

WALK 121.
CROWDEN. 121.
28-5 Miles. 7 hours 50 minutes.
Map Dark Peak. SK00/10



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Start near the Youth Hostel in Crowden (072994). Walk S over Crowden Brook, then rise up a bridle way for a few hundred metres to a sign to open country on the R next to a sign to Pennine Way via Laddow Rocks.

Level going at first over grass with hills rising steeply in front. Ahead to the R Crowden Clough divides the hills, a powerful valley showing the power of water in bye gone days. Soon, a fence accompanies on the R, to come to a ladder stile near a sign to Open Country and a plaque to Harry Philips. This is a surprisingly long level section on stony ground under a towering exposed gritstone with a deep Clough in the foreground.

Deviate away to the R from the Laddow path and make for the Clough on a thin, stony track that winds its way to the hillside. The stream looks tame in summer weather. The path leads down to stream level where outcrops of black grit lie on the R. now there is the pleasure of clough-hopping, and compare these with others I the peak district. The view is dominated by interlocking spurs which create suspense. Pick the way that becomes an art among the boulders and rocks that lie alongside the stream: look back and see the view and discover the height risen and how fascinating is the view in retrospect.

Proceed and the hills rise ever higher above. Occasionally beautiful pools lie under gritstone outcrops or at the foot of small waterfalls, the floor of the valley is quite wide where the stream emerges round a spur to meander briefly before tumbling down over slabs of glistening rock. A few gnarled trees remain here and there; the valley narrows as the path rises and the path diminishes to a faint worn track.

Suddenly, the view between the cleft hillsides is filled by a striking outcrop of rock shaped like a tower built on a promontory that no man could better have chosen, in fact, one of the castles that give tremendous character to this stage of the clough. Still engage in interesting rock-hopping and come to a gorgeous pool under rocky steps, then realise that another rock castle has appeared. After these fine features have been passed, the landscape goes into a narrow valley. Soon the walking gets easier as the path gets grassier.

Soon it is time to cut off L and pick a well-worn path to Black Hill, which is soon reached without any more deviations (078047). From the trig-point, set to walk on the alternative Pennine Way over level ground of peat and grass. This leads to the edge of Issue Clough. Bear L and walk on the high path above the Clough.

The path soon swings L to go on a bearing of about 270 degrees. Drop down the hillside and continue the long plod to eventually enter Dean Clough and climb out of it the other side. Soon come to a wooden bridge and notice there is more grassland around. A second wooden bridge appears then before long, climb up a bank to a ladder stile, a sign Pennine Way, and the road A.623 at 075071.

Walk N over moorland with Wicken Grain on the L flowing down into the Wessenhead Reservoir. Losing height, go over a small wooden footbridge, then rise to meet an industrial road to then turn L and walk along it towards the reservoir. Walking generally NW, pass several more reservoirs on the L, and, to the W of them, rise the slopes of Wessenden moor cut by cloughs typical of all the gritstone valleys, their sides rounded by the action of water.

Go over a small step-stile, then a wooden footbridge, followed by another; the footpath is now high on the hillside, an artificial track made for the water board (presumably), the HCWN can be seen on several marker stones.

The path now cuts deep into the hillside, then out again at Layzing Clough and Little Hey Sike Clough to go over a strong bridge and continue to Wessenden Lodge to then cut down a bank to signs of the Pennine Way. Go over a step stile on the L of a gate, and then walk on a wider hard road, the view ahead blocked by one of those interlocking spurs. On the L the steep hillside is cut by Cloughs, deep gashes in the gritstone.

Progress along the track leads to Butterley Reservoir and a public road. A few metres further, go L through a wooden gate, with a sign, to then descend an incredibly long flight of steps. At the bottom go L over a stone arched bridge with the Dam on the L. Now reverse the process by climbing an incredibly long flight of steps up to a jitty. Then come up to a cricket ground, football pitch and golf club. Go R to get to a road at 043105.

Bear L and walk uphill to where, at a fork, a road goes off to the R. but go L here, off the road a hundred metres beyond a N.T. sign to Bobus, and follow a footpath down to a brook, then up a bank. The path bears R and goes SW through moorland rising gently, until a small reservoir (Redbrook Reservoir), appears on the R. Though small enthusiasts enjoy sailing on it. Beyond it, Pule Hill attracts attention by its conical shape. Pass a few signs to the Pennine Way.

