

Big Moor Geocross V7

Big Moor is about ten square kilometres (10,000 hectares) which is large enough to support at least 200 wild red deer. These are highly visible from main roads and can distract drivers. Passengers on buses heading to Bakewell from Sheffield are often entertained by them.

The red deer population on Big Moor are believed to have escaped from a captive herd on Chatsworth Estate and found Big Moor an ideal habitat with no predators. From three individuals first seen in the 1980s they have thrived in the wild and increased their numbers and territory to include Topley and Burbage Moors and Lady Canning's Plantation.



Red deer on Burbage Moor

The name Big Moor is often given to the whole of the moor, including the moors above Froggatt and Curbar Edges. I have always seen White Edge as the west boundary of Big Moor; the OS maps have always placed the title to the east.

The deer are not concerned about this; they spread across the whole territory and beyond. They are not hunted, but poachers do operate here.

Big Moor has changed hands several times in the past 100 years. It is currently owned by the Peak District National Park Authority and managed by the Eastern Moors Partnership. This partnership is a collaboration between the National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Before 1927, Big Moor belonged to the Duke of Rutland. He owned seven grouse shooting moors close to his Longshaw Estate. These covered 11,700 acres and each one had a gamekeepers lodge:-

Houndkirk Moor

Burbage Moor

Totley Moor

Big Moor

Froggatt and Curbar Moors

Ramsley Moor

Leash Fen

All these shooting moorlands had white painted gates. They were kept locked, and the Duke instructed his gamekeepers to keep the public out.

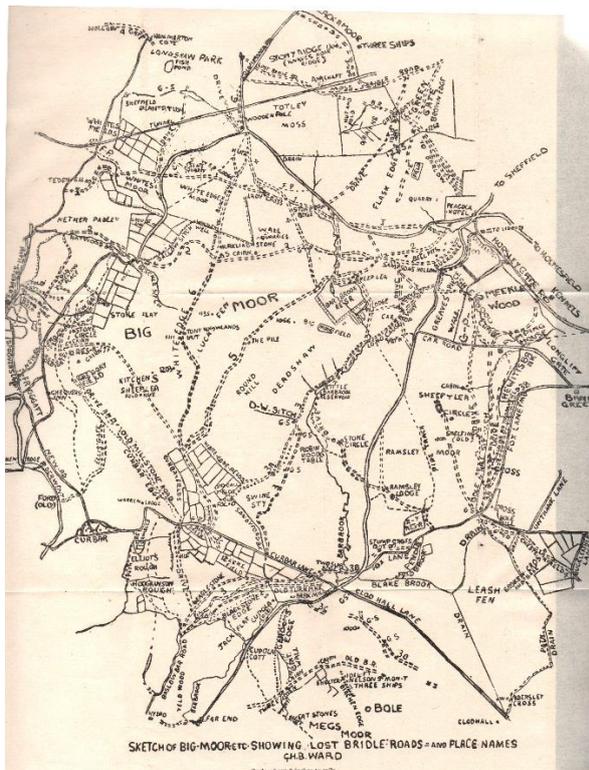
In 1927 the Duke was forced to sell all his shooting moorlands to clear debts.

The Peak District and Yorkshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England were able to help Sheffield City Council buy the entire Longshaw Estate.

It was pre-agreed with Sheffield City Council that the Longshaw Estate would be given to the National Trust. It took four years to arrange the details of this deal.

In 1927 - 1928 the purchase of The Longshaw Estate was concluded and in 1931 Ethel Haythornthwaite was able to give Longshaw Estate to the National Trust.

Since 1900 the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers were active campaigners for access to the countryside. Their Founder, GHB (Bert) Ward, lived close to Big Moor.



Between them, members of SCR collectively knew more about Big Moor than the shooting landlords. This detailed map of the Lost Bridle Roads on Froggatt and Big Moors is from the 1944 SCR Handbook, hand-drawn by GHB Ward. It is one of several maps he drew over a 40 year period covering Big Moor. It shows all the traditional rights of way which had been blocked off by the shooting landlords.

