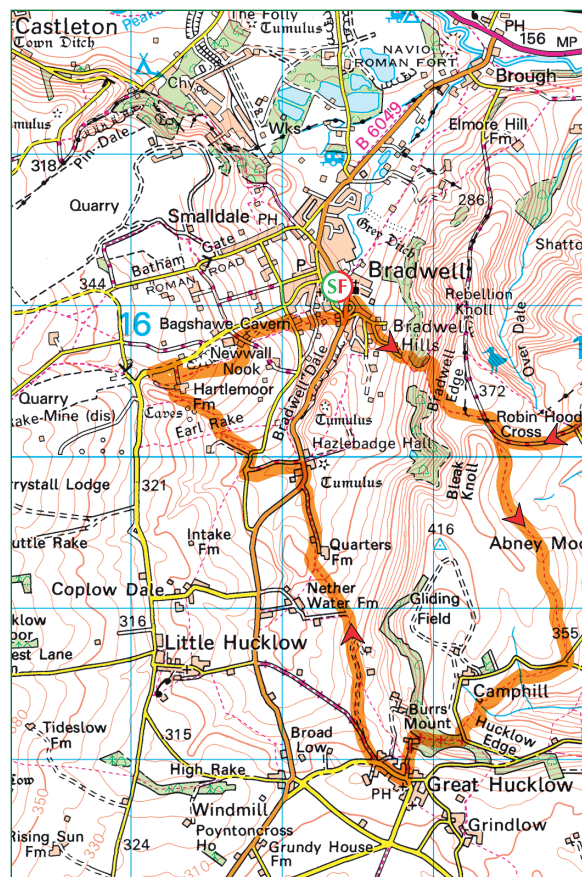
### *Bradwell to Offerton*

<b>Start/Finish</b>	St Barnabas Church, Bradwell SK 174 810
<b>Distance</b>	12 miles (19km)
<b>Ascent/Descent</b>	755m
<b>Time</b>	6hr
<b>Terrain</b>	Minor roads, open fields, footpath, trails and moorland
<b>Map</b>	OS 1:25000 Explorer OL24 White Peak
<b>Refreshments</b>	Bradwell
<b>Parking</b>	Bradwell, on-street parking

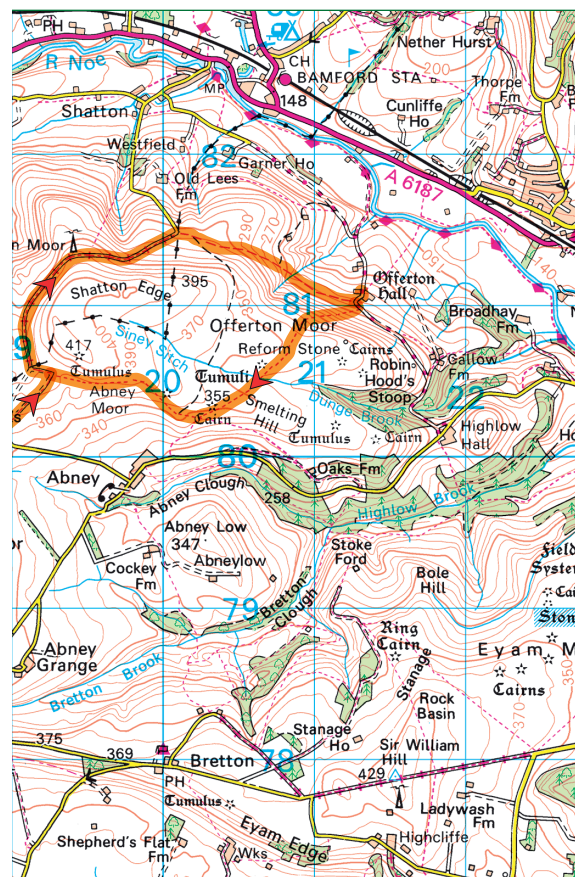
Bradwell sits astride the Dark and White Peak. Geologically this is gritstone and limestone country. The walk from this typical Peak District village with its narrow lanes and huddled houses requires a little stamina at the beginning, but the reward is magnificent. If you have never walked across a moor before, then Offerton Moor will be a new experience that will entice you to venture further into the Dark Peak at a later date.

Starting from St Barnabas Church, walk SE along the **B6049**, and take the next road left, opposite the Shoulder of Mutton pub. Continue along the narrow road to The Green. Bear left down Bessie Lane to Edge Lane then ascend to a public bridleway. Follow the bridleway signpost through a gate and, after passing a stone gatepost on your right, leave the bridleway and take the footpath right to a squeeze stile at the junction of two walls. Follow the line of the wall right, through a metal gate onto **Bradwell Edge**. Cross a field to go through a second squeeze stile at a wall junction then follow the footpath past a dewpond on your left and the remains of **Robin Hood's Cross** by the wall on the right. At the end, go through a metal gate and over a stone stile into Brough Lane.





Once onto the moor there are fine **views of the northern Dark Peak**. To the northwest, the mass of Kinder Scout sits beyond the Great Ridge; in the north are the waters and gritstone edges of the Upper Derwent Valley; and to the east, the line of Stanage Edge fringes the skyline.



