

Explore

the Litton Loop

a self-guided trail

Walk through a landscape created under a prehistoric tropical lagoon to discover beautiful dales, thriving wildlife, lead mines and fields that follow the hooves of medieval oxen. The trail includes the Peak District villages of Tideswell and Litton.

Start and Finish: Fountain Square, Tideswell.

Distance: 5 miles, 9km

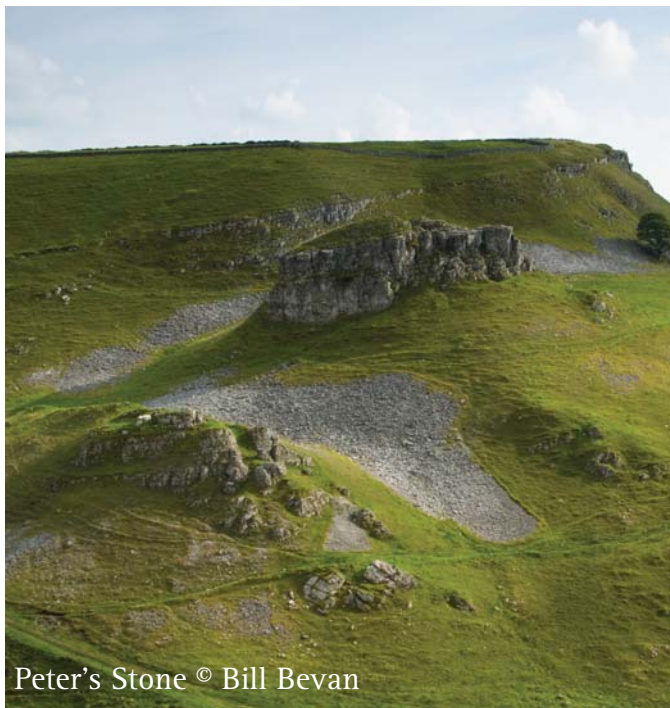
Time: Allow 3 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Route: Along country lanes and footpaths. The trail is steep in places and much of it is over rough ground, which can be muddy in the dale. You cross many walls with step stiles. Walking boots and outdoor clothing are recommended. Please take care of traffic on country lanes.

There are cafes, pubs and shops in both villages.

Transport: For buses visit www.traveline.org.uk or call Traveline on 0871 2002233. There is no pay and display car park in Tideswell.



Start beside the visitor panel at Fountain Square in the centre of Tideswell.

1 Saxon Source

The origins of Tideswell are lost in the dim mists of the Dark Ages when Britons and Anglo-Saxons competed for control of England. About 700 AD or so, a Saxon chief called Tidi or Tidde built a stone-walled enclosure here. Tiddeswall was listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 as a royal estate of the Norman King William the Conqueror. The village eventually became Tideswell via Tidiswall and Tidiswell.

Tideslow is a Bronze Age burial mound on a hill about one mile north of the village. Could it have been re-used for the resting place of the Saxon chief who gave Tideswell its name?

Walk along Queen St, pass the church and leave Tideswell via Commerical Road. There is a roadside path on the right hand side of the road.

2 Farming

Look for the farm animals in the fields either side of the road as you walk. The land around Tideswell and much of the White Peak is cattle and sheep country. You'll see plenty of black and white Friesians, which are renowned for their milk. Most of the sheep are whitefaced Texels and Mules raised for their meat.



Friesians © Bill Bevan



Skylark © David Iliff

Turn right along the lane a little before the main road. At the brow of the hill take the footpath on your left at the wooden finger post.

3 Skylarking

Listen for the song of the skylark as you walk through the fields in spring and summer. Skylarks fly up vertically, sometimes as far as 1000 feet or 300 metres, and hover for minutes at a time while singing. It's their way of advertising their territory to rivals and mates – a song of sex and violence.

Continue through the fields, crossing the walls by the step stiles and follow the top of the ridge. Stop at the highest point just after the trees where you have a good view over Litton village.

4 Walking the Edge

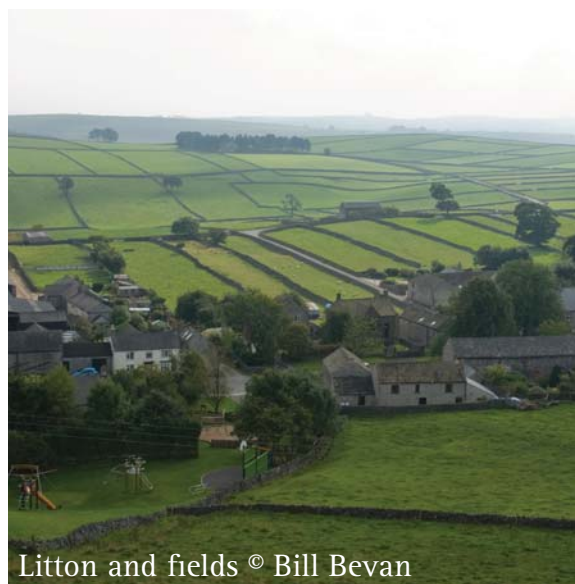
You are now on Litton Edge. The beautiful views across the village also take in the surrounding limestone plateau. Grey limestone dry-stone field walls dominate the scene. Notice the distinctive curving walls that divide the meadows and pastures into narrow sinuous fields? The lines of these walls follow the routes taken by ox-drawn ploughs 1,000 years ago. Then the walls did not exist and this land was part of Litton's common field. Commoners of the village had the right to plough strips - known as furlongs - in the open fields to grow crops. But oxen

don't have a very good turning circle so farmers had to begin turning long before they reached the end of their furlong. This created a series of parallel strips running along the ground in a reversed-S pattern. When the common fields were enclosed in the Middle Ages the walls fossilised this pattern.

