

Alport Moor Geocross V79

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Alport Moor is the loneliest moor overlooking the Upper River Derwent. Not just lonely through lack of people but also by lack of mappable features. It is a long way from anywhere, and the trig point is rarely visited. It is one of the least visited moors above the Upper Derwent Valley. You can see why the paths are often grassy.

In fact it is so little used that the OS map doesn't even give it a name!

Unlike the other moors overlooking the Upper Derwent Valley, Alport Moor has no gritstone tors! Alport Moor is the 'Empty Quarter' of Bleaklow.

However, the fine gritstone tor of Crook Hill overlooks the Ladybower and the Derwent Reservoirs, a sentinel gritstone tor at a busy junction on the A57 Snake Pass and the Derwent Dams road. It is passed by thousands every day, yet rarely visited.

There are actually two tors on Crook Hill. Crook Hill is the dominant tor and has been awarded an 'Ethel' designation, but in fact neighbouring Lady Crook Hill is quite a bit higher.

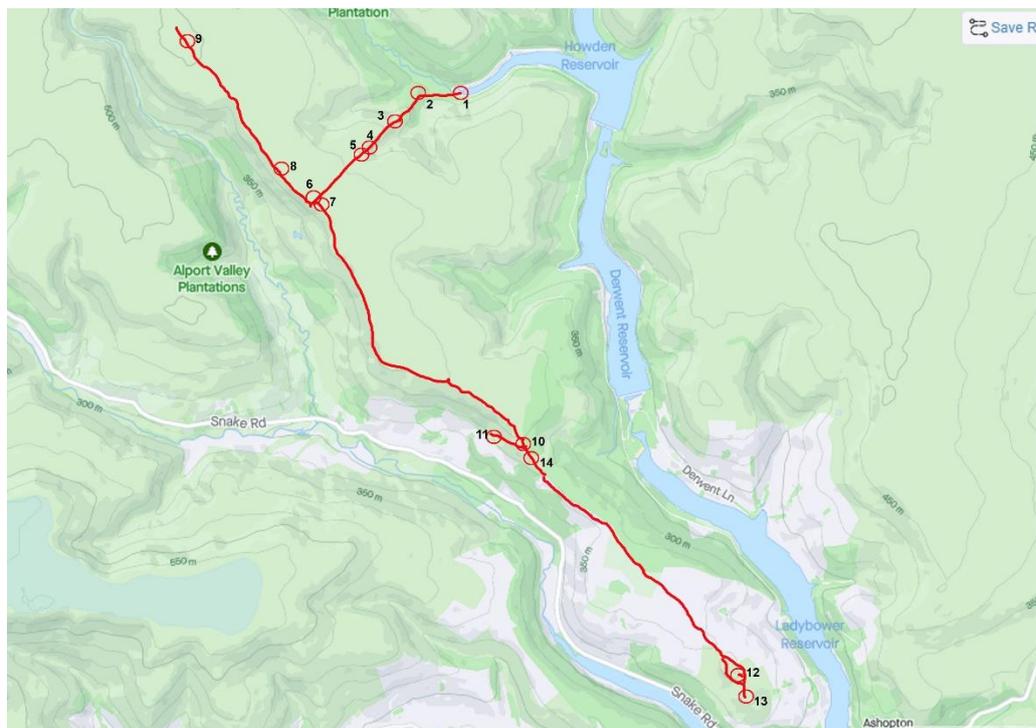
Highlight of this Alport Moor Geocross is the Alphabet Stone which you can easily fail to see it even close up. It took me three visits.

The Alport Moor Geocross V79 takes you to one of the most spectacular views from Alport Castles, one of the best in the Peak District. It also passes through the densest concentration of shooting butts!

