The Wycoller Panopticon Walk

The walk begins from a waymarked post between the car park and Atom where a footpath takes off along the side of the valley towards Foster’s Leap. The walk can easily be completed in about an hour and offers some attractive views of Pendle’s Panopticon from various points within Wycoller Country Park. The path is very narrow and soon divides into two. Take the right hand path to descend towards the farmhouse and former barn of Foster’s Leap. From the second kissing-gate there is a good view of Foster’s Leap Rock poking its nose out above the stand of sycamore trees next to the barn. This outcrop is referred to in Colne church records of 1714 and is believed to be named after Foster Cunliffe, a relative of the Cunliffes of Wycoller Hall who claimed King Charles II as his godfather. He made a daring (some would call it insane) jump across the gap from the cliff behind on to the top of the rock. On entering the garden of Foster’s Leap Barn, you can see an attractive pond boasting some unusual creatures, such as a pink hippopotamus. However, this is private property and walkers are expected to cross the lawn, on the route indicated by the yellow waymarking arrow, to join the metalled road linking the barn with the farmhouse further down the valley side. Next to the latter is a gate. On entering the field here, follow the wall to the left and cross into the next field by means of a ladder stile. The gateway next to it is usually open.

Two more posts show the right of way downhill to a footbridge over the stream next to the eighteenth-century farmhouse of Parson Lee Farm. This is the only bed and breakfast establishment in the valley at the present time. Close by a stile at the end of the barn there is a great view of the Panopticon. It really does seem as if it is about to roll down the hillside at any moment and – when people stand next to it – looks not unlike a massive boulder abandoned by the retreating glacier which formed this valley. The bronze finish of the Panopticon’s metal-based paint blends in perfectly with the colour of its surroundings and it is easy to imagine that this object has long been part of the landscape.

Attractive waterfalls and some superb specimens of European Larch and Common Beech are highlights of the walk down the farm track to ‘Water Meetings’. Here, two unnamed tributaries unite to form Wycoller Beck which, a short distance further downstream, is crossed by the prehistoric Clam Bridge.

Beyond the Clam Bridge is Copy House Bridge, rebuilt in 1992, where there is the choice of walking through the live willow tunnel in the Conservation Area, or heading through the picnic area with its duck pond to the Old Coach Road behind the Aisle Barn Visitor Centre. The willow tunnel is worth a detour as it is one of a set of willow structures, including a life-size horse and rider, constructed by local people working with professional artists to enhance the wider Panopticon site.

Either way, the old road should be followed uphill to the Haworth Road Car Park, where this walk began. But if you are in need of refreshment before the final stretch, you may want to call in at the Wycoller Craft Centre and Tea Rooms which serves a range of snacks and delicious home-made cakes.

(Open daily except Monday, 11am – 5pm.
T 01282 868395, W www.wycollercraftcentre.co.uk)

The walk is 2.5 km, or just over 1.5 miles, long and should take about an hour.

Directions to Atom
- Leave M65 at junction 14
- At the roundabout take 1st exit A6068 for Keighley
- After almost 2 miles at another roundabout take 3rd exit A6068 for Keighley
- After 2 miles turn into car park for Wycoller County Park on your right
A Panopticon for Pendle

Designed by Peter Meacock with Katarina Novomeskova and Architecture Central Workshop, Atom is constructed in ferro-cement with a surface coating of metal-based paint. It is intended as both viewing-point and shelter, and also as an intriguing and beautiful object in the landscape.

From inside, its circular viewing spaces frame univalved views of the surrounding countryside and an initially hidden, polished steel ball reflects back those views to the visitor.

Through Land, the education and creative arts project linked to Panopticons, local people worked with professional artists to create a striking series of willow sculptures which can be seen in nearby Wycoller village, a conservation area since 1973.

Wycoller also has several unusual architectural features, including seven small bridges that cross Wycoller Beck, and an 18th-century five-aisled barn, now converted into a visitor centre.

Panopticons and Land were projects of the East Lancashire Environmental Arts Network (ELEAN), which aims to demonstrate the positive role of the arts and cultural activity in the social, economic and physical regeneration of Pennine Lancashire.

Pennine Lancashire’s Panopticons are a unique series of twenty-first century landmarks, designed to attract visitors into the countryside to enjoy the stunning landscapes and wealth of attractions that this delightful area has to offer.

In addition to Atom, nestling on the hillside above Wycoller village, there are three more Panopticons to discover, each commanding spectacular views.

From Colourfields, in Blackburn’s Corporation Park, you can enjoy a widespread panorama of the Park below, with the town beyond and distant views out towards Lytham, Southport and Fleetwood.

From Singing Ringing Tree, on Crown Point above Burnley, there is a superb view of Pendle Hill to the north and you can glimpse the Cliviger wind turbines on the Yorkshire border to the east. In between there is a comprehensive view of the town of Burnley, with the famous Turf Moor football stadium at its centre. On a clear day you can see the Bowland Fells, Pendle, Ingleborough, Pen-y-ghent and Great Whernside.

From Halo, the centrepiece of a former landfill site on Top o’ Slate, now re-landscaped and returned to public use, visitors can enjoy wonderful views of the Rossendale valley, Greater Manchester and parts of Pennine Lancashire, which were formerly inaccessible.

Visit a Panopticon soon – and discover Pennine Lancashire! www.panopticons.uk.net

For information about other things to see and do in Pendle, contact: Pendle Tourist Information Centre; T: 01282 661701  E: tourism@pendle.gov.uk  W: www.pendle.com