

Derwent Moors South Geocross V25

Derwent Moor, is either the first or last of the high Peak District Moors which travellers had to cross between Sheffield and Glossop.

This Derwent Moors South Geocross V25 trail features some very well known landmarks. It also features an ancient rock carving which very few people have been able to find and so this is included as an optional detour.

Derwent Edge overlooks Derwent Village, and packhorse trains had good reasons to be wary in crossing these moors, particularly if they were carrying goods of high value. From as early as 1150, robbers would stop travellers and ask for payment for safe passage, or just simply rob them. These robbers would otherwise have carried on their countryside farming activities had it not been for the Norman Conquest of 1066.

One of the most famous of these legendary countryside robbers may have grown up in nearby Loxley.

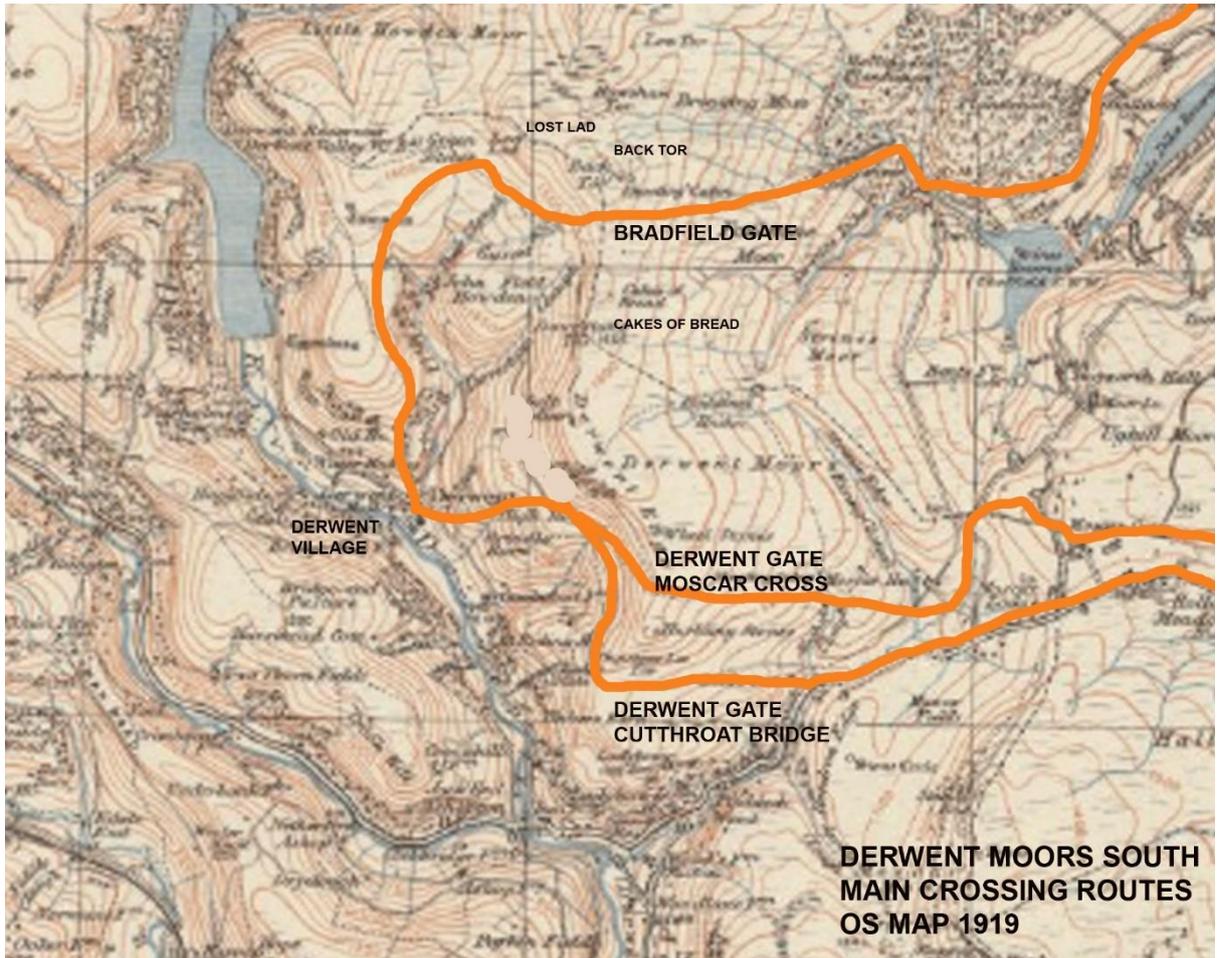
One version of the legend of Robin Hood names Normandale pasture (croft) in Loxley as having the foundation of a house where Robin Hood was born in 1160. Normandale House was later built here.

