

Fairholmes Circular (via Bleaklow and Derwent Head)			Fairholmes Circular (via Bleaklow and Westend Valley)		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
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## Fairholmes Circular (via Bleaklow and Derwent Head)

**Start & Finish:** Derwent, opposite Fairholmes Bus Stop

Derwent, opposite Fairholmes Bus Stop, map reference SK 171 893, is 19 km west north west of Sheffield City Centre, 237 km north west of Charing Cross, 214m above sea level, and in **Derbyshire**.

**Length:** 27.8 km (17.3 mi). **Cumulative ascent/descent:** 674m.  
For a shorter, see below **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 8 out of 10 to 10 out of 10, depending on weather and route finding.

**Time:** 7-9 hours walking time. For the whole outing, including meals but not travel, allow at least 8-10 hours.

**Transport:** Derwent, opposite Fairholmes Bus Stop is served by bus line 257 from Sheffield Interchange to Bamford Station (journey time 37 mins), but only on Sundays during BST. On the current schedule, the 7 hours 20 minutes left for walking between the arrival of the first bus and the departure of the last will not be enough to finish the full walk (for almost all walkers). A taxi will need to be arranged for one of the journeys.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** This walk cannot be done as a public transport-based day walk from London, due to the infrequent bus service, but if staying in Sheffield or along the Bus Line 257 from there to Bamford, i.e. in the Hope Valley or at the Ladybower or Yorkshire Bridge Inns.

**OS Landranger Map:** 110 (Sheffield & Huddersfield)

**OS Explorer Map:** OL1 (The Peak District – Dark Peak Area)

### Walk Notes:

Quite possibly the wildest and remotest of the fully written up SWC walks, this route leads from a remote bus stop on the famous Derwent Reservoirs through woods onto a grassy boggy ridge past Alport Castles, Britain's largest inland landslip area with its fascinating rock formations and piles of rocky debris, to one of England's few great, untamed wildernesses: Bleaklow. Bleak by name, bleak by nature, it is famed for its extensive, wild moorland and is home to two of the three highest points in the Peak District. Despite its reputation as an endless, featureless mass of peat bogs, Bleaklow is quite magnificent though. Its contours are more rounded than Kinder's, but it is less accessible and more remote with fewer paths and features aiding navigation, basically an often-pathless wilderness – rough, boggy, quiet, wild and lonely. But it also has some picturesque gritstone rock formations, worn into shapes by wind and water and plenty of scenic river valleys running off it. The route across Bleaklow follows the Pennine watershed across the heart of the unforgiving plateau, with wide vistas across the Dark Peak area and to the North, before descending through the very pretty Upper Derwent Valley past Howden and Derwent Reservoirs back to the start.

Note: The stretch along the large – and partly pathless – peatland plateau requires excellent navigational skills and very good stamina, as any divergence from the best line requires much higher levels of energy, due to the deep peaty groughs, some watery holes and boggy ground either side of (and sometimes on) the best route.

### Walk Options:

**An Alternative Descent Route from Bleaklow Stones** avoids most of the often-pathless crossing of the high moors and leads via Grinah Stones, Barrow Stones, Round Hill, Ridgewalk Moor & the Westend Valley to the road by Howden Reservoir and thence to Fairholmes.

This is rated **7/10**, with 25.3 km/15.8 mi distance and 609m ascent.

### Lunch

#### Picnic.

**Tea** (details last updated 11/04/2025)

**Derwent Café** Fairholmes Visitor Centre, Bamford, Hope Valley, Derbyshire, S33 0AQ (01433 650 953, <https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/visitor-centres/derwent>). The Derwent Café in the Peak District Visitor Centre building is open 08.00-19.00 in summer, and to dusk at other times. The café is a hot and cold food kiosk with a separate entrance to the VC.

### Notes:

#### Ladybower Reservoir

Ladybower Reservoir is a large Y-shaped reservoir, the lowest of three in the Upper Derwent Valley. The River Ashop flows into the reservoir from the west; the River Derwent flows south, initially through Howden Reservoir, then Derwent Reservoir, and finally through Ladybower Reservoir. The area is now a tourist attraction, with the Fairholmes visitors' centre located at the northern tip of Ladybower. The east arm of the reservoir, fed by the Ladybower Brook, is overlooked by Hordron Edge stone circle.

Ladybower was built between 1935 and 1943 by the Derwent Valley Water Board to supplement the other two reservoirs in supplying the water needs of the East Midlands. It took a further two years to fill (1945). The dam differs from the Howden Reservoir and Derwent Reservoir in that it is a clay-cored earth embankment, and not a solid masonry dam. Below the dam is a cut-off trench 55m deep and 1.8m wide filled with concrete, stretching 150m into the hills each side, to stop water leaking round the dam. During the 1990s the wall was raised and strengthened to reduce the risk of over-topping in a major flood.

Drinking water must be pumped to treatment works rather than using gravity flow as in the other two reservoirs, increasing costs. It is treated at Bamford water treatment works and then flows south down the 45 km long Derwent Valley Aqueduct to supply clean water to the cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester. The aqueduct passes through the park of Chatsworth House. A tunnel carries some of the water from the Derwent Valley eastwards through the hill and into the lower of the two Rivelin Dams to supply Sheffield.