Location	OS grid reference
1	Westend Bridge SK 15498 92762
2	Footpath sign SK 15322 92841
3	Birchinlee Pasture sign SK 14968 92580
4	Shooting butt SK 14512 92179
5	Birdwatchers shelter SK 14472 92096
6	Footpath sign SK 14133 91599
7	Alport Castles SK 14132 91579
8	Upper Alport Dale SK 13902 91839
9	Alport trig

	SK 12879 93256
10	Haggtor crossroads SK 16379 89067
11	Alphabet Stone SK 16039 89220
12	Crook Hill Stone Circle SK18466 87106
13	Crook Hill SK 18340 86842
14	Hagg Side footpath stile SK 16376 89059

Each of the locations can be found on the route below. The locations are listed in order and sufficient background is included to help you triangulate your position to identify the location



Start from Westend bridge on the Howden Reservoir.

Location 1 OS ref SK 15498 92762

Westend bridge

W3W scouting.educates.ocean



Prior to the Derwent Valley Dams project, Westend Valley was farmed for hundreds of years by four small farms. West End Farm was in the valley bottom, close to this bridge. Bank Top, Ridge Farm and Ronksley Farm were on the moorland edge of enclosed grazing, at around 420 metres height (approx 1400 feet). Their sheep grazed the moors and their shepherds met with other shepherds at Shepherds Meeting Stones.

The moors were named by the farmers depending on how they were grazed.

Birchinlee Pasture, Rowlee Pasture, Bridge-end Pasture. But no name is given to the land north of Alport trig....

All four farms were closed when the Howden Reservoir construction began, between 1901 – 1912. The steep valley slopes, which were grazing pastures, were planted with conifers. Grazing ceased so the traditional drystone walls were not maintained. Over the last 110 years many of these drystone walls have collapsed.

The Ladybower bus service used to pass here and the narrow bridge over the River Westend was never engineered with regular bus traffic in mind. The bridge has recently been shored up with gabions, wire baskets filled with free draining stones. But the bus service has stopped due to lack of paying customers.

Just upstream from this old bridge is a more substantial one used by forestry vehicles.

Location 2 OS ref SK 15322 92841

Footpath sign

W3W juggled.tipping.hers



The steep public footpath leadover the moor to Alport, valley via the spectacular landslip feature known as Alport Castles.

Location 3 OS ref SK 14968 92580

Birchinlee Pasture sign

W3W subjects.cupcake.equipping



Birchinlee Pastures was unenclosed moorland grazing for the four Westend farms. The farms were cleared to allow construction of the Howden and Derwent Reservoirs.

In 1901 a new 'Birchinlee' village sprang up to house almost 1000 construction workers on the Derwent Valley Dams Project. It was nicknamed 'Tintown' due to the corrugated metal sheeting used for the temporary houses. It was a model village in several respects, all the houses had water and sanitary facilities. There was a hospital and pub, and there was law and order enforced by a resident policeman, but it was a friendly temporary community and his services were rarely needed.

Birchinlee village lasted just 14 years until the first two dams, Howden and Derwent, were completed in 1916.

Birchinlee Pastures moor is now managed for grouse shooting and grazing a few sheep. The new deciduous tree planting seen here in plastic tree shelters along the upper slopes of the conifer plantations, will be shaping the Moors for the Future.

Location 4 OS ref SK 14512 92179

Shooting butt - north

W3W chef.pavilions.nametag



This is the first of 20 shooting butts at the head of Ditch Clough. This might be the most densely built shooting moor in the Peak District. Huddled into 0.9 hectares and just 75 metres apart, Ditch Clough would be a very noisy place when shooting takes place.

The fencing is to keep out the few sheep who might seek shelter.

Location 5 OS ref SK 14472 92096

Birdwatchers shelter

W3W hers.eyeful.ribcage



This corrugated camouflaged metal shelter is usually placed on the ridge overlooking Alport Castles at the beginning of the spring bird nesting season. It is normally anchored down to prevent it from being blown away.

This year (2022) it had not been placed, and was looking a bit abandoned. Perhaps it had become a shooting shelter?

Location 6 OS ref SK 14133 91599

Footpath sign

W3W valued.found.emerald



The remote ridge overlooking Alport Dale sees few visitors. Birdwatchers visit in spring to spot birds of prey. The footpath leading to Alport trig is grassy and boggy in places. The long distance views are spectacular.

