



How We Ate.....Blackwell



Transport



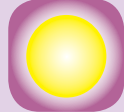
Distance

5 km
3.5 mi

Allow

3 hr

Difficulty



Trail Summary

Moderate difficulty. Steep slopes and steps in places. After heavy rainfall, it can get flooded on section along river.

Start and finish:

Miller's Dale Old Station, off B6049. National Park pay and display car park, Rangers office, toilets and information here. OS White Peak Explorer Map, OL 24. SK138 734.

Access:

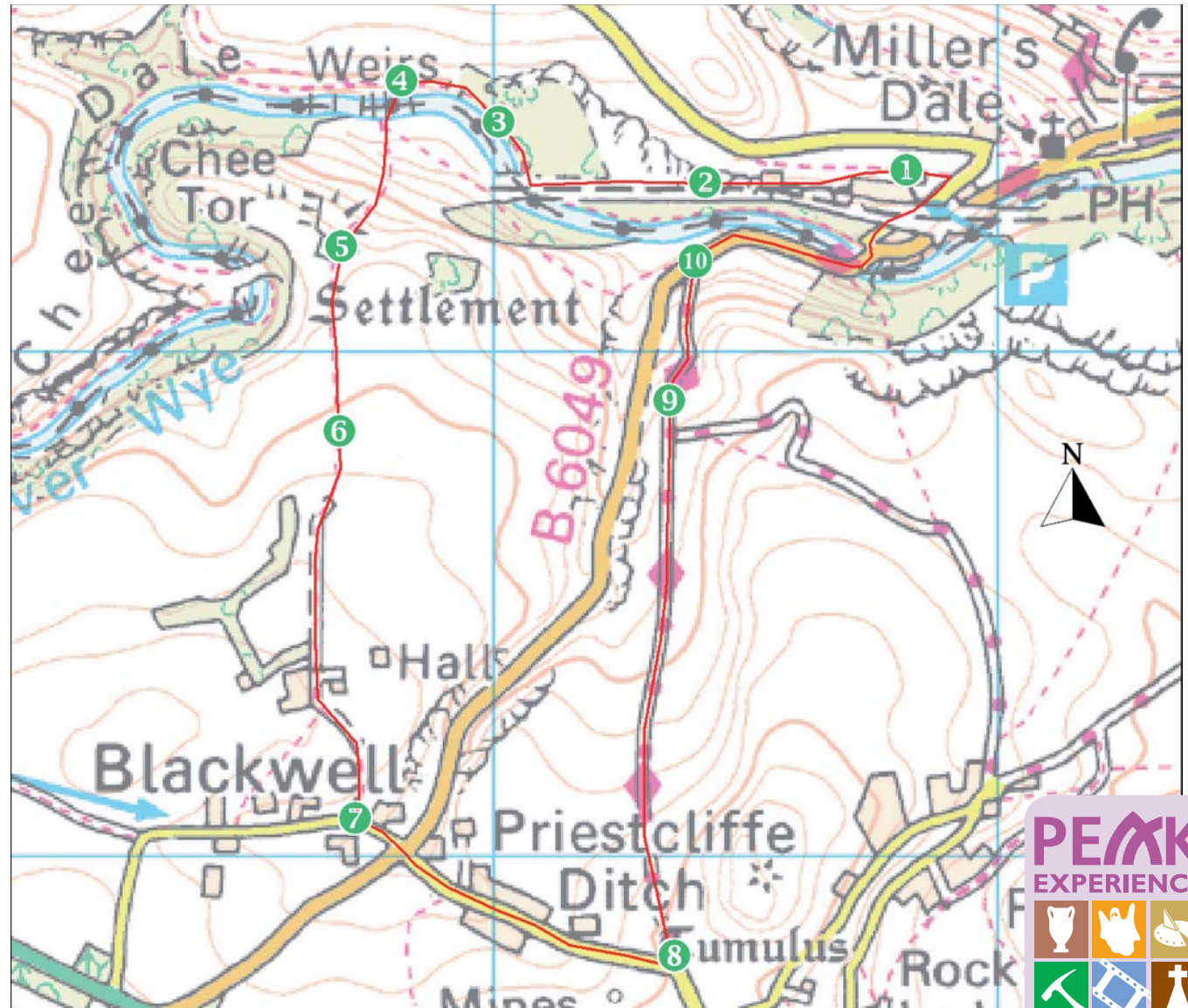
At Miller's Dale turn off onto a minor road signed Wormhill. After bridge, take turning on left for pay and display car park.