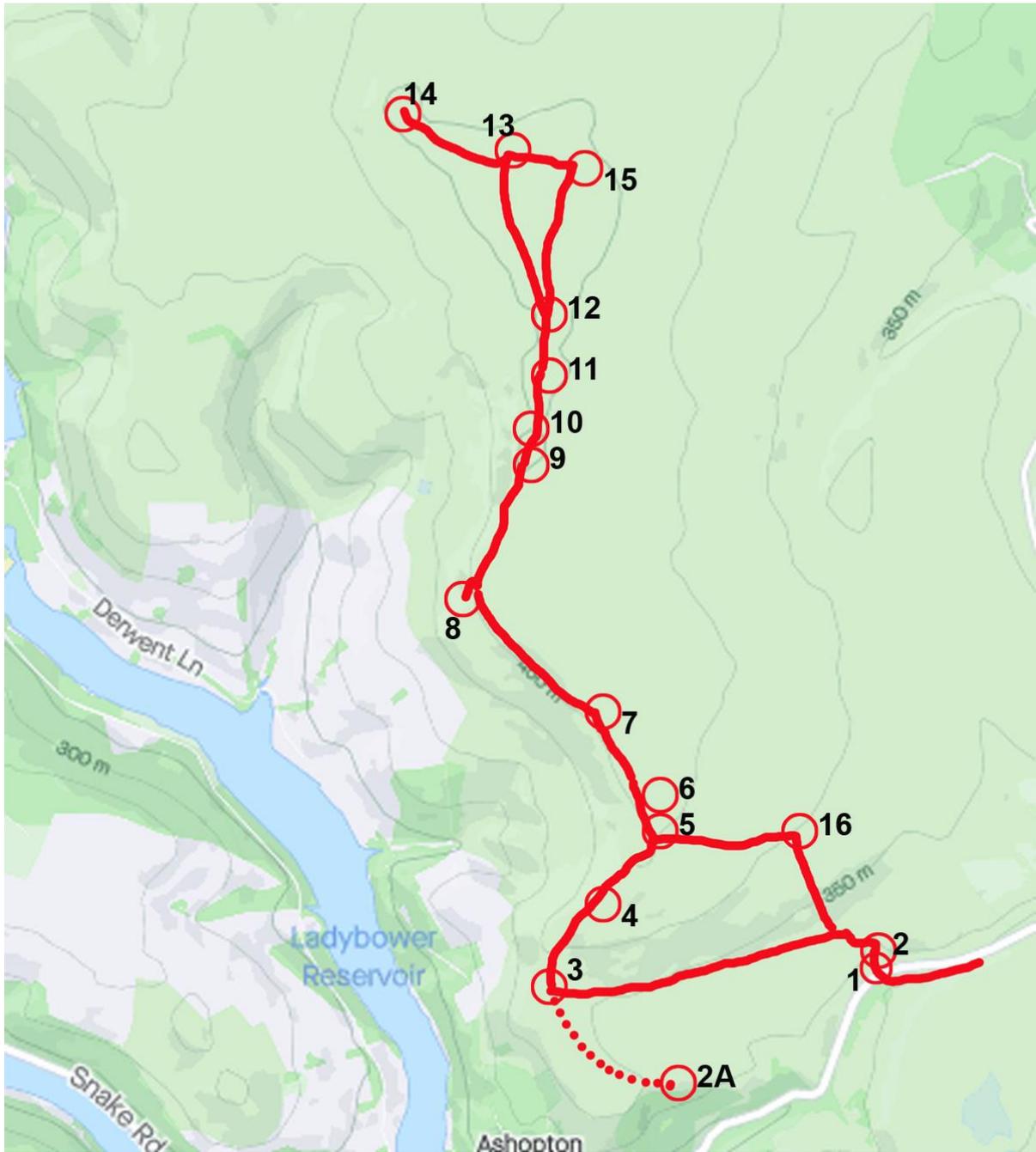
It is worth noting that 1160 is just 94 years after the Norman Invasion of 1066, when King William the Conqueror seized all the land of England and gave it to his barons. In doing so he took common land rights away from the local population. The barons were allowed to charge taxes. None of these new initiatives were popular with the English people. The newly imposed taxes were not in the least bit popular.

