



Walk 7: The Wirksworth Quarries – Directions

Start Point: Car Park (free) at National Stone Centre off B5035. Map ref SK285554

Maps: 1:25000 Explorer Sheet OL24, Peak District, White Peak Area or 1:50000 Landranger Sheet 119, Buxton, Matlock & Dovedale.

Public Transport: There is a bus stop for the Rainbow 6.1 bus, running between Derby & Bakewell, at the entrance to the Stone Centre.

Public Toilets: National Stone Centre, Middleton Top Visitors Centre.

Distance: 3½ miles

Time needed: 1½ - 2 hours.

Description: A walk of medium difficulty, with some fairly steep climbs and descents, along tracks and public footpaths. There are good views of quarries in the area. Other industrial architecture includes that associated with old industry, railways and mining.

(1) From the National Stone Centre car park enter the High Peak Trail via the track at the side of the old locomotive, turn right towards Middleton Top. The quarry on your right is the Cole Hills Quarry (2). From the trail on your left (3) the 'Reef' quarry can be seen. Walk along the Trail a few metres and look at the large outcrop of rock on your left (4).

Continue along the trail to the bottom of a long incline, on your left there is Middleton Bottom Wheel Pit (5). As you walk up the incline there are spoil heaps to the left just after the road bridge (6). Continuing up the incline there is the disused 'Wheatcroft' Quarry on the left, just before the trail crossed another road (7).

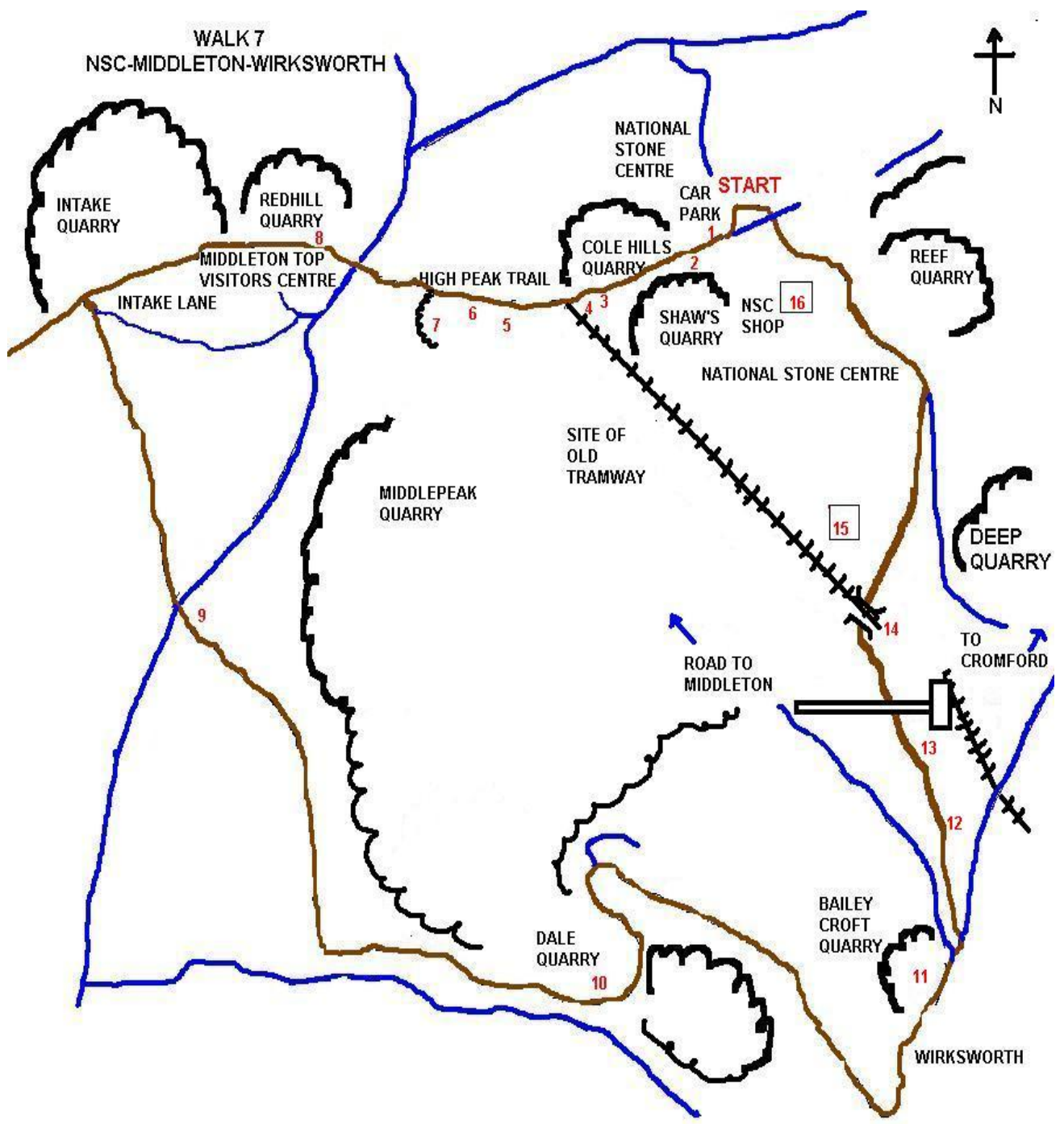
(8) At the top of the incline is the Engine House. Looking back down the incline you see Middlepeak Quarry on the right. Continue along the trail Past the Middleton Top Visitors Centre on your left. There are toilets at the centre and a Picnic site at Redhill Quarry on your right. Follow the trail to a gate at the junction with Intake Lane. Turn left through the gate. To a footpath on the right of the lane go between two boulders onto a footpath take the right of steps to the left cross the stile and follow the well trodden footpath around the end of a dry stonewall through a squeeze stile, over a wooden stile to a squeeze stile at the side of a road, cross the road and take public footpath, directly opposite, signed 'Circuit walk around Wirksworth.' Leave the road via the stile. (9) There are good views of Middle Peak Quarry. Walk diagonally right to a squeeze stile in the far wall. Cross two more fields to the boundary fence of the quarry, which the path now follows, climbing uphill to a corner.