The large rectangular fields to your left date from the 18th and 19th centuries when the last commons were enclosed. The straight walls follow the rulers of surveyors who divided the land on drawing boards in their offices for local landowners.

Look back the way you have come to see the TV mast above the trees on the horizon. Tideslow burial mound is near the mast.

Follow the footpath downhill through the fields, heading towards the light coloured house that seems to perch in front of the steep daleside. Turn left on to the road, taking care of traffic. Walk for about a quarter of a mile then take the public footpath on your right at the wooden finger post.



Litton and fields © Bill Bevan

The ground you stand on now was part of this underwater world about 350 million years ago. The Peak District was a tropical lagoon fringed with reefs on the Equator. Over millions of years the underwater pressure compressed these bones and shells until they formed limestone. This created the distinctive rolling landscape of the White Peak and provided stone for houses, walls and to burn to make lime for mortar and fertiliser.

You can see different layers of this sea bed in the limestone on the daleside in front of you.

Keep going down the footpath. Turn right straight after the ruined wall to drop down on to the footpath on the other side of the wall along the dale. Turn right to walk along the bottom of Raven's Dale.

5 Tropical Lagoon

Imagine you are deep below the waters of a tropical lagoon. The bodies of dead sea creatures are floating down around you and your feet are sinking into a sea bed made up of their shells and bones.



Peter's Stone © Bill Bevan

6 Peter's Stone

The distinctive dome of Peter's Stone rises above the dale ahead. This distinctive limestone outcrop stands out because rock around it has slipped downhill into the dale. It earned its name in the 1800s when someone thought it resembled the dome of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Locals call it Gibbet's Rock. Legend has it that the bodies of executed criminals were hung on its summit to remind all would-be criminals that they wouldn't escape justice.

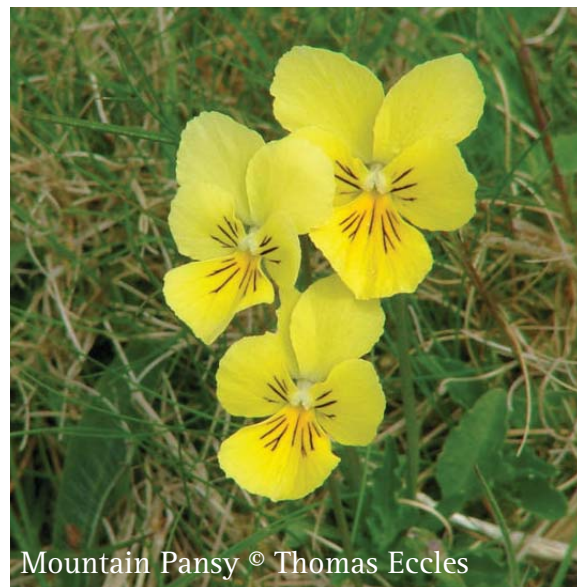
Keep on the footpath along the bottom of the dale past Peter's Stone.

Turn right through the narrow gate beside the five big stepping stones. Walk along the path up the narrow dale.

7 Carpets of Flowers

Have you noticed the flowers on your route since entering Raven's Dale? The grasslands of the dalesides are lit up with a multitude of colours during spring and summer. Wildflowers such as Early Purple Orchids, Dog Violets, Cuckoo Flower, Mountain Pansies and Cowslips carpet the dalesides in spring. In the summer Common Spotted Orchids, the Frog Orchid and Burnt Orchid come into bloom. Butterflies love these flowers for their nectar. Some butterflies you might spot are the Common Blue, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper.

Continue up the dale. Follow the path as it bears right at the top of the dale through fields towards Litton village.



Mountain Pansy © Thomas Eccles

Continue towards Litton. Turn left on to the lane then right over the stile and walk diagonally across the field into the village. You have a great view of Litton Edge in front of you. Turn left on to the main road and head towards the village green.

8 Underground Mines

Look out for hollows underfoot as you approach the gate and wall before the village. If you look over the wall to your left you will see more hollows as well as low hillocks. These are the remains of Litton's industrial past. They are old lead mines that follow a mineral vein known locally as a rake. Miners from Litton dug lead ore out of the ground here.



Early Purple Orchids © Thomas Eccles

9 Mining Village

Litton is a small historical village and one of the prettiest in the Peak District. The village expanded during the 17th century as cottages were built to house miners working in the surrounding lead mines. The cottages are arranged around a village green where the steps of an old market cross survive.

Carry on through the village passing the market cross on your right. Leave the village along the main road. There is a roadside path immediately after the national speed limit signs. Take the lane on your right with the unsuitable for motor vehicles sign. This road takes you back into Tideswell.

We hope you have enjoyed walking the Litton Loop. This trail is also available as an mp3 audio tour. There is also an easy-going trail around Tideswell's Hidden Histories.

This trail has been produced by Visit Tideswell Accommodation Group with funding from the Peak District Sustainable Development Fund, Tideswell and District Community Association, Tideswell Parish Council and Visit Peak District.



NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Supported by the Sustainable Development Fund

Interpretation and design: www.inheritage.co.uk