The building of the reservoir resulted in the submergence of the villages of Ashopton and Derwent, including Derwent Woodlands church and Derwent Hall. Ashopton stood roughly where the road to the Snake Pass met the Woodlands Valley. The narrow stone Packhorse Bridge over the Derwent was removed and rebuilt at the head of the Howden reservoir. In 1976, 1995 and 2018, dry conditions caused the water level to drop and the village of Derwent to once again be exposed.

#### The Peak District (National Park)

The Peak District is an upland area at the southernmost end of the Pennines.

The Peak District National Park is one of the UK's most popular and is located within the boundaries of five counties (Derbys., Ches., Staffs., Yorks. and Greater Manchester). Founded in 1951, it was the first national Park in England. The Park spans an area of around 1,440 km<sup>2</sup> (550 mi<sup>2</sup>) and – despite its name – its terrain consists mainly of rolling hills, farmland, moorland and some gritstone escarpments (the "edges"). It is however significantly higher than much of the terrain in the surrounding area.

The Peak District is formed almost exclusively from sedimentary rocks dating from the Carboniferous period. They comprise the Carboniferous Limestone, the overlying Gritstone and finally the Coal Measures, though the latter occur only on the extreme margins of the area. In addition, there are infrequent outcrops of igneous rocks including lavas, tuffs and volcanic vent agglomerates.

The northern Dark Peak (whose geology is gritstone) is one of the most famous landmarks in the Peak District National Park, known for its exposed and isolated tracts of moorland, as well as its expansive rolling plateau which is covered by cotton grass bogs and heather moorlands. The soil of the area is composed of moorland peat which provides the perfect environment for the plant life in the area. The areas to the flanks of the high moorland host numerous copses which are composed of Oak and Birch.

The southern White Peak (whose geology is mainly limestone) is another distinctive area within the park due to its gently sloping Limestone plateau, crisscrossed by the Limestone Dales. The Dales provide the areas' drainage and vary in steepness throughout the area.

### **Derwent Reservoirs**

In 1899, the Derwent Valley Water Board was set up to supply water to Derby, Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and the two Gothic-style dams were built across the River Derwent to create Howden Reservoir (1912) and Derwent Reservoir (1916). West of the Derwent a large village known as Birchinlee, locally known as 'Tin Town', was created for the 'navvies' – the workers who built the dams – and their families, many of whom came from the Elan Valley Reservoirs in Wales.

Over the decades, demand for water increased. Piped intakes were constructed from the rivers Ashop and Alport to the west to feed directly into the Derwent reservoir, but soon demand increased further to the point where another reservoir was required. The larger Ladybower Reservoir, built largely during World War II, necessitated the flooding of the villages of Derwent and Ashopton, with the occupants being relocated to the Yorkshire Bridge estate, just downstream of Ladybower dam. A packhorse bridge with a preservation order on it also had to be moved, and was rebuilt at Slippy Stones, north of Howden Reservoir.

The boundary between Derbyshire and Sheffield/South Yorkshire follows the River Derwent in its upper reaches and therefore runs through Howden Reservoir.

The topographical similarity between the Upper Derwent Valley and the Ruhr Valley of Germany led to the dams being used as a practice environment for the Lancaster bombers of 617 Squadron (Dam Busters) in 1943 before their attack on the Ruhr dams. *The Dam Busters* film was subsequently filmed at the Derwent Dams.

### **Alport Castles**

The Alport Castles are a landslip feature in the Peak District National Park on the eastern side of Alport Dale, in the National Trust's High Peak Estate, north of the Snake Pass and north-west of Ladybower Reservoir.

At almost a kilometre long, it is thought to be the largest inland landslide in the UK. The name "castles" comes from the debris from the landslide, which has produced several gritstone mounds that tower over the valley and appear from the distance to look like castles, with the largest of these, the "Tower", resembling a full-scale motte and bailey castle.

The exact cause of the landslide is unknown, but similar if less dramatic landslips occur all around the Dark Peak, notably on Mam Tor, where softer lower layers of shale give way under the heavy gritstone above.

The rock faces and cliffs are unstable and unsuitable for climbing and scrambling but the site is accessible along some well-trodden public rights of way and is a popular site for walkers and birdwatchers, as ravens and peregrine falcons have been known to nest on the crags.

### **Bleaklow**

Bleaklow is a high, largely peat-covered, gritstone moorland, just north of Kinder Scout across the Snake Pass, in the High Peak near the town of Glossop. Much of it is more than 600m above sea level and the shallow bowl of Swains Greave on its eastern side is the source of the River Derwent.

Bleaklow Head (633m), marked by a huge stone cairn and crossed by the Pennine Way, is the second-highest point in Derbyshire and the high point at the western side of the moor. It is one of three summits on this plateau above 2,000 ft, the others being Bleaklow Stones, some 3 km to the east along an indefinite ridge, and Higher Shelf Stones, 1.5 km south of Bleaklow Head.

Much of the main plateau of Bleaklow is a boggy peat moorland, seamed by 'grouches' (deep water-eroded channels in the peat), and lacking strong changes in elevation – in poor conditions its traverse is probably the most navigationally challenging in the Peak District.

Bleaklow is part of the National Trust's High Peak Estate and in recent years there has been considerable investment of resources to block many of the eroded peat gullies as part of major schemes to re-wet the peat and restore healthy sphagnum moss communities which are essential for peat formation, carbon-capture, and reduction in dissolved carbon which contaminates water supplies.