A young man born in Loxley in 1160 saw a better future for himself as a champion of the common people. Robin Hood's simple strategy was to rob from the rich and give to the poor. No wonder the Sheriff of Nottingham is always portrayed as a villain.

One track over Derwent Moor leads to Moscar and through the village of Stannington into the Loxley Valley and the wide ranging Sherwood Forest, where Robin Hood and his Merry Men originated. The 12th Century was the beginning of a time of national uprisings against the Norman barons who had changed the traditional ways of rural English life. The imposed Sheriffs had great difficulty in putting down a popular uprising.

Robin Hood and his outlaw successors continued to campaign against their foreign aggressors for hundreds of years.





Start at Cutthroat Bridge layby.

Location 1 OS ref SK 21334 87383

Cutthroat Bridge - gate

Location 2 OS ref SK 21364 87463

Old Cutthroat Bridge

Location 2A OS ref SK 20485 86883

Ladybower Tor Rock Art

Location 3 OS ref SK 19798 87398

Derwent Gate Bridleway crossing

Location 4 OS ref SK 20115 87743

Hurkling Stones

Location 5 OS ref SK 20326 88024

Shooting Butt

Location 6 OS ref SK 20388 88158

Odd shooting butt

Location 7 OS ref SK 20235 88554

Wheel Stones – east end

Location 8 OS ref SK 19580 89264

Salt Cellar

Location 9 OS ref SK 19663 89606

Derwent Edge sign

Location 10 OS ref SK 19701 89912

Dove Stone

Location 11 OS ref SK 19842 90123

Cakes of Bread – west

Location 12 OS ref SK 19780 90705

Bradfield Gate Head guidepost

Location 13 OS ref SK 19763 90993

Back Tor trig point

Location 14 OS ref SK 19339 91218

Lost Lad

W3W [jump.butlers.conspire](https://www.jump.butlers.conspire)

Location 15 OS ref SK 19916 90949

Back Tor East graffitti rocks

Location 16 OS ref SK 20793 87973

Guide post stone stoop

Location 1 OS ref SK 21334 87383

Cutthroat Bridge - gate

W3W circular.handsets.gasping



This gate by Cutthroat Bridge is the main access to Derwent Moors, used by walkers and mountain bikers.

Around 1600 a man was discovered dying nearby in Highshaw Clough, the valley of the stream which goes under the original Cutthroat Bridge. His throat had been cut and he was left to die two days later. Travelling alone in the Peak District could be dangerous, and thieves were numerous.

The present route of the A57, and the present day Cutthroat Bridge, dates from much more recent times, 1820 when the Snake Pass turnpike road was built.

