

Castles and Caverns

PILSBURY CASTLE AND THE UPPER DOVE VALLEY

A lovely 7.5 mile (12 Km) walk exploring the upper Dove Valley, taking in an important Peak District archaeological site - the motte and bailey castle at Pilsbury.

Parking: Hartington village car park.

Refreshments: Several places in Hartington village. Also the Packhorse Inn at Crowdecote is about at the halfway point (with only a small detour). (Opening times are limited - check beforehand on 01298 83618)

This walk starts from Hartington, an attractive village with fine 18c houses. Stilton cheese is the local speciality, made in a factory in Hartington and sold in a tiny shop overlooking the village pond. One of the most impressive buildings is Hartington Hall (now the Youth Hostel), a three-gabled manor house set on the outskirts of the village. Bonnie Prince Charlie is supposed to have stopped here in 1745 on his march into Derby.

A Turn right out of the car park and follow the lane past the village green. Turn left up Hide Lane by the church and take the second path on the left in 600 yards, signposted to Pilsbury Castle. This descends northwards across fields. Just below a farmhouse the path swings left to follow a drystone wall on the left. The path cuts across the stony drive coming up the hill from Bank Top Farm. Follow the waymarked route along the side of the valley.

West of Carder Low the path goes through a gateway by an intersection of walls and becomes less clear. Here, climb half right to another gateway, then head for a group of trees. Beyond these another footpath sign points the way uphill to a step stile in a ridge wall, where you look down into a small valley.

Descend into the valley and turn left at a sign for Pilsbury and Crowdecote to reach a high lane by a stone barn. Continue over the stile across the road, following the path which rounds the high slopes above Pilsbury. The footpath goes left down the hillside to a farm track and wall alongside the ancient works of Pilsbury Castle.

Pilsbury Castle is one of the best examples of a motte and bailey castle in Derbyshire. Only the earthworks are now visible - you can see the motte, a man-made mound to accommodate the wooden keep, and the two baileys, located to the south and east of the motte. The castle's history is a bit of a mystery, although it was probably built around 1100 by the Normans, on the site of an Iron Age fort.

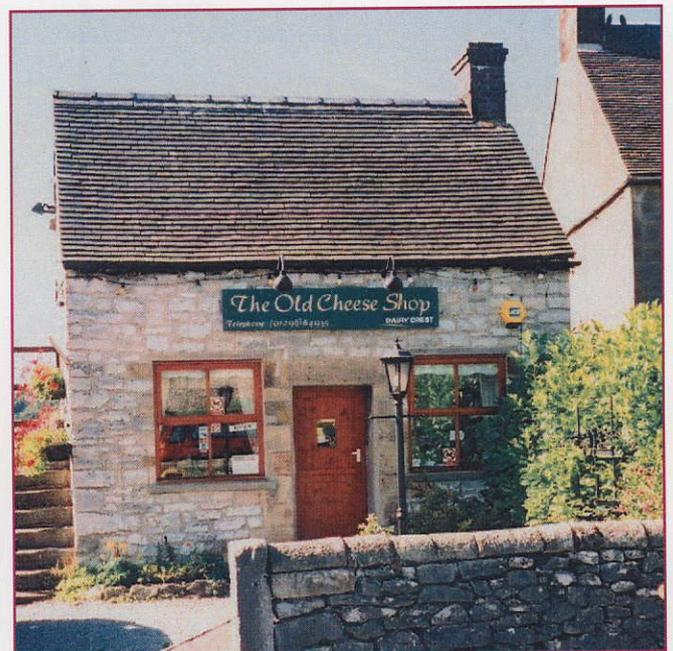
It is thought that William the Conqueror gave the Hartington estate to one of his barons, Henry de Ferrars, who fought for William at the battle of Hastings. Henry probably built Pilsbury Castle as an administrative centre from which to rule the surrounding area.

Go through the stile here, turning right along the route which heads up the valley towards Crowdecote.

B Just past Bridge End Farm (unless you are going ahead to the Packhorse Inn) turn left to cross the River Dove by a footbridge and follow the path signposted to Edgetop, climbing steeply to reach the Longnor road. Turn left along the road and follow for about 2 miles as far as Harris Close Farm, enjoying the views of the upper Dove Valley.

Turn into the drive at Harris Close and then through a stile by an outbuilding. Follow the footpath (with the wall on your right) through several fields. After going through a wood the path descends into the valley, joining a farm track heading towards Bridge-end Farm.