Turn left, over a stile, following the way mark arrows, and keeping in the fields to the left of a lane.

(10) Dale Quarry comes into view to your left as you descend. The path then turns left, down into the quarry, goes under a bridge made of corrugated iron and climbs out of the far side. It then descends steeply to a tarmac lane, the old entrance road of the, now disused, quarry. Turn right onto the lane and follow it downhill to reach Wirksworth Market Place. (There are plenty of interesting old stone cottages and buildings along the length of the lane).

Turn left, alongside the main road, walking under a very high footbridge, to the Fire Station on your left. (11) Notice the old Bailey Croft quarry behind the Fire Station and the filling station. Follow the road to 'Old Lane' on the left. Turn left and follow the lane, notice the metal gates on the left and right of the path. (12) These are at the site of the level crossing from the quarries to the goods yard which is on the right. (13) At the time this walk was being charted a large conveyer belt system was in place, however soon afterwards the conveyor was dismantled leaving little sign of its presence. Continue up hill to where you pass under a stone bridge (14), this carried the tramway from the railway to your right to the Cromford and High Peak Railway which is now the High Peak Trail. Continue along the path through the wood, there are two lime kilns (15) on your left, the path joins an unmade lane, turn left up hill to the National Stone Centre. There are toilet facilities, a shop and exhibition within the buildings. Walk uphill from the shop, under the archway carrying the High Peak Trail to the car park.

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MARKET PLACE
Not to scale
Walk by R.J Sterland MBE
and G.F.Selby-Sly

Walk 7: The Wirksworth Quarries - Points of Interest

- 1 Start at NSC car park
- 2 Cole Hills Quarry
 - Produced a black polished Carboniferous lagoonal limestone, which in the past was sold as marble.
 - Date of start of operation are not known but it was in operation by 1830
 - The quarry had ceased by 1930
 - 1935 an asphalt plant was built in the quarry.
- 3 To the left the 'Reef' quarry can be seen just beyond the buildings with Shaw's or West Quarry in the foreground.
 - These quarries contain evidence of reef structures of Carboniferous age (354 –290Ma) separating the lagoon to the left and the deep ocean where Wirksworth now stands.
- 4 At the large outcrop of rock on the left of the trail,
 - Notice near the top a cave-like structure which was the entrance to an old lead mine.
 - Look over the dry stonewall next to the outcrop to see the site of a disused 'tramway' connecting the Cromford and High Peak Railway (the trail you are on) to the Midlands Railway in the valley.
 - There are no records of this tramway ever being used but rails have been found when the Midlands Railway was being renovated.
- 5 On the left of the trail is 'Middleton Bottom Wheel Pit'
 - Here ropes were attached for the pulleys for the Middleton Top Engine House to winch railway wagons up the steep incline.
- 6 To the left of the incline there are spoil heaps from old quarry working.
- 7 The now disused 'Wheatcroft' limestone quarry is on the left, just before the trail crossed another road.
- 8 At the top of the incline is the Engine House
 - Containing, the powerful steam engine which was used to operate the pulley system in conjunction with the Middleton Bottom Wheel Pit to winch loaded wagons up the incline you walked up.
 - A few metres further along the trail is the Middleton Top Visitor Centre on your left with toilets facilities
 - A Picnic site at Redhill Quarry on the right of the trail.
 - Looking back you see Middlepeak Quarry on the right.
- 9 In front is a view of Middlepeak Quarry,
 - Limestone quarry.
 - Middlepeak closed in 1991
- 10 Dale Quarry comes into view to your left as you descend.
 - This quarry is being filled.
 - There are chert nodules in linear beds within the limestone on some of the exposures to the right of the track.
- 11 Notice the old Bailey Croft Quarry behind the Fire Station and the filling station.
- 12 Notice metal gates at each side of the track, these are the site of the level crossing to the goods yard on the right of the track.
- 13 The site of the recently dismantled overhead conveyer belt system from Middlepeak Quarry to the goods yard on the right of the path
- 14 The footpath passes under a stone bridge, which carried the tramway from the railway to your right to the Cromford and High Peak Railway, now the High Peak Trail.
- 15 Two derelict lime kilns on your left
- 16 National Stone Centre. There are toilet facilities, a shop and exhibition within the buildings