

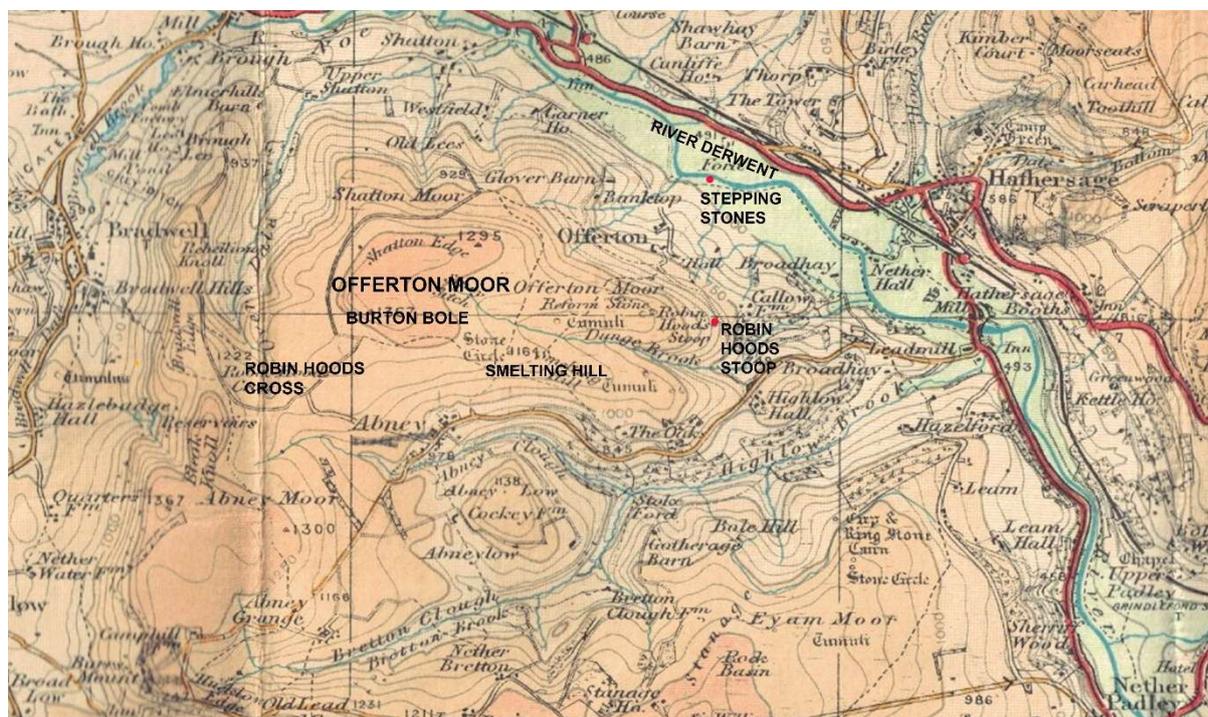
Offerton Moor Geocross V27 Revision A

20 October 2025

Text & photos for Facebook

Offerton Moor is little visited although there are two footpaths crossing the moor. The moorland is Access Land under the CROW Act (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The ascent of the steep north moorland slope may put people off.



Smelting Hill

The east part of Offerton Moor is known as Smelting Hill. The west part is Burton Bole. These were important lead smelting sites from 1500 to 1800.

Burton Bole is a good summit and although not a trig point, it is on the 'Ethels' list.

Bole Hill is the name given to a lead smelting site. A bole hill was a place where lead was smelted in the open air, usually situated at the top of a hill where the wind was strongest.

For at least 300 years this was a small industrial operation, during the lead mining boom years of the 1500 to 1800s where miners from nearby villages would bring their locally dug lead ore to be smelted into lead ingots. It would be carried to the smelting works by cart or by horses with panniers.

The nearest market for lead was in Sheffield from where it would be despatched downstream by boat. To carry heavy lead ore from the White Peak, over the River Derwent and uphill over the Sheffield moors was expensive in horsepower. The traditional bole hill smelters were on the Sheffield moorland edges, getting the benefit of the prevailing SW winds.

In the 15th century, lead smelting, a process of extracting lead from ore, was a relatively large and established industry in Europe, with significant trade volumes. Smelting involved heating lead ore (galena) to extract the metal, often using charcoal-fired furnaces or simpler "bole" smelters relying on wind. The extracted lead was used for various purposes, including roofing and water pipes.

Offerton Moor was close to the lead mines around Eyam and had the perfect height and alignment for the prevailing south west winds. Timber for charcoal was available from woods nearby. The nearby village of Abney was where the charcoal makers lived. It is interesting that some of these woods are still managed for timber production.

For more than 300 years, people living in the Hope Valley would see their south skyline glowing red at night with the many smelter fires on Offerton Moor.

Lead smelting needed good hot fires with plenty of quick burning wood. A smelt might need two days to complete. Cart tracks for access was needed to fetch the ore from the lead mines, and to carry away the finished pigs of lead.

Upland bolehill lead smelting stopped in the 19th century when the Hathersage Leadmill on the River Derwent opened. This new mill had waterpowered bellows to blast air into the smelter.

When smelting on Offerton Moor stopped, the land was heavily contaminated by lead and for many years was considered poisonous to plants and grazing animals.

The bolehills left behind large supplies of lead-rich waste slag which was later reworked to abstract the remaining lead. Today the land grows heather and grasses and is lightly grazed.

