
Walk 10 Ticknall to Staunton Harold Hall and back

Distance: about 12 km (7.75 miles)

Time: half a day but you may want to make a full day and visit Calke Abbey. There is also a garden centre at Staunton Harold Hall

Not suitable for people with walking difficulties as there are steps on some sections of the walk.

The walk can easily be split into two shorter circuits; by parking at Staunton Harold or one of the car parks by Staunton Harold Reservoir (locations 12 and 13 on the map) you can cut out over a mile of walking through the village of Ticknall.

This walk can easily be started at either Ticknall or Staunton Harold Hall as there is good parking at both places.

For Ticknall, drive through the village and look for the car park at the village hall [1][SK 35326 24040] on the north side of the village, clearly signposted from the main road.

It is also possible to park at other car parks along the route [12, 13] (see map) and all are currently free.

From the car park in Ticknall, head back to the main road and turn left. Go through the village and when you are almost at the end, opposite the last house on the left-hand side, turn right onto a tarmacked track into the former Ticknall limeyards. These lime quarries existed on both sides of the main road through the village and worked limestones and mudstones of Carboniferous age. Ticknall was also once home to a flourishing pottery industry in the 16th to the 19th centuries (p.25). You can still find old pottery debris in the fields around the village.

Continue along the track for a short distance until you reach a field on your right then take a path off to your left. After a short walk down you will see a major arch of rock below which there is a cave [2][SK 36155 23754]. This is man-made and the limestone was mined here and in other parts of the limeworks (p.27). The more intrepid walkers can scramble down the bank and take a closer look at the cave. Return to the track and head back the way you came. After a short distance, take a path off to your left and head into the Ticknall Lime Yards SSSI and through the main quarries. Please note the sign warning about the potential hazards and also that hammering of the rock faces is not allowed. To your left you can see a quarry face composed of a well-bedded yellowish rock called dolostone (p.6). Just ahead you come to a buttress of this rock. It is not a particularly fossiliferous rock as many of the fossils were destroyed in the alteration process to dolomite. This is the main mineral that makes up the dolostone rock. Immediately past the buttress, turn left and head down the path for a short distance. You will come to another rock face [3][SK 35950 23724] that again shows good, near-horizontal bedding, it also contains some beds of mudstone and pure white limestone at the bottom. Look to your right and you will see a large block of rock that is dipping quite steeply towards the face. This is actually a block from the collapse of a former mine here.

Return to the main path and turn left, continuing through the old quarries and note the large piles of quarry spoil here. You will pass rock pillars and go under a bridge — tall people beware, but there is an avoiding path. Soon you will come to a tunnel [4][SK 35615 23754]. This was where the Ticknall Tramway (p.28) entered the quarries. It was built so the tramway avoided crossing the road to Calke Abbey and is considered to be one of the oldest railway arches in the world. To avoid walking through the tunnel, take a path off to the left just before the entrance, cross over the road to Calke Abbey and continue on to a gate. Go through the gate and after about 30 m take a path on your left, joining up with the tunnel route. If you go through the tunnel take care as the floor is uneven and slippery and the roof height is very variable. At the end of the tunnel, ascend the steps on your left, cross over two stiles and take the right-hand of the two paths.

The next section of the walk passes through pasture fields that may contain sheep. You will come to a wall which you cross using a stile, climb over a second stile and across a field to turn right on the road to Calke Abbey. Continue along the road, go over a cattle grid and climb up the hill ahead. You are climbing up a slope formed by a bed of resistant

sandstone in the Millstone Grit. At the crest of the hill, continue down the other side — the gentler gradient shows that you are descending what is called a dip slope, caused by tilting of this bed of sandstone. Where the road bends to the left, you will need to continue straight ahead along a path. At the bottom of the slope, turn left along a grass track. Soon, Calke Abbey [5][SK 36740 22615] will come into view (p.35) and you will join the tarmacked road leading away from the Abbey. If you would like to visit the abbey, turn left.

