

PILSBURY CASTLE TRAIL - from Longnor CENTURIES OF TRACKWAYS

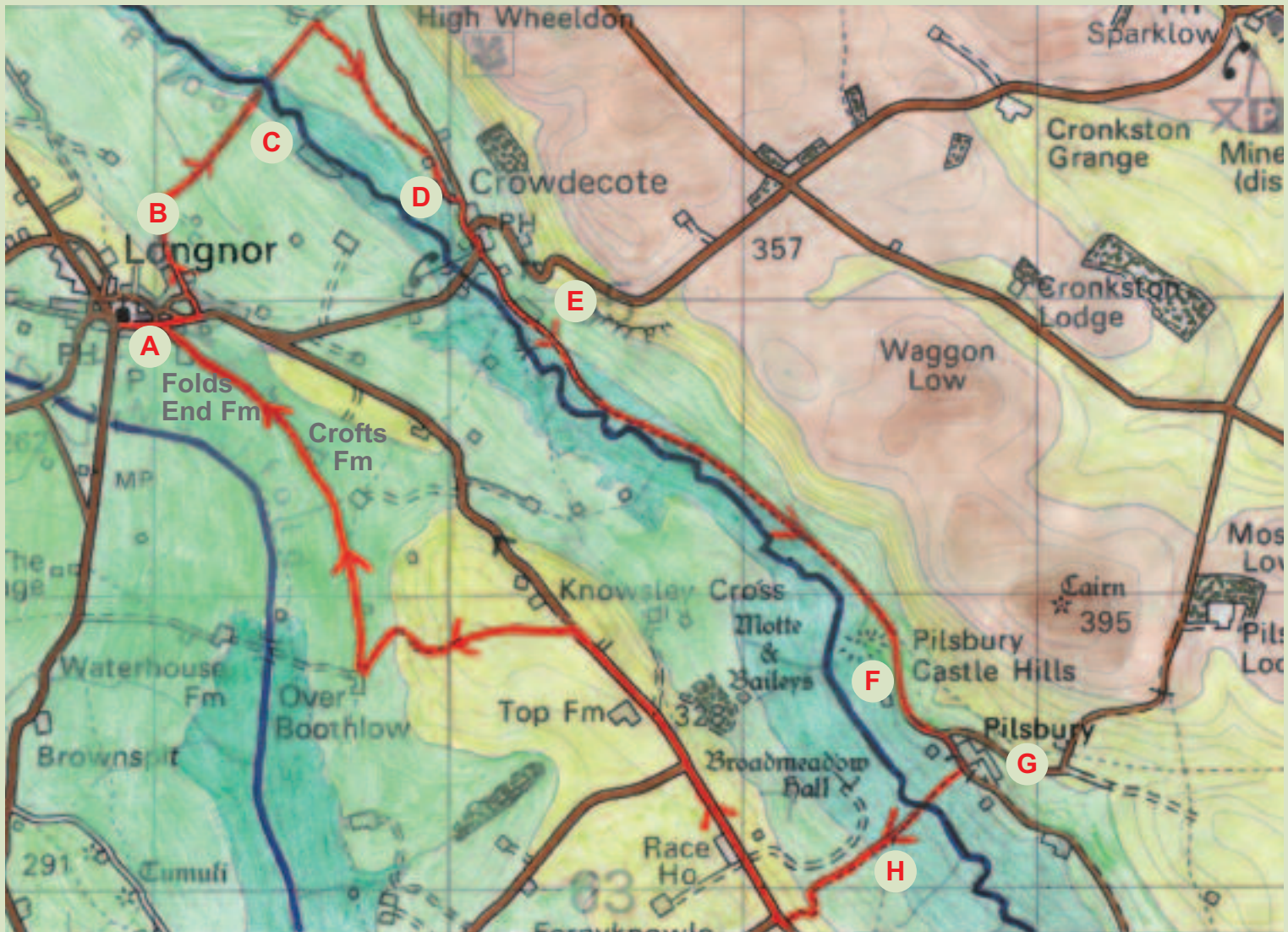
a moderate walk of 6 miles with one ascent and stiles