This half-day circular walk takes you through upland farmland worked since the Neolithic period. On the way you will see a dairy farm with cows and sheep, a limekiln, a Romano-British settlement, fields and walls dating from the 1800s, a farm with a history stretching back to the Anglo-Saxons, and ancient fields 2,000 years old.



Part-funded by the European Union European Regional Development Fund

See 5,000 years of farming in half a day!



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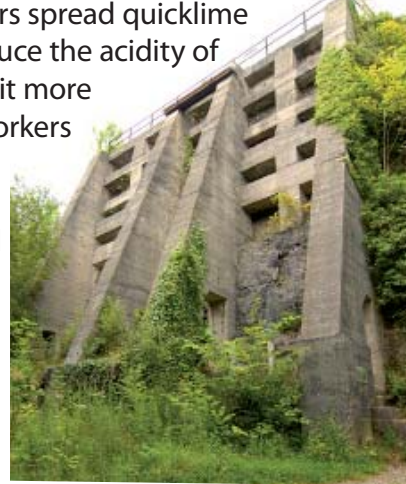
1. Miller's Dale Station

Miller's Dale Station (below) was built in 1863 and closed in 1970. The railway line was important to local farmers in the 1800s as hundreds of gallons of milk a day were transported by rail to Manchester and Liverpool. Quicklime was also produced locally and transported by rail.



From the station head right along the old railway line, signed as Monsal Dale to Chee Dale. Continue on the path and you will pass on your right a disused quarry and the large cement buttressed building - East Buxton Limekilns.

from the adjacent quarry into quicklime (calcium oxide). Quicklime used in the steel industry and in agriculture. Farmers spread quicklime on the land to reduce the acidity of the soil and make it more fertile. Limekiln workers fed in fuel and limestone at the top of the kiln and raked out quicklime from the bottom. You can find out more from the plaque at the site.



Follow the path until you reach the bridge. As the bridge starts, the path drops down to your right (signed Monsal Trail via Chee Dale). Follow these steps down to the bottom of the viaduct, then head right, following the path along the river before the bridge. This stretch of path may be flooded in places, but you can still use it.

3. Victorian viaduct

The bridge is a fine piece of Victorian engineering built to carry the railway over Wye Dale.

The River Wye rises on Axe Edge and flows eastwards through Buxton and Bakewell, joining the River Dove at Rowsley. In the past, there were many watermills along the river that harnessed water power to grind grain into flour. You can still

see a working flour mill at Caudwell's Mill and Craft Centre, Rowsley.

Cross over the river at the wooden bridge signposted to Blackwell. Briefly take the path to the left – it forks immediately. Take the less-trodden path heading right uphill towards the grey limestone square block. Follow the path towards the woodland, cross the ruined wall and turn left. Walk to the first rock outcrop then turn right and head uphill.

4. Chee Tor Romano-British remains

As the land starts to level, notice the lumps and bumps of the field around you.

This is Chee Tor, a Romano-British settlement. Look at the raised areas of ground. It is possible to make out ruined walls (pictured right), rectangular yards, and terraced platforms for houses and streets. These traces have survived because the rocky ground is not suitable for



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2. East Buxton Limekilns

The kilns (pictured right) were opened in 1880, with the concrete buttresses added in the 1920s. They remained in use until 1944. Here workers processed limestone (calcium carbonate)



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agriculture, but instead has been used as pasture for sheep, and so has not been ploughed.

The deep holes at the top of the hill are more recent leadmine shafts.

At the top of the hill there is a dry-stone wall. Look for the gap and wooden footpath sign marking the route ahead. Cross through the wall and go on, keeping the wall to your left. Then cross over the stile.