<https://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/moorlife/moorlife-project-sites/bleaklow>

### **Derwent River**

The Derwent is a Derbyshire river of 106 km/66 mi length and is a tributary of the River Trent, which it joins south of Derby. Its waters ultimately reach the North Sea via the Humber Estuary. For half its course the river flows through the Peak District and for most of the first 10 km it forms the border to South Yorkshire. In the lower reaches between Matlock and Derby it was one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution, providing power to the first industrial scale cotton mills. Today it provides a water supply to several surrounding cities, and its steeply sided valley is an important communications corridor through the uplands of the Peak District.

### **Peak Horsepower – Kinder Loop**

Peak Horsepower has been created to extend and improve the Peak District bridleway network. Their Kinder Loop is an 88 km (55 mi) circular waymarked route through the dramatic scenery around Kinder Scout and provides an iconic, challenging long-distance riding route in the centre of the country. It starts from the head of the Ladybower reservoir and draws on existing bridleways, the Pennine Bridleway and the Trans-Pennine Trail.

<http://www.peakhorsepower.co.uk/>

## WALK DIRECTIONS

The bus turns around a turning circle at the end of the (public) road before stopping at **Fairholmes Bus Stop** near the top end of **Ladybower Reservoir** in the **Peak District National Park**, so walk back along the left-hand pavement of the road in the direction the bus travelled up from, i.e. southerly. In 70m you cross the exit from the main car park and **[!] turn right** across the road and follow a signposted permissive footpath ('**Lockerbrook**', 'Walkers Only') through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and follow a gravel track up through a wood, with the **Locker Brook** down on the left. In 50m ignore a signed path to the right ('Derwent Dam via Old Railway') and continue steeply uphill. It 130m the path levels out and you cross the **Ashop Conduit** on a railed bridge.

[This transports water from the Ashop and Alport rivers and the Locker Brook into the Upper Derwent Reservoir. It was built before the Ladybower Reservoir was conceived, into which these waters now flow anyway.]

On the far side at a three-way signpost, continue in the previous direction steeply up into the wood ('Lockerbrook'), ignoring a right turn ('Derwent Dam'). In 90m the path largely levels out and veers to the left. You have a drop on the left and the path ascends more steeply again and in 110m you *turn right* with it to meet a broad forest track in 30m. *Turn left* uphill with a low marker post with permissive path (white arrow on black roundel) and green and black walking trail markers. In 40m pass another marker post and in another 40m *curve hard right* with the track. In 110m by another marker post, *turn up to the left* off the track with a signpost ('Lockerbrook Farm') along a narrow forest path, in 10m passing a fenced standing stone on the right, possibly a memorial stone. In 40m the path starts to ascend and in 100m you pass another marker post.

In 70m *turn hard right* up a stepped path and at the top of the steps *veer right* by a marker post. In 50m the path levels out and in 15m you *turn left* by a two-way signpost ('Lockerbrook') and in 80m go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate out of the wood and continue in the same direction along a clear path through a pasture with a drystone wall away to the right and a tributary of the Locker Brook down on the left, and some farm buildings away to the left. The path converges with the wall and in 140m you go through a crumbling perpendicular drystone wall. In 70m leave the pasture through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate by a three-way signpost and *turn left* along a car wide gravel track ('Lockerbrook'). Views on the left are dominated by the Derwent Edge (SWC Walk Ladybower Inn Circular via Derwent Edge and Strines) and Stanage Edge.

In 150m go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate by a DofE camping field on the left and pass some info panels this side of the **Lockerbrook Outdoor Centre**. Follow the track to the right of the hostel and outdoor centre and at the far end of the site, you cross the Locker Brook by a little waterfall on the right and *bear left* with the track. In 40m you have **Hagg Side** wood on the left and in 270m reach the brow of the rise, with Mam Tor and the Great Ridge now in view ahead (SWC Walk Bamford to Edale via Win Hill and Great Ridge) and a signpost by a stile to the left of a wooden field gate 20m ahead, with a fork in the track and a guide stoop and a signpost beyond that (SWC Walk 349 Ladybower Inn Circular via Alport Castles and Derwent Reservoirs joins from there).

**[!] Turn right** up a grassy bank and aim for a ladder stile over a drystone wall to the left of a metal field gate halfway up the sloping pasture ahead (310°) along a narrow but clear path. In 150m go over the ladder stile (or through a metal field gate 15m to its right) and continue in the same direction through a narrow pasture with a wall on the left and **Woodcock Coppice** away on the right, still along the permissive path. In about 300m go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate with an **Access Land** marker

and *curve left* with a clear car wide farm track (good **back views** from here **to the Hope Cement Works** and its large limestone quarry in the Hope Valley). In 25m you pass a National Trust High Peak Estate – Rowlee Pasture signpost and follow a general bearing of 310° for the next 1.5 km, gently uphill to near the highest point of **Rowlee Pasture**.

At a fork in 20m take the left, more used path (290° initially), staying slightly to the left of the ridge, i.e. with restricted views to the right, but with fine views on the left across the **Woodlands Valley** to the northerly face of **Kinder Scout**, as well as the **Great Ridge** and **Win Hill Pike**. In 650m you finally get some views on the right and in 120m continue along an engineered section of the path on flagstones through a boggy section of this largely grassy moorland, slowly getting away from the hum of the A57 Snake Road. In about 550m you reach the brow of the engineered path by the top of the pasture (at 483m above sea level) a little away on the right and *bear left* with the path. Remnants of a drystone wall are 100m away on the left. In 60m the engineered path ends for 40m and in another 90m you *bear right* with the path (315° initially).

