

Hardwick Wood & Bluebells Walk

ABOUT THIS WALK This walk takes you through fields and woodland with panoramic views plus glorious bluebells in the Spring. It starts and finishes at the Ashover Rock (also known as The Fabrick) but if you are staying at our holiday cottages in Alton we will provide you with a bespoke version of this walk which starts and ends at **Wildflower Cottages**.

WHERE DO I START? From the layby on Alton Lane, near the junction with Brownhills Lane, next to the Ashover Rock heathland.

ARE THERE ANY MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB? This fairly gentle walk involves a few hills but they're hard to avoid around here!

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? The walk is 4 to 5 miles in length so allow a couple of hours.

The Walk

With the Ashover Rock behind you, turn down Brownhills lane and follow it downhill into Alton. At the T-junction turn left on Tinckley lane and at the old red phone box (sadly no longer in use) turn left - look out for traffic at the junction - and immediately right up the footpath on-to Quarry Lane.

Follow the lane, passing cottages on the right and left and at the first footpath sign on the right go down the field and continue to follow the well-marked footpath downhill across several fields until you come out on-to a lane. Turn right on the lane for a few yards and then take Grinderswell Lane - signposted 'Wingerworth'. Follow this lane, crossing a stream, until the junction with Press Lane. Go straight across and follow the footpath to Press Farm. Just before the farm building go through the stile on the left and walk across the meadow behind the house and towards the trees to reach the stile by the gate.

Go up the next 2 fields diagonally towards a large red brick house on top of the hill, heading for the telegraph pole by the trees. Catch your breath at the top and take in the lovely views. Go through the stile and turn right on the lane. After a few yards turn right along a footpath into the wood - marked on the sign as the 'South Chesterfield Way'. Note: the stile was in a poor state last time we walked this way and we noticed that people were crossing into the wood a few metres to the right of the stile.

Enjoy swathes of beautiful bluebells in the Spring all the way through the wood. Keep to the footpath along the edge of the wood and leave it where the path curves left at the end. Go straight ahead through a stile tucked away in the corner behind holly trees. Then continue straight ahead keeping the dry stone wall to your right.

Follow the path straight on and through a metal kissing gate, following the ridge. There are lovely views to both sides. Look out for the abandoned quarry on the left and take care of children and pets - the sides are quite steep!

Before the track curves left (no admittance beyond this point) go through the stile in the bottom right corner & head down the right-hand side of the field, through another stile and into the woods. Take the left fork in the path towards a footpath marker post and go straight ahead at the post to the left of the Britton Woods sign. Follow the well-marked path through the woods and out on-to a lane. Go towards the T-junction and turn right on the road to Ashover. After a few yards go left along a lane towards Coldwell Farm.

Follow this track over the cattle grid and past the farm following footpath signs. On reaching open fields after passing the farmhouse, turn right and at the top of the field turn left along a track. After about 300yds take the well-marked 1st stile-gate on the right. The path goes in several directions here but you need to head towards a gap in the wall slightly to your right (marked by a sign) and down the next field and out the gate on-to the lane, heading for the footpath finger post. Cross the lane and go through a stile, heading uphill towards a group of houses, crossing several fields. This part of the route is well-marked. Go out on-to the lane and turn right.

You are now back in Alton. Follow this lane (Tinckley Lane) to the junction with Brownhills Lane. Turn left and retrace your steps to your start point. Do take time to explore the glorious heathland around the Ashover Rock. There are fantastic views from here and the area is designated as open access land so you have the right to roam.

We hope you enjoyed this walk, perhaps the first of many around Ashover. If you want to try more, a book of 6 detailed walks around the parish is available from local shops for £3. All sale proceeds go towards footpath improvement.

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