

Cheap Thrills In New Mills

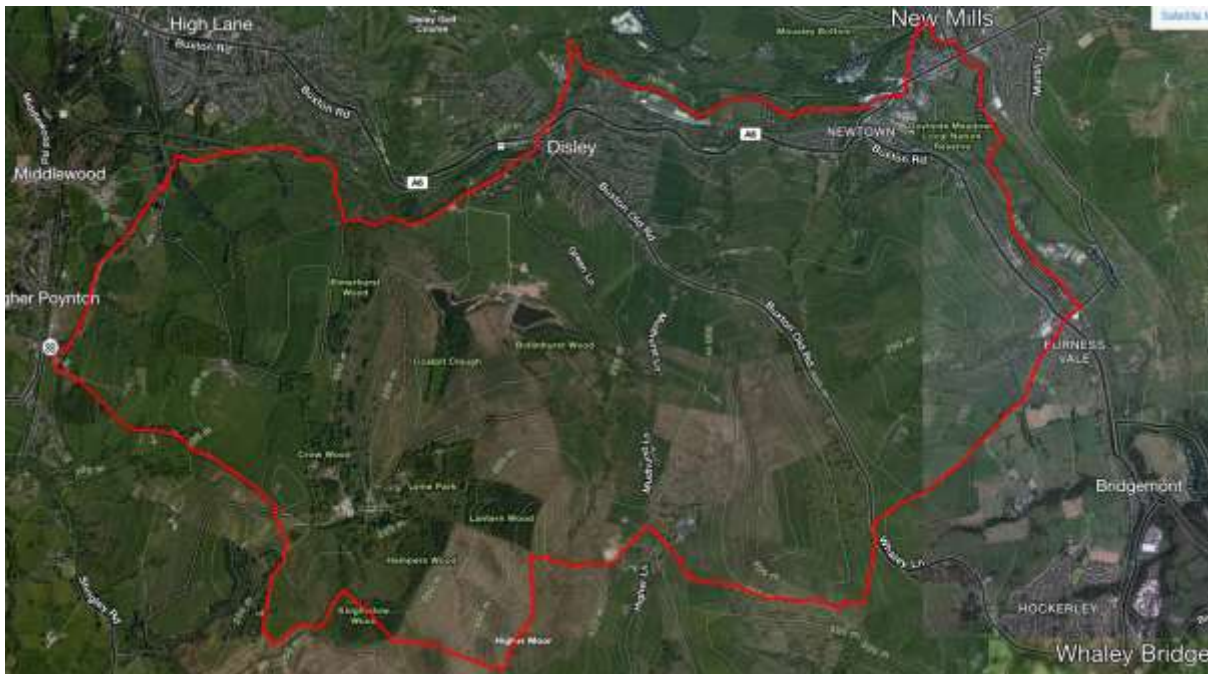
Starting point: Nelson Pit Car Park (free), Higher Poynton SK12 1TH. There are toilets here if open. This meeting point is known as “The Boars Head” the name of the nearby pub.

Distance: About 13 miles – typically takes 1h50 at group 1 Sunday run pace – which suggests that it would be a 5hr+ walk.

Terrain: Good path, muddy path, muddy field and some road. Trail shoes but you can get away with anything with some grip. It can be cold on the top of the hills especially in wet, windy weather.

Quiz: 15 questions to amuse you along the way.

Strava map and trace at: <https://www.strava.com/activities/419877021>



Directions

Turn left out of the Nelson Pit car park and follow the road up and over the canal and onto the farm track. Keep right at the fork and continue up past the farm to enter Lyme Park at the gate by the white house named “Windgather”. So far this is the route of the Bowstones NYE fell race.

Q1. What are the Lyme Park opening hours?

Continue up the rough track. As it starts to level you’ll see another track merging from the right. About this point cut off right across a flat field sometimes used for overflow parking and head for a small group of 3 trees. Continue in the same direction across the drive and follow a grassy path to a gate and through it into Pursefield Wood. Continue on the track through the wood towards Paddock Cottage (also known as “The Pepper Pot”) but before reaching the cottage turn left through a wooden gate and onto a narrow stony trail.

