

## **Ninety six                    WHALEYBRIDGE – TAXAL & BUGSWORTH BASIN**

This is a lovely varied circular walk. Through the hamlet of Taxal and buttercup meadows of dairy farms one ascends to limestone grassland with fine views. Then the descent to the historic Bugsworth Basin allows return to Whaley Bridge via the Peak Forest Canal and tramway.

Take the train to Manchester Victoria and from there a tram to Manchester Piccadilly Station. From here catch a Buxton train. *Option: - turn right as you get off the tram and on Fairfield Street use the lift on the left to the link bridge lounge.*

The train goes through fine limestone scenery from New Mills onwards. Alight at Whaley bridge station.

Leave the platform and go right down to Reservoir Road. Turn right under the railway and fork left with Reservoir Road.

Pass a converted chapel in the trees on the left and keep uphill past a sailing club.

Go left on the signed footpath immediately after it. Cross the dam. *This is Toddington Reservoir, built to provide water for the Peak Forest Canal. At the end of the dam go right over a little stone stile and take the path on the right of a hedge.*

Go through stile in a wall and take the lane past the farm and go round the new houses on your left.

Cross the main road and take the footpath opposite. Curve right with the hedge. Taxal Lodge is on the other side of it. *Oops – make sure you don't stand in a cow pat! Cross a triangular stile marked Midshires Way (are they sponsored by MacDonald's?)*

Cross the drive to Taxal Lodge and continue on the path. At a fork, go to the right hand side of the little wall to visit Taxal. *Stone built, with an ancient church tower “..it is the ideal village one dreams about... it is a poem rather than a place...”*

Turn left down the restricted byway after the church. Wade across the ford at the bottom – *or do as I did and go over the footbridge hidden to the left of it!* Turn left along the other bank and immediately through a gate. The lane gradually climbs up the valley side.

Cross Buxton Road and go along Mevriil Road opposite. Go down the path on the right hand side of the goals. This brings you out at Shallcross Mill Road. Cross towards the 1897 villa opposite and go right through the new housing. At the road junction at the top turn left over the bridge to go along Elnor Lane.

Cross main road (Chapel Road) with Robinson's The Board Inn to your left.

Go up Eccles road opposite. Follow its bend right.

Turn left up the lane where there is a gothic gate in the wall.

Go through the hamlet and to the left hand side of a large hedge.

Keep ahead staying at more or less the same level on the hillside. *You pass through stiles and fields of limestone grassland with fine views.*

You come to a cricket field. Go over the stile onto the lane.

Turn left for a few yards then go over the stile on the right. Continue straight ahead. At one stile descend across a little valley and then up what looks like a very steep ascent to another stile.

Once over this stile go straight ahead across the field. Above are the big barns of Hall Farm.

Go through gap in barbed wire fence and under the power lines. Again walk straight ahead by the wall on your right.

Cross one stone stile then another and bear left through a little patch of allotments.

Leave the allotments and curve right by the first house and over a stile onto a lane.

Turn left from stile and then immediately left to join Western Lane. Walk in front of a curving terrace of cottages.

Then follow the road right. Cross the bridge (*over the noisy A6*) to Bugsworth Basin. *This was a busy 18<sup>th</sup> century inland port where limestone, lime and grit were loaded onto barges for distribution around the country.*

The Navigation Inn is opposite you. *This is a free house with a range of good real ales and food. Rooms are available.*

Cross the canal towards the Inn and turn left along the broad white road. Follow this down to the canal bank. *This is the Peak Forest Canal.*

Go under the A6 bridge, then cross the canal left over bridge 37 – a foot bridge.

Continue along the bank past a Tesco (*no country walk is complete without one!*) to Whaley Bridge wharf. *Notice the transshipment shed is still standing.*

*The canal was supposed to carry on from this point over the **bone dry** Derbyshire plateau! They ran out of money and instead the Cromford and High Peak Tramway was built from here to Cromford Wharf (near Matlock) where it rejoined a canal. The railway had to transport waggons of water up The Peak for its winding engines!*

Walk alongside the shed and straight across to go along Tom Brads croft.

Continue onto the footpath. *This was the route of the Cromford & High Peak Tramway.*

Cross the tramway bridge (*rails in situ*) and go ahead. *You go onto what is a steep incline for a railway. At the top go sharp right and down the lane. Here is the Shepherd's Arms – a gem of a pub with thick walls, tiny rooms, and a tranquil conviviality. It serves some good real ale.*

Pass the pub, *if you can*, and go left past The White Hart. *Real ale on sale, but Sky screens.*

Follow main road across the river. *The Railway is Robinsons but opposite is the rather nice Bella's cafe with a veranda out back.*

Cross the road here and go right up the station approach.

Cross the footbridge to the far platform for a train back to Manchester.

CLASSIFICATION:                    MEDIUM    MODERATE

RIVERS, CANAL, COUNTRYSIDE,  
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY, VIEWS, CAFES,  
PUBS, SUPERMARKET,

RAIL FARE:                    category two

MAPS: OS 1:50 000 sheets 110 & 119

Philip's Street Atlas Derbyshire.

*\*This is a very good trip indeed but the connection times with the current (2010) timetable can be more than ample – I suggest a shop or a coffee in Manchester. If it doesn't suit you, consider buying a Peak Wayfarer to let you use the tram to Piccadilly. It will be a little dearer but more flexible.*