Why was Pilsbury Castle built in what seems today to be such a remote location? How was it connected to other settlement sites in the area? What evidence is there on the ground of the ancient trackways that once crisscrossed the Dove Valley? Pilsbury Castle and its spectacular setting has intrigued and baffled archaeologists and historians for many years. We invite you to join us on a stroll through time from the ancient village of Longnor to the Pilsbury Castle site. We will follow some of the old routeways across the Dove between Staffordshire and Derbyshire and may well unravel some of the Pilsbury mysteries.

The walk starts at the Longnor Craft Centre, formerly the Market Hall, on the front of which we can read a table of the tolls payable by traders to the Lords of the Manor (the Harpur Crewes) in 1903.



Longnor was already an important market town in 1595 when John Harpur was granted a Tuesday market there. By 1604 there were at least nine licensed alehouse keepers in the town. Fairs had been held there as early as 1478 and in 1817 there were still eight fairs a year. A guidebook of 1803 tells us that Longnor was on one of three coach routes from London to Buxton.



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Key

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Longnor Market Square B Viewpoint of Upper Dove valley C Beggar's Bridge D Site of original millrace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E Bridge End Farm F Pilsbury Castle Site G Hamlet of Pilsbury H Marty Lane |
|---|---|

We now bear right along the road towards Longnor for about half a mile. Just before the water storage tank we turn left at a waymarker and follow the track towards two field gates, passing through the right-hand gate. Our destination, the village of Longnor, can now be seen on the right, perched on a gritstone saddle between the valleys of the Dove and the Manifold.

It is part of a spectacular panorama, clearly at a meeting point of several different route ways. To the west, stretch the Dark Peak and the Staffordshire Moorlands while eastwards lie the White Peak and the Derbyshire limestone. The 1765 turnpike road to Leek wends its way over the Manifold towards the Royal Cottage whilst the former turnpike from Cheadle heads northwards through Longnor towards Buxton and Manchester.



We join the trail in the Longnor market place, where you will find local hostelrys, shops, a craft centre, public toilets and a limited number of parking spaces, with further parking available nearby. The going can be rough in places, so we recommend boots, waterproofs and picnic provisions.

The journey on the ground is likely to take you a good half-day but the journey into the past could well absorb you for several hours longer.



Do please visit our website for further details of the Pathways to Pilsbury Project and for an outline of the research that has been done so far:

www.pilsburycastle.org.uk

1

Walk down the hill towards an old drinking trough, keeping the wall to the left, bearing right above a small wooded area to avoid boggy patches. Now pick up a grassed track, pass through a field gate and follow the signs, which lead us left towards Over Boothlow. In front of the farm we turn right, crossing a stile beside a way marker.

The River Manifold is below us on the left. We now proceed towards Longnor, following the series of wall squeezers, step stiles, bridges and marker posts until we reach Crofts Farm. Here we make for a marker post at a wall corner and take the track which crosses the 'fossilised' Longnor strip fields. These once formed part of the Longnor Town Field. On reaching Folds End Farm, we pass over a stile into a field. By the barns, we turn left at the field gates and pass through the farmyard, turning right to reach the road through a final gate. We now turn left along the road back to our

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It is almost certain that the origins of Longnor as a trading centre go back even further and that it was the site of the market claimed by the lords of Alstonefield Manor in 1293. It enjoys a favourable position close to the meeting point of two counties and the region's gritstone and limestone uplands. It was therefore ideally placed for the exchange of goods in early times.

From the square in the centre of Longnor (A) we take the old turnpike road towards Crowdecote. Just at the end of the built-up area, we turn sharp left up the lane called Top of th'Edge until it forks at a farmyard. We take the right fork through a farm gate to the right of a well.

