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Lathkill Dale

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Free roadside parking at SK 193645.
Ordnance Survey map	OL24 The Peak District – White Peak Aea
Distance	6.9 miles
Date of Walk	24 April 2015
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Lathkill Dale is one of the country's finest limestone valleys and a haven for flora and fauna. Along it runs the crystal clear River Lathkill. It derives its name from the Norse Hlatha-gyll, meaning "barn in a narrow valley". In addition to farming, the valley has in its time seen much industrial action by millers, quarrymen and lead miners and remnants can be seen, not least the interesting Bateman's House.

The valley is dry until you get to Lathgill House Cave, then the dale widens out and the river begins to grow.

The valley contains an area enclosed to protect the rare Jacob's Ladder flower, so rare that it is listed in the British Red Data Book of plants. It derives its name from the shape of its leaves which resemble a ladder (if you stretch your imagination a little!). In the spring, you might see wild orchids.

This is a popular walk and you are unlikely to have it to yourself but spread out along its length, numbers are not too bad.

There are no facilities en route but plenty of rocks which can be put to use as picnic stops.

The walk starts from a free rough parking area at the junction of Back Lane and Moor lane outside Youlgrave (or Youlgreave – so good they named it twice!), about a mile from Youlgrave (This avoids a pricey pay and display at Over Haddon!). To get there, turn NE off the A515 at Parsley Hay, signposted for Youlgreave and Monyash. After 250 yards, take the first right, signed for Youlgreave and Lathkill Dale, and follow this lane for 2¾ miles to the parking area. It is signposted with 'P' signs at Moor Lane.

Start: Cross the road from the parking (SK 193645) and go through a walkers' gate following a fingerpost for the "Limestone Way".

There is an easy to follow path through/over a series of stiles and gates and through Low Moor Wood.

By Calling Low Farm (SK 181650), go through a kissing gate, following a public footpath fingerpost, then through another two small woods. As you emerge from the

second wood, head towards the right hand field boundary about a hundred yards down the field. You start to get glimpses of Lathkill Dale below, to the right. Go through a kissing gate to follow the fingerpost for "Cales Dale".

Follow the path through another couple of kissing gates. You enter the Lathkill Dale National Nature Reserve and descend a long flight of stone steps into Cales Dale (SK 173653).

At the bottom of the steps, go over a stile. There is a four way fingerpost. Follow the climbing path in the direction of "One Ash Grange". Alternatively, if you want to shorten the walk, turn right along Cales dale to follow the fingerpost for Lathkill Dale, although this misses out some of the more dramatic sections, where it is most gorge like.

When you arrive at a farm (confusingly signed as Health House Farm when I visited), the path goes to the left of the corrugated iron barn, up some steps. Follow the main track through the farm and turn right at a three way fingerpost for "Monyash" SK 166653).

Further along the track, another fingerpost confirms the direction to "Monyash".

Arrive at a fingerpost by a gate and follow "Lathkill Dale.

Keep straight ahead at a copse of trees.

At a pair of gates, follow the direction of the yellow arrow, through the left gate.

Go through a kissing gate in the next field and bear slightly left to the wall at the bottom and follow it along, left. Note if you look over the wall, you might see what looks like another path but do not be misled. Stay to the left of the wall.

The route descends gently to a stone step stile (SK 162661). Cross this and turn sharp right. You are now in Lathkill Dale and all you need to do is follow the main path along the valley bottom.

At SK 167660, you pass an enclosed area with a sign informing you that it contains prolific amounts of the rare plant Jacobs Ladder. This is usually in flower from late May to late June.

At SK 171659 you pass the entrance to a cave and not far after this, the river Lathkill starts to make its presence more noticeable. Continue to follow this, ignoring any side turns.

You pass a footbridge which is the direct route from Cales Dale.

You pass a pleasant waterfall.

There are some old millstones further along and remains of an old sluice gate, weir and dam (SK 184658). These are the remnants of Carter's Mill

At SK 194659 there is a footbridge leading to a ruined building. This is Bateman's House and hides a secret in that it is built over a mineshaft. Furthermore, you can descend some steps at the rear for a closer look. It is quite safe and there are information panels which tell you about the history and about an unusual water pump which kept the mine dry. There is a hand operated generator to light the shaft but you really need two people to alternate between cranking and viewing.

Continuing the walk, you pass stone pillars which once carried an aqueduct to operate a waterwheel.

Continue to follow the river along until you reach a large panel just before a barn, with information about Lathkill Dale. Turn right past the barn and cross the river via the stone clapper bridge (SK 203661).

On the other side, turn left along the broad track, which soon turns back on itself, continuing to climb out of Lathkill Dale.

Arrive at a gate (SK201660). Follow the fingerpost which indicates the Right of Way through the farm (Meadow Place Grange).

At the farm, go straight through the farmyard to follow the fingerpost for "Youlgrave" and "Middleton". When the path splits, take the right fork and follow the wall on the right until it turns right at a corner. Here is a yellow arrow indicates the onward direction, more or less at 45° to the route from the farmyard. This 45° course is now virtually a straight line to the road by which you are parked, about a third of a mile further on.

Head for the right hand boundary of the field where there is a stile about half way along. Over this, head for the diagonally opposite left corner of the next field, where there is another stile. Cross and continue in the same direction, following the fingerpost.

Just short of the diagonally opposite corner, cross another stile into the road. Turn right to follow the road back to the parking area.



