

THE ADAM BEDE WALK

With a bit of research, some imagination and a measure of poetic licence this walk will take you to some of the scenes in Hayslope in the time of Adam Bede.

‘This is what I undertake to do for you, reader.’

Park at Ellastone village hall (a) (DE6 2HB) which was built 100 years after Adam Bede’s story. You will already be on the Green, as featured in the book, but you are going to enter from the top end of the Green. Walk back onto Church Lane and turn left, up what was the main road through Hayslope; just after the old school (built 50 years after the story) there is a large sycamore tree. Now the sycamore is also known as the great maple, so this was where Dinah Morris delivered her preaching (b). Just past the tree enter the field (which is now a play area) and stand where the traveller would have stood, looking towards the preacher. This is the same view that the traveller had all those years ago - the hills to the north (The Weavers, referred to in the book as the Binton Hills), the tall mansion directly beneath (now the new Wootton Hall), the church to the east and looking south over Jonathon Burge’s pasture and wood-yard towards the green cornfields and walnut trees of the Hall Farm.



b

The walk is heading in that direction, so exit the field back onto Church Lane and again turn left to what is now the main road. (c) Due to the height of the hedge on the green, this is also the best place to enjoy the view north from the preaching field. In the book it is described as a fork in the road, the left track leading back down the valley. Cross the road carefully here and make use of the pavement to follow this route. Towards the bottom of the hill on the right is Adam Bede House; it has a name plaque on the wall, so you can’t miss it.

Adam Bede House (d), according to local legend, is where George Eliot stayed with her uncle, William Evans. Evans ran the largest building firm in the area, employing 112 men in 1850. Suppose then that he was the real Jonathon Burge and this was his house.

What’s needed now is a wood-yard. Continue down the hill and find a driveway to the right, which is also a public footpath; down here there is a house on the left called ‘The Old Estate Yard’ (e) and if you walk past to the stile and turn round facing back towards the road it all falls into place. On your left is the back of Jonathon Burge’s house and on the right the old wood-yard now converted into a private house. You can imagine the strapping figure of Adam Bede walking past after locking up the yard to return the key to the house.



d



e

Walk back to the road, turn right and cross over just after Church Lane, before getting too close to what is now the B5032. You are standing on what was Hayslope’s ‘little street’ (f). Pause for a second and look diagonally across the main road towards what is now Ellastone Old House. This is the Donnithorne Arms. Continue towards the main road - looking down the road to the left you can see that this is the entrance to the village from Treddleston and the road to the right goes down the valley to Broxton (Denstone), the home of the Reverend Irwine. Carefully cross the road at the corner, outside the old butcher’s shop which once had its own slaughterhouse.



f

The Donnithorne Arms (g), was in real life called the Bromley Arms, after the Bromley Davenport family from Wootton Hall. (You will shortly pass the remaining pub in the village, the Duncombe Arms, named after the owners of Calwich Abbey, where the book is set and where the trail heads next). Although the Donnithorne ceased to be a public house in the 1960’s the tell tale signs of its original purpose are still here; the troughs and tie up rings for the horses, and the grand set of semicircular steps on which Mr Casson stood surveying the scene before ‘the preaching’.



g

Continue on the road towards Broxton until you reach the edge of the village and turn left down Dove Street heading towards the old bridge across the river which is the border between Loamshire (Staffordshire) and Stonyshire (Derbyshire). You are not going to leave Loamshire however, for 250 yards down this road there is a small lodge on the left (h) marking the entrance to Donnithorne Chase (Calwich Abbey).



h

Take this drive, which is now a public footpath, and before long a large brick farmhouse with brick barns and buildings can be seen on the left. Although the house was rebuilt in the 1850’s, you will remember from the book that it was in need of repair; this place best fits the description of the Hall Farm (i). Continue towards the Chase taking note of the quality of the bridge; you are walking towards the home of a wealthy family.



j

Just off the road to the right, come upon a little cottage which was probably the home of old Martin Poyser (j) as we see him in the book leaning on his gate greeting his family from the Hall Farm on their way to church. There is a turn to the left here, beyond the pond, that leads to the church but you will follow this road on your journey back. For now continue towards the old house itself (k), the remains of which appear on the right soon after the next gate.



k

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Behind the house is a stable block, obviously magnificent in its day, but it is possible to imagine the front of the house with its lawns, on which the games were played at the birthday feast, stretching down to the man-made lake. Walking on, you can see that more of the house still stands behind the stables but again we have to imagine its splendour. Continue past the large walled garden, common to estates like this and which is now a nursery, and on to the Chase Farm (l) which is, as it says in the book, about 10 minutes walk away.