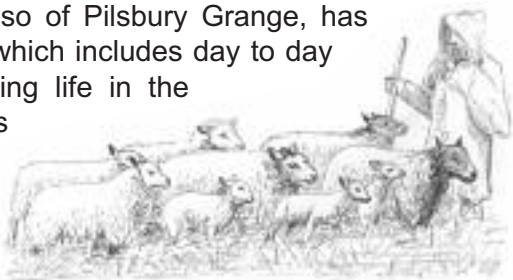
From here we have a panoramic view (B) of the Upper Dove Valley and can locate sites of traditional human habitation and the ancient routes which linked them.

2

To our immediate north lies Hindlow, once the site of four Bronze Age burial mounds or 'lows', whilst to the east, some distance away, is the Neolithic henge monument of Arbor Low, which is over 4000 years old. Ancient trackways must have traversed this limestone plateau. The Street, for example, was a Roman road from Derby to Buxton which roughly followed the line of today's A515, keeping to the higher ground just to the east of the Dove Valley.



The hamlet must have been a busy little spot in centuries gone by. It was at Pilsbury Grange, then farmed by Joseph Gould, that the earliest known recipe for the making of oatcakes was obtained by John Farey as he collected material for a report on the agriculture and industry of Derbyshire in 1815. William Gould, Estate Manager for the Welbeck and Chatsworth estates, and also of Pilsbury Grange, has left us a diary which includes day to day details of farming life in the industrious household of Pilsbury Grange from 1783 to 1788.



We leave the hamlet by the track down to the right which leads to a ford and footbridge over the River Dove.

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As we cross the footbridge, we will notice the substantial supports of an older bridge that would have allowed the passage of goods and animals over the river to join the green lane on the other side. Perhaps in earlier centuries, trains of packhorses carried salt from Cheshire along this route. Traders at Longnor fairs might have come this way to exchange the woollen goods of Derbyshire with silks from Leek and Macclesfield. Perhaps monks from Combermere Abbey in Cheshire or Dieulacres Abbey at Leek (which both owned land in Longnor) passed this way in their travels, or drovers escorted their cattle to be bought or sold at Longnor fairs.



We are following the rutted track called Marty Lane (H), still known locally as the 'old salt way', which winds up the hill between a wall and a stream.

At the start of the steep ascent, we glimpse Broadmeadow Hall, to our right. Once the manor house of Sheen, the present building dates back to the 1660s. At the top, on the Sheen to Longnor ridge road, the grass verges by the side of the road offer good viewing points back towards the Dove Valley. We may well spot some of the Bronze Age 'barrows' close to Pilsbury, such as the cairn, to the west of Pilsbury Lodge and Carder Low, just south of Pilsbury Grange.



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RETURN ROUTE

To return to Longnor, we leave the castle site by the eastern-most exit, near the limestone outcrop. We now turn sharp right down the footpath to the hamlet of Pilsbury, keeping the wall and the River Dove to our right. We pass two wooden stiles beside field gates before reaching the road, where we bear right into the hamlet (G).

Pilsbury is a shrunken village which dates back at least to Anglo-Saxon times. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1068, it was part of the Manor of Pilsbury and Ludwell. The large present-day houses can be traced to the late 17th or early 18th century.

It was here in the 12th century that the Cistercian Abbey at Merevale in Warwickshire built a grange. The production of good quality wool was big business to the Cistercian order and the grange here would be run as a sheep farm.

Our own trackway now follows the cemented lane down the steep hill towards the water treatment works. This is one of the old routes out of Longnor into Derbyshire.

We know from living memory that workers from Longnor and beyond walked this way to work in limestone quarries at Dowlow and Brierlow on a daily basis. Oral records suggest that they travelled along the old lanes, "up Wains Lane, down Clarkes Brow, across Beggars Bridge and over the hill near Abbots Grove." In the 1950s, there were 43 men from the Longnor area still employed in the Derbyshire quarries.