Location 7 OS ref SK 14132 91579

Alport Castles – viewpoint near end of stone wall

W3W minds.twisty.arranges



This is the magnificent view towards Kinder from Alport Castles.

Alport Castles is a massive landslip which is still active. The landslip is 1km wide and is much bigger than the better known Man Tor landslip. It is probably the largest landslip in the Peak District National Park. The folds and hollows of successive slips are clear to see. There is a footpath which twists its way through the contortions, down to the River Alport and Alport Farm.

This rocky tor is known as 'The Tower' and is the most 'castle' like formation. It is a tottering tower of eroded blocks.

South of the The Tower is 'Little Moor' which appears to be a chunk of grassy moor which has slid down the hillside intact.

Do not stand too close to the edge, it is great nesting habitat for birds who don't mind that it is very tottering and unpredictably loose.

Location 8 OS ref SK 13902 91839

Upper Alport Dale

W3W conceals.fund.saucepan



This viewpoint to Upper and Lower Alport Dale is on Birchin Hat, the rim of Alport Dale, named hundreds of years ago in a time when birch trees would have been abundant at the top of the steep bank. The height difference from the River Alport to Birchen Hat is more than 200 metres. Alport is one of the steepest sided valleys in the Peak District, typically 50% (1 in 2)

The capture of water from the River Ashop and River Alport was an important and clever engineering strategy of the Derwent Valley reservoirs project, and was completed in the 1920s. It significantly increases the catchment of the Derwent Reservoir, by adding water from the Ashop and Alport valleys, thereby providing more water for the cities of Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham and Leicester long before the third reservoir, the Ladybower was built.

By 1920 the beautiful peaceful valley of the River Alport had received the Derwent Valley Water Board standard treatment of their water catchments: monoculture conifer plantations and exclusion of grazing. Alport Farm escaped clearance.

In the late 1990s the public were outraged when they heard of plans for total felling of the Forestry Commission owned Alport Woodlands. This prompted a new plan of gradually replacing the conifers with deciduous woodlands.

The Alport Re-Wilding Project is a unique partnership between the National Trust and the Forestry Authority which aims to preserve the habitat and improve the landscape. It has a 40 years timeframe and was begun in 2001.

Location 9 OS ref SK 12879 93256

Alport trig

W3W [motivates.wisdom.spout](https://www.w3w.org/motivates.wisdom.spout)



One of the least trampled moorland trig points; the concrete plinth is just 200mm above the peaty soil. By comparison, Edale Trig on Kinder Moor is one metre higher than the heavily trampled peat.

This is one of the most remote locations in the Peak District National Park. I found a compass here and placed it on top of the trig pillar. It was still there a month later!

Bleaklow Hill is four kilometres north, but few walkers make the trek.

Location 10 OS ref SK 16379 89067

Haggtor crossroads

W3W cope.tagging.disengage



Historically an important junction of bridleways. One continues north along the high ground, north to Alport Castles and Westend, and south towards Derwent and Ashopton. These two trails lead down into the Ashop Valley, one passing Rowlee Farm and the other Hagg Farm.

Location 11 OS ref SK 16039 89229

Alphabet Stone

W3W lessening.shift.croaking



An interesting piece of history sits un-noticed on the hillside in open view above Bellhagg Barn. Most people won't see it, and even those who go there specially to see it may not find it.

The Alphabet Stone is situated on the west-facing hillside above Bellhagg Barn, on the road which links Rowlee Farm to Lockerbrook.

The Alphabet Stone is a boulder of Millstone Grit which has a planed face on which the English alphabet and the numbers 1-10 had been carved. It was probably made in the early 1800s and the text is now in poor condition with some of it barely decipherable.

The part bearing the number 1-10 is missing, probably when the stone was vandalised.

The local shepherd is thought to have carved the alphabet and numbers onto it, in the early 1800s. He taught local children from the nearby farms and was able to keep an eye on them from the windows of Bellhagg Barn when he had other tasks to carry out.