This trail follows the edge of a small and rather picturesque valley known as Cluse Hey. Years ago my daughters renamed this “The Valley of Changing Colours” – very apt if you see it across the seasons. Follow the trail to the end then up a couple of steps to a stile and climb over to enter Knights Low Wood. Continue along the bottom side of the wood and after 300m turn right, now following the track used by the parkrun. Leave the wood through a gate and continue straight ahead up the main track onto the moor (back on the Bowstones FR route). There are often deer here although they can be quite hard to spot at a distance.

Grind up the track towards Bowstones. As you reach the wall turn left to follow the line of the wall still upwards and count the communications masts.

Q2. How many masts at Bowstones farm?

Keep straight on, following the grassy path below the wall; watch your footing and negotiating a gate. A view finder marks the highest point from where you can see Kinder, Shutlingsloe, Jodrell Bank, Alderely Edge, the Welsh Hills. Continue to follow the slippery path to meet a wall junction. A stone shaft is the remains of a Saxon Cross. Ignore the wooden stile ahead. Instead turn right climbing the chunky stone steps over the wall. Sight ahead of you the former Moorside Hotel (now a school) – this is your direction as you follow the path over a couple of stiles and some tricky bogs. The footpath narrows as you pass the grounds of a rather shocking new mansion. Turn left and run down the road.

Q3. What strange craft is moored in the pond by the farmhouse on the right side of the road?

Reach the main road and go straight across, following the road in to the school grounds. Keep straight ahead and cross a cattle grid as it becomes a farm track. Just before reaching a wall turn off left following an indistinct path upwards and parallel to the wall. You’re not going to the top of Black Hill and will soon reach a stile with a prominent warning sign.

Q4. What is the warning?

You’re now running on a very pleasant grassy path shelved into the hillside – presumably an old packhorse route – and splendid views open up to the right over Kettlethulme, Windgather Rocks and out towards Shining Tor. What a treat to be out on the hills!

The path curves to the left and descends to a bridge that consists of a single large plank and is extremely slippery. Continue up to a stile, cross it and continue straight ahead (ignoring the smaller path down to the right that leads down to the legendary “Dipping Stone”). Now more views open up ahead towards Kinder and down below your next destination Furness Vale. Follow the path as it tracks left then descends to the road, Whaley Lane.

Turn left and carefully cross the road. After less than 100m follow the footpath sign on the right, over a stile and into the field. Head directly away from the road and follow the line of the wall on your left. It can get a bit muddy here but soon you cross a stile and are bounding down the field towards a farm. Follow the slippery track down through a gate and past the farm. Continue to follow the track as it passes renovated farmhouses and becomes Yardsley Lane. Welcome to Derbyshire!

(In very wet weather an alternative to the above section is to take the second footpath sign right off Whaley Lane which becomes Diglee Rd and leads into Yeadsley Lane).

Reach the A6.

Q5. What is the name of the Chinese Restaurant?

Go straight across the A6 and down Station Rd.

Q6. What is the time of the last train from Furness Vale to Manchester on a Saturday night?

The canal bridge is just after the station. Turn left onto the towpath of the Peak Forest Canal. If you're marathon training it is possible to follow this canal all the way to Marple. This is one of the most appealing sections of the PFC with a row of cottages and canal boats arranged along a small marina. But don't get too attached to the canal as at the first bridge we cut off right following a track down to a farmhouse. Before the house follow the footpath sign over a stile into a sloping field.

Q7. What produce is for sale and advertised by the stile?

Follow the muddy path and try not to face plant. Squeeze through the gate by a tree and turn right to cross the River Goyt by a green steel bridge with gates at either end. Turn left off the bridge and join a trail to a farm house at a T-junction. Turn left onto a wide farm track and don't forget to wave to the alpaca.

