

Walk 5: Roystone Grange Trail

Map: OS Outdoor Leisure 24: White Peak Area
Distance: 3.5 miles. One moderate incline, but generally easy.
Time: 2 hours
Resources: A pamphlet describing the trail and giving lots of historical details can be downloaded from <http://www.peak-experience.org.uk/tourism/explore-the-guides/peak-experience-guides/peak-time-travellers/attraction-details/RoystoneGrange.html?ContentID=48&PHPSESSID=1de0ca08ea53c2d33a16bec2d45f0bd4>.

This is another short walk that can be combined with a car trip around the southern part of the Peak District. Part of the path is along the old High Peak railway bed, but we do get onto some access land (where you are free to roam), and also see something of the history and geography of the area.

Start Point

From Nottingham, follow the A610 towards J26 of the M1. Carry on past the M1 and through Ripley to Ambergate, where the A610 meets the A6 at a T junction. Turn left (north) up the A6 to the first set of traffic lights, located in Cromford (where the High Peak Railway started). Cromford is worth a look around if you're interested in industrial archaeology. See <http://www.derbyshireuk.net/cromford.html>. Turn left at the lights and right (past the duck pond) after 200 yards. You are now on the A5012 "Via Gellia" which is not a Roman road but is thought to have been named after John Gell who made the first road in the valley (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/foundation-web/DryValleys.html> and <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/foundation-web/ViaGellia.htm>).

Drive up the dry incised valley followed by the A5012 until you come out on the limestone plateau past the Grangemill crossroads (note the Hollybush pub on the right corner). Pass a minor crossroads (Aldwark on the left and Elton on the right). The road runs straight for about half a mile, then there is a slight right bend with a minor road running off on the right to Elton and Winster. A quarter of a mile beyond the bend is a minor road on the left signed Parwich. Turn left into this road which is called Mouldridge Lane. Nearby is Mouldridge Grange. The word Grange signifies that this farm belonged to a monastery, but the monks left the farming to lay people. See <http://www.peakdistrict-nationalpark.info/time/limestone/monasticGranges.html>. Other nearby granges are at Roystone Grange and Minninglow Grange.

Keep on Mouldridge Lane, which runs straight for a few hundred yards, then crosses a track before wiggling left and right to cross the old High Peak Railway. Round the next bend is the entrance to a free car park at Minninglow. Leave your car here and head towards the gate leading to the High Peak Trail (details at <http://www.cressbrook.co.uk/visits/highpeaktrail.php>.)



Photo 1: Leaving Minninglow Car Park to join the High Peak Trail

Once through the gates the trail lies invitingly before you (Photo 2).



Photo 2: The High Peak Trail near Minninglow

Beware of bikes, especially during school holidays! This is ideal cycling country for young families, and it can get a bit frustrating if one has to keep getting off the track to allow bikes to pass. The attractive scenery helps to keep one's temper in check.



Photo 3: Looking towards Minning Low hill (centre)

Photo 3 shows the view ahead, with Minning Low hill in the centre of the photograph. The word Low derives from the Anglo-Saxon Hlaw which means

rounded hill and is often applied to a hill with an ancient barrow or tumulus on its summit.



Photo 4: Minning Low from the High Peak Trail

Minning Low is a prehistoric cairn probably dating from the New Stone Age or Neolithic. Details of this, the largest cairn in the Peak District, can be found at <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=120>.

Eventually you arrive at a confusing crossroads of paths. The High Peak Trail keeps straight on here, and the Roystone Grange Trail is the highest path (centre left). I would have put a photo here to explain, but my camera didn't work. PH took the rest of the photos using his excellent Panasonic camera. The Roystone Grange track was dry but very rutted – it looked as if it could be very muddy in wet weather, as you can see from Photo 5. Follow the sign to Royston Grange on the right hand side of the track.



Photo 5: Looking back down the track

Now walk down the field – you can see the High Peak Trail on the railway embankment in front of you. Go under the bridge beneath the railway into another field (Photo 6).



Photo 6: Over the stile, down the field, under the bridge and into another field.

Still going downhill, look out for Royston Grange Farm (Photo 7).



Photo 7: Royston Grange Farm set in a sheltered location.

Keep going downhill, bearing left, and look out for the stile shown in Photo 8. Climb over this stile and come into a lane running downhill. Don't get too confident – you will pay for all this downhill walking later.



Photo 8: Stile to lane; Royston Grange farm in the background.

On the left is what looks like a small chapel (it might not be!) with a deep valley behind (Photo 9). It is interesting (and it is free) to speculate about the origins of these deep ravines – perhaps they date to the melting of the ice at the end of the last glaciation. Certainly the stream presently occupying the valley is too small to have cut it.



*Photo 9: Royston Grange Chapel? Or is it something else?
No prizes but satisfy your curiosity.*

Once over the stile shown in Photo 8, walk down the track and go towards Royston Grange farmhouse. Watch out for a metal gate on your left with a sign saying that the path starting here leads to access land. Go through the gate and walk along the grassy path until you reach a signpost pointing uphill. Keep going uphill until you reach the top of Roystone Rocks. This is "access land" so you can walk anywhere you like. Keep to the side of a stone wall as you cross the hill. There are good views of the surrounding hills (Photo 10).



Photo 10: View from Roystone Rocks

You may notice that there are piles of loose rocks at the tops of some of the hills. These piles of rocks look like demolished buildings but they are probably lumps of limestone or grit that have been levered loose by the freezing and thawing of water in joints or cracks during a time not very long ago when Derbyshire had a climate like Alaska or Siberia.

Proceed down the north side of the hill, bearing right at the first wall to reach the roadway beyond Roystone Grange Farm. Pass the cottages on your left and turn left into Minninglow Lane at the T-junction. After a short walk reach a crossroads with a sign to Minninglow car park.



Photo 11: Sign to Minninglow car park

Overall assessment: an easy walk, with good views. Lots of interesting landscape and historical features – get the pamphlet mentioned at the head of this page, and look up some of the descriptions of Derbyshire archaeology to get the most out of this walk. If you stopped at Cromford on the way here, try going to Hartington where there are a couple of good pubs and a factory shop selling Stilton cheese. See <http://www.derbyshireuk.net/hart.html> or <http://www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk/content.php?categoryId=132>.