Location 2 OS ref SK 21364 87463

Old Cutthroat Bridge – east of stream

W3W waxing.artichoke.image



The old bridge and historic packhorse track is approximately 200 metres north of the present day A57 road. There is a well used old ford about 100 metres higher up Highshaw Clough, indicating that this was a year-round crossing point for the packhorse trade.

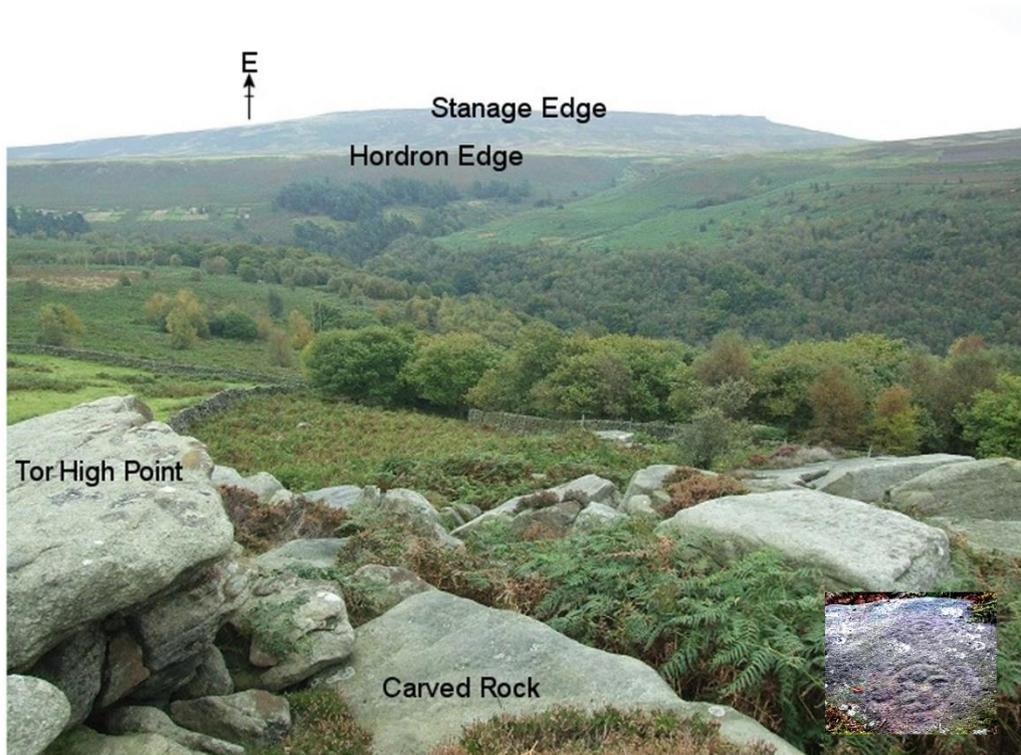
Location 2A

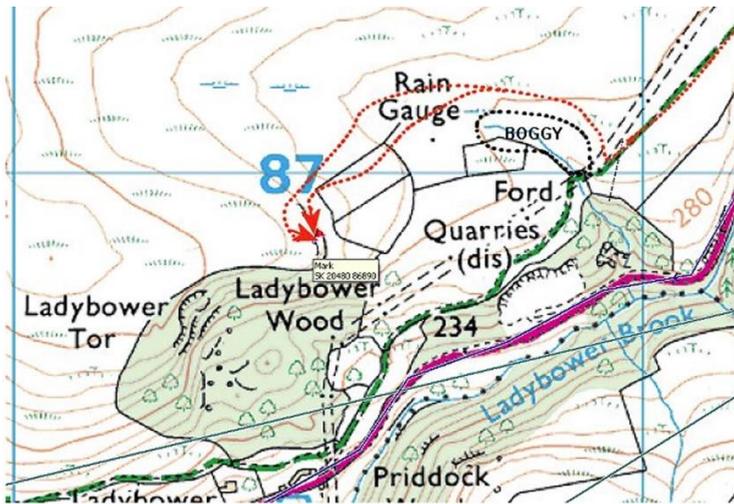
Ladybower Tor Rock Art

SK 20485 86883

W3W hairpin.menswear.crypt

Location 2A is an optional off-path detour. It is fair to say that many have failed to find the Rock Art. It is a little easier in winter after the head high bracken has been flattened by snow. Take the picture below to help find the carved rock.





