

# Discover Deep Dale Nature Reserve

## A circular walk in the Peak District National Park

This is a beautiful walk incorporating Plantlife's Deep Dale Nature Reserve. The route passes through spectacular limestone scenery and beside slopes with an exceptional wealth of flowers.

Along the way is the picturesque village of Sheldon, which is a good lunch stop, and ancient woodlands with bluebells and wild garlic in spring.

### Where to start

Start at White Lodge pay-and-display car park and picnic site, just off the A6, between Taddington and Ashford-in-the-Water (grid reference: SK170705). There is a bus stop nearby, which is served by an hourly Transpeak bus between Bakewell and Buxton.

### Distance

4 miles

### Walk grade

Moderate. The route includes some steep slopes, a number of stiles and some rocky, uneven sections.

### Refreshments

The Cock & Pullet public house in Sheldon welcomes walkers, serves food and has a pleasant garden

### WC

There are public lavatories at the start of the walk and also in the Village Hall at Sheldon (open Easter to October).



## We are Plantlife

Plantlife is the organisation that is speaking up for our wildflowers and plants. From the open spaces of our nature reserves to the corridors of Westminster, we're here to raise their profile, to celebrate their beauty, and to protect their future.

Wildflowers and plants play a fundamental role for wildlife, and their colour and character light up our landscapes. But without our help, this priceless natural heritage is in danger of being lost.

**Join us in enjoying the very best that nature has to offer.**

## Britain's countryside. Save it with flowers.

**Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales**



**Speaking up for the nation's wild plants**

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### Thank you

Deep Dale Nature Reserve is owned by Plantlife and managed in partnership with a local farmer and a team of volunteers. We would like to thank Lee Waterman, Jo Sanderson-Mann, George Challenger and Debbie Fieldsend who kindly volunteered their time to help with production of this guide. Funding was provided by the Big Lottery Fund.



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# Plantlife

## Wildflower walks



## The wildflowers of Deep Dale

A circular 4 mile walk in the  
Peak District National Park



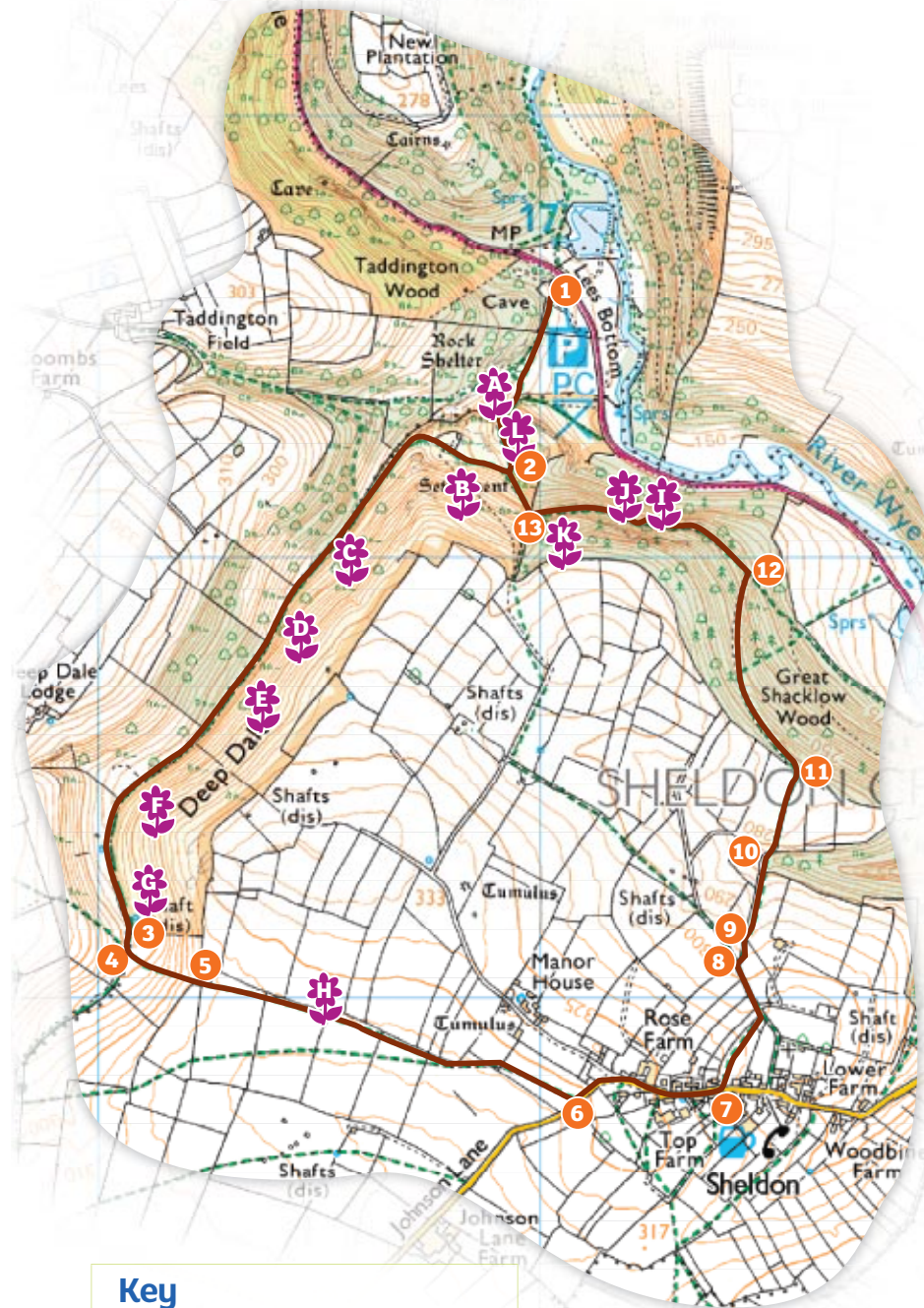
# Discover Deep Dale Nature Reserve

## Directions

- 1 From the car park, follow the path leading gently uphill from the pay-and-display machine. Pass through a gate to reach a rocky gully. Climb over a stile in the wall to enter Deep Dale reserve by an information board. Continue straight ahead, following the path uphill.
- 2 The path bends to the right, signposted Deep Dale and Monyash. On flat, scrubby ground beside the path are the remains of earth and stone walls, part of the former settlement of Horsborough, dating from Roman times. The path soon reaches a dry stone wall. Keep this wall on your right as you walk through the dale for  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile.