It was used as a Sunday School in the early 1800s.

Location 12 OS ref SK 18466 87106

Crook Hill Stone Circle

W3W manage.manicured.kebabs



Crook Hill might have a Bronze Age stone circle. It was built some 5000 years ago. Or it might be the remains of a kerb to a cairn. It's claim to be a stone circle comes from its carefully selected site below an impressive pair of summits, a good location for seasonal rituals.

Only two standing stones remain, but there are two others which have fallen and are still in place as part of a circle, within a rubble bank 7 metres diameter. Other stones are partially buried.

There are twelve stone circles marked on the OS map of the Peak District, but there are others. This might be the thirteenth, and the most northerly. There is a theory that the migrating Neolithic people who came to mine lead throughout the White Peak, brought the concept of stone circles with them and gradually spread onto the Eastern Moors. Their stone circle building skills were at their peak when they constructed Arbor Low, but waned over the next few thousand years. This may be one of the last.

Location 13 OS ref SK 18340 86842

Crook Hill

W3W forwarded.walked.vaulting



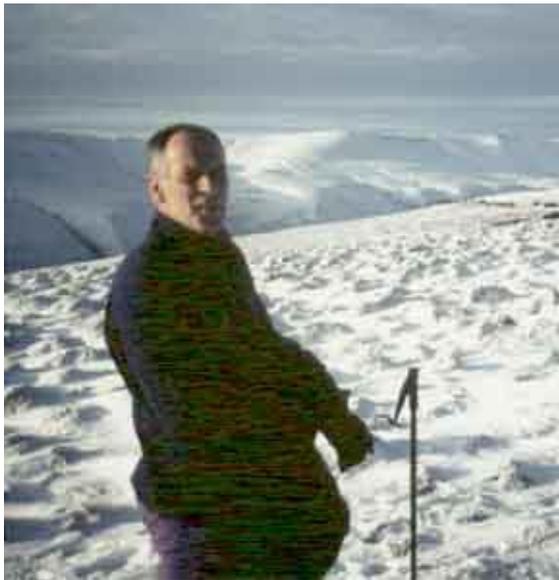
Crook Hill is a gritstone tor 374 metres high. It forms a landmark at the entrance to the Upper Derwent Valley, and stands above the National Trust owned Crookhill Farm. A few hundred metres north is a similar and slightly taller tor, Lady Crook Hill, 382 metres high. Both have craggy west facing cliffs

Crook Hill is one of the 'Ethels', a select list of 95 hills in or on the fringe of the Peak District, mostly over 400 metres height. They were named 'Ethels' in 2021 by the Peak District and Yorkshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, a countryside charity, as a tribute to Ethel Haythornthwaite. Ethel was born into the Sheffield Ward family, daughter of one of the largest industrialists in the Steel City. She was very well connected and passionate about the countryside. She was also well educated and an expert letter writer, and she knew how to use her connections to make things happen. One of her first major achievements was to raise a public appeal to purchase the 747 acre Longshaw Estate which was threatened with development. She bought the property in 1928 and immediately gave it to the National Trust. She

continued to campaign for the countryside and championed the establishment of the Peak District as Britains first National Park in 1951.

Over half of the 'Ethels' are long established trig points. Most have public access but a few are on private land. Crook Hill is now on Open Access Land thanks to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Climbing to the summit of Crook Hill was not allowed in the nineties when access was restricted to footpaths which don't lead to the summit. However on a snowy Boxing Day in 1993 it made a good starting point for an epic 35 km circuit of all the Upper Derwent Valley summits in the few hours of daylight available. Accompanied by Mark Vallance, whose credentials for the epic day out included two years service for the British Antarctic Survey as Base Commander.



Despite it's highly prominent location it still doesn't get many visitors.



Location 14 OS ref SK 16376 89059

Hagg Side footpath stile

W3W [printout.ponies.coast](https://www.printout.ponies.coast)



This stile leads to an alternative descent to Fairholmes car park, and is not shared with mountain bikes.