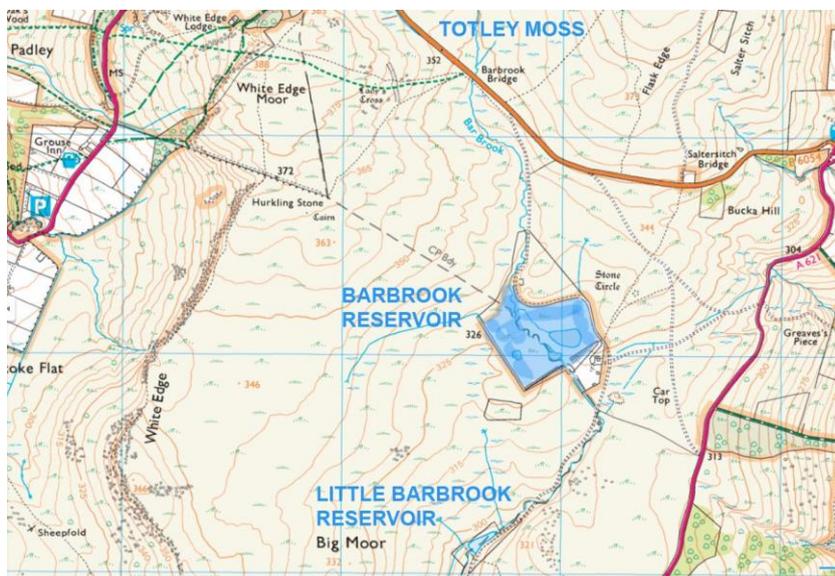
Two years later, writing in the 1929 Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Handbook, GHB Ward writes that the grouse shooting rights on Froggatt, Curbar and Big Moor had been leased to William Wilson for a five year period. Wilson, a Sheffield snuff manufacturer, owned other shooting moorland including Stanedge Lodge and Hallam Moors near Redmires Reservoirs.

It can be certain that clashes between gamekeepers and ramblers were a much more frequent occurrence on Big Moor than on any other moor in the Peak District. There are only a few points of access which the gamekeepers could watch. The infamous white gates were kept locked and the footpath entrances we use today didn't exist.

Since their foundation in 1900. Bert Ward and his Sheffield Clarion Ramblers had been trying to amicably negotiate access to Big Moor. But this moor was now in the hands of William Wilson, an enemy of public rights of way, as he had shown by blocking up footpaths and removing historic guidestones on Bamford and Stanage Moor.

By 1937 SCRH GHB Ward is much more positive. He reports that North East Derbyshire Water Works have bought the lease to Big Moor. As a Civil Servant himself, Ward was certain that the NEDWW (public sector) would be obliged to listen to his arguments about restoring long established traditional access rights.

It was to be another 14 years before Ward won his access campaign. This came by the creation of the Peak District National Park in 1951, with a remit to provide public access.



Barbrook Reservoir was built in 1882 by the Chesterfield Water Works. Barbrook Reservoir (or 'Still' as it was called then) held around 100 million gallons of water fed from Totley Moss drainage ditches, to supply Chesterfield homes. It was used for almost 100 years until decommissioning in the 1970s.

The Totley Tunnel railway passes under Totley Moss. It took 5 years to complete and was opened in 1893. The OS map shows lots of man-made drainage ditches on Totley Moss, all leading water into the Bar Brook. These have been carefully planned and engineered, certainly not the work of farmers. Were these dug to keep water out of Totley Tunnel? Or to capture water for Barbrook Reservoir, and onwards to Chesterfield?

A warning to anyone crossing Totley Moss, especially on a night fell-race. Beware of these ditches, some are very deep!



Barbrook and Little Barbrook Reservoirs were used to divert the Bar Brook water to North Chesterfield rather than into the River Derwent. This well-used track leads to the locked white gates and was built by the Chesterfield Water Works in 1882. Beneath it a water pipeline took water east under Baslow Road and into Ramsley Reservoir. There are a series of heavy covers for inspection purposes.

Barbrook reservoir was an earth dam construction with a clay core and an overflow weir for excess water to run off into the Bar Brook. Being on a peat moor made the water extremely acidic and it could not support plant or fish life. To make it palatable it was treated with chlorine, lime and sulphur dioxide.