The 'other' upland peat bog plateau of the Peak, **Bleaklow**, dominates the view ahead (**Bleaklow Stones** can be seen on 330°, **Grinah Stones** on 342°) and in 70m you get views on the right of the moorland dropping away towards the (out of view) **Upper Derwent Reservoir** and to **Derwent Edge** and ahead of **Alport Castles** and the wooded **Alport Dale** on the left. In 400m the flag-stoned section ends as you go through remnants of a drystone wall and continue in the same direction along a drystone wall on the left (all those walls are shown on the OS map). This section can be boggy but there often is a drier alternative to the left of the collapsed wall. In 430m the path converges with the drop on the left, revealing fantastic views of the large land-slipped area of **Alport Castles**, with a drystone wall running through it. Follow the top of the plateau along the drop (there is a narrow path right by the edge for best views) and in 110m ignore an unmarked public footpath forking down to the left along a faint path – just as you get fine views of the most picturesque part of the area, **The Tower**, through a gash in the rockface.

Continue in the same direction and after 500m near the far end of the landslip area, where **Alport Mere** (one of the few tarns in the Peak District) reveals itself beyond The Tower, and where you can see the meandering **Alport River** in the Dale below, you reach perpendicular remnants of a drystone wall and a low three-way footpath sign. Ignore a right turn ('Howden Reservoir', the onwards route of SWC 349). Continue in the same direction ('Footpath to Hern Clough and Bleaklow') along a grassy path along the **Birchin Hat** escarpment with a crumbling drystone wall on the left and with Bleaklow ahead. On a bearing of 322° **you can (briefly) see a trigpoint on the top of Westend Moor**. This will be in and out of view for the next 2.1 km until you pass it! In 200m you have an intact wall on the left and in 100m at the end of that wall you continue with the drop on the left. In about 900m you ford a first stream and in 130m another one. **[!] Veer to the right** (340°) away from the drop with a clear path, ignoring a faint left fork. You gently ascend through the boggy – but largely firm – moorland and in about 600m you again have the trig point in view ahead. In 150m you pass it at 507m above sea level.

Ignore left forks leading back to the edge of the moor at **Glethering Clough** (on 275° & 300°) and continue in the same direction (325°) towards the top of a rounded hill ahead (the top of **Alport Moor**). The route is fairly obvious for the first 600m or so, when you cross a boggy saddle with some groughs between the top of Westend Moor and the rounded hill ahead. In 150m you pass a chest-high stake and continue in the same direction towards the obvious top (330°). In 100m starts an area of small pools and watery holes, sometimes hidden under grass: you have to be very observant here, although this is still good to walk – if you avoid the pools! You can also spot attempts to **support the re-wetting of the bogs**, for example by blocking water off-flow with wooden panels.



In about 400m you can pick up a clear path again. In another 200m you reach the (unremarkable) top of **Alport Moor** at 535m above sea level. From here *bear left* (285°) – initially only with a faint path – towards the highest point of the saddle between this top and **The Ridge** (on the OS map), leading up to **Bleaklow**. In 150m the path bears to the left and in 270m, at a T-junction with a grough running down to the saddle, you *turn right* along the grough and then through the saddle and back up The Ridge along the at times intermittent path, on a general bearing of 320°. In the higher parts the path is firm and clear though. In about 800m from the saddle you reach the plateaued top of The Ridge at about 575m above sea level.

The route ahead along the ridge is clear on a broad bearing of 350°. From here, you have some rock faces away on the left across the infant **Alport River**, and **Bleaklow's highest point** (Bleaklow Head) at 633m above sea level further away to the left. The marginally lower **Bleaklow Hill** (630m above sea level) is half left ahead, with the headwaters of the Alport flowing down it. To the right of the route are the headwaters of the **Westend River** and **Bleaklow Stones** scattered along Bleaklow's ridge, with **Grinah Stones** visible away to the right. You **either** continue carefully through some deep peaty depressions (usually carrying well), interrupted by grassy or shallow watery sections (but also containing some deeper pools) **or** you find a more defined path in somewhat dryer ground a little to the left.

In about 250m you reach a wire fence (on the OS map) with **two stiles close to each other** and a field gate 70m to the left of the stiles. There are clear paths from either of the stiles up the remaining ascent to Bleaklow's ridge, initially staying to the left of the Westend's headwaters, on a broad bearing of 5°. **This area can be very wet though**. So, *turn left* to the wooden gate and pick up a path there, which in about 60m stays to the left of a deep cut (the infant **Westend River**), containing **a treacherous area** of grass 'floating' on water. In 280m the broad depression on the right that carries the Westend River narrows to a tight clough and you can see some rocks at the top of the rise.

**Aim for those rocks:** you follow a narrow path to the left of the clough and in 100m cross it and continue in the same direction. In 50m pass the first of the scattered gritstone boulders you spotted from below and in 70m pass to the right of a large standalone boulder. In 40m you walk through some more sculpted gritstone boulders and follow along the clough further uphill. In 150m the clough opens out to a grassy, mildly undulating moorland landscape with big slabs of gritstone dotted about. Other than that, **the plateau is largely feature-less**. You are close to the highest point of the rise, from where you get **views north into Longdendale**, with the **A628** (Manchester – South Yorkshire via Woodhead Pass) running through it.

