

# Alstonefield and Wolfscote Dale

**A walk through fields around the village of Alstonefield, followed by a long easy stroll along the banks of the river Dove through dramatic Wolfscote Dale and pretty Milldale. This is one of a number of walks around this part of the Peak District, which is one of my favourite places.**

## Walk Facts:

Start	Car Park in Milldale (SK 138 547), off the A515 Ashbourne/Buxton road
Terrain	Field and riverside paths, one steep climb (right at the start)
Length	Eight miles
Time	Three and a half hours
Food/Drink	Milldale (shop), Alstonefield (pub and cafe)
Toilets	Milldale (by the bridge), Alstonefield (at the car park, off the route of the walk)

## Route

From the car park, walk down into the little village of Milldale. Turn left to pass the refreshment shop and the telephone kiosk and walk up Millway Lane (this is NOT the road alongside the river!).

Millway Lane is marked on the map as a track and used to be one but was metalled a few years ago after a water main was laid along it. It's too narrow to use as a road and there are 'Unsuitable for Motor Vehicles' signs at both ends but this doesn't stop a few people from driving along it, so **take care** as there's little room for the vehicles to pass walkers. There's a rather bizarre 60mph speed limit sign at the bottom - for people intent on suicide, presumably!



The lane climbs steeply, with good views behind back into the valley. This is the only steep climb of the day, so take your time and enjoy the views. Eventually the route levels off and you come to the ancient St Peter's church on the left.

After admiring the church, whose graveyard contains some ancient gravestones and an even more ancient Yew, continue into the village. Fork left to walk to the left of the pub and past the tea rooms and post office (which seemed closed last time I was there), then at the next junction of roads take the right fork.

Walk past the Memorial Hall and its small car park then, when a junction is reached, cross the road to a house called 'The Old Reading Room' and turn left to walk along the pavement. Obviously, you could start the walk in Alstonefield by parking there, but that would mean the climb up Millway Lane would be right at the end of the walk and I prefer to avoid uphill finishes to my walks whenever I can!

Walk along the pavement by the road for about half a mile, leaving the village behind and passing a couple of

footpath signs. In theory the road can be avoided by using one of the footpaths but it was obstructed when I was there!

At a point where the road veers left, look for a stile in the wall to your right. Climb over the stile and walk diagonally left to the corner of the field where there's a gateway. Go through this and head for the right-hand end of the small plantation of trees which is ahead of you. Go through a gate at the corner of the plantation and head for a finger-post which can be seen in the opposite wall of the next field, a little to the right.

At the finger post, turn right into the green lane. Follow this until it comes to an end at a gate (at grid reference 129 568). On the way, there's a gate with a battered 'no right of way' sign, leading into a field with a waymark post indicating a footpath - most odd, but luckily not important for this walk!

Cross the stile by the gate at the end of the lane and turn left into a field through another gateway. Walk straight ahead as the field descends, with a wall on your right. When the corner of the wall is reached, look ahead for another wall which comes into the field from the far side and ends abruptly in the middle of the field. Cross over to this and walk on the right hand side of it to a gate with a stile in the far wall.

Pass through the stile and walk a short distance to another gate. Go through this gate, being sure to close it properly as requested by a notice on it, to enter How Narrowdale. Walk straight down the bottom of this short, pretty dale which runs between Narrowdale Hill (left) and Gratton Hill.

At the dale bottom, go through a squeeze stile (a gap between two stones) by yet another gate and walk straight ahead, ignoring a track which runs left to right. Follow the obvious route, sometimes a path and sometimes a walled track, passing through several gates, until finally you reach a gateway (which may or may not have a gate!) leading to a flat meadow.

Do not enter the meadow. Instead, look for a small wooden gate to the right, leading the way into a path which may be rather overgrown with nettles. Follow the path, with a hedge and fence on your left, until a wooden bridge over the river Dove is encountered. Cross the bridge and turn right to pass through a stile and join the made-up path along the river bank.

The rest of the walk doesn't need any directions, as you simply follow the river all the way back to Milldale. Along the way you pass through Wolfscote Dale and eventually reach the road at Lode Mill, where you cross the river by the stone bridge.

The dale is peaceful and quiet. There's lots of wildlife on the river, including ducks which may eat from your hand! Additionally you may see herons, hares and rabbits and maybe even a fox. The dale sides are rich in flora, a now-rare example of limestone hillsides. Please keep to the path and avoid damaging the flowers.



Back in Milldale there's a National Trust information point by the bridge as well as a chance to buy a very welcome cup of tea or ice cream!

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