

## Hoe Grange Farm Walk



### 1. Start in the farmyard

Howe Graunge is first mentioned in 1497 as part of the Duchy of Lancaster estate. The front half of the current farmhouse dates back to 1660's. The land, farmhouse, milking shed and stables were part of Tutbury Monastery Estate - hence the name Grange. In the 1891 census Hoe Grange Farm was run by a farmer called John Waterfall and his wife. They were relatively wealthy and had 4 farm labourers and a maid servant. The rest of the large sheds and buildings you see make up the modern farm and have been built since 1960.

### 2. Proceed out of the yard gate passing the dew pond on your right.

Home to a colony of great crested newts, which are quite rare. These circular ponds were dug out to provide water for the farm animals and date back to the 1700's and 1800's. They were needed as in this limestone area water drains away quickly through cracks in the rock just below the thin soils. Originally to retain the water the ponds were lined with clay held together with straw and protected from cattle hooves by stones. They filled up with rain water from the surrounding land. Hoe Grange has 6 in total, but very few of them now hold water properly. David has a long term ambition to renovate some of them.

### 3. Turn right across the front field to the wooden gate at the bottom of the rocks.

This wall is the boundary of the National Peak Park, as well as the Brassington Parish boundary.



The free standing rock is called Jacob's Pinnacle (sometimes known as Jeff Cote's Pinnacle) and is mentioned in various climbing books. Although relatively low in height it makes an interesting climb - so we are told!

Harborough Rocks which is just 3 miles up the road towards Wirksworth is another popular area for climbing and bouldering enthusiasts.

**4. Once through the gate turn left, climb up the bank around the hill, to the top keeping the wood on your left.**

You are now in the National Peak Park, Britain's first national park, established in 1951. Hoe Grange works with the Peak Park and has been awarded the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark for conservation, use of locally grown and made products and services, use of environmentally friendly products, efficient use of energy and water and minimisation of waste by reducing, reusing and recycling. We hope you will all help us whilst here on holiday.

Keep your eyes open for wildlife, particularly hares, pheasants and rabbits, not just the natural brown ones, but black and the occasional albino.



Due to the terrain this bank has not been intensively farmed so you can see many traditional meadow grasses and flowers including wild orchids, cowslips, ladies smock, forget me nots, daisies, wild thyme and many more.

At the top of the hill there are many small dolomite limestone rocks above the ground, ideal for children to scramble and climb.

**5. Continue Straight ahead through the gate leaving another dew pond to your left - look out for moor hens nesting on the water.**



In front of you, you can see Ballidon Quarry, one of the largest Limestone quarries in the country, which has been in operation since the 1940s. The unique Beelow Limestone was formed 330 million years ago when the area was a shallow salt water lagoon close to the equator. The sediment which accumulated is almost entirely made up of tiny fragments of marine animal shell

giving it a chemical purity of 99% calcium carbonate, which is quite unusual and very valuable. The 1.25 million tons produced per year is used for animal feeds, industrial fillers, (including in your toothpaste!) and aggregate for white concrete and glass manufacture. Bitumen coated road maintenance materials and white concrete blocks are also manufactured and the inferior stone is used for construction purposes. The quarry is owned and operated by Tarmac Ltd and employs over 200 people.



**6. Follow the stone track down towards the quarry**

- you can see on your right hand side the remains of ridge and furrow. These are low parallel ridges with shallow gullies between them and may go back to Medieval times with each ridge being a cultivation strip within an open field. The ridges improved drainage and created a slightly larger growing surface. Another purpose of the furrows was to separate the adjacent strips of land farmed by different people.

**7. Go through the second gate on your right and follow the wall to the top of the hill. Turn left and follow the top wall until you pass through the gateway.**

Immediately on your right hand side are the remains of the sheep pen fold used for catching, sorting and shedding sheep



All the field walls in this area are built from local limestone without mortar, hence the name drystone walls. They are an excellent guide to the underlying geology of the area. These boundaries were created over the last few hundred years with a climax in the 1700's and early 1800's when many commons and remaining open fields were enclosed.

The walls are double skinned, with larger through stones every meter or so laid across the full width of the wall to help stability and bind the 2 halves together. The top of the wall is capped with a row of "coping stone". The size and weight of these keeps the weather out and holds the structure together. There is a real art to dry stone walling, and it is a slow back breaking process, so please do not climb over the walls as they can easily crumble.



**8. Go through gate on right hand side and onto trail** - please ensure you close the gate behind you securely. You are now on the High Peak Trail - the remains of the Cromford to Manchester railway, which was decommissioned in 1967. It is now designated as part of the Pennine Bridleway and is a nature reserve for leisure use.

You can see some of the original rails and sleepers at the entrance to the farm drive making up the cattle grid - Hoe Grange has been recycling for years!

**9. Set off to the right and follow the trail.**

This has been a nature reserve since it was opened as a footpath in the 1970's. It is now part of the National Pennine Bridleway.

**10. Continue until you reach the first small wooden gate on the right hand side and go through it back on to Hoe Grange fields.** There are a pair of railway arches on your right hand side. This is because originally the land either side of the middle wall belonged to 2 different farms, Hoe Grange and Ballidon Moor Farm. This is also the Peak Park Boundary again. You can see on the bank on your right-hand side the remains of lead mining workings.

**11. Go diagonally across the field towards the left, follow down the left-hand wall passed the plantation of young native trees and then down through the paddock to your cabin.**

These include Ash, Sycamore, Hawthorn, and a horse chestnut tree grown from a conker by our daughter Caroline and a millennium oak tree.