If you are not visiting the abbey, turn right along this road. You will pass the church on your left [6][SK 36899 22344] but access is only possible from the abbey and gardens. Continue along the exit road from the abbey until you reach a normal road and then turn right. This road is quiet as it mainly serves visitor traffic leaving the abbey. At the next junction, turn left and after about 300 m, you will come to a bend with a signpost and turn off to the right here into Dimminsdale [7][SK 37551 21815]. Dimminsdale is a 6.5 hectare nature reserve owned by Severn Trent Water and managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The varied geology has resulted in a good mix of habitats — scrub, damp woodland, open water and glades. Interpretation boards provide information on the flora and birdlife of the reserve — you may be lucky and spot a kingfisher here. In early spring, the nature reserve is also noted for its fabulous display of snowdrops. However, please note that the paths may be muddy.

Dimminsdale was formerly another area of limeyards (p.29) that was also connected to the Ticknall Tramway, but opening later in 1830. Coal was also brought here by the tramway to fire the lime kilns, from the nearby, now-disused, colliery in Rough Heath Wood. Sadly, none of the former lime quarries are now visible as they are all submerged under water. On p.28 is an artist's representation of what they looked like in their heyday. The remains of some of the lime kilns are still visible.

After a short distance descend a series of steps to a junction in the path. Take the left-hand path and after a while you will come to a post with the number 6 on it. Just off to the right here and ahead, you will see a rock face [8][SK 37642 21709]. This is a bed of pebbly sandstone in the Millstone Grit. These strata overlie and are therefore younger than the limestones worked in the quarries.

They form what is known as the quarry 'overburden', or waste material that had to be removed prior to quarrying the limestone. It is not known whether this sandstone was worked at all but it may have been used for dry stone walls, as was sandstone quarried from near Calke Abbey.

At the far side of the nature reserve, take the footpath off to the left and continue along a grass path until you reach a road. Turn left here towards Staunton Harold Hall [9][SK 37765 20980] (p.34). Just before you reach this road, you will cross over the Thringstone Fault, the major structure that marks the northern boundary of the Leicestershire Coalfield; so you are now walking on rocks of the Carboniferous Coal Measures. In the past, coal was mined from the nearby village of Heath End for use on the Staunton Harold Estate.

At Staunton Harold, you may like to look around and visit the garden centre. The hall, built between 1760 and 1778, is not open to the public but there is an attractive church [10][SK 37940 20936]. This church, managed by the National Trust, is only open on specific days, so it is best to check on the National Trust website when planning your visit.

Exit via the road crossing the lake in front of the hall, where there is often a good variety of bird life. Take a footpath immediately on your left, continuing up the hill and entering the wood on your left, known as Keith's Clump [11][SK 38272 21160]. This is a permissive path, so please read the notice and follow all instructions given. Follow the path through the wood, continuing beyond along a lengthy stretch with a wall to your left. Here, we have crossed over an unconformity representing a time gap of about 70 million years, and are now on the Triassic Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation. In the field to your right, you may be able to see blocks of this sandstone. Soon you will come to a stile on your left and after crossing it, take the path going downhill through more woodland. There are good views to your left looking back towards Staunton Harold Hall.

At the bottom, you will come to a car park [12][SK 37802 21980]; turn left and exit in the left corner onto a road, turning left and crossing the southern tip of Staunton Harold Reservoir. You have now returned to Dimminsdale; retrace your steps up the hill, turning right and past the exit road from Calke Abbey. Continue down to another car park [13][SK 37519

22657], which has excellent views over the reservoir and an interpretation board giving details of the wildlife. Exit the car park and continue along the path from the end of the road, down to the reservoir shore and turn left along the shore. Cross over the shallow water and the path runs parallel to a wire fence on your left marking the boundary of the Calke Estate. Cross a stile at the end of the fence and continue on for about 40 m, then take a path off to your right. The path now crosses a number of fields and you may see blocks of sandstone in these fields, derived from the Millstone Grit. You will eventually come back to the track through the Ticknall limeyards. Follow this back to the main road, turn left and head back to the car park.