At this point is the option to walk down to the river along the footpath to the right from the farm. Here you can see the weir and canal (m) used to provide water for the construction of the lake in front of the old house. Turn back and return through the main part of the Chase again. You will see several houses off to your right. It is the last one, in the woods, opposite the ruins that was most likely to have been the Hermitage (n). Somewhere further along this track is where the encounter between Arthur and Hetty and the fight between Adam and Arthur took place; there is even a large beech tree (o) above the gate.

Continue back through the Chase until you reach the fork in the road encountered earlier and this time go right, the way the Donnithornes would have travelled to church and the way Adam Bede returned home. Although now a grassy track the road is still visible as it winds round the contours on its way to Hayslope. A marked footpath to the right provides an interesting diversion to take a look at the stone quarry, and a chance to picture how the stone was cut, extracted, carted and used all those years ago.

Returning to the carriage way, continue towards another of the Chase's lodges; take time at the gate to admire the fine ironwork of the fastener (p) and the herringbone style of the dry stone wall along the roadside. Concentrate on more modern problems as you reach the road for, although this road to Treddleston was here in Adam Bede's time, it did not carry the traffic that it does today. Head for the church across Tit Bridge and look left down Tit Brook to see a plank bridge (q) like the one to the Bede's house, which was probably further upstream to your right.

Cross the road on the corner and head straight up the field towards the church. The road used to go up here and passed to the left of the church. You will have to go to the right and enter the graveyard via a stile. This side of the church is the original graveyard but some of the real inhabitants of Calwich are buried behind the church and all are worth examining on your way back to the car park. Before you leave the churchyard through the lychgate take the right path and the Evans' family tomb (r) is the large one on the left with the low iron fence around it.



p



r



Quarry 

Adam Bede nearby

There are some other locations from George Eliot's Adam Bede in this area, but too far afield to include in this walk...

There are two other large houses less than two miles away: the traveller on the Green referred to Wootton Hall as a tall mansion directly below the 'conical mounds' which are the Weaver Hills. Wootton Hall was demolished in the 1930's but rebuilt in 2000. It was here that Jean Jaques Rousseau stayed while in England and local legend has it he used to walk the lanes dressed like a tramp. Rousseau is said to be the father of modern democracy and he stayed here 100 years before George Eliot stayed in Ellastone. 100 years after her, Sir Oswald Moseley (leader of the British Fascists) resided at the other large house, Wootton Lodge. This was probably the large house that Adam Bede visited to carry out repairs. It is a formidable Jacobean mansion in secluded grounds but, with a footpath across its front lawn, well worth a look if you can find it.

The other place of interest is Roston Common, referred to in the book as 'The Common' where there is an Adam Bede cottage; this was probably the home of George Eliot's grandfather who had a wood-yard there before moving his business to Ellastone. You will also find Bartle Massey's house and schoolroom that Adam attended. It is about 2 miles out of Ellastone so if you take the road down Dove Street that you walked down earlier and cross into Derbyshire keeping left at the first junction on the B5033. Just after the two bridges that pass over this road there are some good views of Calwich Abbey to the left so stop and look. When you reach the top you are on the common and the first house on the right is the schoolroom and Adam Bede cottage is a bit further on, on the left.

Although George Eliot is supposed to have written a lot of the book while she was abroad it's easy to believe that she returned to Ellastone as her descriptions of the localities are so accurate. The character Adam Bede is based on her father, Robert Evans, who was an impressive man starting work in a wood-yard before going on to manage a large estate. In real life of course he moved to Warwickshire as an estate manager and his brother stayed in Ellastone where he grew the family firm into a very prosperous building business.

