



Peeling Back Whitle's Historic Layers

Discover the hidden history of the historic Whitle landscape. This quiet corner of the Peak District was once home to a large community of farmers. Populations have come and gone here, but their stories have been revealed by the community, archaeologists and historians who have peeled back the layers of the past.

Please take this self-guided trail and put it back when you have finished your walk. **Please keep to the route, which is on private land, and keep dogs on lead.**

Distance: $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, 1.2km. Time: 1 hour.

Follow the concession path down to the hedge before Under White farmhouse.



1. Spurred on to battle

Look through the hole in the hedge across the garden to spy the hollow-way of the packhorse route across the Dove Valley. The metal spur from a horse-rider's boot found here dates from the English Civil War in the 1640s. Was it lost by someone passing through or a tenant of Whitle? Were they involved in the Civil War?



Continue down the track to Under White Farmhouse.



2. Spot the working farmhouse

There has been a farmhouse here for at least 300 years. More than just a house, it was a complex of working buildings. Can you spot some of the essentials of a traditional farmhouse? The water trough in front of the house supplied its water – for drinking as well as washing. Pigs were kept in the sty to the right. The block of stone at the corner of the sty is part of a cheese press (see photo, left). Nearly all farmers made their own cheese from their cows' milk until the 20th century.

Continue past the farmhouse and down the track until it bends to the right and you reach a wicket gate on your left. Go through the gate and bear left past an ancient tree and stand above the level platform terraced into the slope.

3. Tudor Times

This terraced platform has been made by people. We think it was to provide a level area for a timber house. Walk onto the platform and imagine life inside the house without running water, electricity or central heating. Look across the slope towards the bottom of the valley. Can you see how the field is 'corrugated?' It's easier to see in winter than in summer. This is ridge and furrow, created by ploughing to grow crops. Pottery found here included this sherd from a Tudor butter pot.



Walk up the slope and go through the gate in the fence. The stone trough in the wall to your left has been worn by the buckets as generations of families collected water here. Continue to the ruined stone farmhouse.

4. The Harrison House

This stone house was built in the late 1600s for the Harrison family. It was abandoned between 1851 and 1879. Have the stones been re-used to extend Under Whittle farmhouse?

Underground is the house cellar. This was re-roofed and turned into a vaulted storeroom after the house was abandoned. It then became a place to dump rubbish in the late 19th/20th century. Archaeologists found toys, tins, bottles and jars amongst the rubbish.

Continue past the Harrison house and bear right down the hill to the waymark post for a great view of the Dove Valley.

5. People of the Valley

Imagine this quiet valley dotted with houses, the smoke of hearths drifting into the sky. The fields are busy with farmers tending crops and livestock. Depending on the time of year, you would see farming families sowing corn, weeding the growing crops or harvesting oats and root crops. The terraces cut into the slope below you, like 3 fingers, were created by farmers in the Middle Ages needing deeper soils and flatter land to grow their crops on.

Look across and down the valley to your right for the remains of Norman Pilsbury Castle (see illustration, right). It was built by the Ferrers family to stamp their authority on this part of their estate. The Ferrers were barons, granted land for fighting alongside William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings.

Continue further down into the valley through the gateway to your right.

6. Farmers

The long, broad embankment you are standing on is called a headland. This is where the oxen were turned around at the end of ploughing the common field.

Just below here there used to be a barn, in what was once called 'barnfield' and which is known to have been used by the Slack family who lived in the house with the cellar in 1845. Archaeologists discovered wall foundations, nails (see photo, right), parts of a plough and stone cobbling (see photo, right bottom). There is a hollow-way to the left that crosses the River Dove.

Why is the barn no longer here and where did the stones from its walls go? Look around. Are there other buildings the stones may have been re-used in?

We hope you have enjoyed this glimpse into Whittle's populated past. Please return through the wicket gate to the farm track and back to the start of the trail where you can return this guide.

To find out more about Whittle's past please visit www.peelingbackthelayers.org.

