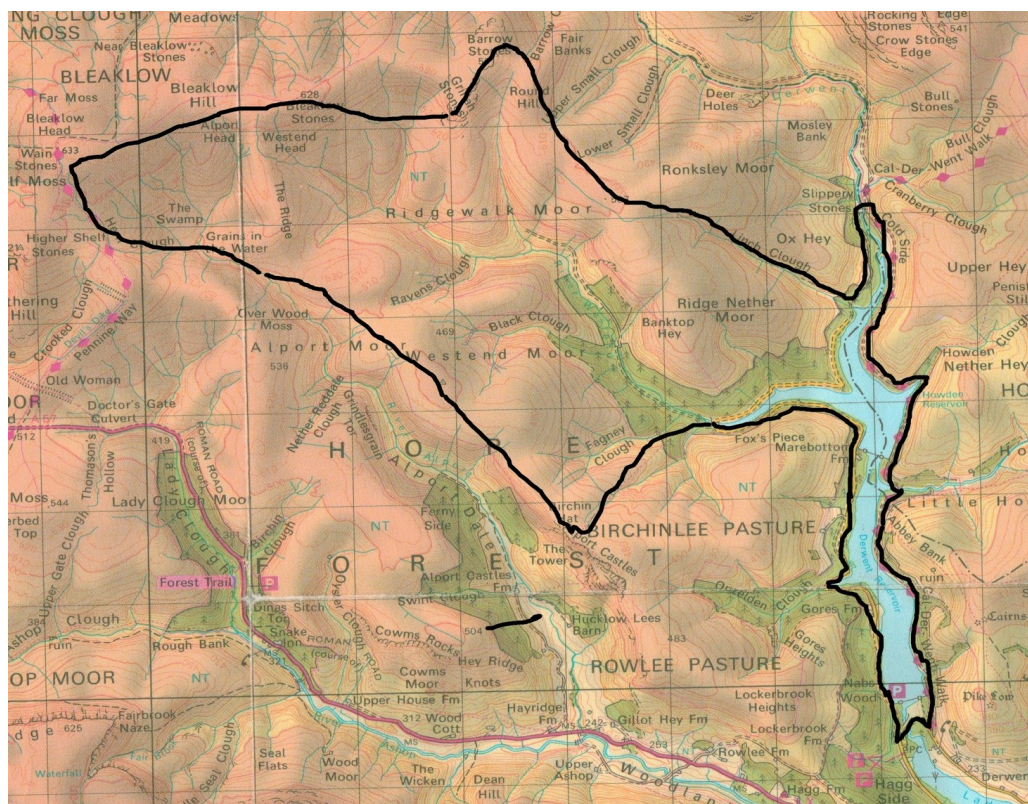


WALK 72.
RESERVOIRS 72.
23 miles. 6 hours 30 minutes.
Map Dark Peak.



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Start at Fairholmes car Park at the Derwent Dam (171897). Walk N on the W side of the reservoir, passing Howden Reservoir Dam on the way. An information stand describes the temporary village called “Tin Town” (near Birchenlee) which housed the workers who constructed the Dams. Pass the Howden Dam and walk W along the tongue of water (Hern Side) where the River Westend flows into the reservoir. At the end of this inlet, where the road does a U-Turn to the E, go L off the road to a gate with a wooden step stile on its R; this is the only stile met on this walk.

Enter Ditch Clough Plantation and walk W on a pleasant track for a few hundred metres to a track that cuts off uphill (153928). A sign states that this is a public footpath to Alport Castles; just after this there is a metal sign erected by the P.D. and N.C.F.P. Society showing path via Alport Castles Alport and Haybridge Farm to Hope Cross and Edale number 118 erected in 1953. Climb straight up steeply upwards through the trees.