Ladybower Tor was once a visually prominent landmark above the Ladybower Brook as it entered the narrow gorge leading down to its junction with the Rivers Ashop and Derwent.

Historically there has been stone quarrying at Ladybower Quarries for hundreds of years because it had relatively easy access for carts, and was close to settlements at Bamford and Ashopton where stone was needed for buildings.

The Derwent Valley Water Board acquired the quarry and probably enlarged its operation to obtain local gritstone for use in the Bamford Water Treatment Works and other reservoir minor building projects. The quarries are now abandoned and a wood has become established, making them virtually invisible. Rock climbers continue to re-discover the quarries and when last counted there were 38 recorded climbs including the very fine EN 24.

In recent years archaeologists have examined the natural rocks and found carved symbols on a flat topped rock near to the moorland summit of the unquarried part of Ladybower Tor. They called these squiggles 'Bronze Age Rock Art'.

I have been out more than once to try to see the carvings. I did manage to take a photograph that might show a small pair of rings and a larger 'open' ring with a short tail.

It has been suggested that this is a Bronze Age map showing the junction of the three rivers at Ashopton. The rivers are the Ladybower Brook, the River Ashop and the River Derwent. Enclosing them is thought to be an encircling 'territory' of the local tribe.

If you were looking for a possible site for a new settlement in the Bronze Age this map would have been a deterrent.

The Rock Art might be up to 5000 years old and hasn't been refreshed since the Bronze Age finished over 2000 years ago.

The site is visible from the Hordron Stone Circle and from Stanage Edge in the distance to the east.

Location 3 OS ref SK 19798 87398

Derwent Gate bridleway crossing

W3W escalated.jeering.awoke



Derwent Gate is the most southerly of the Five Gates (roads) which pass over the Derwent Moors. This is a well signed footpath and bridleway crossing between Derwent Valley and Moscar.

It is well used by mountain bikers.

There are two Derwent Gates, both reached from Derwent Village. The more southerly one is lower and therefore the easiest to cross.

Location 4 OS ref SK 20115 87743

Hurkling Stones

W3W camp.motored.swooned



The Hurkling Stones are the first of eight gritstone tors on the path to Back Tor. All 8 are named and shown on the OS 1:25000 map.

Named 'hurkling' by local shepherds they resemble crouching or lying down animals when seen from a distance.

All the eight gritstone tors are visually impressive and distinct. If you only make one trip onto the Dark Peak Moors, this is probably the best concentration of gritstone tor scenery.

The footpath along Derwent Edge has recently been resurfaced and is now quite a lot wider than it used to be.

Paid for by the publicly funded 'Moors for the Future Partnership', it chiefly benefits access by vehicle for moorland management and for shooting parties. Walkers don't need a three metre wide path.

Location 5 OS ref SK 20326 88024

Shooting Butt

W3W beams.processes.surely



This is an un=natural location to build a shooting butt. It seems to be unnecessarily close to an important public right of way path junction. Concrete has been used in the construction, probably because the improved 'path' allows concrete to be carried onto the moor.

Location 6 OS ref SK 20388 88158

Odd shooting butt

W3W hurry.rant.steeped



Another example of the convenient use of concrete to build an unattractive shooting butt.

Location 7 OS ref SK 20235 88554

Wheel Stones – east end

W3W engine.beans.crank



The Wheel Stones are a prominent skyline landmark, also known as the Coach and Horses. They are very popular with walkers as a scenic picnic location.

Seen from the A57 Ladybower Road at a distance silhouetted against the sky they might be an old fashioned coach and horses with a coachman at the rear.