Halfway down the hill we turn left beside the barn, then sharp right behind this building onto a bridleway that leads across the site of one of Longnor's medieval open fields towards the crossing of the Dove at Beggar's Bridge (C).

This was once a much used packhorse route leading into Staffordshire, winding its way up from the Pilsbury Ford across the Dove, up and over the ridge, down into the Manifold Valley, across the bridge at Brund, before the climb across the gritstone moors to the Mermaid Inn and over Gun Hill towards Congleton and the Cheshire plain.

As we cross the river Dove, we observe almost at once the change in geology from limestone in Derbyshire to shale and then gritstone in Staffordshire. As we climb the steep slope, we notice the rich, damp pasture land in the fields around us.



We now follow this green lane for a short distance, keeping the hedgerow and wall to our right until we reach a gateway. Here we turn sharply right, pass over a stone stile with a waymarker, and head back down the valley towards Pilsbury, keeping the wall to our left. We cross two stone stiles and then join the track towards Meadow Farm and the hamlet of Crowdecote.

The undulating ground beneath our feet reminds us that we are passing over the remains of ridge and furrow ploughland. We are probably right on the edge of the arable farmland at Crowdecote which belonged to the Duchy of Lancaster in the 14th to 16th centuries. The ancient footpath we are following marks the boundary of the cultivated land. Between here and the River was the old Fullowe Meadowe, which perhaps got its name from an association with the fulling processes at the now ruined Crowdecote Mill, first mentioned in 1434-5.

Fulling involved the scouring and cleansing of newly woven cloth with fuller's earth, either by means of mechanical hammers, or, in earlier times, with the pounding of feet. As we enter the hamlet, we pass the site of the original millrace, the source of which is a spring, to our right **(D)**.

In the centre of the village, the Packhorse Inn and the toll cottage just down the road on the left are clues to the strategic significance of Crowdecote, at a natural crossroads by the county boundary, and at one of the main east-west crossings of the Dove.



There was an early medieval route down Crowdecote Bank from Chesterfield via Monyash and Longnor into Cheshire, and by 1709 Crowdecote was known to be on a 'great road'. Once the 1765 turnpike from Hassop to Newcastle-under-Lyme was opened, Crowdecote was on a main route to the Potteries (via Leek).

In earlier times, Crowdecote would have commanded a crossing of the Dove barely a mile upstream from the Pilsbury Castle site, as well as a view of traffic both north and south down the valley. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, it would have been positioned mid-way between the manor of Pillesberie and Lodewelle (Pilsbury and Ludwell) to the south and Salham (Soham) to the north. Salham (place by the willows) no longer exists as a settlement but 'Soham' field names, existing to this day, suggest that Glutton, or Earl Sterndale, a mile or so upstream, was the original site of the lost Saxon manor.



Toll Cottage, Crowdecote

*Cross the road carefully just past the toll cottage and take the first left turn, keeping the Dove on your right. Carry straight on down the lane towards Bridge End Farm **(E)**, following the signs. Note the remains, on your right, of the old pre-turnpike crossing of the Dove and the former roadway up the hill towards Longnor.*

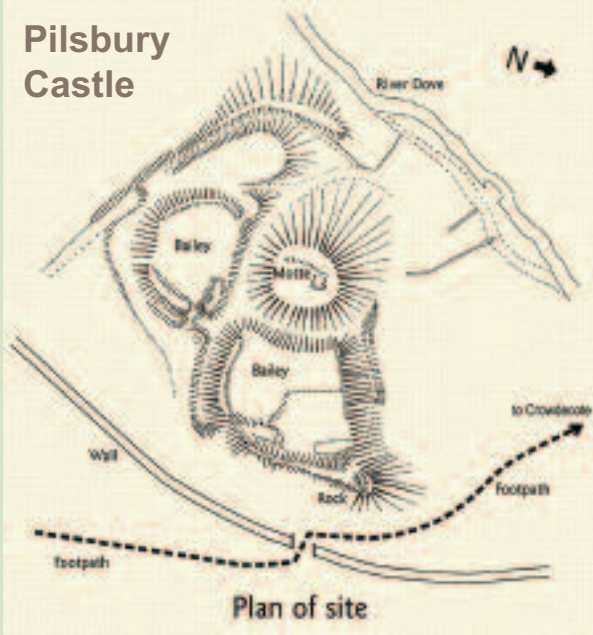
*Now carry straight on down the track and across the fields, all the way to Pilsbury, keeping, of course, to the Derbyshire side of the Dove. At the final wall crossing, a wicket gate leads into the Pilsbury Castle site **(F)**.*