Figures

(Figure 114) *Gigantoproductus*. One of the fossils that may be found in the Ticknall limeyards.

(Figure 115) Walk 10 route map Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2011.

(Figure 116) Well-bedded limestones and mudstones of the Ticknall Limestone Formation exposed in the former limeyards at Ticknall.

(Figure 117) Collapsed block of limestone in the Ticknall limeyards.

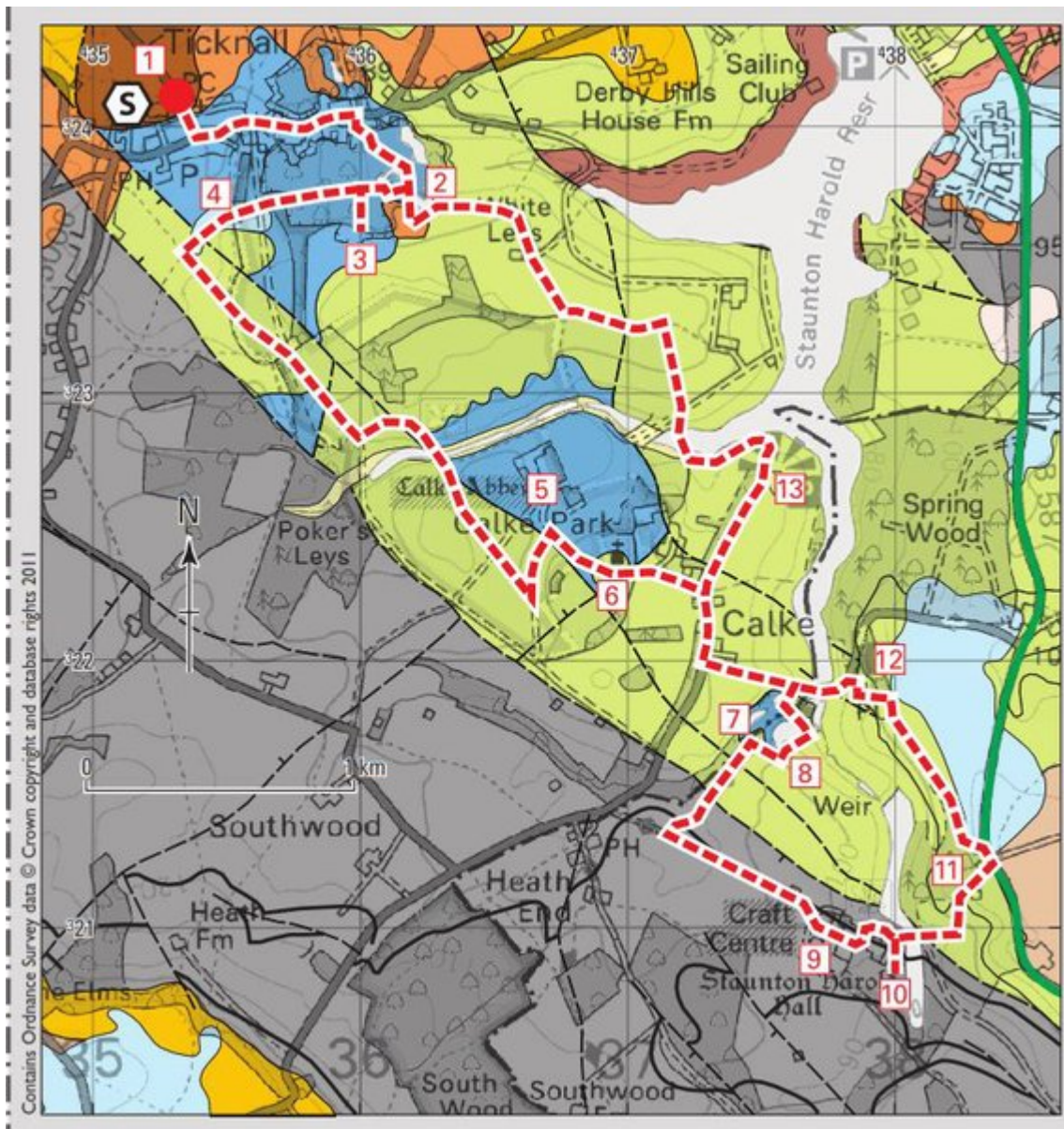
(Figure 118) Calke Abbey church.

