

# Eyam and Stoney Middleton

**A walk taking in some of Derbyshire's many "green lanes" along with field paths and a steep-sided limestone dale. The views are good and the terrain interesting throughout, even the part which takes us (on a right of way) through workings connected with a quarry! Don't let that put you off, though, as it's a small part of a fascinating walk through true limestone country.**

## Walk Facts:

Start	Roadside or car park in Eyam village at SK 215 767. Note that the lane shown on road atlases as running to Eyam from the Grindleford to Calver road is permanently closed, as the authorities have given up waging a hopeless battle against subsidence. The easiest access to Eyam is from the A623 road just north of Stoney Middleton
Terrain	A nice mix of tracks and field paths
Length	About eight miles
Time	Around four hours
Food/Drink	Shops, cafes and pub (Miners Arms) in Eyam. Pub in Stoney Middleton.
Toilets	Eyam.

## Route

Park either in the car park or on the roadside (where this is allowed) in Eyam. The village is interesting for its many well preserved old buildings. These include many cottages and also the Hall, which is in the village near the church and is open to the public at various times. There's a pub in the village along with a number of tea shops, cafes and small shops selling food and drink, craft goods and so on, situated at both ends of the village.



Eyam's main claim to fame comes from an outbreak of bubonic plague which struck in 1665, possibly carried from London in a package of cloth ordered by the village tailor, one George Viccars. He was the first victim, his burial taking place on September the 7th 1665.

Outbreaks of the disease were not unknown in the midlands at the time but what marks out the Eyam outbreak is that the villagers quarantined themselves, cutting off direct contact with the outside world. Over the course of the next fourteen months, until late October 1666, the plague ran riot in the village, killing 259 out of a population of around 350. However, the quarantine

was successful as the disease did not spread to any of the surrounding villages and towns.

In recent times, it's not the death rate in the Eyam outbreak which has intrigued scientists, but the higher than expected survival rate. Some people never contracted the virulent disease despite nursing dying family members, while others showed the symptoms but recovered. Studies have suggested that by a quirk of fate an unusually high proportion of the population had a particular gene which confers resistance to the disease.

There are signs fastened to many of the buildings in the village pointing out the history of the building. In addition, information panels are situated opposite the Hall, along with the old village stocks. Sadly, some of the signs are getting a little dilapidated and I hope they will be repaired before the information they give becomes illegible.

To start the walk, head out of the village on the main road past the Hall, towards Foolow. Look for a road on the left called Tideswell Lane. Take this road, which initially is metalled and passes houses but soon becomes a track in open countryside between walls. Follow this for about a mile and a quarter until it joins a road (the busy A623).

This is a delightful walk along an ancient trackway through the small fields surrounded by drystone walls, typical of this part of Derbyshire. Imagine how much stone was used in the construction of the walls, and how much labour they involved. The area is very quiet, save for the skylarks and lapwings whose song fills the air on spring and summer days. The banks of the lane are home to wild flowers in abundance. This scene has probably changed little in the last two centuries, so enjoy this walk through history.



Eventually, the 21st century reappears with a bang as you join the A623 at a point where a minor road also joins it. Turn right onto the main road (not the side road!) and follow it for a couple of hundred metres, ignoring a finger post pointing up another green lane on the other side of the road.

Opposite the junction of another minor road, look for a finger post near a building. Cross to this and take the stile to enter a field.

Continue straight on for a little over a mile through several more fields, at one point crossing a minor road. The route is always obvious as the exit from each field can be seen from the point at which you enter it, and the path is visible on the ground most of the way. There are excellent views on all sides.

Eventually you join a second minor road at grid reference SK 193 745. Turn left onto this and immediately leave it to walk along a rough track on the left. **This track is used as access to a nearby quarry and carries heavy lorries on working days.** It's safe enough but please make sure you watch out for traffic and keep children with you at all times.

You are now entering an area where man has totally changed the landscape. Follow the track, ignoring a finger-post on the right at a point where the track turns to the left to pass some lagoons used in some way connected with the quarries, but I don't know exactly what their purpose is (if you do, please enlighten me!). This area has totally changed in recent times - when I first walked this area in the 1980s, the lagoons and pools didn't exist - they are only shown on the OS maps from the mid 1990s onwards.

After leaving the lagoons behind the track descends and eventually reaches a junction called Black Harry Gate. Carry straight on here, heading for the valley of Rough Side and ignoring a track (Black Harry Lane) to the left and a footpath / quarry access road to the right.

Rough Side is a typical limestone dale, its steep grassy sides dotted with rocky outcrops. The only aspect not typical is that the track through the dale was itself once an access route (to a mine) and is unusually wide. It is not used for mine traffic any more but off-road bikes do use it sometimes.

Given the industry nearby, the dale is surprisingly tranquil. When I was there, cowslips dotted the banks and buzzards could be seen in the sky ahead. After a while the track starts to double as a stream bed but soon the water moves to one side and eventually leaves the track altogether to run down the right-hand side.

After passing the caged-up accesses to Sillet Hole Mine, which add more water to the stream, the dale starts to become more wooded and the sides close in. Eventually the stream crosses to the other side. Not long after this, look for a finger post on the left by a gate with a stile. Go over the stile and continue on the path which runs parallel to the dale for a while, through scrub, then climbs steeply for a short distance. At the top of the climb there's a superb view back along the dale, with a convenient rocky outcrop ideal for sitting on to admire the view!

After resting, walk through a gateway. Don't follow the line of the small hanging valley you're now in. Instead, strike off to the right, climbing through trees. You soon reach a wall with a stile by the side of a huge beech tree. Go through the stile and follow the path through four fields, admiring the views on the way. When you reach a finger post, ignore the route to Stoney Middleton (even though that's where you're going!). Instead, follow the path marked Calver Sough (a sough is a drainage channel from a mine, in case you're wondering).

When you reach a gate at the end of someone's garden, go through it and walk straight ahead through the bottom of two gardens to join an access track. Turn left to walk down the track (ignoring a finger post pointing right) to enter the village of Stoney Middleton.



Turn right at the end of the road (Eaton Fold) to walk downhill. Take a steeply-descending pedestrian channel on the left just before the school to get down onto the main road (the A623 again). Cross the road and pass a curious 8-sided building which is now a fish and chip shop but was originally a toll house.

Walk along the minor road past the toll house for a short while and then turn left onto another road. This forks after a short distance. Take the left fork (Cliff Bottom) which is signposted Eyam. Continue on this lane, climbing through the village. Ignore a footpath to Eyam on the left and stay on the lane.

When this ends at a gate with a stile alongside, take the stile. Continue along the track, which passes through a field at one point. This field contained new-born lambs and their mothers when I visited at Easter 2004, a welcome sight!

The track resumes at the end of the field and takes you back to Eyam, joining the village near the pub where you can enjoy a well-earned drink!

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