

## The Chatsworth Challenge Walk

This document contains brief details about the Chatsworth Walks, and also information on Eyam (the Plague Village) and the magnificent Chatsworth House, both of which you will pass during the walk.

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### The Walks

Taken as an occasional break from our traditional three peaks walk in the Yorkshire Dales is our 'On Tour' walk in the Chatsworth area of the Peak District of Derbyshire.

The Baslow walk has an exciting perspective... two circular walks in one! Both walks start and finish on the village green in Baslow in Derbyshire. The main longer walk of 22 miles is for the strong willed and determined walkers who relish a tougher test, and follows the route of the well-established 'Chatsworth Challenge'.

The shorter second walk of 8 miles provides an event for those who feel comfortable with a less arduous walk and also starts in Baslow with the last 5 miles following the same route as the 22 mile walk. The starts of the two walks are arranged so that all walkers who complete their event in an average time arrive at the finish at roughly the same time.

### The 22 Mile Walk

The 22 mile walk heads up and along Baslow & Curbar Edges before crossing the valley to the 'plague' village of Eyam. After Eyam the route heads across Eyam Moor to the hamlet of Abney before doing a U-turn onto the picturesque village of Foolow with its pub and tiny church grouped around the village green and pond.

Once through Foolow it's across Longstone Moor to drop off the steep edge and down into Great Longstone. Beyond Great Longstone is the disused railway line which is followed almost all the way into Bakewell station before climbing up onto Calton Pastures with marvelous open views in every direction. With 5 miles to go this path now merges with the route of the 8 mile walk.

By the time both walks reach Calton Lees they are well into the home straight, with just the 2.25 miles following the River Derwent past the imposing setting of Chatsworth House and gardens.

To the left is the village of Edensor which in 1838, by order of the 6th Duke of Devonshire, was relocated to its present position because he was of the opinion it was spoiling his view. From here the path leads straight past Queen Mary's Bower and onto Baslow and the finishing line.

### The 8 Mile Walk

This also starts on the village green but heads out of Baslow across the toll bridge with the small stone shelter that once housed the toll keeper.

After the bridge the path winds through rolling pastureland before heading through the village of Pilsey. Once through Pilsey the route follows a quiet country lane with marvelous views in all directions for about a mile before turning left onto Calton Pastures to join the 22 mile walk for the rest of the journey back.

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### Eyam - The Plague Village

It is perhaps sad that such a picturesque village nestling as it does in the heart of the Derbyshire Peak District should take its position in history as the place where such human suffering occurred in the 17th century.

Late in the summer of 1665 it is thought that some infected bales of cloth from London were delivered to the house of the village tailor, Alexander Hadfield. They were opened by his assistant George Vicars who very shortly afterwards became ill and died a violent death. His death was followed very quickly by his two stepsons,

Edward and Jonathan Cooper and his immediate neighbours and eventually by that of the tailor himself. This was the Bubonic plague and it was beginning to take hold rapidly in the village. The infection spread unchecked throughout the autumn slowing down in the winter only to return with greater vigour in the following spring and summer reaching a peak in August when 78 people died in the month.

In the fourteen months that the disease lasted it claimed 260 lives out of a population of around 800.

Under the leadership of the Rev William Mompesson and his predecessor Rev Thomas Stanley the villagers agreed to accept a strict quarantine in order to try and prevent the spread of the disease beyond the village boundary.

They were supported by the Earl of Devonshire and by other charitable but less well off wealthy neighbours who provided the necessities of life during their period of isolation.

To control the infection within the village they agreed upon two initial courses of action.

Firstly in the interests of speed, they decided to bury their own dead close to their homes rather than in consecrated ground in the belief that unburied corpses were a major hazard in the spread of the pestilence, and secondly to worship in the open air where it would be possible to maintain corporate worship without being in close proximity with their neighbours.

The provisions for the villagers were left on the village boundary where today there is still on the outskirts a location called the Boundary Stone where it is believed that money to pay for the provisions was left in small holes and covered in vinegar to cleanse it and hopefully stop the disease from spreading. Some people in the village were strangely immune to the plague and science has since shown that they had a particular chromosome which protected them from the infection. Indeed it has been proved that descendants of some of these people still live in the village today and still carry that same gene.

For those of you taking part in the 22 mile walk you might like to check your maps and try to spot the Riley Graves where Elizabeth Hancocks husband and six of their children are buried. It is set in a small stonewalled area in a field to the right of the lane as you approach Eyam Village.

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### **Chatsworth House**

Chatsworth House is a large country house 3 miles north east of Bakewell. It is the seat of the Dukes of Devonshire, whose family name is Cavendish.

Chatsworth stands on the left bank of the River Derwent and looks across the river to the low hills that divide the valleys of the Derwent and Wye. The house contains a unique collection of priceless paintings, furniture, old Master drawings, neoclassical sculpture and other artefacts.

Chatsworth's garden is one of the most famous in England, and Chatsworth has been selected as the United Kingdom's favourite country house several times.

The first house at Chatsworth was built by 'Bess of Hardwick' along with her second husband Sir William Cavendish of Suffolk around 1552. The first Duke of Devonshire was created in 1694 and Cavendish is still the family name today. The high point of the walk is surely the final mile or so which goes past the imposing facade of Chatsworth House.

As with all great landowners of the time the family always had members at the very heart of British politics and in 1756 the 4th Duke became Prime Minister. It was he who decided that the house should be approached from the west and because they interfered with his view he pulled down the old stables and offices, but not happy with that he then razed the cottages of Edensor village which were visible from the house! He moved the villagers to the nearby hamlets of Pilsley and Beeley but the 6th Duke decided that in fairness he should rebuild the village in its entirety (but out of view of the main house of course).

As you pass by the front of the house and look up to the woods beyond it is possible to see the hunting tower where wives, lady friends and children of invited guests would go to gain a superb vantage point from which they could watch the days hunting unfold down in the parklands.

In 1569 Queen Elizabeth 1st appointed The Earl of Shrewsbury as custodian of Mary Queen of Scots who was a prisoner at Chatsworth at various times up to 1584. The squat stone tower at the entrance to the park just over the bridge is known as Queen Mary's Bower (or boudoir)

At the Baslow end of the park is the large circular 'Kissing Gate' which was constructed in 1999. A kissing gate is a type of gate used between fields which allows people to cross but prevents animals from doing the same. Some say that the name derives from the custom and practice of the first person through the gate demanding a kiss from the person following before they would allow them through.

Sadly it is more likely to be a reference to the touching of the gate parts when fully opened either way - a common term used in engineering. However, if anyone would rather believe the former explanation please feel free to demand your customary right from whoever is behind you! Good luck.

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