Someone has suggested that from Derwent Village they resemble an old woman baking but I think this is getting mixed up with The Cakes of Bread.

Location 8 OS ref SK 19580 89264

Salt Cellar

W3W blankets.throat.outermost



The Salt Cellar is a dramatically balanced pillar of horizontally bedded gritstone. Thousands of years of sand blown wind erosion has narrowed the neck.

Location 9 OS ref SK 19663 89606

Derwent Edge sign

W3W person.roaring.circulate



The end of the engineered road. This well built stone staircase climbs over the top of Dovestone Tor.

Dovestones crag is a remotely situated climbers crag, worth looking at from below. It features very large pockets where doves might nest.

It is well worth detouring left and below the crag to get a better view. Most people miss this.

Location 10 OS ref SK 19701 89912

Dove Stone - east

W3W pulp.joystick.dabbling



The Dove Stone is above the fantastically sculpted Dovestones Tor.. Similar in formation to the Salt Cellar, a top heavy free standing gritstone tor.

Location 11 OS ref SK 19842 90123

Cakes of Bread – west

W3W never.crowbar.headers.



Another skyline landmark, similar to the Wheel Stones. A couple of the cakes have a moat, where over the years sand has been picked up by strong winds and carved away the base of the 'cakes'.

The angle of the gritstone beds are quite uniform.

Location 12 OS ref SK 19780 90705

Bradfield Gate Head guidepost

W3W arose.waiters.adhesive



Bradfield Gate is one on the five 'Gates' which cross the Howden and Derwent Moors. Once over the watershed a well made track, Foulstone Road, leads down to Strines, and from Strines Bottom on by road to Low Bradfield.

This is the main route connecting the village of Bradfield with Derwent.

The pillar, made of three jointed pieces is called a guide stoop and may have had a direction marker on top. It is probably set into a substantial buried stone base which has been strong enough to support the pillar for hundreds of years. Guide stoops were often vandalised by gamekeepers to discourage travellers using them to guide crossings over their grouse moors.

It is interesting that there is no guide stoop for the crossing of Strines Moor 1500 metres south. There must have been one originally because the (missing) track follows an ancient line of marker Boundary Stones which mysteriously terminate 500 metres east of the Salt Cellar. A case of making it more difficult for travellers to find their way across the grouse moors.

Location 13 OS ref SK 19763 90993

Back Tor trig point

W3W outings.irritated.relieves



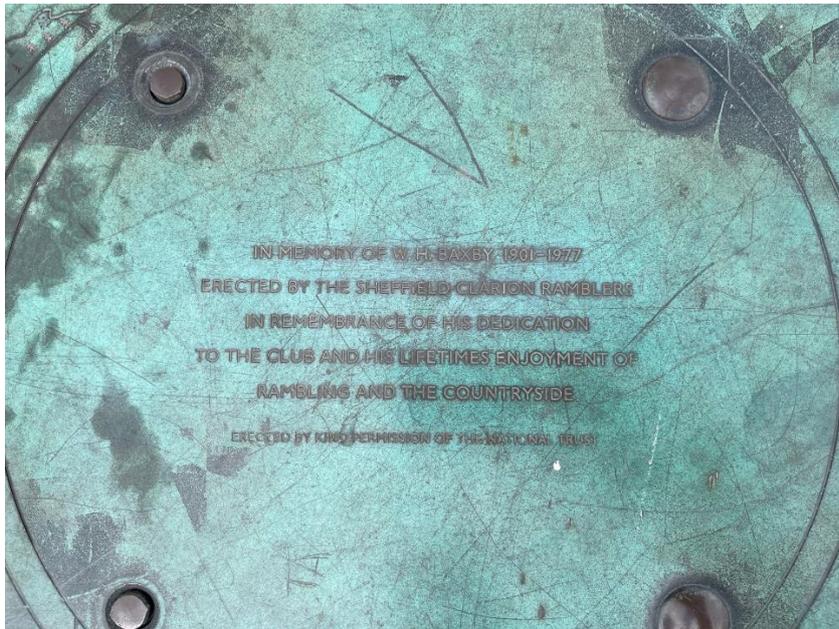
Back Tor is a prominent landmark that can be seen from most of the Howden and Derwent Moors. The trig point is positioned on a blob of concrete and requires moderate scrambling skill to reach it, and to get down safely.