The surrounding groughs and cloughs are a **good opportunity for a largely wind-protected picnic**, before the demanding continuation of the route. Continue in a broadly easterly direction through the groughs, trying to find higher, grassy ground where possible. In 160m you pick up a path of sorts and aim for an assortment of large gritstone boulders close together directly ahead, which you pass in 75m. In another 80m you reach the **Bleaklow Stones**, a large area of picturesque gritstone boulders, with the landscape dipping down on the other side of the stones and with **Grinah Stones** visible ahead across the top of the **Westend Valley**. The boulders stretch out to the left and right and feel free to explore them, but **the route continues from the furthest right stones**, where you follow a clear path gently downhill (30° initially). In 100m stay to the left of a small boggy patch and in 20m you reach **a very indistinct fork in the path**.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For the Alternative Descent Route**, avoiding further long stretches without a clear path, *bear right* (115°) along an indistinct path to the left of an infant stream and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Alternative Descent Route**.

**For the Main Walk Route**, *fork left* (continuing in the same direction, 55° initially) and follow an intermittent line of stakes on a general bearing of 55° **for 850m**, staying at the top of the ridge along the watershed, negotiating groughs and boggy stretches of the peat as best you can (on the last outing stakes were spotted in 300m, in another 150m and then again in 400m, just before the prominent grough mentioned below). This is an **energy-sapping** stretch. Eventually – at spot height 580m – you cross a prominent grough with the water flowing left-to-right, this is a major tributary to **Deep Grain** and thence the River Westend. *Veer left* immediately after the grough (25°), **away from the headwaters of the Westend**, but initially still with some higher ground to the right.

Soon enough the ground drops away to the right as well and you are walking along a different watershed: on the left – off **Featherbed Moss** – the waters flow through **Far Black Clough** into the infant **River Etherow**, one of the three rivers forming the **River Mersey**. On the right, the waters flowing off the bowl of **Swains Greave** are the ultimate furthest source of the **River Derwent**. You now follow a similar bearing **for 1.3 km**, initially walking in a grough, while following a very few stakes and some small stone cairns, then along an intermittent path to the right of another grough (on the OS map as a stream) but continuing in the same direction where that grough bears to the left to **Far Black Clough**. Later you *veer a little to the left* with the watershed (and an intermittent faint path and some more stakes, not all of which are close to that path), again dipping in and out of groughs, while trying to avoid bog and deep water on the grassy ground. **The ideal line offers mostly good walking**, but straying off it often results in some hard work! You eventually reach a clear boggy plateau at 514m above sea level.

*Bear right* at a small round wooden stake with a vague grass path on a bearing of 60° for 90m, then *bear right* again at another small round wooden stake on a bearing of 80° with a faint path **for 700m**. Stay on the watershed (Derwent to the right, Etherow/Mersey on the left), trying to follow an intermittent path and a line of stakes and negotiating groughs, bogs and waterholes. Eventually you reach a fence line by a one-plank stile at an indistinct bend in the fence, where the left-hand fence direction is northerly towards **Far Small Clough**. This is **Swains Head** (on the OS map) and you go over the stile and cross over from Derbyshire into **South Yorkshire** (Sheffield to the right of the ridge ahead, Barnsley to the left). [The county boundary bears right, down to the Derwent, and follows it for almost 10 km to **Abbey Tip Plantation on Upper Derwent Reservoir**.]

[!] *Bear right* with a clear path on a bearing of 130° gently down slope **into the Derwent Valley** through grass, bracken and heather, with **Dean Head Stones** towering above on the left and **Barrow Stones** towering above on the right on the other side of the valley. **For the next 1.0 km**, the path is mostly identifiable and always stays high above the Derwent. **In more detail**: in 220m and in another 30m you go through a couple of deep groughs (shown on the OS map as a stream); in 100m you are close to the **Derwent River** (although some 20-30 height metres above it); in about 200m (at spot height 465m) you are level with the **Dean Head Stones** above on the left and keep descending on a broad bearing of 125°, then 110°; in 300m you *veer left* (due E) with the path to continue on the level for a while; in 130m you pass a couple of boulders on your left and in 50m *bear right* (140° initially) and follow a faint and intermittent path downhill through heather mixed with grassy spongy watery ground, sometimes bracken; in 200m another faint path joins from the right; in 50m you cross the stream coming down **Hoar Clough**.

Up ahead on the left you have **Horse Stone Naze** on Howden Moors. The path slowly converges with the Derwent and in about 500m you cross a stream coming down **Coldwell Clough**. The valley narrows, so much so that Horse Stone Naze is out of sight for a while, as you follow a good grassy path through bracken, close to the meandering river. In 230m cross another stream out of an unnamed clough (here, the area down by the Derwent may be boggy, but there is a faint path a little higher up). [!] In 300m, at 370m above sea level, 40m before a lone tree up on the left and about 150-200m before a clump of trees near the riverbed where the Derwent drops more steeply down a gorge, you [!] *fork up to the left* along a clear path to the left of said lone tree (105°), ignoring the continuation along the riverbed. In 40m you pass the tree (an oak) and in 15m continue along intermittent flagstones, with the **Humber Knolls** (on the OS map) on the left.

