

CICERONE

WALKING IN THE PEAK DISTRICT WHITE PEAK WEST

40 walks in the hills of Cheshire,
Derbyshire and Staffordshire



Paul Besley

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**40 WALKS IN THE HILLS OF CHESHIRE, DERBYSHIRE
AND STAFFORDSHIRE**



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.

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AND STAFFORDSHIRE**

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This book is dedicated to the members of Coniston Mountain Rescue, without whose aid it would not have been possible. Thank you.

Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched before and finalised during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/977/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: Three Shires Head, where the three counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire meet (Walk 16)

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I got to enjoy many days out while researching this final volume of the Peak District trilogy. The beautiful scenery is perhaps a given, but what always adds to a day is the interaction with other people – walkers, climbers, cavers, local people and those working on the land. Everyone helped in some way to contribute to the overall message of the book. Our countryside is not just about the land, but perhaps more importantly, it is about the people. To all of you, I want to say thank you for making my days that much richer.

I owe a big thank you to the team at Cicerone Press, Joe Williams, Amy Hodkin, Andrea Grimshaw, Clare Croke, Caroline Draper, Hannah Stevenson and Felicity Laughton.




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A walk isn't a walk without a dog, and I would like to thank Monty, Olly and Scout for their contribution, and for never sharing their food but always sharing mine.

Most important of all Alison Counsell, my partner of many years. You made all the difference.

Route symbols on OS map extracts
(for OS legend see printed OS maps)




-  route
-  start/finish point
-  route direction






SCALE: 1:50,000

0 kilometres 0.5 1
0 miles 0.5

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/977/GPX.

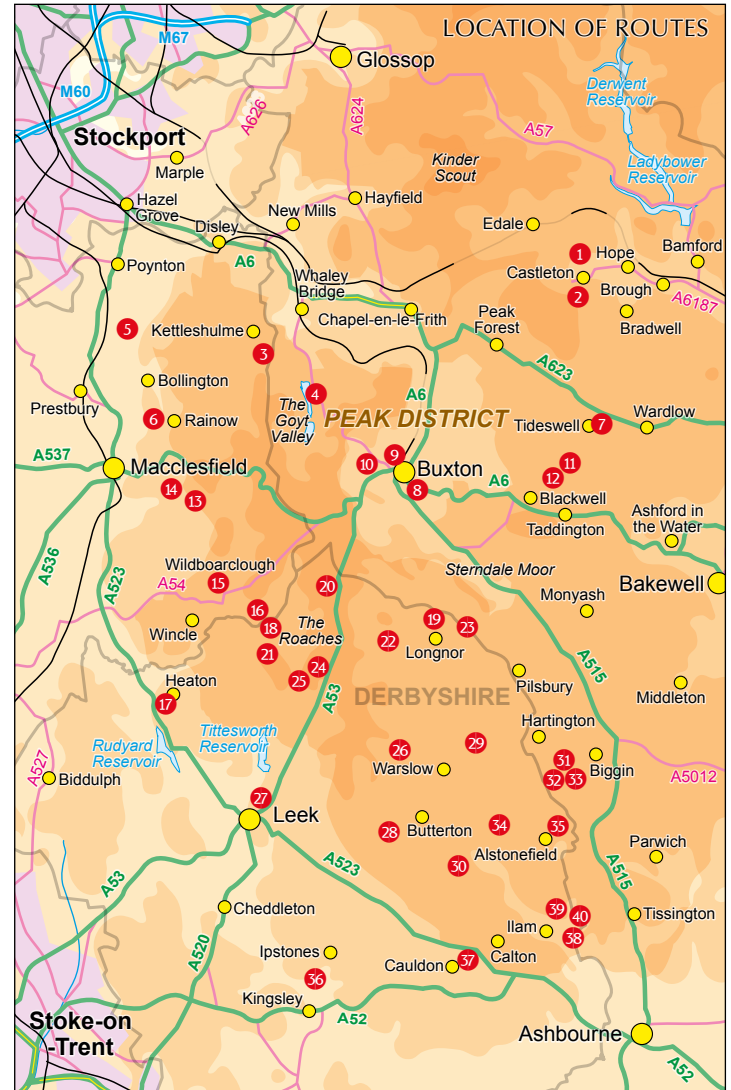
Features on the overview map

-  County/Unitary boundary
-  Urban area
-  National Park eg **PEAK DISTRICT**

	600m
	400m
	200m
	75m
	0m



Combs Moss from Corbar Hill (Walk 9)



INTRODUCTION

The northern section is characterised by wild moorland that gradually seeps downhill and turns into pasture that leads into dales and the clear waters of streams working their way through the limestone. The walks move from east to west as they work south into the heart of the region and include some areas that can be found in the first volume, *Dark Peak Walks*, but offer different places to explore and vistas to enjoy.