As the path reaches its high point, and get a superb view of the valley containing Upper Mill. Drop to a car park, then cross the road at 018095, and follow the Pennine Way on a wide rough track over Standedge. The view down the valley becomes more distinct as the village of Diggle becomes visible; a TV mast in the far distance.

Now on a tarmac road passing a cottage on the L. in a few metres, go R off the road at 009099 to a poor gate and so into a field, walking now SW through a narrow field, walking now pleasant again. Come to a fence and wall and enter a lane and wider views to the R, to see a reservoir at the head of another valley which drops down to Delph.

Pass old gritstone cottages with lines of narrow mullioned windows, possible old textile cottages, then come down to the A.62. Walk forward a few metres, then go L across the road at 004092 to a poor stile at a sign, then walk E on a rough track of 100 metres down to another road at 005092. Bear R to walk S for a few metres, then go L off the road through a slot in a concrete fence. Walk SE downhill through a field and make for a slot stile near a gate in the black wall on the L. lose height in this pleasant area, walking S and come to a gate. On the L is a disused reservoir.

On a lane now with fence either side, rising to an area called Carr where there are a few cottages, then come to a road at 005083. A sign here. Cross the road, and go along a drive which is signed Harrop Green Farm: it turns out to be a little hamlet to pass on the L, to a road. Go downhill, round a corner and down to a road junction with a view over a railway line (007080). Keep in the same direction for only a few metres then cross the road to a sign: Tame Valley Joint Committee. Enter a car park then go forward to walk on a canal at Diggle.

The village appears to be a narrow line of buildings following the valley; a disused mill on the R bearing the name Wharf Mill 1919. Cross the road and continue on the canal-side and another mill appears with the name Shaw on the tower. Just beyond it is the Victorian Gothic Town Hall. Go L across the bridge to a poor stile, then along a narrow jitty under a railway bridge. Bear R and walk along an overgrown lane, railway on the R, up to a really good wicket gate to climb uphill through a field with wall on the L.

Go over a step stile and continue climbing steadily for 50 metres to another step stile next to a slot in stone wall. Cross a lane to a scrappy fence no stile, then climb a wall on R through a field and follow the wall round to the R into a small pocket and an old metal gate. Pass a house on the R and come to a road at 003067 to go downhill for 40 metres then off the road to the L at a footpath sign along a short drive at the side of a house to a gate with a stile on its L.

Walk through a field, keeping close to a fence and old wall on the L, to then curve to the L. in about 100 metres, come to a gate with a stile on its L, then continue, wall on the L with a good view of the valley in front. Surprisingly, there stands a church high up in front with not a house near it. Come to a white gate and a slot in a wall then drop downhill, passing many horse jumps, going SE. Cross a footbridge and climb uphill to a short section of wall containing a stile.

Climb up a field, hedge on R, and high ridge on L; see ahead the outline of a war memorial. Go over a stile and continue but with wall on the L, good walking to a black building which is a garage. Go through an interesting jumble of old houses and come out onto a road where a sign states Saddleworth Fold.

Go L for a few metres then R at a sign along a house drive, garage on L, passing a new gate, then walking E uphill along a narrow jitty overgrown with a high bank either side. Soon, come to a flight of stone steps on the L that would not disgrace a fine Palladian mansion. Where do they go? Avoid them and continue uphill to the road at 006060. Bear R and walk S along this road and see a fine viaduct below in Upper Mill. Bear L at a fork and climb uphill to Knowl Farm on R. the road now drops; in about 50 metres, go L up a lane at 005049. Walk E on a good hard lane; on the L, the skyline is a jagged outline; on the R, the ground drops into a valley. Surprisingly, the lane degenerates into a narrow footpath through grass and trees, still dropping. When it starts to rise again, go sharp R (SW) downhill on a difficult to see path. Come to a small spring or stream, to then do a U-turn and go L uphill (SE then S).

Come to a gate with a stile on its L. go forward on lush grass and come to Hawk Yard Farm, to enter by a wicket gate. Go forward on the farm drive and come to the A.635 at 010039. Bear L and walk uphill for just under half a mile to a drive which goes R to the reservoirs. At the dam a plaque states that this stone was laid by H.M. the King of Tonga 1981. Cross the dam; go over the overflow and go L through a wicket gate, signed open country, go directly up the hillside; a steep scramble, at the top is Dean Rocks. Walk S near the edge and make for Chew Reservoir.

Go SE from Chew Clough to Laddow Rocks, which was passed early on. Go over a concrete bridge. The nearer to Laddow Rocks the path drops. Choose the easier route back to the start.