5. Farmland views



From here there are good views of the limestone farming landscape, cut with the steep-sided river valleys. Farmers graze their dairy cows in these fields to produce milk and cheese, and their sheep produce lamb and wool.

Most of this land has been farmed for 5,000 years, since Neolithic

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times! Almost certainly there were Romano-British fields here nearly 2,000 years ago. And about 1,000 years ago, an Anglo-Saxon common field.

The walls around you are much more recent (pictured left). The straight walls to your left and ahead were built in the 1800s when this land was 'improved' using lime to make it more fertile. But the line of the curving wall to your right may date back 1,000 years.

Head across the field to the top right corner where the path now joins a farm track to Blackwell Hall. Walk towards the farm buildings at the end of the track.

6. Blackwell Hall

The hamlet of Blackwell in the Peak, in which the farm sits, is mentioned in the Domesday Book written by the Norman conquerors in 1086 AD. Archaeologists have found the remains of an Anglo-Saxon hall nearby.

The farmhouse you see today dates from the late 1600s/early 1700s. These days, it is a farm-stay bed and breakfast. Other farm buildings date to the 1800s. Look out for the 1863 date plaque on the



end wall of the nearest building you pass on your right (pictured below left). Can you see DD carved on it? These are the initials of the Duke of Devonshire, who once owned the land. It's said that in the 1500s, Bess of Hardwick used a hunting lodge here.

Blackwell Hall houses the Farming Life Centre, dedicated to celebrating and supporting upland farming. It is a resource for the local community and opens to the public only on occasional open days.

Follow the path to the left at the footpath sign. Continue along the track down to the road, turn left at the farm entrance and go down to the junction. Cross straight over the road, signposted for Priestcliffe. Follow the road up through the hamlet of Priestcliffe Ditch.

7. Priestcliffe Ditch

Notice how the Priestcliffe Ditch houses and farms are set along a central road. This is a typical medieval village layout, with strips of land leading out from the back of the houses.

The second building on your left is a traditional Peak District farmhouse and barn. Often the house and barn were attached to each other to form one building.

As the road bends off to the right take the sign-posted track to the left. This track runs for around



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a mile heading back towards Miller's Dale and gives you a wonderful view over the farmed White Peak landscape.

8. Medieval farm traces

This track gives access from Priestcliffe to the sur



rounding fields.

Take a good look at the stone walls all around, and see if you can pick out some narrow fields to your left (pictured above). These strip fields were probably enclosed by individual families after the Black Death in the 1300s. At that time, many families changed from growing crops to farming sheep, because the weather worsened and because sheep were less work to care for than crops, for families who had lost many working people to the Black Death. The top wall marked the limit of Priestcliffe's fields. Think how much limestone they had to move to build these walls!

Continue along the lane until it widens out with grass verges to either side.

9. Read the land: 2,000 years of farming history

Look up to the grassy slope to your left, beyond the narrow valley and above the trees. Can you make out the earthen banks which appear as dark lines in the field? These divide the slope into square fields and narrow terraces. You can see this best just after you pass by a track that leads off to the right.

Some were created by farmers ploughing the sloping ground. Ploughing eroded the soil and loose soil tumbled downhill and piled up behind field boundaries, such as hedges and walls. Other banks were built by farmers to mark boundaries and plant hedges on. Some are nearly 2,000 years old, made by the Romano-British villagers of Chee Tor. Others were made by Anglo-Saxon farmers over 1,000 years ago. These farming families grew grain crops in the fields and terraces.

10. Back to Miller's Dale

The track ends by joining the B6049. Go right along the road towards Miller's Dale. Take the left turn in the road and head back round under the bridge to the car park.

We hope you enjoyed your walk! Please tell your friends.

There are more Peak Experience self-guided trails for you to download at www.peak-experience.org.uk

Inspired by the landscape?

Send us photos or stories from your walk to share with others on www.MyPeakExperience.org.uk And if you or your children were inspired to create poetry, songs, paintings or drawings we'd love to see them.

Written by: Melissa Peet & Bill Bevan

Photos by: Bill Bevan

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