Some walks would not normally appear in a guidebook of the Peak District. Bollington, Rushton Spencer and Lamaload are all places that fall away from the usual routes. I have included them because they form part of the western sheet of the Ordnance Survey White Peak map and, as such, deserve attention. In fact, these walks offered some of the most surprising and enjoyable days out. Some walks are very familiar, but I have tried to offer new perspectives, perhaps starting from a different place so that, as the route unfolds, you may be exposed to little or unseen views. The walk from Shutlingsloe to Chest Hollow (Walk 15) is one that should definitely be completed, if only for the experience of walking across a little-known moor or descending the beautiful trail back to the car.

If you are interested in geology, this section is perhaps the most fascinating. It begins in Castleton, at the very cusp of gritstone and limestone. The walks around Winnats Pass, above the great limestone pinnacles that overlook the gorge, also tread above the caves of Castleton including the unseen Titan, Britain's deepest cave shaft at almost 142 metres.

There is an unusual walk around Buxton (Walk 8). A psychogeographical foray around the town's major sites, one where I encourage you to choose your own route, it makes for a wonderful afternoon of gentle exploration.

The rugged terrain around the Goyt Valley with its moorland views gives a gentler introduction to the Dark Peak than, say, Bleaklow might, and is a good way of establishing whether you would like to explore the wilderness areas of the high moorlands.

Finally, the routes settle down into limestone country and some impressive landscape features such as the Dragon's Back, the limestone reefs of Chrome Hill and Parkhouse. It is here also that the walks start to engage with the older communities of silk weavers, cotton mills, canal systems and the salt and drove roads.

WALK 1

Castleton to Mam Tor

Start/Finish	Castleton SK 147 829
Distance	4.5 miles (7.5km)
Ascent/Descent	415m
Time	3hr
Terrain	Footpaths with some moderate ascent and descent
Map	OS 1:25000 Explorer OL24 and OL1
Refreshments	Castleton
Parking	Castleton car park SK 149 829

The village of Castleton sits on the boundary between the gritstone and peat of the Dark Peak and the limestone and pasture of the White Peak. The village is dominated by the 'Shivering Mountain', Mam Tor with its near-vertical face of shale, and the narrow gorge of Winnats Pass.

Begin the walk on the opposite side of the road to the entrance to **Peak Cavern**. ►

