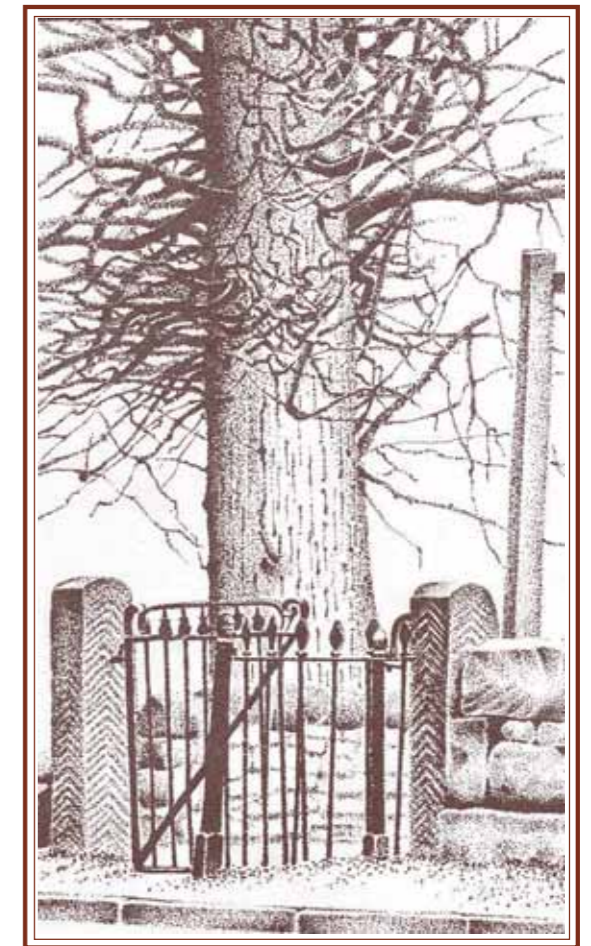


Leek Landscapes

A COUNTRY WALK



How to get there

The start of the walk at Ladderedge Country Park car park is about one mile from Leek town centre near the main A53 Newcastle Road. The car park is off Sunnyhills Road, 100m from its junction with Newcastle Road. The main Leek to Stoke bus service runs along Newcastle Road with stops near to Sunnyhills Road.

Enjoy the walk

The walk is 9 miles (15kms) encircling the town. Allow 4 hours and time for stops. The route passes mostly through attractive farmland and offers many interesting views of Leek and its setting. Some short sections cut through built up areas. The Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 24 White Peak covers the area, or the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 258. Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle under Lyme

Leek

Neatly contained in its Moorlands setting, Leek reflects close ties with the landscape. Its early development was as a market town for the produce of the area's farms. A market charter was granted in 1208 and by taxes and tolls this trade supported the abbey at Dieulacres. Although the abbey declined, the town's farming trade continues.

The mills that characterise the Leek skyline today grew out of the silk weaving industry that flourished in Leek in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A dyeing industry developed alongside, taking advantage of the pure hill water available in the Churnet. The bright green copper tops that feature on some of the buildings reflect the success of Leek's industry at this time. The prosperity of this period left the town much of its present day character and heritage.

Leek is given the name Lec in the Domesday Book of 1086 and doubtless there was a settlement long before. A great fire in 1297 destroyed the town but earlier origins are suggested by the distinctive stone crosses of the area. The name may be Old English for a brook. If so, it is appropriate for a town distinguished by its position on a hill in a valley with the Churnet looping round.

The River Churnet

The beautiful valley of the River Churnet appears over-large for such a small river. Geologists have shown that during the ice ages, the valley to the west of Leek was one of a number that cut through the hills carrying huge volumes of meltwater southwards from the ice sheets of the Cheshire Plain. The Churnet is now dammed upstream at Tittesworth. Much of the flow is taken by Severn Trent Water to supply consumers in the North Midlands. A small amount is released from the dam to maintain a flow in the river.

