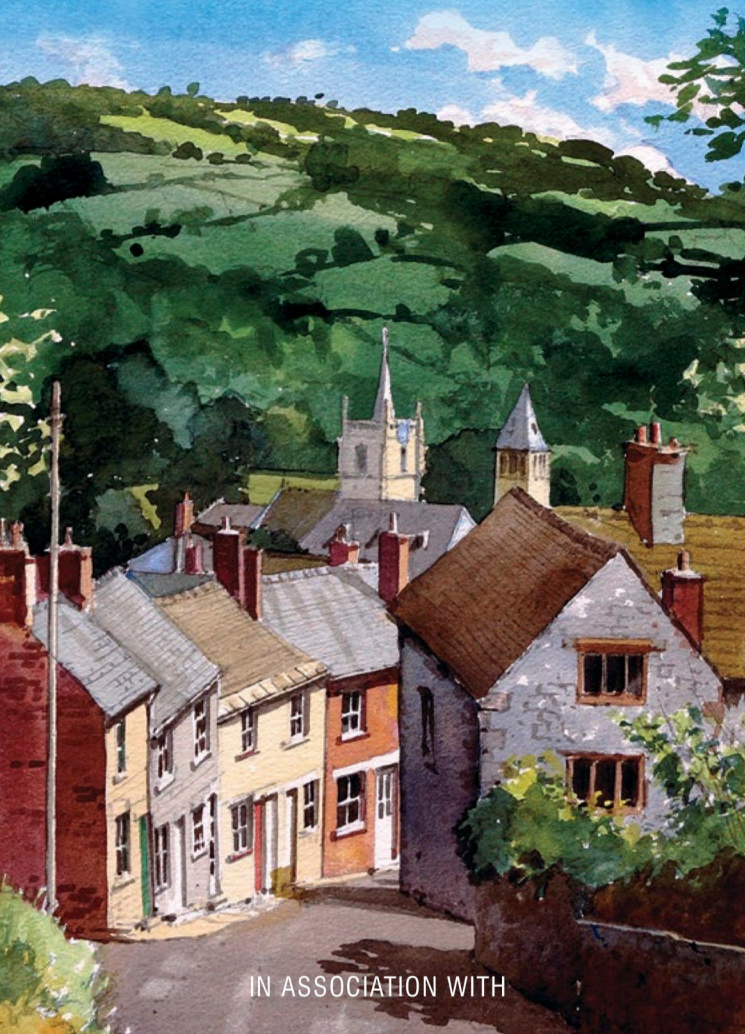


WIRKSWORTH

MINI GUIDE



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Wirksworth
Heritage
Centre



WIRKSWORTH
TOWN COUNCIL



Wirksworth is within easy reach of Matlock (4 miles), Bakewell (12 miles) and Ashbourne (10 miles). Derby is its closest city, just 12 miles away. The town is nestled at the head of the Ecclesbourne Valley surrounded by beautiful open countryside with delightful walks and stunning views.



T'OWD MAN

The name 'T'Owd Man' or 'The Old Man' refers to the earliest known representation of a miner, possibly dating from Saxon times. In folklore, T'Owd Man is a spirit inhabiting mines

and caves, and lead miners often referred to hard rock as T'Owd stone, an unlucky occurrence.

Although his carved image can now be seen in Wirksworth's St Mary's Church and he has been 'adopted' by the town, his true origins are to be found in nearby Bonsall. In the course of restoring St James' Church, Bonsall in 1863, the carving was one of several pieces of interesting medieval stonework discovered in the masonry which found their way into the garden of Mr Coates, the Churchwarden. T'Owd Man was somehow 'kidnapped' and taken to Wirksworth where it was later inserted into a wall in St Mary's Church for safekeeping.

Produced by Wirksworth Heritage Centre with support from Wirksworth Town Council.

Cover image courtesy of Iain Mackay

Town map courtesy of Paul Carr

Photography courtesy of Phil Richards, Wirksworth Festival and partners

A SHORT HISTORY

Quirky. Different. Special. Words often used to describe this fascinating Derbyshire town on the southern edge of the Peak District, where the geology and landscape have shaped its character and its people for generations.