As you walk through the dale, look out for a linear hummock running directly up the slope, on your left. This is formed out of spoil from past lead mining. The toxic soil is tolerated by some specialist plants including mountain pansy, spring sandwort and moonwort.

- 3 Eventually you'll come to a gate by a pond. Circular, man-made ponds like this are known as dew ponds. They're an ancient and common feature of limestone areas in the Peak District, designed to collect surface water for livestock to drink. Leave the Deep Dale reserve through the gate and keep left.
- 4 Soon afterwards, cross the wall on your left via some steps and follow the footpath uphill. Take care as the path can be slippery when wet.
- 5 Towards the top of the slope, climb the steps over another wall to reach the first of a series of enclosed meadows. As you cross these meadows in summer, buttercups, sorrel and yellow-rattle are at your feet. Skylarks might be singing overhead and swallows swooping across your path.



### Key



Wildflowers. Descriptions overleaf



Walk route

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Follow the path across these meadows, passing through four gates. The path then bears left to cross another wall via steps, and cuts briefly across the corner of a field to reach more steps into the last of the series of meadows. Cross this field and leave it via a further set of steps over another wall to reach a road.

- 6 Turn left towards the village of Sheldon. Here there's the option of a short detour to Magpie Mine, one of the best-preserved of the former lead mines in the Peak District. A significant part of its engine house is still standing and can be clearly seen from the road. Entering Sheldon, you'll pass a few houses and barns, and then the village hall on the left, where there are public toilets.
- 7 Soon after the village hall, take the path on the left, over a wall and then slightly downhill between a wall and fence. At the end, go over another wall to a track, turn left and follow this track between stone walls, slightly downhill until you reach a gate.
- 8 At the gate turn right, following the waymarker downhill, once again between two stone walls.
- 9 Cross a stone stile into a field and continue downhill until you reach a gate to enter woodland.
- 10 Follow waymarkers along the boundary wall. Soon afterwards, cross the wall via steps into a field and then follow the right hand side of the field.
- 11 Go through a gate back into the wood. Continue following the path through the woodland until you meet another path (12).
- 12 Bear left and slightly uphill. The path winds its way through the woodland. As you approach the gate towards the end of this path, in late spring you might be lucky enough to see the pale-brown bird's-nest orchid.
- 13 Passing through the gate you're back in Deep Dale Nature Reserve. Follow the waymarkers to White Lodge car park. At the T-junction (2) turn right and you're back on the path to the car park. To your right as you walk is the imposing slope of Monsal Dale, on top of which are the remains of Fin Cop hill fort. Here recent excavations found evidence of a horrific massacre linked to Iron Age warfare.

# The plants of Deep Dale

Deep Dale is famous for its wildflowers. They include:



**A** **Alternate-leaved golden saxifrage**

Found low down on the corner of a limestone outcrop directly behind the Deep Dale information panel. Has a triangular stem and bright gold-yellow flowers from April.



**Devil's-bit scabious**

In late summer this plant forms masses of violet-blue flowers in parts of the dale. Their colour is particularly intense in evening light.



**C** **Mountain pansy**

Found where the remains of old lead workings form grassy mounds running directly up the daleside. It's tolerant of toxic lead in the soil and forms drifts of yellow in June.



**Columbine**

Also known as Granny's bonnet and commonly associated with cottage gardens, it grows wild at Deep Dale. Here its flowers are occasionally white rather than the usual blue or purple.



**E** **Cowslip**

The displays of yellow cowslips are spectacular in spring, and at their peak (usually in early May) it is estimated there are more than a million in bloom.



**Early purple orchid**

Masses of these purple flowers colour the daleside in May. They have an unpleasant tom-cat scent and the leaves are usually blotched with dark spots.



**Autumn gentian**

Also known as felwort, its purple flowers need bright sunshine to open fully. A late flowering plant (July to early October) which is easiest to find on the slopes at the southern end of Deep Dale.



**Yellow-rattle**

An annual plant of meadows and pastures, named after its yellow flowers and the way that its seed rattles inside brown papery capsules when ripe. Flowers from May onwards.



**R** **Ramsons**

Also known as wild garlic. Forms impressive drifts at the base of the wooded slope, instantly recognised by the onion aroma that fills the air between April and June. The leaves can be added to salads or even used to make ramsons pesto.



**Toothwort**

This ghostly-white, parasitic plant lacks green pigment and has spikes of pink flowers that resemble rows of teeth. Look for it at the base of trees in April.



**Wood anemone**

Also known as wind-flower, wood anemone is one of the earliest spring flowers. Look for it in woodland and scrub, and terraces on the daleside where its delicate flowers form sheets of white.



**Musk-mallow**

Usually pink-flowered (occasionally white elsewhere), this plant has deeply cut leaves and grows in only one place at Deep Dale, on an area of flat ground beside the path.