Pilsbury Castle site

***YOU HAVE ARRIVED.** Enjoy exploring the site (for details see back page). In good weather conditions, it can offer a delightful spot for a picnic.*

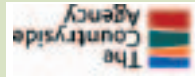
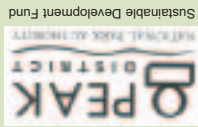
Pilsbury Castle



The earthworks here are the remains of a typical motte and bailey castle, which would have controlled the Dove Valley, the local people, and traffic along and across the river. Pilsbury Castle probably dates from the late 11th or early 12th century, just after the Norman Conquest. It was presumably built by the Ferrers family, later the Earls of Derby, perhaps as part of the Norman response to the unsuccessful rebellion in the north. Pilsbury was mentioned in a Ferrers charter as late as 1262.

The castle was mostly built on a shale promontory overlooking the river Dove. The two baileys (enclosures) would have contained timber buildings to house garrison and manor officials. They were defended by the ditches and banks you can see, with timber palisades on top, strengthened by the formidable reef limestone knoll to the East. The motte (mound) was perhaps topped by a wooden watchtower. A gatehouse would have guarded a bridge to the eastern bailey, with a further bridge leading to the motte. Smaller earthworks outside the castle to the north probably marked fields or garden plots. Other earthworks suggest an old river course, a defensive work or a fish pond.

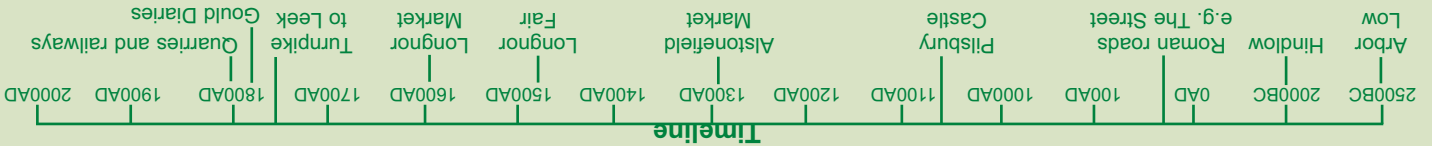
The sunken track, which passes the southern bailey between castle and river, may well have been an ancient way along the valley. Like the path we have walked today, it may once have linked pre-Norman manors along the valley, all mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086.



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Line drawings by Sheila Hine

The Pilsbury Castle trails were produced by the Pilsbury Castle Interpretation Group.

Public transport available. Details from: Busline: 0870 608 1608 or visit: www.peakdistrict.org



Join us on a journey into the past! Two Pilsbury Castle trails from Hartington and Longnor will guide both walkers and readers to the best example of a Norman motte and bailey castle site in the Peak District. Each guide explores a historical landscape of ancient settlement and trackways and throws fresh light on the interpretation of the castle site. The Pilsbury Castle Trails were produced as part of the 2nd Stage of the Pilsbury Castle Interpretation Project, the whole of which ran from 2001-2004. For further information, visit our website www.pilsburycastle.org.uk where you will find details of our research and conclusions to date. The collaboration continues! Can you help us uncover further evidence?

Pathways to Pilsbury

Pilsbury Castle

£2



A walk through time.....

from
Longnor
to
Pilsbury Castle