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Parkhouse Hill and Chrome Hill

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Village road parking outside St Michael and All Angels Church, Earl Sterndale (SK 091670)
Ordnance Survey map	OL24 The Peak District – White Peak area.
Distance	5.3 miles
Date of Walk	22 April 2015
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk to Parkhouse Hill and Chrome Hill provides an exciting ridge walk (two ridges really) with brilliant far reaching views. The hills are spectacular limestone promontories to the north of the River Dove and were coral reefs on the edge of a lagoon millions of years ago, in the Carboniferous Period.

The hills are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest by reason of the wide range of limestone flora, including the rare Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*).

The route is not likely to be picked up by casual scanning of an OS map as no rights of way are marked over the summits. However, they are within Access Land and there are concessionary paths. In places, the precise route may not be defined by worn turf but it is not difficult to work out the access to the clearer worn areas.

The walk should not be underestimated, as there are very steep descents from both summits but especially from Parkhouse Hill, hence the red traffic light. Because the rock is limestone, I would not recommend the walk during or immediately after wet weather as it is likely to be treacherously slippery underfoot.

The walk starts at the village of Earl Sterndale, where there is roadside parking on a side road next to the church and a handy seat for boot changing. Across the road is the Quiet Woman pub, its sign depicting a headless woman, said to represent a woman who was too talkative and suffered the ultimate punishment! [See note below #].

The easiest way to describe the route to get to Earl Sterndale, is to turn south off the A515, about 3 miles south-east of Buxton, on to the B5053 signed for Longnor. Follow the B5053 for 1½ miles to a crossroads then turn left for Earl Sterndale (signed). From any other direction consult an atlas or use sat nav. Good luck!

There are no facilities en route but good picnic spots at the top of both hills. The Quiet Woman might have refreshment available on return to Earl Sterndale (check opening times).

Start: From the church (SK 091670), cross the road and walk down the right hand side of The Quiet Woman pub. There is a yellow arrow footpath sign on the wall of the pub, which is easy to miss. As you walk round the corner of the pub, you will see a three way fingerpost at its rear. Take the right hand route for Hollinsclough. [# Note 29/12/2023 the pub has closed. These instructions may need revising, depending on

what happens to the building. If anyone undertaking the walk could provide anything useful to update the instructions, for the benefit of other walkers, this would be appreciated].

After two walkers' gates, cross a larger field, head towards the sharp pointed hill ahead (which is Parkhouse Hill). Cross a stile by a gateway and water trough. A kissing gate is then visible ahead. Through this, head downhill, initially in the direction of some barns across the valley but then swinging left to a stile.

Cross this stile then head downhill at about 45°, to the road (SK 085668). Cross the road and the onward route is clear, to a gate at the foot of Parkhouse Hill.

As you look up the hill, the worn footpath can be made out. However initially, head anti-clockwise round the hill for 100 yards or so, before zigzagging back. You need to look carefully for the slightly trampled path. This evens out the slope. Once you start the more direct ascent, the route created by others becomes clear.

There are no cairns/trig points to indicate the summit but there is no doubting when you reach it (SK 078669)!

Continue ahead along the ridge (279°), towards Chrome Hill directly ahead. The path descends very steeply in places and there are some vertical drops so take care. As you descend, you will reach a point (SK 078670) where the path seems to divide and you may be unsure whether to go left or right to complete the descent. The right hand path is the way to go. I would mention here that two walkers watched our descent and when we arrived at the bottom, they said they had taken the left path, which was horrendous and potentially dangerous and that we had definitely taken the best route. So, be warned!

At the road, turn right then left over the stile (SK 077671) just before the cattle grid for the path up Chrome Hill.

You go through a kissing gate, passing a memorial to Bill Etches of Dowall Hall, the building directly below. The route is not defined but is straight up the hill and a more specific path appears as you ascend.

Again, there is no summit marker.

Continue along the ridge (310°) and descend the end to a kissing gate. Go straight ahead through this, following the obvious path.

At a walkers' gate, turn right following the Concessionary Path fingerpost.

At the top of the grassy hill, bear left through a gate then follow the right hand boundary through the next couple of fields. You reach a broad track and a three way fingerpost (SK 065682). Follow the direction to Booth Farm, to the gate you can see at the far side of the next field. Another fingerpost here confirms your onward direction.

Continue in the same direction until you reach a broad track by two sets of gates. Turn right then left at a tarmac lane towards Booth Farm.

When the tarmac turns right to the farm, head off to the left along a broad track (SK 059681).

Just after a stone cottage, the track divides. Take the right fork (descending).

When the track divides again, once more, go right.

Pass an entrance to private land and ignore a path off to the right, going back on yourself.

Your route turns right through a gate and immediately over a bridge (SK 063669), before turning left.

When the path emerges on to a road, turn left into Hollinsclough. Turn left at the road junction.

Walk along the road for about a quarter of a mile. Look out for a stone barn on the left and on a bend. About a hundred yards after this, cross the stream via a bridge and through a stile (SK 070667). Bear right and follow the left hand bank of the stream.

Stay with the stream until you come to a footbridge next to a ford (ignore a broad crossing into a field before this).

At a junction of tracks, keep left and go through the large gateposts. On reaching a tarmac lane, turn right.

A few yards along the road, come to two separate fingerposts (SK079668). Turn off the lane to follow the left pointing finger. A specific trodden path may be very faint.

At a double walkers' gate, go straight ahead, to reach the road at the point where you started the ascent of Parkhouse Hill. Retrace your steps back to Earl Sterndale.