Leave the plantation at a gateway in the wall, and a sign to open country (N.T.). Climb gently on a landrover track (to shooting butts), going SW. to the R, look down into Fagley Clough; and as ascended there are views into the Westend Valley and S down over the reservoirs, then climb up the ridge further to the E. continue SW as the track levels out and walk alongside a broken wall, an unusual feature found on these hills. Then, suddenly come to the edge of Birchin Hat and get an impressive view of Alport Castles. Bear R and walk NW on a good path on the edge of the ridge for about half a mile to where the path tucks into a small clough in the hillside and comes out again. Just here, go R off the path out on to the moors and walk NW on a good path that is easy to follow even in

bad weather, taking as it does the highest point along the watershed until it reaches a trig point at 129932.

The track levels out here; to the W is Glethering Clough and the waterfalls; to the R is Black Clough. The path begins to drop a little. Take a path that goes W towards Miry Clough but do not descend into Alport Dale; when the edge of the E bank is reached, bear R and walk NW along the dale which is now in its upper reaches therefore decidedly narrower and shallower. The path rises all the time until it reaches a point marked on the map as Grain in the water (106947). This spot is a useful marker: Hern Clough and a path come down from the Pennine Way; several streams descend from Alport Head from the N, and a faint path comes down from Bleaklow Stones.

Go W so as to ascend Hern Clough, then follow the stream NW to a point where there is a stake on the Pennine Way on the L, go R off the path. The aim is to achieve a little variety by following the route described by Norman Sanders in his "Upper Derwent") which goes just below the well-trodden route from Wain Stones to Bleaklow Stones; it skirts the heads of the several cloughs which descend to the basin at Grains in the Water. Those wishing to take the traditional route will find it more straightforward.

Walk NE over generally level ground but several descents into and out of groughs and cloughs. Keep as far to the R without losing height and work the way in and out of the major cloughs around Bleaklow Hill and Alport Head to Bleaklow Stones. After stopping to admire these interesting shapes, especially the Trident, a huge boulder split into three parts, and looking at the deep carvings on them, turn and make for Grinah Stones to the E. in mist, keep just below the ridge on a clear path, though the experienced walker will know how it is easy to lose a path when it enters a stony area or a stream bed. From Grinah Stones, strike off NNE to Barrow Stones which are easily and soon found even in mist, then change direction and walk SE downhill to Round Hill along the narrow watershed between Grinah Grain to the S and Barrow Clough to the N.

The final difficult stage of the route drops down through Linch Clough. Descend to the S on a clear path that soon levels out; on the L Ronksley Moor drops down to the Derwent. The path veers slightly to the E and soon cuts across an interesting landmark, a straight dike. Enter a shallow clough and descend fairly easily until the clough becomes a sharp, V shaped valley down which a stream flows. Progress becomes more difficult: it is not easy to walk high up on the bank, neither is it easy to walk by the stream; so pick the way best as possible. Gradually, like most horror stories, the situation improves: a faint path develops high up on the L bank above the stream; the valley broadens out. The sad remains of a wall appear, and, on the other bank, the clear line of a wide track makes a zigzag up the steep bank. Soon attain level ground and walk on the lower stretches of that same track; soon to pass a sign to open country and enter a plantation.

Bear L and walk N along a firm wide road to Slippery Stones; cross the fine, old Packhorse bridge that was brought here from the drowned village of Derwent and erected in 1959 in memory of John Derry, a fighter for access to the open spaces that we can now enjoy on this walk. The bridge was originally built in mediaeval times and was repaired in 1682. It was referred to in a C.14 charter as being "on the common way from Sheffield towards Darwent". This spot was meeting place for several ancient routes, some of which were tracks which connected granges owned by Welbeck Abbey. From this point Cut Gate goes off to Penistone; a document of 1571 refers to it as "Cart Gate".

Cross the bridge and take the highway S, back to the start, walking on a good track all the way with the reservoir on the R. On the way lifting the eyes to the natural scenery around: the great hills whose power is to be respected, finding the way over expansive moors or up the confining cloughs; the beauty man has brought here by building dams and towers of mediaeval scale whose gritstone is a match for the waters that have come down from the gritstone hills; and always the distant men who flew their Lancaster's low over these waters in their training for heroic deeds in wartime. There is much to refresh the spirit here.