At the signpost to Hartington, turn left through a gate and across a field, then over the river by a footbridge. The path crosses fields, aiming for the woods to the left of the dairy buildings and enters them via a stile. Go into the forecourt of the dairy and turn left along the lane back into the centre of Hartington.

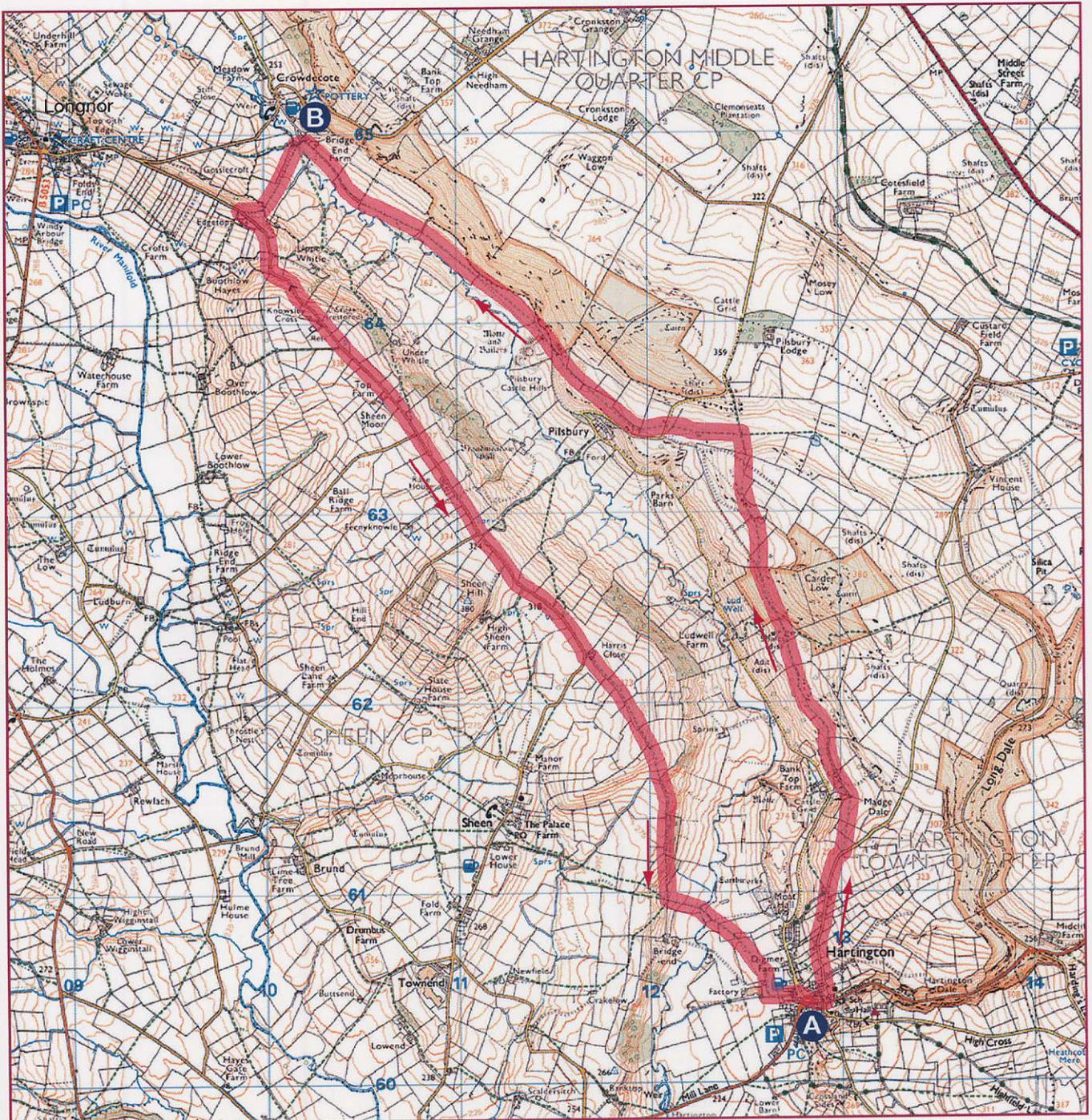


The Old Cheese Shop, Hartington

continued overleaf...

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For more information about the area visit the cycle hire and visitor centre at Parsley Hay, just off the A515 on the way into Hartington.

From the approximate halfway point of the walk (Egetop) you can take a short diversion into the village of Longnor, which has a craft centre and several pubs.