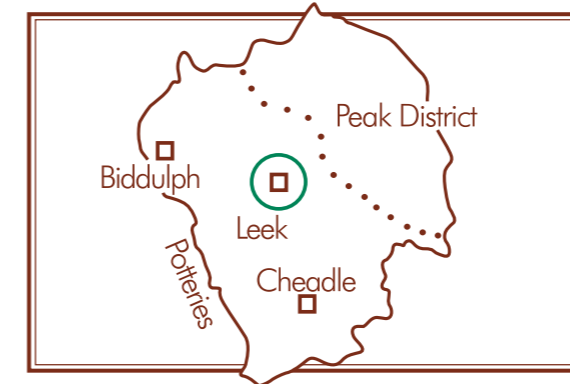
The Leek Canal Branch

The canal feeder is followed for some distance below Longsdon Wood. It brings water from Rudyard to the Leek Branch of the Caldon Canal. The system of reservoir, feeder and canal link was constructed at the close of the eighteenth century. It was designed by the engineer, John Rennie. His aqueduct over the Churnet, seen near the end of the walk, once took the canal into Leek. But the main purpose was to provide vital extra water to a busy network including the main Trent-Mersey line.

Dieulacres Abbey

The old Cistercian Abbey of Dieulacres stood to the north of Leek near Abbey Green. It was built in 1214. The stone probably came from quarries visible on the walk. For a century or more, the abbey dominated Leek's economy. There were abbey farms at Foker Grange, Westwood, Birchall and Easing. But before the dissolution of the monastic system in England between 1536 and 1538, the abbey had gone into financial and moral decline. In 1538, the state took away or sold off much of what remained, including roof lead and metalwork from the buildings. Stonework that could not be sold must have gradually collapsed and has been used in other buildings nearby.

LOCATION OF WALK



Remember these paths cross private land.
Please:

- Keep your dog under control
- Fasten all gates behind you
- Take all your litter home
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Follow the country code

For comments or more information please contact:
The Parks and Countryside Service
at

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council,
Moorlands House,
Stockwell Street,
Leek, Staffs. ST13 6HQ.
Tel: 0845 605 3010

E-mail: countryside@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
Web: www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk

The walk is described clockwise starting from the car park off Sunnyhills Road at Ladderedge Country Park.

1. Leaving the car park, head across the field to the main road. Cross and turn left. After 200 yards turn right along the right hand side of the canal feeder channel. Follow it for about 1½ miles past the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's nature reserve. This is an ideal place to see and hear many woodland birds such as treecreepers and woodpeckers.

2. Towards the end of the woods, turn right along a farm track. Follow the path over 3 stiles, heading for the bridge under the old railway line. Beyond the bridge, bear right along the path until you arrive at the Macclesfield Road. Cross and continue down the road for 200 yards to Bridge End.

3. Cross the road and walk up Bridge End for 60 yards. Turn right between the factory and the first house. Pass through a green gate to the crest of the hill. Cross the stile in the hedge on your left and continue in the same direction as before with the hedge now on your right. After two further stiles, head across the next field to a stile near a gate. Cross this and a second stile, keeping the fence on your left to the road.

4. Walk up the road to the Abbey Green Inn and through the car park to a stile at the top. Bear left up the hill amidst fine parkland trees. Continue through a wood and on to the crest of the hill. Clear weather will give you extensive views over the area before you descend to a stone squeeze gap in the wall ahead. Continue down beside the wall to North Hillwood.

5. Turn right along the metalled road through the farm and continue for ½ mile to South Hillwood. Do not follow the road as it turns left into the yard but take a rough track to the right down fields to the river. Rising again, the track becomes enclosed as it loops left to Horsecroft Farm. Cut diagonally across the farmyard to emerge at Tittesworth Avenue.

6. Turn right and then right again into Haregate Road. Take next left up New Sett/Novi Lane to Buxton Road.

7. Cross into Mount Road and follow it for one mile over the hill known as Knivedon. Turn left and you will cross Lowe Hill Bridge over the Ashbourne Road.

8. Keep right, following the track for ¼ mile until it turns sharp right at a junction down to Ballington Grange Farm. Keep left around the farm aiming for a squeeze gap in the wall beyond. Bear left through the gap and keeping the copse on your right, follow overhead wires to the bottom of the field. Walk down through Ballington Wood to a stream. Keep left behind the houses until the path turns onto Ashenhurst Way. Turn left to the main Cheddleton Road.

9. Cross diagonally left into Junction Road. Turn left after ¼ mile down a lane immediately beyond The Pride of the Moorlands pub. After 60 yards turn left down a slope onto the former railway. Continue until at the end of the industrial estate a right turn can be made leading to a road turning circle. Cross this and continue to the (now partly filled in) canal aqueduct over the river. Keep right, alongside the river and so back to the Country Park car park.

Look out for the Lapwing emblem on a yellow arrow that marks the way.