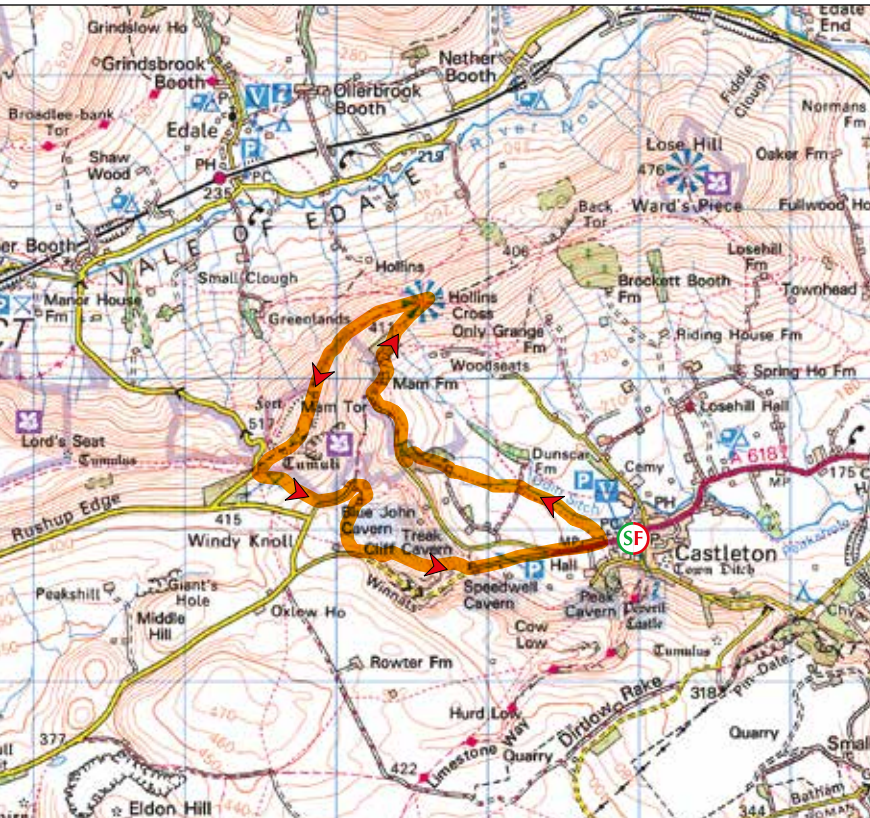
Go up the steps; a signpost points to the public footpath that runs by the side of the house. Then go through several gates to cross pasture in a NW direction following **Odin Sitch** upstream. On reaching the drive to **Dunscar Farm**, go straight across and continue over a field until the path veers right; follow it over a concrete bridge then go left through successive gates to a second farm drive. Cross the drive and follow the footpath straight ahead through the gate and up steps then, maintaining your course, continue on to the crushing circle of Odin Mine. ►

Follow the footpath through the mine workings to the road and turn right along the roadway.

The road is now closed to traffic due to a massive landslide that continues to this day as Mam Tor shivers

There are several caves in Castleton to choose from on a rainy day.

Odin Mine is now closed but the ore-crushing wheel and circle can be seen, and its position gives a sense of the conditions the miners worked in.



down the valley. It is interesting to see the destructive power of gravity and nature.

Where the road turns sharp left take the footpath on the right down to **Mam Farm**, keeping to the left as you skirt the farm buildings. Shortly after clearing the farm, take the footpath left and ascend into woodland. Where the footpath forks keep left ascending to a wooden stile that leads you onto the bare hillside overlooking Castleton and the Hope Valley. Follow the steadily rising

footpath up to The Great Ridge. At the top, go through a gate to arrive at **Hollins Cross**. ▶

Go left and follow the slabbed ridge trail to the summit of **Mam Tor**. From the Ordnance Survey **triangulation pillar**, follow the stone slabs and steps SW down to the road, then go immediately S through a gate and bear left down a field to a second gate leading onto minor road. Turn left along the road, then turn right, into the entrance of the **Blue John Cavern**.

Blue John is a semi-precious mineral known for its purple-blue or yellow colouring. It is now only mined in this hillside and the Blue John and Treak Cliff caverns are the only ones working the seam. The process of turning the mineral into artefacts is long and laborious: first the stone is air dried for a year, then it is sealed with epoxy resin before it can be worked. The name Blue John is said to come from the French *bleu-jaune*, blue-yellow, the colours of the stone.

In the days before Grindsbrook Booth had a church, burials took place at Castleton; the coffin was carried along the 'Coffin Route' over Hollins Cross.

The ore-crushing circle of Odin Mine





- 40 day walks exploring limestone gorges, valleys and tors
- Buxton, Hartington, Leek, Ilam and Tideswell • chambered cairns, Norman churches, mills, and monastic granges

There is much to explore in the Peak District National Park. Resonating with human activity stretching back to the Neolithic Age, the White Peak features many idyllic villages and market towns nestled within a limestone landscape of green pastures and deep dales.

The White Peak is a place filled with natural beauty where the plants and wildlife in woodlands, rivers and meadows can turn a short walk into a full day of exploration. This is a landscape in which to dawdle and absorb the world around you.

This is the second volume to *Walking in the White Peak* and explores the western sheet of Ordnance Survey OL24. Following well-waymarked public rights of way, many walks can be enjoyed in half a day or joined up for longer days out.



- suitable for year-round walking
- notes on history, geology and art

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