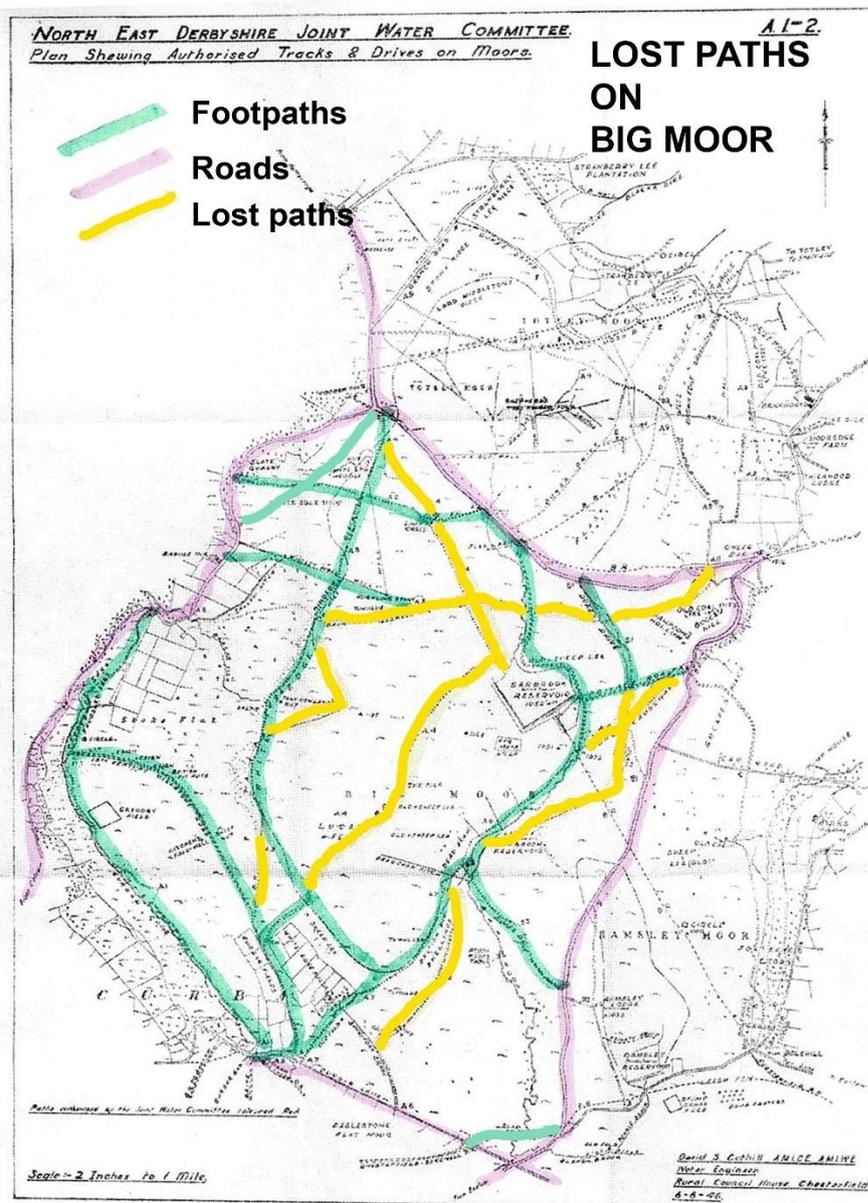
Howden and Derwent Reservoir water is also acidic. The Bamford Water Treatment Works uses ferric sulphate to help clump together small particles in the water, making them easier to remove through filtration, and chlorine and lime to balance acidity.

Barbrook supplied North Chesterfield with 500,000 gallons of water daily, enough for 5000 homes. It made sense for the NEDWW to become the landowner.

Bert Wards son redrew the Big Moor map in 1961 as 'Plan Showing Authorised Tracks and Drives on Moors' by North East Derbyshire Joint Water Committee.

The postscript to the battle for moorland access came with the Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act on 2001. Virtually all of Big Moor is now designated Access Land.

However, the fact is that very few people stray off the main public footpaths. The Barbrook Drive and White Edge are the most well-used paths. Many of the Tracks and Drives shown on the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers 1961 map are now hardly used or lost. I have walked all of these paths so I know that from personal experience!