In 180m you cross the stream coming down **Lands Clough** by a tin shed away on the left, with the more impressive **Upper Small Clough** across the valley. The path continues as a car wide gravel track about 30m above the level of the Derwent and you follow the narrow but not-too-narrow-for-views stretch above the river **for 1.3 km**, with **Rocking Stones/ Crow Stones Edge** and **Bull Stones** ahead, and **Howden Edge** a little to the right ahead (leading to High Stones, **the highest point in Sheffield**). Eventually you *turn left* with the track to ford the stream coming down **Stainery Clough** and *turn right* on the other side and rise with the track up the lightly wooded **Oaken Bank**. At the end of the wood in 700m you cross the stream coming down **Broadhead Clough** (with a fine **waterfall** away on the left after heavy rain) and rise with the track, away from the river. In 80m the track levels out and in 150m a car wide grassy track joins from the left behind (a public footpath on the OS map, although waymarked here as a National Trust Concessionary Path).

This picturesque stretch of the valley is called **Cranberry Bed**, with **Little Moss** rising above on the left and **Mosley Bank** opposite. In 350m an easy-to-miss faint path to the right down to the river leads in about 240m to **Slippery Stones**, a deep natural pool in the river with a small waterfall and **a renowned Wild Swimming spot** (from there the continuation of the path re-joins the main track by the footbridge over the stream out of Cranberry Clough). In 200m the track *bears to the right*, 30m before a signposted bridleway (and the **Peak Horsepower – Kinder Loop** with it) comes down from the left **from Cut Gate and Howden Edge**, by a National Trust – Howden Moor sign and in another 100m you cross the stream coming down **Cranberry Clough** on a footbridge.

In 40m ignore a right turning track signed 'Westend and Alport Castles' (SWC Walk 349 Ladybower Inn Circular via Alport Castles and Derwent Reservoirs comes up along it) and continue in the same direction (a public footpath signed for 'Derwent Valley'), gently rising. You have the **Slippery Stones Bridge** down on the right (as it was listed, this old packhorse bridge had to be brought here stone-by-stone from its former place in Derwent Village before Ladybower Reservoir could be flooded) and follow the easterly edge of Howden and Upper Derwent Reservoirs **for about 6.4 km to Derwent Dam**.

**In more detail:** In 270m go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate (fine views back from here up the Upper Derwent Valley) and the track curves to the left in 40m to contour along **Cold Side**, with **Long Edge** above. **Howden Reservoir** comes into view and in 650m you go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and ignore a stile on the left and continue in the same direction along the gravel track, with trees on the right below. In 320m ignore another stile on the left leading up into **Ronksley Wood**. Howden Reservoir is now visible through the trees, on the right below. In 200m – just after passing a National Trust – Coldside Oaks sign – you go through a gap to the left of a wooden field gate to **leave the Access Land** and continue along the car wide gravel track ('Fairholmes 5.5 km'). The track curves to the left and – foliage permitting – you get glimpses of the **Howden Dam** on the right.



In about 750m from the gate a car wide steep forest track joins from the left. **Nether Hey** hill is visible ahead and in 170m you *turn sharp right* with the track where it crosses a stream coming out of **Howden Clough**. Ignore a faint path joining from the left and also in 75m a signposted public footpath joining from the left out of Howden Clough. In 650m you pass the Howden Dam (no access) and descend with the track ('Fairholmes 3.5 km'). In 200m a service track from the dam joins from the right and you curve to the left with the track, with views on the right now of the **Upper Derwent Reservoir**. In 60m a steep forest track joins from the left ('Path to Access Land'). You continue gently downhill and in 110m walk through an often-open wooden field gate and *turn right* across a bridge over the **Abbey Brook**. In 125m from the bridge you pass some larch-clad buildings on the right belonging to the **Howden Hydro Power Scheme**. You are passing back into Derbyshire and in 80m a footpath joins from the left by a PNFS sign.

Continue along the track and in 170m by a bench on the right, *veer left* with the track as it joins the reservoir side. In 250m you get views down to the **Derwent Dam** – and opposite on the westerly bank you have an inlet where the waters off Rowlee Pasture join via **Ouzelden Brook** and **Alport Grain**. In 450m you pass a bench on the right below and in another 200m by another bench on the left, a signed footpath joins on the left from 'Bradfield & Strines', just before you cross the stream out of **Walker's Clough**. In about 800m you cross the stream coming out of **Hollin Clough** on a bridge (on the far side ignore a permissive path on the left into Hollinclough Plantation). Opposite on the westerly side is the outflow of the **Ashop Conduit**, diverting some of the waters of the Alport and Ashop Rivers and the Locker Brook into the reservoir. In 150m – just before the Derwent Dam – a public footpath bears right through a wooden gate ('Walkers Only').

[!] *Bear right* through the wooden gate and descend gently along a fenced path. In 60m you pass the reservoir dam and [!] *turn right* down some steps, ignoring the continuation of the fenced gravel path. At the bottom of the first set of steps you pass the **East Tower** of the dam and continue down a second set of steps (ignoring a left turning path). At the bottom *bear left* across a meadow along a well-trampled path and in 200m *turn right* along **Derwent Lane**. You cross the **Derwent River** in 40m, in 60m ignore a left forking tarmac path to the **Derwent Café** and ascend along the road to a roundabout and *turn left* to **the bus stop at Fairholmes** 70m away.

