

WELCOME TO THE WIRKSWORTH LIMESTONE WONDERGROUND SELF-GUIDED TRAIL

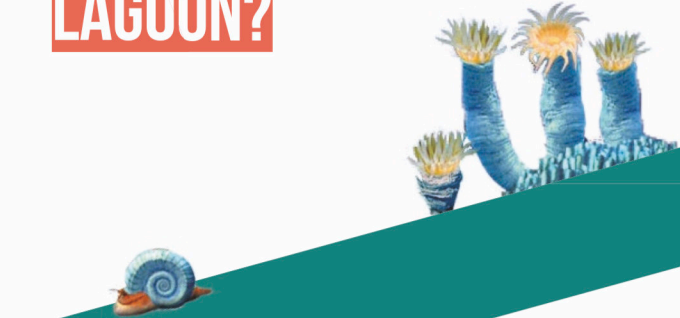
Wirksworth sits between limestone to the west and gritstone to the east.



© Caroline Bridges Photography

On this limestone walk you can see fossils from the prehistoric coral lagoon, hear nature taking back disused quarries and walk the line of one of the world's earliest railways. You'll see some lovely old buildings and moss-smothered walls on your way. You may meet some sheep.

DID YOU KNOW YOU'RE AT THE EDGE OF A CORAL LAGOON?



Explore the limestone riches that first made Wirksworth wealthy and provided rock-breaking work for the town.

Meet an Anglo-Saxon miner. Find fossils and a Georgian railway. Don't get your feet wet in the tropical sea!

To discover more of Wirksworth's history, visit Wirksworth Heritage Centre, 31 St John Street, Wirksworth DE4 4DS.

01629 707000

www.wirksworthheritagecentre.org

WIRKSWORTH

LIMESTONE WONDERGROUND TRAIL



INCLUDING TRAIL MAP



Distance

5.5 km / 3.5 miles

Difficulty

Steep hills.

Stony ground.

Potentially muddy.

Start

Wirksworth Heritage Centre

Finish

The Old Market Place, Wirksworth town centre.

Toilets & Refreshments

Town-centre cafés and pubs.

Middleton Top visitor centre.

National Stone Centre.

Public toilets in Barmote car park,
Coldwell St.

This trail is part of New Opportunities Wirksworth's
Wirksworth Works project, funded by the National
Lottery Heritage Fund and supported by Wirksworth
Town Council.

Wirksworth Works is grateful to Walking for Health walk
leader Dave Brown for sharing his knowledge. Derbyshire
Dales District Council Walking for Health offers weekly
led walks departing 9:45am every Wednesday from
Wirksworth Leisure Centre. The programme is published
at:

www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk
and

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder/derbyshire-dales



Time

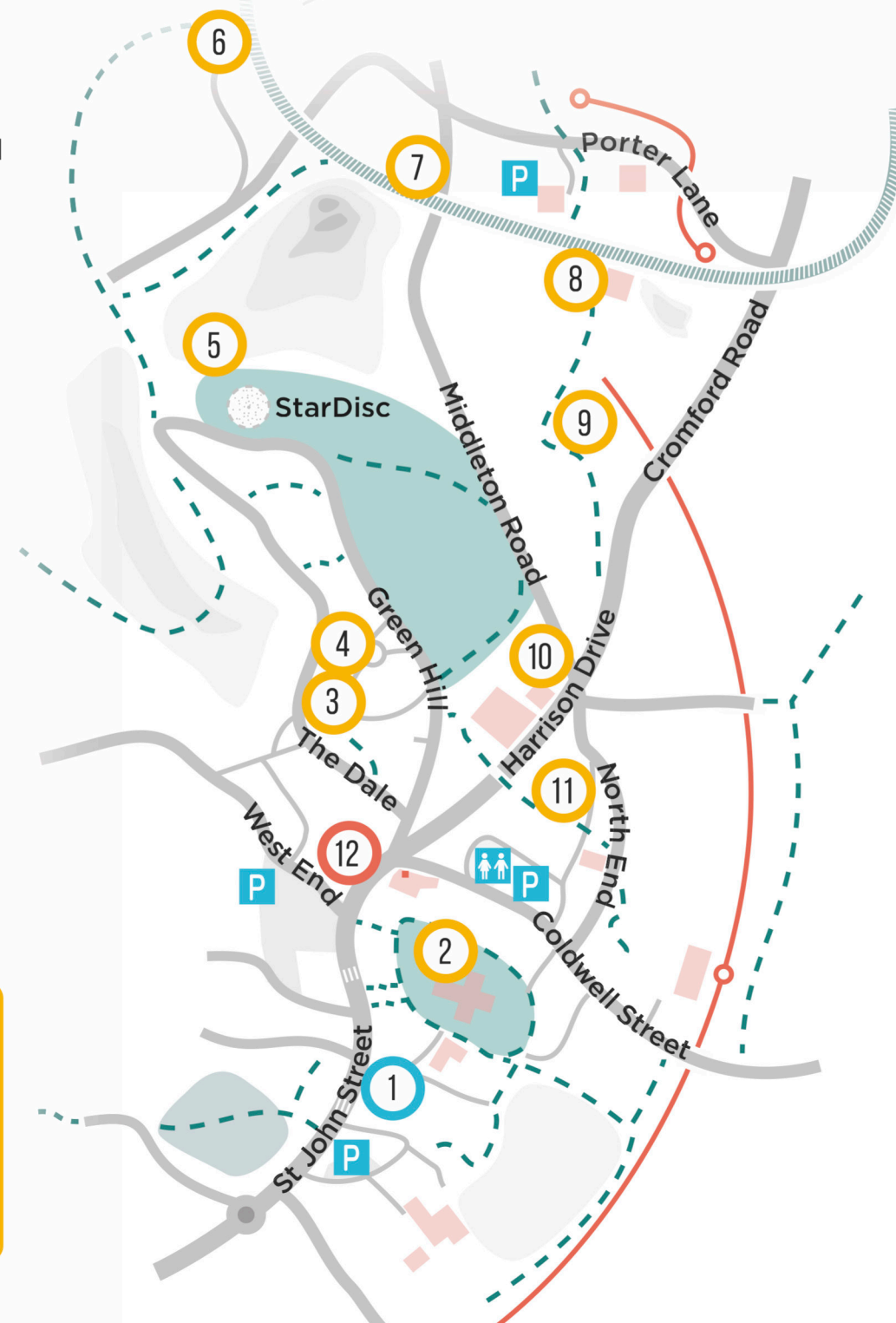
3 hours

Start

- 1 WIRKSORTH HERITAGE CENTRE
- 2 T'OWD MAN ST MARY'S CHURCH
- 3 THE DALE
- 4 WALKERS COTTAGE
- 5 MIDDLE PEAK QUARRY
- 6 HIGH PEAK TRAIL
- 7 MIDDLETON INCLINE
- 8 NATIONAL STONE CENTRE
- 9 OLD LANE
- 10 LIME KILN PUB
- 11 MOOT HALL
- 12 OLD MARKET PLACE

End

	PATH
	RAILWAY
	CROSSING
	GREEN SPACE
	PARKING
	TOILETS



1. Wirksworth Heritage Centre 31 St John Street



Why not explore the exhibitions and refresh yourselves in Webster's café before or after your walk?

Directions

Walk up the small lane beside the Heritage Centre. Follow it round to your left. You arrive at St Mary's church precinct. Go around the church to the door on the opposite side.



2. T'Owd Man, St Mary's Church

Inside the church, you can see many ancient carvings. T'Owd Man is an Anglo-Saxon lead miner carved over 1000 years ago. Wirksworth's limestone was once rich in lead, and lead mining first made the town wealthy.

Directions

From the church, cross the main road, St John St, at the crossing. Turn right, cross West End and browse the shops on the Old Market Place as you walk towards The Dale.

3. The Dale

The Dale was home to lead miners, until their houses became sandwiched between limestone quarries. Residents of the old stone cottages could lose their windows and roofs to quarry blasts. As the quarries expanded, local houses were knocked down. The first cottages you pass are original old housing.



4. Walkers Cottage, 31-33 The Dale

Until the 1950s, this was a grocers.

Here the Thwaites cut sugar into blue paper, sold home-made ginger beer and weighed biscuits into bags for local quarrying families. The Thwaites lived over the shop. Custom dwindled as houses were demolished.

Directions

Go all the way to the top of The Dale, and up the few steps to the wooden gate on to the public footpath through Middle Peak Quarry. Listen for woodpeckers, owls, rooks and birdsong.

5. Middle Peak Quarry

Fancy a beer? Until the mid 1850s, this quarry was Barley Flatts, where barley was grown for Wirksworth's maltings to produce beer malt. The 1855 Beer Act increased malt taxes to pay for the Crimea War and allowed brewers to malt their own barley, so many independent maltings shut down.

These quarries produced stone for sea defences, steel making and motorways.

Directions

Go all the way through the quarry and pass into the field. Turn right up the hill through fields until you come to a small but fast road. Take care crossing the road. Continue up through the fields until you pass through a narrow gate, then walk up to the track. Turn left to find the High Peak Trail. Turn right on to the trail and head towards the tall chimney of Middleton Top Engine House.



6. High Peak Trail

Today's trail runs along the line of the Cromford and High Peak Railway,

one of the world's earliest railways. At Middleton Top Engine House, occasional open days give opportunities to see the engine working, almost 200 years after it was built. You can still see winding gear and other traces of the railway. It opened in 1830 to connect the industrial heartlands of the East Midlands with Lancashire as an 'upland canal'. It closed in 1967.

Directions

From the Engine House head down the steep incline until you reach the turn-off for the National Stone Centre.



7. Middleton Incline

At 1:8, the Middleton Incline was one of 9 steep

sections on the old railway. Look out for more winding gear, cables and industrial remnants near the bottom.

Directions

The National Stone Centre is well signposted. From the trail, either turn off left and go through the asphalt carpark back under the trail or take a right down some earth steps.

8. National Stone Centre

The NSC has an exhibition, giftshop, café and toilets.

Local limestone was created 330 million years ago from the compacted bodies of dead sea creatures lying on the bottom of a tropical lagoon. Prehistoric volcanoes shook the lagoon's limestone and created fissures that filled with lead ore. Take time here to explore the exemplary limestone geology and look for fossils. The Millennium Wall demonstrates walling stone and techniques from all over Britain. Wildflowers, rabbits and birds now colonise the former quarries.



Directions

From the NSC, head down below the turret sculpture by local artist Denis O'Connor and choose the path signed to Wirksworth and Ravenstor Station.



9. Old Lane

Old Lane dates back hundreds of years. When you reach the fields on your right, look for the lumps and bumps which mark the shafts of 400-year-old lead mines.

Directions

From Old Lane you meet the main road into Wirksworth. Cross the main road and turn right towards town.

10. Lime Kiln Pub

Take a look at the Lime Kiln pub sign. Old lime kilns heated quarried limestone to over 900°C to create quicklime fertiliser for farmers.



Directions

At the infants school and before the Co-op, choose the left fork along North End then find Chapel Lane immediately on your right. Walk along the lane until you reach the Moot Hall.



11. Moot Hall

The Moot Hall was built in 1814 for the Peak Barmote Court to meet and enforce lead mining's strict rules of rights, measures and ownership. The Court still meets annually at Wirksworth. The first Barmote Court was founded in 1288.