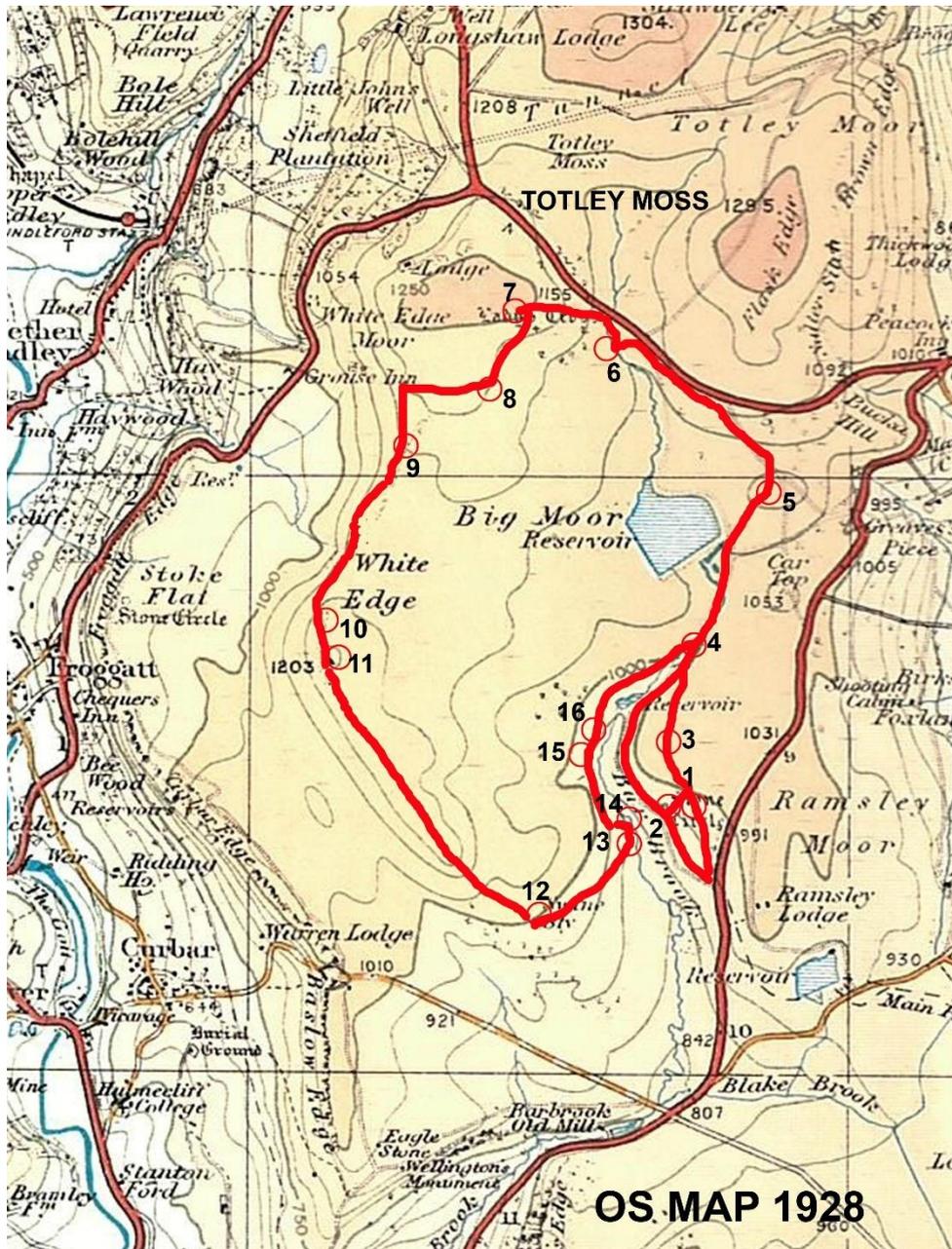
The vast majority of Big Moor is now untrodden except by red deer, and the photographers who stalk them.

Most people are unaware that there was once a thriving colliery in the north-east corner of Big Moor; at Bucka Hill near the Owlbar roundabout. In 1811 it was part of Salter Sitch Colliery which continued north along Brown Edge. The shallow Ringinglow coal seam is close to the surface on Bucka Hill and was bell-pit mined by

shallow shafts in an east- west band. The Ringinglow coal seam was only 1 – 2 feet thick. Beneath it was gannister from which a fireclay works in Totley made bricks for furnace linings for the Sheffield steel industry. Dyson Refractories, formerly known as Totley Brickworks, closed in 2006.

The impervious gannister on Bucka Hill made sure that the water table remained high, and as the waterlogged shafts collapsed, many became round ponds. The NE corner of Big Moor is rarely visited.

Each of the locations can be found on the route below.



Start and finish at layby on A621 Baslow Road



One of the many White Gates, usually locked.

OS ref SK 27919 75611

Cairn

W3W playful.incorrect.marathon



This circular raised cairn is close to Barbrook 1 Stone Circle, one of the three Bronze Age Barbrook stone circles. For the last few years there has been a sign here asking people not to remove or add stones to this ancient cairn.