## Alternative Descent Route

You follow the grassy path to the left of the infant stream and in 150m reach an area of more prominent groughs. In 30m – at spot height 595m – cross a grough and **[!]** *bear left* along a peaty path between grass banks initially (55°). Continue on the same level along the rim of the **Westend Valley** and in 160m another path joins from the left behind (good views back to Bleaklow Stones from here). The path is mostly good to walk, i.e. firm enough where it is boggy, and you cross plenty of small streams running down the slope. In 150m you *bear right* with the path and in 250m and then in another 50m cross the two furthest of the streams that form **Deep Grain**, a major tributary to the Westend, one of them in a deep cut. You gently re-ascend towards Grinah Stones and in 370m cross another stream, then in another 250m ford one last stream (both flowing into Deep Grain), before ascending to the plateau above and to the left of the **Grinah Stones**, 150m away.

At the far end of the boulders **[!]** *fork to the left*, initially due east then *curve further to the left*, towards a handful of large boulders 40m away and follow the path to the left of those boulders. Briefly you can see the higher of the **Barrow Stones** ahead in the distance and then the path *veers left* to in 40m go to the left of a **large peat hag** situated at the top of a deep grough and then to *veer right* immediately through a partly sandy area, gently uphill. On the right ahead and below you can see the upcoming descent route from Barrow Stones: to **Round Hill** (with a cairn/storm shelter and a boulder as well) and from there turning right to a pool on **Ridgewalk Moor** (just to your right). As you ascend, Barrow Stones come back into view and you can also spot a fence line below on the right. You cross a stream en route (one of two tributaries of the **Grinah Grain**) and in 550m from the peat hag reach the **Barrow Stones** near 'Big Daddy', a prominent multi-part gritstone boulder with a wooden gate in a fence line visible at a lower level.

It is worth exploring the stones to the left for parts or all of the 400m long area they are scattered about in (there are stunning surround views to be had from the top of the highest boulders across the Derwent Valley to Howden Edge and beyond to the Northern Pennines), **but the route continues by turning right through the wooden gate**. Your aim is the top of the (suitably named) **Round Hill** 450m away, with its storm shelter and one lonely gritstone boulder, following a mostly clear path (135° broadly), while crossing the other tributary of the **Grinah Grain** in 230m. The path is usually clear and good, but there are a few slippery stretches. On a good weather day, in direct continuation beyond Round Hill, you can see **Back Tor on Derwent Edge**. By the storm shelter and boulder ignore a left turning path and *turn right* along a clear path. The aim now is a pool visible on 160°, although the path initially aims to the right of that direction (and you lose sight of the pool) and ever so gently curves to the left to pass the pool in 950m.

**In more detail:** with Grinah Stones prominent away on the right, you descend over 250m to a watery, boggy, grassy plateau and follow the path very carefully through it. The pool is now out of view as it's on slightly higher ground, but the path is easy enough to follow and the ground is usually firm enough ever where there are pools of water, but **do tread gently** as there are soft and deep areas mixed in between. Minimise any potential problems by staying on the highest ground of this very gently sloping plateau. Eventually you pass the pool on its left-hand side at 510m above sea level and continue along the beginnings of a grassy car wide track and in another 80m reach a four-way junction of tracks, with the one crossing running in a deep cutting between peat banks.

*Turn right* along the gravel car wide track. In 65m you pass the first of a line of grouse butts on the left and *turn left* with the track. In 160m you *bear down to the right* with the track, now with the impressive **Ravens Clough** across the Westend Valley, leading up to the grassy ridge the ascent route went up along on its way to Bleaklow. The terrain gets

steeper, and in 300m you *curve to the left* with the track, to zigzag through a few turns: in 220m, after which you go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate by a **National Trust – Ronksley Moor** sign, and again in another 200m. The **confluence of Grinah Grain and Westend River** is down on the right. In 350m you go through a wooden field gate (with a Forestry Commission 'Please shut the gate' sign) or over a stile to the left of it and follow the track through a lightly wooded area – a newly planted wood centred on **Dry Clough**. In 250m you leave the wood through another wooden field gate or over a stile to the left of it. In 110m go through remnants of a drystone wall (more obvious on the left) and then pass the corner of a large clear-felled conifer plantation across the **River Westend** (to be replanted with a mixture of native trees).

There is a rockface up on the left and in 180m you pass the corner of another (largely) felled plantation on the immediate left. Continue along the wood with the river below on the right, and in 700m *turn right* with the track and a stream towards the river but in 40m *turn left* at a three-way junction (the continuation leads to a usually-too-deep ford). In 90m *turn right* across a two-railed footbridge with fine **views back to the Grinah Stones** on 330° ( while **leaving the Access Land**) and *turn left* along a car wide forest track (a permissive route). Follow this track along the river (a fine native brown trout river) all the way to the road along the **Howden Reservoir**.

**In more detail:** in 80m cross the stream out of **Black Clough**; in 900m – where a forest track joins down from the right – cross the stream out of **Fagney Clough**; in 180m a public footpath joins down from the right along a wooded ridge by a Peak & Northern Footpaths Society sign (the route of SWC 349 Ladybower Inn Circular via Alport Castles and Derwent Reservoirs); in 30m cross the stream out of **Ditch Clough**; in 50m ignore a track turning left towards a bridge over the river; in 100m go through a metal gate to the left of a double wooden field gate onto the road along **Howden Reservoir**, at a bend.