Also look out for

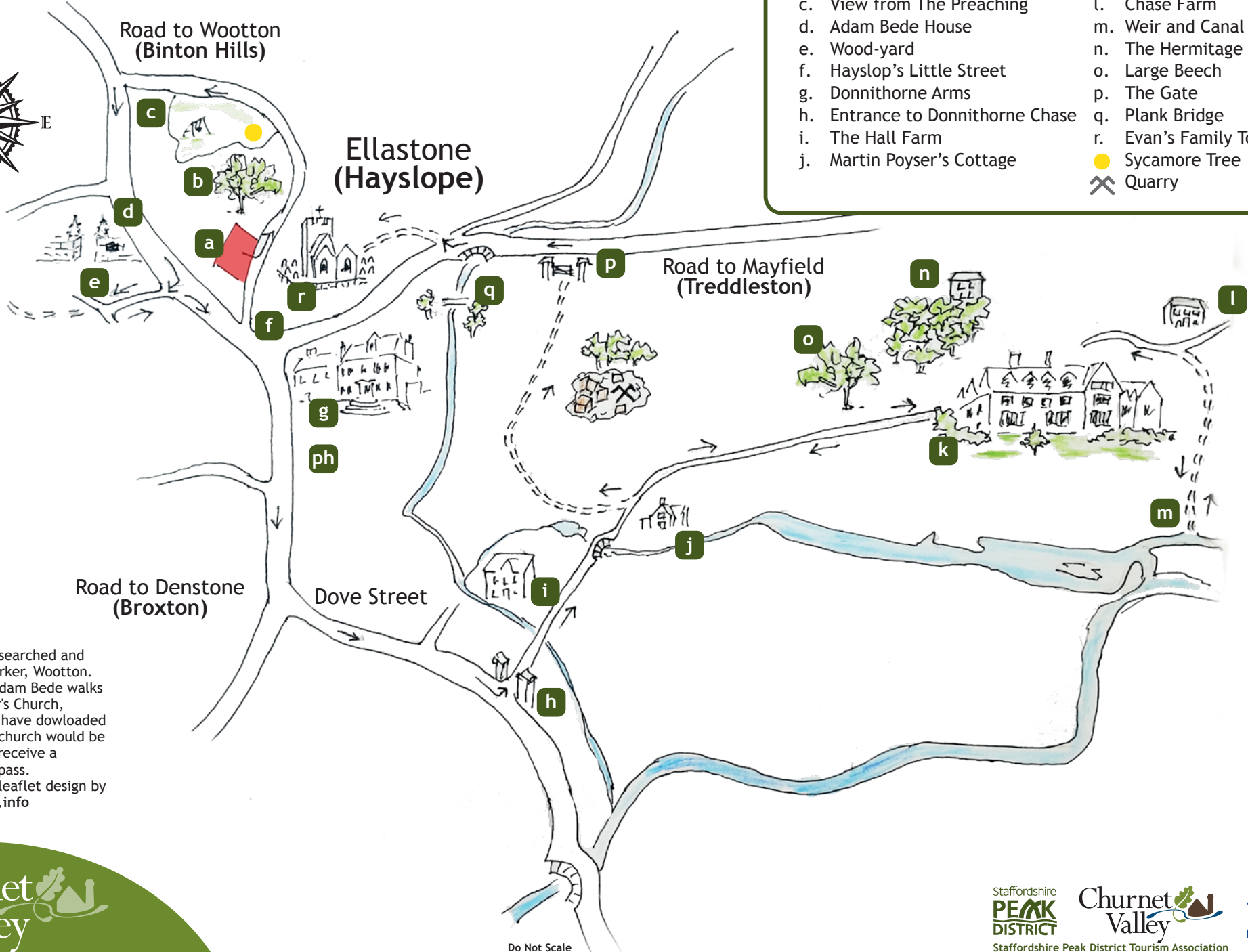
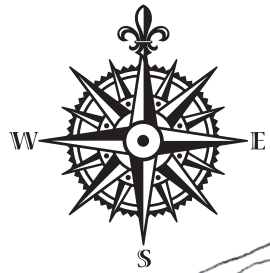
While walking around the village there are some features, not included in the book, that you may like to look out for...



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Key

- a. Car Park
- b. The Preaching
- c. View from The Preaching
- d. Adam Bede House
- e. Wood-yard
- f. Hayslop's Little Street
- g. Donnithorne Arms
- h. Entrance to Donnithorne Chase
- i. The Hall Farm
- j. Martin Poyser's Cottage
- k. Donnithorne Chase
- l. Chase Farm
- m. Weir and Canal to Lake
- n. The Hermitage
- o. Large Beech
- p. The Gate
- q. Plank Bridge
- r. Evan's Family Tomb
- Sycamore Tree
- ⌵ Quarry



This walk was researched and written by Ed Barker, Wootton. Ed runs guided Adam Bede walks in aid of St Peter's Church, Ellastone. If you have downloaded this leaflet, the church would be very grateful to receive a donation as you pass. Photos map and leaflet design by <http://waymark.info>