The Big Moor Circles Walk is one of my favourite Eastern Moorlands walk visits the sequence of three stone circles and ancient fields and hut circles. It still shows the imprint of man from 4500 years ago.

OS ref SK 27859 75582

Barbrook 1 Stone Circle

W3W fingertip.betrayal.trackers



This is a good stone circle, known as 'Barbrook I'. It has a single standing stone and eleven others. It is close to many other ancient features. There are three Bronze Age stone circles nearby and remains of a Bronze Age field system.

This location has Bronze Age to Early Iron Age remains, some probably originating in the Neolithic period. These include fields and settlement remains, as well as embanked stone circles, ring cairns and barrows.

The Three Barbrook Stone Circles are earth embanked, all within a short distance of the old Barbrook Reservoir on Big Moor.

The walk past the three stone circles and other settlement remains is possibly the best and most understandable Bronze Age trail in the Peak District.

OS ref SK 27749 75823

Barbrook 2 Ring Cairn circle

W3W fonts.remains.unsightly



Barbrook 2 can be found just 260m from Barbrook I but is completely different in design. The distinct difference is that the stones have been set into drystone walling contained within a rubble bank, creating an almost complete circle. This may have been the original construction design. What can currently be seen is the result of rebuilding completed in around 1989. It consists of 9 remaining stones with a potential 10th missing stone.

The other photo shows a hut circle.

OS ref SK 27707 76191

Barbrook Bridge

W3W jaunts.scream.aged



Little Barbrook Reservoir is no longer used as a reservoir. It is now known for its natural habitats and suitability for wild swimming. While the larger Barbrook Reservoir was decommissioned and drained as required for safety reasons by the 1975 Reservoirs Act, Little Barbrook Reservoir was maintained with the goal of preserving its natural environment.

Barbrook and Little Barbrook Reservoirs used to supply water to Chesterfield. The well-used track was built by the Chesterfield Water Works in 1882, and beneath it a water pipeline took water east and under Baslow Road and into Ramsley Reservoir. There are a series of heavy covers for inspection purposes.

Barbrook Reservoir is situated on Big Moor between Froggatt Edge and Owler Bar. It was built in 1882 by the Chesterfield Water Works. The reservoir earth dam had a clay core and an overflow weirs for excess water to run off. Being on a peat moor made the water extremely acidic and it could not support plant or fish life. To make it palatable it was filtered and treated with chlorine, lime and sulphur dioxide.

It supplied Northern Chesterfield with 500,000 gallons of water daily, enough to supply around 5000 homes.

The main Barbrook Reservoir, the water treatment works and nearby Ramsley reservoir were closed in 1999 and drained a few years later for safety reasons.

Across this bridge and to the south is a catchwater conduit which intercepted small streams coming off Big Moor, diverting the water into Little Barbrook Reservoir and then to Ramsley and off to Chesterfield. The conduit walls have been breached and most of the water escapes without reaching Little Barbrook Reservoir.

The connection to Ramsley Reservoir is no longer used, but pipework and covers are still visible.

The Reservoir Keepers House is now used by the Eastern Moors Partnership.

OS ref SK 28333 77288

Barbrook 3 Stone Circle

W3W flock.frozen.spins



Barbrook 3 is the third of the Barbrook Moor stone circles. It is also known as Owler Bar Stone Circle.

It is quite large but very difficult to find. There are two parallel paths north of the Water Board Reservoir Keepers house by the now empty Barbrook Reservoir. The paths diverge, and the east path goes through the circle. The stones are quite small, but once you see one the others gradually appear!

The 1:50,000 OS map has it in the wrong place: it's actually 200 metres east.

The perimeter rocks are small, less than 500mm high. It looks better in real life, and in winter when there is less vegetation.

It is one of the largest stone circles in Derbyshire, consisting of 21 remaining stones in a 26m diameter ring.

This circle almost disappears beneath long grass during the summer.

OS ref SK 28333 77288

Bar Brook old bridge

W3W rescue.apple.clap



This crossing of the upper Bar Brook is no longer used. There are no connections to this ancient bridge from existing paths.

The stone guide post marks the location and the heavy stone slab planks are supported by well-made stone walls. People avoid this crossing by using the footpath at Barbrook Bridge.



There is a similar heavy duty stone plank bridge over the Bar Brook near the crossroad junction of Clod Hall Lane.