Lead was being mined here in Roman times, and by the 12th century it was one of the most important centres for the ore in England.

Many of the town's impressive houses were built during the prosperous times the industry brought, and a stone carving in Wirksworth's imposing 13th century church depicts 't'owd man', a miner with his pick and "kibble" or basket, who has become Wirksworth's unofficial symbol. By the 19th century the lead was all but exhausted and limestone quarrying provided new work for the town's inhabitants. The railway came too, and so did the dust - dry throats led to the creation of over 60 pubs in the town, most now gone but still remembered as Wirksworth's famous 'lost pubs'.



AN INDUSTRIOUS PEOPLE

Arkwright built Haarlem Mill, the first cotton mill in the world to use a steam engine, and Wirksworth became the biggest producer of red tape for Whitehall, its weekly output equalling the circumference of the

earth. George Elliot, in her novel Adam Bede, based her fictional town Snowfield on Wirksworth, and the character Dinah Morris on her aunt who lived in the town.

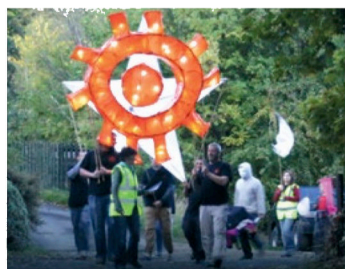




D.H. Lawrence lived with his wife Frieda on the outskirts of Wirsworth, and whilst staying here in the bitter winter of 1918–19 wrote the short story 'A Wintry Peacock'.

A TOWN TRANSFORMED

Over the centuries, quarrying changed the landscape of the town dramatically, and mechanisation brought dust, dirt, and noise. People moved away and took their trade with them, leaving buildings empty and falling down. But the 1970s Wirsworth Project - a remarkable and European award winning regeneration programme - changed all that, transforming the crumbling buildings and recreating a thriving community once again. Today, the railway is still running, ancient customs of well dressings and 'clypping the church' are alive and well, and the quarries have a new lease of life as natural woodland spaces. Wirsworth is now known for its independent shops and cafes, annual arts festival, bustling music scene and for the dozens of artists and creative people who live and work in the town.



WELCOME

Whether you are here for a few hours or perhaps a little longer, we welcome you to enjoy Wirsworth. But beware - you may not want to leave!

10 THINGS TO SEE AND DO

WIRSWORTH HERITAGE CENTRE

Visit the town's amazing Heritage Centre – the place to find your feet if you are visiting or new to Wirsworth, and explore in depth about the town's remarkable history;

- discover famous characters...
- experience the dream cave...
- learn about lead...
- read and hear about literary connections...
- and how we became the red-tape capital of the world!



Webster's Café and the Heritage Centre are open daily, and home to a varied programme of events, as well as the starting point for guided walks of the town.

Tel: 01629 707000
www.wirsworthheritage.co.uk

ST MARY'S CHURCH

St Mary's Church is one of Derbyshire's finest, standing in the centre of Wirsworth in a quiet churchyard. The present imposing building dates from C13th. Its size reflects Wirsworth's important history. Built into the inside walls are earlier stone fragments, notably a carved Saxon coffin lid, and the famous 'towd man' early medieval carving of a Derbyshire lead miner. St Mary's is open every day.



www.wirsworthteamministry.co.uk

ECCLESBOURNE VALLEY RAILWAY

The Ecclesbourne Valley is one of Derbyshire's most lovely and unspoilt valleys, stretching from Wirsworth to the northern outskirts of Derby at Duffield. The railway operates passenger services between Wirsworth and Duffield mainly using heritage diesel railcars, and on selected days steam hauled services on the short branch between Wirsworth and Ravenstor. Special events run throughout the year, including a Classic Transport weekend, Classic Bus Rally and an annual model railway exhibition.

Tel: 01629 823076 **www.e-v-r.com**



WIRSWORTH FESTIVAL

For over 20 years, Wirsworth Festival has become one of the most vibrant showcases for contemporary art in rural England, including the trailblazing Art & Architecture Trail (early September) when the entire

town becomes a gallery with over 130 artists and designer makers exhibiting and selling in more than 70 venues. There's a heady mixture of performance, music, dance, drama, film and family shows



from world-class performers to the very best homegrown talent.