*Turn right* along the tarmac road (i.e. more or less in the previous direction) and follow it for **5.6 kilometres to Fairholmes**, mostly with a good path on earth or grass to the side. **In more detail:** you have a thin belt of trees on the right and the Access Land of **Birchinlee Pasture** beyond it; in 75m you have fine views through the trees on the left along the westerly arm of Howden Reservoir to the rounded hill of **Cow Hey** on the other side and – beyond it a little to the right and higher – **High Stones**, part of the Howden Edge, and **the highest point in the City of Sheffield**. In about 600m you pass **Ridge Clough** on the other side of the reservoir arm, now with **Hern Side** on your right. In 340m the road veers to the right, now with the main body of the picturesque Howden Reservoir on the left, and in another 500m you *turn right* with the road towards Howden Dam. [On the opposite side of the reservoir, Abbey Bank is rising to Lost Lad Hillend and **Back Tor**, i.e. the northerly end of **Derwent Edge**.]

You pass the **Howden Dam** in 250m and in another 80m **Beaver's Croft** holiday accommodation. In 90m a stream tumbles down the wooded hill on the right in a scenic fall and in 20m another one. You get views on the left of the narrow end of **Upper Derwent Reservoir**, and in another 200m of the full body of it. In 150m notice a part-ruined oven-like brick structure on the right: these are the remnants of the incinerator of **Birchinlee Village**, aka 'Tin Town', a temporary settlement built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to house the navvies (up to 1,000 of them, including families) building the Howden and Derwent dams. In 100m you pass a pond on the right and in 80m **[!] detour 20m to the left to a brick memorial** housing – on the reverse – a very informative panel on the temporary village (currently missing). The map on the panel illustrates where huts, shops, roads, the railway for transporting people and stones to this sight, police station, canteen and some other structures stood in relation to today's road.

Continue along the road and in 40m by a car wide gravel track joining from the right, you find another panel 25m away on the right with a replica of a photo of the site at the time ('Accident Hospital'). In 100m there is a mysterious gate-like structure made out of rock somewhat away to the left and in another 100m you pass an info panel with a photo ('Water Supply'). In 80m by another small panel on the left, you have the fenced-off stone remnants of the canteen's **beer cellar** (the 'canteen' was extended twice over the years to cope with demand). In 100m pass a two-way signpost ('Fairholmes 3 km') and in 60m, opposite of where the old lane through the huts comes down to join the modern road, pass a last, larger panel and **model of Birchinlee Village** (1901-14). In 100m *turn right* with the road around an inlet and in 250m *turn left* with it to cross **Ouzelden Brook** on the lane (ignoring a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate) and then further left, gently rising. In 170m a signposted bridleway joins from the right through a metal gate, this is the **old packhorse route** from the Woodlands Valley and Edale to the Upper Derwent Valley and beyond to South Yorkshire.

You get views on the left up the reservoir to Howden Dam and Cow Hey behind and in 150m *turn right* with the road and a two-way signpost ('Dambuster Memorial 1.2 km'). In 300m pass **Gores Farm House** on the right and continue between earth banks for 100m. Derwent Dam with its impressive towers becomes more and more visible and in about 500m you are level with a scenic bridge on the other side of the water, spanning the stream out of **Hollin Clough**. In 150m ignore a permissive path forking right along a car wide gravel track, signposted 'Lockerbrook 1 km', just before a cattle grid (with a wooden gate to its left). Follow a gravel path to the left of the road and in 70m you pass a **memorial stone to Tip**, a sheepdog that kept watch on the moors aside its dead owner for 15 weeks! In 20m go over the **Ashop Conduit**. [This transports water from the Ashop and Alport rivers and the Locker Brook into the Upper Derwent Reservoir. It was built before the Ladybower Reservoir was conceived, into which these waters now flow anyway.]

You then pass the **Dambuster Memorial** and in 50m the **Derwent Dam** and reach a small car park on the left. **Here you have a few choices, based on your remaining energy levels and time left to the last bus from Fairholmes:**

- **Easiest:** descend for 500m along a gravel path to the left of the road, through the roundabout at Fairholmes and to the bus shelter;
- **A tad longer and with a little height gain:** in 75m *fork right* along a grassy path gently uphill, signposted '**Fairholmes via Old Railway**'. You follow the path along the line of the railway that delivered materials and people for the building of the Dams, gently uphill into **Lockerbrook North Plantation**, with the **Ashop Conduit** flowing on the right behind an earth wall (well worth climbing up to and having a look), passing a few railway line marker posts en route. In 400m you can spot the bus shelter at Fairholmes below on the left through the trees but continue through the wood. You pass the remnants of the old railway viaduct across the Lockerbrook Valley and descend into the valley and in another 70m *turn left* at a path T-junction, past the viaduct buttress and through a wooden gate onto the road at Fairholmes, with the bus shelter 100m away to the left;
- **A tad longer and with a little height gain:** in 30m *turn left* down a stepped public footpath which leads down to the road to Derwent village by a bridge over the Derwent River. *Turn left* over the bridge for **fascinating views of the imposing Derwent Dam** across a large meadow. Then return to the road and *turn right* from the previous direction back across the Derwent and up along the road to the roundabout at Fairholmes and with the bus shelter away to the left.

The **Derwent Café** is about 100m from the bus stop, down towards the Derwent Dam.