

# Eyam Moor, Abney and Stoke Ford

**A nice location away from the crowds, superb open views, deep gorges, woodland and babbling streams combine to make this a varied and fulfilling walk. Don't be put off by the length of the description, as the route is not generally hard to find and the small amount of navigational effort required is amply repaid by the varied nature of the terrain.**

## Walk Facts:

Start	Sir William Hill Road (actually a track) at SK 225 780, on the minor road from Eyam to Grindleford
Terrain	Paths and tracks over moorland, through gorges and woodland. More demanding than its length suggests, as height is gained and lost several times. Significant parts of the route will be muddy and wet after rain, at which times waterproof boots are essential.
Length	About eight miles
Time	Around four hours
Food/Drink	Shops, cafes and pubs in Eyam (a mile from the start). Nothing en-route.
Toilets	Eyam. None en-route.

## Route

Park the car on Sir William Hill Road, a track which leaves the Eyam to Grindleford road at a sharp bend. Walk up the track towards the summit with its communications tower.

The name of the hill is something of an enigma, since it's far from certain just who "Sir William" was. The name is ancient, appearing in Eyam parish registers as far back as the late seventeenth century. Baddeley's guide to the Peak District, published in 1899, claimed it may have been named after Sir William Peveril, son of William the Conqueror, but this is far from certain as many other noblemen associated with the area were also called William, as it was a popular name in aristocratic circles for many years.



Follow the track right over the hill, passing first the chimney of Ladywash Mine (a little way from the track on the left) and then the tower, and continuing down the other side. There are excellent views all round. Near the summit the wall on the right has been undermined by the tunnelling of badgers.

Eventually the track joins a minor road. Walk straight on along this for a few metres, then join another track on the right. Follow this track, ignoring footpaths to Stoke Ford and Bretton Clough & Abney, until it becomes a

metalled road near a house.

Immediately past the house take a footpath which passes behind the building. This footpath has been enclosed by a new fence on the right and a wall on the left. It's a rather curious arrangement and gives the impression that walkers are not particularly welcome. After a short while you come to a stile with a touching memorial plaque. Nearby, the new fence has isolated a memorial seat, complete with its own plaque. One wonders what the reaction of the donors would be to its present inaccessibility.

The next section of the walk requires a little care in navigation but the interesting and varied terrain you'll be walking through makes this worthwhile.

Cross the stile and continue along the path for a short distance until it takes a right-hand hairpin bend to double back on itself near another seat. Go straight on here to follow a less distinct path which goes steeply down through woods.

At the bottom of the hill, walk straight on to pass to the left of a distinct cone-shaped hill, keeping the steep wall of the gorge on your left. At this point you leave the woodland and enter an area of rough ground with bracken. Follow the path which meanders downhill, ignoring others which go up the hillside to the left or towards the woods on the right.

When the hills have been left behind, look for a small ridge running left to right ahead of you, with the foundations and footings of a couple of ruined buildings on top of it. Walk up to the ruins and then turn left and follow the ridge, with a small stream a little way to the left, until a point where the land begins to descend steeply to a larger stream with a distinct footpath on its far side. Look for a crossing place below on the right and find your way down to this (circle around to the right, do not descend directly down the bank!). Cross the stream and climb to join the distinct path, turning right onto it. You'll be glad to know that the rest of the route is much easier to follow!

Continue along the path as it crosses two wooden bridges with a stile between them. Shortly after this you begin to climb out of the wooded gorge, initially utilising steps built into the path. I heartily dislike such steps - they ruin the illusion of wildness and are damned hard work to boot! Like Lake District guidebook writer A. Wainwright, I think stairs should be used for going to bed, not climbing hills!

As you exit from the valley there's a stile into a field. From here you follow the obvious path through fields to a farm. Pass to the right of the buildings of Cockey Farm on the access track, then go straight on where the track turns left, keeping the wall on your right, to a finger-post by the wall a little way ahead. Cross the wall by the stile and the head diagonally left across the field. There's a large agricultural building on the hillside ahead - head to the left of it. When the field boundary is reached, look for a gate and pass through this to join a green track on the hillside which swings left (you're now heading away from the buildings but don't worry!). Follow the track until it joins a road, then turn right and walk into Abney.

Shortly after passing a telephone box, look for a finger post on the right marked Stoke Ford and Eyam. This part of the walk starts off as a track but soon becomes path through the wooded valley of Abney Clough with a stream below and to the right. The route is very obvious so you can relax from the navigation for a while and enjoy the scenery. The woods are alive with birds in spring and summer, the babbling of the stream is never far away and there are wild flowers in the places where the woods thin out. Wonderful!

Eventually you get to Stoke Ford. You can't miss it - it's a place where a number of footpaths and streams converge. While it used to be a ford, two bridges now provide easy crossing of the water. It's a great place to pause for a picnic (and is well used for this purpose on busy days!).

To continue on your way, cross both bridges and pass an oblong stone structure (which makes a good resting



place). There's a sign put up by the Peak District and Northern Counties Footpaths Preservation Society in 1939, pointing the way "by Gotherage Barn to Grindleford and to Eyam". It's interesting that this sign, erected on the eve of war, is still pointing the way after sixty five years. I wonder how many modern finger-posts and signs will last even half that time?

The Society was founded as far back as 1894, though it has its roots in the "Manchester Association for the Preservation of Ancient Public Footpaths" which dates from 1826. It's still going strong, under the somewhat shortened name of **The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society**.

Somewhat sadly, we won't be following the route indicated by the hoary old sign. Instead, we go immediately to its left to climb out of the valley through the woodland.

The path soon levels off and you cross a stile by a gate into moorland. Follow the path keeping the fence on your left until you eventually descend to a stile by a gate with another sign. Don't cross the main stream here but instead go through a stile to enter an area of young conifers. Follow the path through the trees in Highlow Wood (which will be a quagmire after rain!) until eventually you emerge into a field.

Follow the path through several fields, at one point making use of a gateway in a wall, until you pass Tor Farm which has had a lot of reconstruction work done, including some impressive new drystone walls. Just past the farm you emerge onto a minor road. Turn right onto this.

The trains you can hear on this part of the walk are down in the valley, passing through the town of Hathersage, which comes into view behind you as the road climbs. The railway is the Hope Valley line joining Sheffield to Manchester. Until the end of 2003 the stopping service on this line had the distinction of using the oldest trains in regular service in the UK, dating from the 1950s. These days however, much newer trains are used.

Follow the road uphill until it levels off and you find yourself with a large dilapidated stone barn on your left. At this point look for a stile in the wall on the right, by a gate - it's rather easy to miss so take care. If you find yourself still on the road with the farm buildings behind you, you've missed it!

Once over the stile turn left and follow the path which climbs above the road for a short while then swings to the right. Then it's simply a case of following the obvious path for a mile or so across Eyam Moor back to the point where the Sir William Hill Road track leaves the metalled road, which is where you left your car. The moorland itself was populated from prehistoric times and has a number of ancient cairns and a stone circle, though sadly these are not visible from the path.

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