Tel: 01629 824003 **www.wirsworthfestival.co.uk**

STEEPLE GRANGE LIGHT RAILWAY



Enjoy a unique twenty minute train ride through dramatic limestone scenery in an old National Coal Board manrider powered by small ex-industrial locomotives. This narrow gauge line is built on the trackbed of a branch of the

old Cromford and High Peak Railway, now the High Peak Trail. Its most famous engine, ZM32, was British Rail's smallest ever diesel loco.

Tel: 01629 55123 www.steeplegrange.co.uk

WIRKSWORTH CARNIVAL AND WELL DRESSING

See one of the largest concentrations of well dressings in Derbyshire – a unique Peak District custom where wells are decorated with natural materials to create intricate designs. Every year Wirksworth comes alive for a weekend of carnival entertainment in support of the event.

www.wirksworthcarnival.org

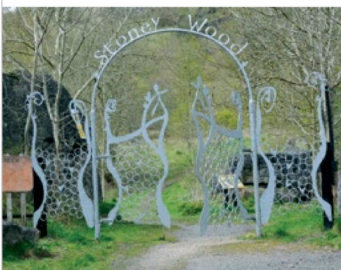


LATE MAY
BANK HOLIDAY
WEEKEND

STONEY WOOD

Stoney Wood is Wirksworth's Millennium woodland, planted in the area recovered from Stonecroft Quarry on land donated by Tarmac Ltd. Planting by local people

has been inspired by the Forêt Giono woodland near Wirksworth's twin town of Die in France. An ideal spot for walking and picnics, and a regular location for large community events.



THE STARDISC

The StarDisc is a spectacular 21st century stone circle created by renowned visual artist Aidan Shingler. From its setting high above the town, it commands stunning views over Wirksworth and the Ecclesbourne Valley. A star chart, carved into black granite and inscribed with the constellations, is surrounded by 12 silver granite seats representing the months of the year. After dark, the star chart, which spans 12m, is illuminated by low level lighting, powered by our own star the Sun.

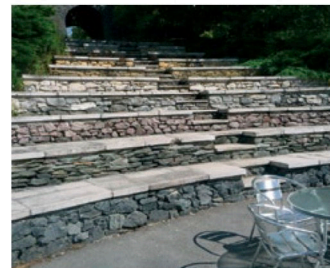
www.stardisc.org



NATIONAL STONE CENTRE

Discover a world of geology that has been 330 million years in the making. The NSC is a 40 acre Site of Special Scientific Interest, offering fossil trails, geo walks, an exhibition, café and shop. It also offers dry stone walling, stone carving courses and other activities.

Tel: 01629 824833 www.nationalstonecentre.org.uk



GREENHILL AND THE DALE

Explore the maze of jitties and clusters of tiny courtyards between the cottages that is known affectionately by locals as the Puzzle Gardens. From the town's central market place, the cottages and narrow alleys of Greenhill and the Dale wind up the hillside like those of a traditional coastal fishing village.



A TASTE OF WIRKSWORTH EVENTS

There's lots more going on besides!

Wirksworth Heritage Centre hosts a regular **PORTRAITS GROUP, OPEN-MIC POETRY EVENING, ACOUSTIC SESSIONS, A BOOK CLUB, HERITAGE TALKS** and much more.

We're also the start and end point for a range of **GUIDED WALKS.**

Visit WIRKSWORTHHERITAGE.CO.UK for details.

First Saturday of every month

WIRKSWORTH FARMERS' MARKET

Every Tuesday morning

WIRKSWORTH MARKET

Easter Weekend

ECCLESBOURNE VALLEY RAILWAY EASTER WEEKEND

Late May bank holiday weekend

WIRKSWORTH CARNIVAL AND WELL DRESSINGS

Second weekend in September

WIRKSWORTH FESTIVAL (ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE TRAIL), AND CLYPPING OF THE CHURCH (SUNDAY)

WIRKSWORTH