Continue under the extraordinary "double decker" stone railway bridge. This is the first of several amazing feats of engineering that we'll pass on our tour of New Mills. The bridges here appear to grow organically out of the sandstone. As the main track starts to rise take a side path (with a black hand rail) to stay close to the river. Follow this path past over a bridge and enter the river gorge area known as The Torrs.

Q8. Look to your right. Signs prohibit Dog Fouling by the cliffs. But what activity is encouraged here?

Head towards the high bridges and follow the line of the river around to the left. (Avoid the path off to the right unless you're good for a few miles up to Lantern Pike and Hayfield). Take a moment to look at the weir and other engineering past and present.

Q9. What is the Greek connection?

Continue to follow the path above the Goyt following signs for Millennium Walkway. This is a quite stunning walkway constructed on stilts that allows you to bounce along high above the surging torrents. But remember to read the dedication sign.

Q10. Who is the walkway dedicated to, and how did he die?

Shortly after the end of the walkway turn left to cross the river by a narrow bridge. Feel the burn as you clamber up the steep steps past the old mill and run up to the gate. Go straight ahead joining Torrvalle Rd / Wirksmoor Rd.

Q11. To your right there is a spider and a horse. What is the colour of the horse?

Go almost straight across the main road (Albion Rd) to reach the canal and turn right onto the tow path. You're now running past a famous factory. The clue is in the smell.

Q12. Name the company and any one of their (in)famous products?

You've got a mile and a half now along the canal so it's a good opportunity to raise the pace a bit. But don't go mad. There's over an hour on the clock and you're still in Derbyshire.

Leave the canal by crossing the swing bridge (No. 25) and turn left onto the delightfully named Hagg Bank Lane passing a rather cute canal side cottage.

Q13. What is the name of the cottage?

Grind up the lane and past the farm noting its main produce.

Q14. What is the main produce of Hagg Bank Farm (JS Atherton) ?

Continue straight ahead passing under the railway bridge and out to meet the A6 by the Dandy Cock in downtown Disley. You're now safely back in Cheshire. Carefully cross the A6 and follow the line of shops around to the left. Cross Buxton Old Rd and take the narrow road, Red Lane, between the Rams Head and St. Mary The Virgin Church.

Q15. In what year was the church founded?

Now really feel the burn as you toil up Red Lane. Is this the last hill? Maybe. At the top follow Red Lane around to the right and away from the church. There are a few big houses before the road turns into a track heading down towards Lyme Park. There is a perhaps unexpected view of the Lyme Park tower (The Cage) on your left. Follow the track down to the park gate.

Go straight across the main drive at the NT pay kiosk continuing on the road opposite over a bridge and up to a tall gate. Go through the gate and immediately right over a stone stile into a field following a footpath signpost "Middlewood". The path goes across the middle of the field before dipping under a small railway bridge. Continue on the track as it veers left and then passes between farm buildings. Keep on the path as it crosses a field, veering left as it becomes muddy. Carefully cross a bridge that was broken by the floods last year and continue to reach the railway line.

Carefully cross the tracks and at the road turn right. After a few yards climb left over a stile that is rather hidden in the hedge. Ignore any "footpath closed signs" and cross the field. You'll soon encounter another broken bridge. Improvise a crossing and continue to follow the posts indicating the line of the footpath. The brook here meanders crazily and has almost formed a mini ox-bow lake. At the end of the field go over the stile and follow the path along the brook and over two more substantial bridges. The path then climbs in steps to reach the Macclesfield Canal. Turn left along the canal bank to reach a bridge. Cross the bridge, turn right and immediately loop back underneath to join the towpath and continue in your original direction (with the canal on your left). After about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile you are back above Nelson Pit car park. You can turn right off the canal just before Bailey's Trading Post.

Email me if you have any questions RunningBob@gmail.com. Or indeed if you want to show off with the answers!

Rob Downs