OS ref SK 27147 78239

Lady's Cross

W3W vets.rivers.able



The base and two broken portions of the shaft of Lady's Cross are to be found five hundred metres west of the Upper Barbrook Bridge on the B6054 road to Owler Bar.

Lady's Cross dates from medieval times and marks a crossroads and a boundary stone of Beauchief Abbey land. It is a Listed Ancient Monument.

The cross is mentioned in a deed before 1263 by which the 'waste of the manor of Hathersage' was granted to Beauchief Abbey in Sheffield

OS ref SK 26926 77722

Hurkling Stone

W3W [audit.shows.funny](https://www.audit.shows.funny)



This is the true Hurkling Stone, at the east end of a drystone wall.

There are some carvings, possibly by boundary surveyors. It is on the boundary of Baslow and has carved letters XMB, about 300 metres east of White Edge.

Hurkling means to crouch in Old Norse.

There is a prominent rock outcrop on White Edge itself that is often mistaken for the Hurkling Stone.

OS ref SK 26507 77521

White Edge stone signpost

W3W scam.strain.places



Close to this is one of the Companion Stones.



There are 12 Companion Stones located next to guide stoops in the Peak District. Three of them are on Big Moor.

The sculptor conceived this as two slabs, one on top of the other, but "twisted" so that they did not sit flush...The "twist" was to encourage the idea of walking around the stone, to imply that the stone rotates, as does the poem, which can be read by walking around the stone and reading each side.

The ancient guide stoop is quite a distance away to the north east, and much more interesting, especially if you are heading to Dronfield.

OS ref SK 26121 76369

White Edge Summit Shelter

W3W fillings.sidelined.flips



A red deer watching site with extensive views over Big Moor. The natural rock formation gives good shelter with a distant outlook to the east over Big Moor.

OS ref SK 26378 75857

White Edge trig point

W3W tram.overpaid.conspired



The highest point on Big Moor. Very well visited with great views over Big Moor and the Derwent Valley.

OS ref SK 27050 75038

Swine Sty

W3W teamed.extension.torn



Swine Sty is a Bronze age settlement and Field System to the west of Barbrook and may be around 4000 years old.

The stone circles are all on the east side of Barbrook where there is another Field System. Were these occupied by different tribes?

Together they form a very large area of fields and settlement. There are earlier remains of habitation going back to the Mesolithic period, 11000 years ago. The main period of occupation was Bronze Age to Early Iron Age (2800 years ago). The fields are north of the jumble of rocks called Swine Sty which may have included hut and animal enclosures. The 'sty' looks as though it has been man-made, a crevice between the rocks just big enough for a pig, and increasingly difficult for the pig to escape from as it fattens.

OS ref SK 27455 75327

Swine Sty Cist

W3W [motivator.licks.prefix](https://www.motivator.licks.prefix)



This burial cist is some distance from Swine Sty settlement, about 500 metres north east. It has fine views over Barbrook towards the stone circles. It is quite difficult to find.

OS ref SK 27670 75481

Robin Hoods Table

W3W blackmail.misfits.windy



Unlikely to have been used by Robin Hood. These dressed stones form a substantial 'tressle' table next to a natural spring. Probably erected for refreshments for shooting parties. The dilapidated bridge was a good crossing point four years ago when the tracks appeared to have been suitable for a landrover. Sadly the old bridge has been washed away.

The freshwater spring has a high flow rate.

OS ref SK 27135 75441

Guide stone

Contains dreamers.sues.speedily



A broken guide stone on the moorland path from Little Barbrook to Swine Sty.

OS ref SK 27379 75763

Barbrook stone signpost

W3W ranches.envelope.workbook



This guide stoop marks the start of a footpath crossing SSW to Swine Sty. There are other marker posts at intervals. The date might be 1775 and RC may be a surveyors initials.

OS ref SK 27648 75588

Companion Stones plinth

W3W enrolling.legroom.mystified



Another of the 12 Companion Stones. There are a total of three on Big Moor. This one looks like a tombstone. It has been rolled down the steep bank a few times

OS ref SK 27648 75588

Barbrook boundary stone with WW2 bullet marks

W3W zoom.detective.forehand



The Eastern Moors, including Big Moor, were used as a training ground for infantry troops during both World Wars. Evidence of this training can still be seen today in the form of gun emplacements, practice trenches, and other earthworks.

Some ancient rocks and stone guidepost stoops took a bit of a battering. This leaning fingerstone has been used for World War 2 rifle target practice.