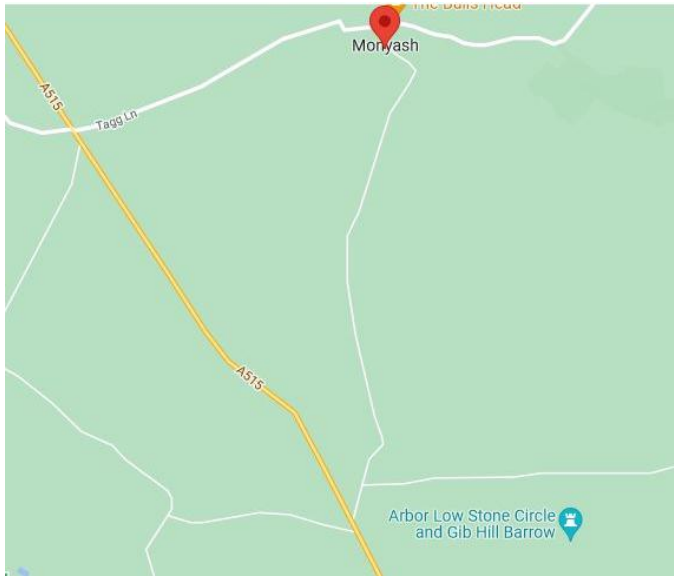


THE TIME TRAVELLERS

ARBOR LOW and MONYASH

Arbor Low is sometimes called 'the Stonehenge of the Peak District'. It is a prehistoric 'henge' monument, with its ditch within the ring of the bank, and contains around fifty limestone slabs, all lying on the ground but probably originally standing. It has not been excavated in modern times.



From Bakewell follow B5055 towards Monyash. Go straight through Monyash on Tagg Lane and turn left onto the A515. After about three-quarters of a mile turn left up 'The Rake'; then after 200 yards turn right onto 'Long Rake' for about half a mile. Turn right onto a track to Upper Oldhams Farm. You will find a small layby for parking by the gate to the site, and the farmer asks for £1 per person via an honesty box.

NB There are gates and stiles to reach the henge.

Satnav: the postcode is DE45 1JS;

Maps: the grid reference is SK 16069 63532

First, please do not walk on the bank – this helps to prevent damage and erosion. There should be some information boards, which are good.

Arbor Low is one of the best-preserved henge monuments in the UK. It is close to a Neolithic oval barrow called Gib Hill. It is likely that the barrow was built first. Other nearby (round) barrows are later than Arbor Low. Indeed, one of them is over the henge ditch.

The first feature to be built could well have been the ditch and bank (like at Stonehenge). The ring of stones and a central 'cove' feature were probably added later, and the cumulative period of use could be as much as a thousand years, 2500 – 1500BC. It is possible, again as at Stonehenge, that the actual *building* of Arbor Low was just as important as the monuments, and would have helped to bind a scattered people together.

Arbor Low (see photo overleaf) is high in the false crest of a limestone ridge, and would have been visible for a long way around. Activities inside it, however, would only have been visible to people standing by (or on) the bank. The name seems to come from 'Eorhburg Hlaw' meaning 'earthwork mound'. There is a large circular bank (2.1 m high) and an internal ditch which surround a roughly oval area (40 x 52 m) with recumbent stones. The ditch and bank have entrance gaps to the north-west and south-east.

On its south-western side there is a round barrow on top of the henge bank; the barrow must be later than the bank. And near that is a low bank and ditch that could be the remains of an 'avenue' – or may simply be an ancient field boundary.



Enclosed by the ditch and bank are the remains of about 50 large limestone slabs, remnants of a stone circle that may have held 41 to 43 stones, set upright in shallow holes. The middle of Arbor Low contains a group of stones known as 'the cove' which may once have formed a rectangular box about 3-4 m wide. It is possible there were also portal stones in at least one of the entrances.

Gib Hill

To the south-west of the henge is a massive barrow known as Gib Hill. It is thought to be a Neolithic oval barrow with a slightly later (Early Bronze Age?) barrow at one end. If you look uphill at the barrow you can see this relationship more clearly.

The barrow was excavated by Thomas Bateman in the 19th century, who found human remains with a pottery vessel, as well as possible grave goods of stone tools.

MONYASH

After visiting Arbor Low return to Monyash. This is an attractive old limestone village at the head of beautiful Lathkill Dale and is surrounded by stunning scenery. Plus, of course, opportunities to have a meal, or simply a cup of something.

At the centre of Monyash is a picturesque green, with the remnants of an old market cross. The village was once an important centre for lead mining and agriculture, and has a number of ponds, which once held the village water supply. St Leonard's church has a spire on a buttressed tower and is a landmark in the surrounding countryside. Just take the time to wander around and look. There is a shop as well as a pub and café – and if you visit in late May or early June you may catch the annual well-dressing.