Location 14 OS ref SK 19339 91218

Lost Lad cairn

W3W [jump.butlers.conspire](https://www.jump.butlers.conspire)





Lost Lad is a large cairn on a subsidiary summit of (513 metres) to Back Tor (538 metres) which is just 600 metres away.

Back Tor is one of the finest rocky summit tors in the Dark Peak and deserves to have been included in the list of Ethels. Surprisingly Lost Lad is also on the list of Ethels! So if you are 'Ethel-bagging' these two can be mopped up in 10 minutes. Or less than 5 minutes if you are a fell-runner.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ETHELS

The 'Ethels' are 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.

Almost half of the Ethels are long established trig points. Most have public access but a few are on private land.

Lost Lad also has a flat topped circular pillar with a map inscribed in brass. This is a permanent toposcope which shows directions to visible landmarks. It helps visitors

to identify key features and summits in the surrounding area. It is deliberately built low enough for children to be shown the surrounding landmarks.

The inscription is in memory of W H Baxby, a past President of Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Club. Sheffield Clarion Ramblers were founded in 1900 by GHB Ward. They vigorously campaigned for restoration of traditional rights of access to the countryside.

LOST LAD LEGEND

Any inquiring visitor will want to know the meaning of the name 'Lost Lad' It is a sad story supposed to date from the late 17th Century (1675), over 300 years ago.

A local 13 year old shepherd boy called Abraham Lowe lived with his widowed mother in the village of Derwent, long before Derwent was submerged. The drowning of Derwent Village took place when the valley was filled with water after the Ladybower Dam was completed in 1945.

It was not unusual for a 13 year old lad to be sent out alone to work as a shepherd on his local moors. These few sheep might be all his family owned.

Abraham was just very unlucky that on this winters day a blizzard cut off Derwent Village and all paths were covered. Abraham's mother sent him to round up some sheep from the high moorland and to bring them to shelter. As always, he took his faithful dog.

As Abraham rounded up his sheep the weather continued to deteriorate and despite knowing the moors intimately, he eventually became lost.

Eventually he looked for shelter beside some rocks, but it was too late for him to be found that night and he died of hypothermia.

His mother and neighbours searched the area but their efforts were unsuccessful due to the poor weather and snowfall. The rescue efforts were called off. Some months later when the spring warmth melted the snow, a fellow local shepherd found Abraham's body curled into the lee of a rock. On a slab of gritstone near his body, he had scratched the words 'lost lad' His faithful dog was found alive at his side.

A cairn was erected as a memorial and this has been subsequently added to by passing shepherds as a mark of respect.

This story may just be a local legend.

Location 15 OS ref SK 19916 90949

Back Tor East graffitti rocks - east

W3W sensitive.detail.spearhead



Many names dates and initials, probably carved by shooting parties. One is dated 1868.

Peak District shooting moors are littered with carvings on rocks, possibly because the invited guests spent a whole day out and needed a bit of alternative activity. Their hosts don't seem to have minded, after all, they 'owned' the land.

A more up-to-date interpretation might be that the shooting rights owners have temporary custodianship of the natural landscape. I'm sure that is how Sheffield Clarion Ramblers would have seen it.

Location 16 OS ref SK 20793 87973

Guide post stone stoop

W3W divider.childcare.perch



A naturally weathered stone pillar set vertically on the path which crosses Derwent Edge between Moscar and Derwent. This track leads down to Moscar House, and then on to Moscar Cross.