

Walk 2: The Slad Valley

For this walk it is necessary to drive to the nearby village of Slad some three miles distant and care needs to be exercised through the narrow lanes. The walk is approx. 4 miles (allow 2 hours) Walking boots or shoes with good grips are recommended, for the paths can become slippery when wet.

Two miles from Painswick in the lovely Slad Valley, lays the village of that name, made famous by the poet and author Laurie Lee in the autobiography of his early life 'Cider with Rosie'. The atmosphere of this secluded valley so beautifully described in the book, comes to life with a walk around the village and into the surrounding hills.

On leaving the Rococo Garden, drive firstly downhill into the village of Painswick. Time permitting, a walk around this elegant and charming village is well worthwhile. There is a car park next to the A46 below the Churchyard.

From Painswick Car Park, turn immediately left down Stamages lane and follow the signs for Bull's Cross. At this crossroads, turn right for the village of Slad. Parking is limited in Slad, mostly to either side of the Woolpack Inn.

Readers of 'Cider with Rosie' will be familiar with the Woolpack and the old village school directly opposite. Opposite also, is the village church in front of which is the final resting place of this famous literary figure.

Some 300 yards up the road from the Woolpack, the cottage set below (see picture) was the childhood home of the author and his family and the funny and reflective depictions of life within the family and in the valley are at the heart of this beautiful book.

Follow the lane on the right down to Steanbridge and take the footpath on the right, alongside the pond and proceed uphill to enter Redding Wood. Turn sharp left to follow a path which runs along the top of a busy badger's sett. On reaching a wide track turn right uphill on an old drover's track until the path temporarily levels out. Here turn left and follow the wide level track into Catswood.

It is this wood that readers of 'Cider with Rosie' will recognise as the home of the legendary 'Sheep with two heads'. This sheep, whose two heads can sing in unison, will also (if encountered in a thunderstorm) tell you in which way you will depart this life.

In the likely event that it is not stormy and you have not spotted the sheep, proceed fearlessly along the track taking a diagonal signposted footpath down across meadows to cross the brook at the bottom. From here the path climbs left to meet the lane at Snow's farm. Follow the lane upwards with lovely views down the valley. On reaching the top of the lane follow slightly downhill for 50 yards and turn right on a public footpath (Wysis Way) Keep to the footpath which leads to Trillgate Farm to join a lane leading up to Bulls Cross.

The Cross according to legend is where there was a fatal stagecoach accident and midnight is a good time to see the ghostly coach and horses of this tragic scene. It was also the site of the local gibbet. This patch of heathland looks less intimidating today, but was a place to be wary of in Laurie Lee's childhood.

On emerging at Bull's Cross take the bridleway between the Slad and Painswick roads, leading uphill into Frith Wood. A short diversion taking the right hand path at the information board leads to the Morley Penistan viewpoint with fine views over Painswick. Near to the viewpoint is the site of Pan's Lodge the ruin of which is no longer evident.

Pan's Lodge was erected by Benjamin Hyett in the mid 18c and links us back to the Rococo Garden and its series of 'follies' also created by this owner of Painswick House. Pan's Lodge was used to entertain and reflected the interest in neo-paganism of the Painswick gentry.

Retrace your steps to regain the original bridleway and follow uphill. When the path levels out at a small clearing take the left fork to walk diagonally down through the wood emerging at small lane. From here continue downhill to cross the B4070 at the War Memorial and follow the lane opposite to regain Steanbridge Lane and the village centre.

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Rosebank cottage



Snow's Farm

