

Hawkstone Garden Party details:

Hawkstone Park is a commercially run tourist attraction – this means it is well kept and has a tea room, gift shop and car park on site, but it does mean we don't get the park to ourselves, we have to share it with the public. However, we will have an area in the Grand Valley to ourselves, so we can have our tea and cake in some privacy. They do also insist that they provide the food and drink, hence the regrettably higher charge this time round.

The park is open from 10am until 5pm – I suggest that you arrive sometime between 12am and 1 pm and maybe bring a picnic with you to eat before we start out. The tea room will be available if you don't want to bring food with you.

The park is big and will take around three hours to do the full circuit, so I suggest we set off around 1pm in order to be back for tea at 4pm. You can explore at your own speed and there are route maps available with options for shorter routes if you don't have the stamina for the whole circuit. The ground is steep and has many big stone steps. The paths are well maintained but there is no avoiding the steps in various parts. There are also one or two sudden dark tunnels, as well as the main caves which are unlit, so do bring a torch – they do sell them at the shop if you forget. Those that don't mind the odd thrill of terror as they grope through a dark tunnel will be able to get by without a torch.

The follies included the white tower (actually red), the column, the hermitage (complete with hermit) and the caves with ruined arch above plus many more minor objects. But the real thrill here is the landscape and the journey from one to the other.

Hawkstone is well signposted with the usual brown signs from the A49, it is near Wem and adjacent to the village of Weston-under-Redcastle.

For those who are arriving on Saturday and staying locally overnight, an invitation is extended to visit my garden in Hope Valley, about 15 miles south east of Shrewsbury. Come anytime from 2pm until 8pm and have a tour of the garden and a chat.

The garden includes a giant tortoise, a tunnel, a tower, a high bridge, a tin chapel, a butterfly house, a glass tower and a dragon seat plus many metal sculptures.

Drop me an email or phone if you wish to come and I'll send you directions.

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