Turn right to go through a metal gate and proceed along Brough Lane, ignoring all side footpaths. Cross the wooden stile just after the lane to Abney and continue along the track through a farm gate. As it sweeps left then descends to the right it brings you to a metal farm gate. Go through and follow the track through another gate then pass the communication mast on **Shotton Moor**.



*The view from  
Bradwell Moor to  
Kinder Scout*

Further on, where the track becomes a road on a sharp left bend, follow the bridleway right, through the wooden farm gate and across fields. Keeping the wall on your left, walk along the bridleway until you reach the farm gate leading onto the road at **Offerton Hall**.

Go through the gate onto the road and take the stile immediately right to follow the footpath uphill onto **Offerton Moor**. Follow the moorland path SW across Offerton Moor, crossing a wooden footbridge over **Siney Sitch** and through a gate in a stone wall to a footpath sign, number 456, placed there, on **Smelting Hill**, by the Peak and Northern Footpath Society (PNFS).

These **Peak and Northern Footpath Society** signs can be found all over the Peak District. Beautifully made they are often a welcome confirmation that you are in fact on the right path. For over 100 years the society has kept a watchful eye on all the footpaths and, where attention is required, it liaises with the appropriate authority.

Take the footpath to Bradwell crossing two stiles to return to Brough Lane. Turn left and retrace your steps from earlier in the day. Crossing over the stile, passing the lane to Abney and then, where the track sweeps right, take the footpath left over the wall onto **Abney Moor**. Follow the undulating footpath across the moor to the road above **Abney Grange**. ►

Go over a stile and turn right along the road. Where the tarmac track to Abney Grange meets the road take the footpath through the gate on your left. Cross the field opposite **Camphill** diagonally to the top left-hand corner, go through a second gate to follow a wall line down to a small stream. Go over the stream and follow the fence line SW past an abandoned house. Cross a second stream keeping SW uphill to a gate by a small underground reservoir then exit onto a road. Go left down the road to where the woodland starts and take the footpath right, down to the local school, then follow the lane into **Great Hucklow**.

Turn right through the centre of the village, pass the Queen Anne pub and take the lane on your right. Where the lane splits take the right-hand fork through the gate. Follow the farm track through a second gate to a signpost where the track turns uphill to the right. Follow the signpost going over the stile on the right at the junction of two walls, then cross fields, keeping the fence line on your right, to a second stone stile in the corner. Cross the stile then walk diagonally NW to pass through a gate and follow the fence line down to another gate. Go through the gate and down the field to the left-hand corner of a large industrial building and a PNFS sign. Follow the footpath along the side of a building through two metal gates to a

At this stage of the walk you may encounter a strange whirling noise. This is the gear winching a glider into the sky.



*The Peak and Northern Footpath Society signs are a helpful and often welcome indicator of direction across the moors*



tarmac lane leading to **Quarters Farm**. Turn left down the lane to the B6049.

Turn right, along the **B6049** and at the entrance to **Hazelbadge Hall Farm** cross the road and ascend Green Dale to a tarmac lane. Turn right then, when the lane sweeps sharp right, go left up Jennings Dale. Go through the gate at the top and turn right along **Earl Rake** then immediately left and ascend through woodland to a wooden stile to enter a field. Walk up through the field and where the path enters open ground follow its course to cross a stone stile. Go left along the wall line to a road. Turn right along the road the right again down the lane to **Hartlemoor Farm**. Halfway along the lane, take the stile on your left over a wall and across a field to a second stile, then turn right and follow the fenced footpath around the limestone quarry to a road. Turn right down the road and then take the footpath next left down to a wooden power pylon. Turn right here and follow the path down to a tarmac road. Turn right then immediately left through a squeeze stile and follow the footpath to return to **Bradwell**.

Bradwell Cottages



## WALK 2

### Hope to Shatton

<b>Start/Finish</b>	St Peter's Church, Hope SK 172 835
<b>Distance</b>	5.5 miles (9km)
<b>Ascent/Descent</b>	200m
<b>Time</b>	3hr
<b>Terrain</b>	Minor country roads, open fields, footpath
<b>Map</b>	OS 1:25000 Explorer OL1 Dark Peak
<b>Refreshments</b>	Hope
<b>Parking</b>	Hope SK 171 834

This short walk passes through some of the ancient villages that sit either side of the gritstone/limestone divide as well as visiting the remains of the Roman fort of Navio. The gentle stroll across the valley pastures is perfect for an afternoon foray or pre Sunday lunch outing. There are fine views along the valley and the gritstone edges of Kinder Scout, Bamford and Stanage.

From St Peter's Church in **Hope**, walk N down Edale Road passing on your right the only remaining dwelling from Birchinlee (Tin Town). ► Where the road forks, bear right to continue past a barn on your left to a track leading to a fenced lane. Walk down the lane to the house, go diagonally left across the yard and ascend steps into a field. Follow the footpath through the gate along the side of the hedge, over a stile and, after the second gate, turn left up the field to go beneath the rail bridge via a white gate. Turn right through two gates into a field. Walk diagonally right across the field and exit via a gate onto the lane directly below Farfield Farm. Turn right past the farm to a minor road junction, then go left towards **Aston**.

Before entering Aston, where the road crosses a stream, go right through a farm gate marked Kiln Croft and walk through another gate along the front of the houses following the left-hand fence. After the houses

Tin Town was built to house the workers who constructed the Derwent Valley dams.