(Figure 119) Snowdrops at Dimminsdale, a nature reserve near Calke. The reserve is owned by Severn Trent Water and managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. Photograph © Christopher Beech courtesy of NFC.

(Figure 120) Staunton Harold Hall.



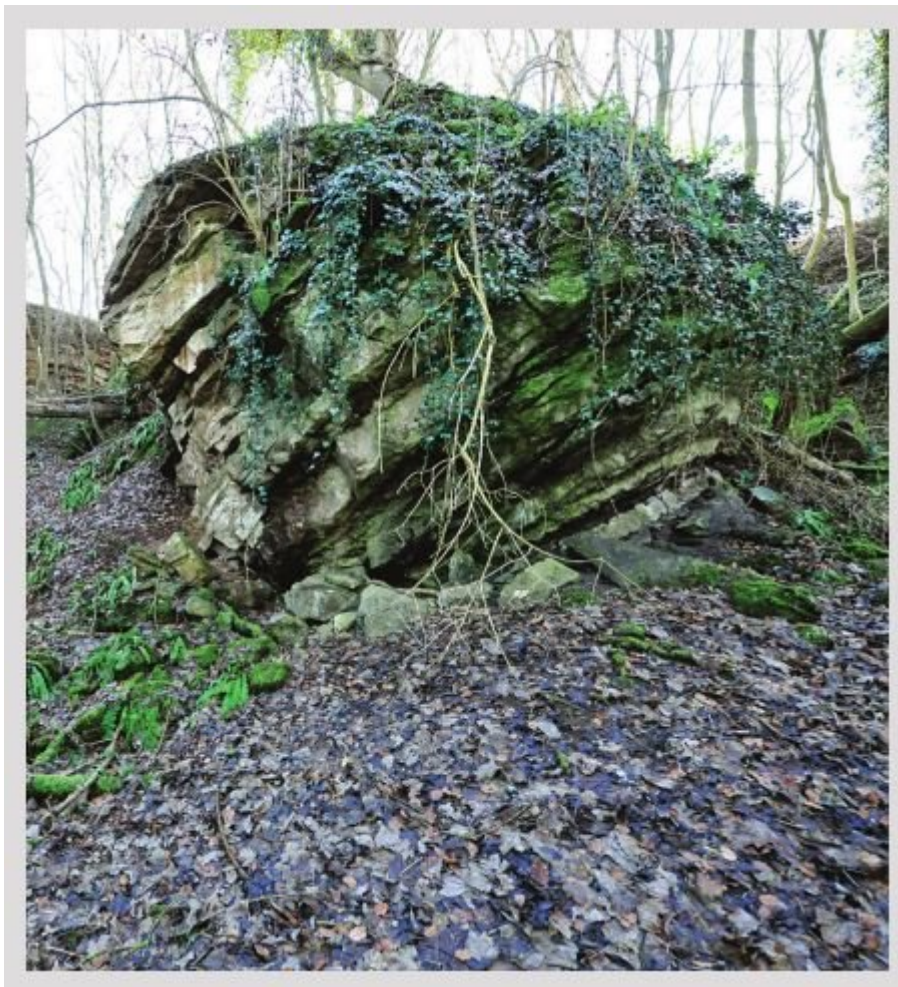
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Photograph © Christopher Beech, courtesy of NFC

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(Figure 120) Staunton Harold Hall.