Robin Hoods Stoop

Offerton Moor has two 'Robin Hoods Cross' locations.

Robin Hoods Cross is below Burton Bole at the west end of Offerton Moor. There is no cross there today. Robin Hoods Stoop is an ancient wayside cross below Offerton Moor on the north east side.

There are many Robin Hood connections with Hathersage.

To have two close together suggests that this was a remote place that favoured Robin Hoods activities. Travellers had to pass by on their way to the Hope Valley villages. Robin Hood famously robbed the Rich and gave to the Poor.

Many travellers would have to cross the River Derwent, probably at the ancient Stepping Stones below Offerton Hall.

A good robber would fight a lesser robber for the territorial right to rob at the entry to the stepping stones.

Perhaps Robin Hood fights Little John here. Not once but twice. He loses first time but wins on the second.



Robin Hood's Stoop is situated at OS ref SK 21708 80630 (W3W [breathing.gathers.symphony](https://www.breathing.gathers.symphony))

A stoop was a stone guidepost to help travellers. This track is on the south bank of the River Derwent, beneath Offerton Moor, and is high enough to never be flooded. This cross has probably stood for over 1000 years.

Most crosses are medieval, 9th to 14th century AD, and were erected by monasteries to help travellers.

Many crosses were later vandalised, particularly after the Enclosure Acts, where the new 'shooting moorland' landowners discouraged use of traditional rights of way. They said the comings and goings disturbed their game birds.

The cross on top of Robin Hood's Stoop is missing and the base plinth was improved in 2008 to stop it falling over. It is fenced to stop grazing animals rubbing against it.

There is a legend that Robin Hood once shot an arrow from this stoop into Hathersage churchyard. The distance is one and a half miles, so 2640 yards. Archers measured their shooting distances in yards. Another version of the legend is that Little John shot the arrow to mark his final resting place.

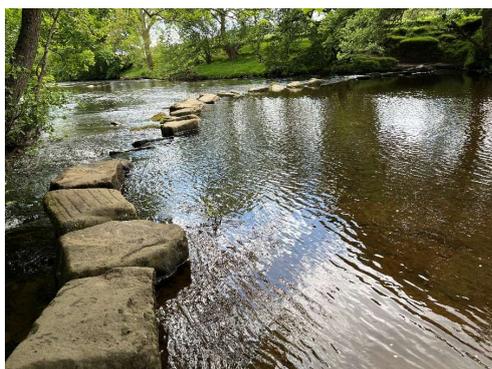
Robin Hood was a good archer, but this legend is totally fictitious. The distance is so far beyond what any archer could ever have done, even with a strong tail-wind. The maximum distance of a longbow arrow in flight is 400 yards.

I have always thought that the fight between Robin Hood and Little John might have taken place at the Hathersage Stepping Stones. The River Derwent has been crossed on foot at this point for over 1000 years. Until quite recently there was a short wooden bridge on the south bank, long enough to reach the first stepping stone. This would be a good place to rob travellers.



English longbow archers were very effective on difficult terrain such as slopes or behind defensive stakes, where they could shoot their arrows high to land in a mass of approaching enemies. Even outnumbered, they could decimate enemy charges and cause chaos.

However, even the tallest and strongest longbow archer has only enough strength to pull the bow into a curve, and release an arrow the length of a full arm. The arrow immediately encounters friction from the air and slows down from the moment of release until it reaches its maximum height. It then accelerates again slightly by gravity as it falls.



Little John

Little John has a stronger connection to the village of Hathersage than Robin Hood.

Like many famous outlaws, legends were sung about him in ballads. Little John is portrayed as a cunning outlaw but dimmer and less capable than Robin Hood.

After being a member of Robin Hood's gang of outlaws living in Sherwood Forest, Little John returned to Hathersage in his later life. He died in a small cottage by the River Derwent, at a site now known as Nether House, a Grade II listed farmhouse.

Offerton Moor hosts several tumuli and other stone features including boundary markers and at least one stone circle. The OS map also labels 'The Reform Stone' but there is nothing significant to see on the north facing hillside.



Below Offerton Moor is Grade II Listed Offerton Hall. The present building dates back to 1658 but it was almost certainly built around a much older structure.

It is not one of the Seven Halls of Hathersage.

The Offerton Moor Geocross V27 follows the route on the map below

Location	OS grid reference	W3W		
		First word	Second word	Third word
1	SK 20861 79943	portfolio	meals	watchdogs
2	SK 20306 80279	gets	transmits	songs
3	SK 20407 80343	reserves	buzzards	success
4	SK 20274 80387	late	symphonic	carpentry
5	SK 20548 80351	twist	graduated	surprises

Location 1 OS ref SK 20861 79943

Abney Moor sign

W3W portfolio.meals.watchdogs



Abney Moor Estate owns Offerton and Abney Moors. The sign shows sheep and a lapwing, although it is clear that the moor is primarily managed for grouse shooting.

Offerton Moor is well managed. Walls have been recently rebuilt and stockproof barbed wire fences added to increase the height of stock-proofing. It is little visited compared to other moors, and only has a couple of footpaths.

Location 2 OS ref SK 20306 80279

Footpath junction

W3W gets.transmits.songs



The two footpaths meet on the south flank of the moor. Grassy footpaths indicate a low level of use.

Location 3 OS ref SK 20407 80343

Benches

W3W reserves.buzzards.success

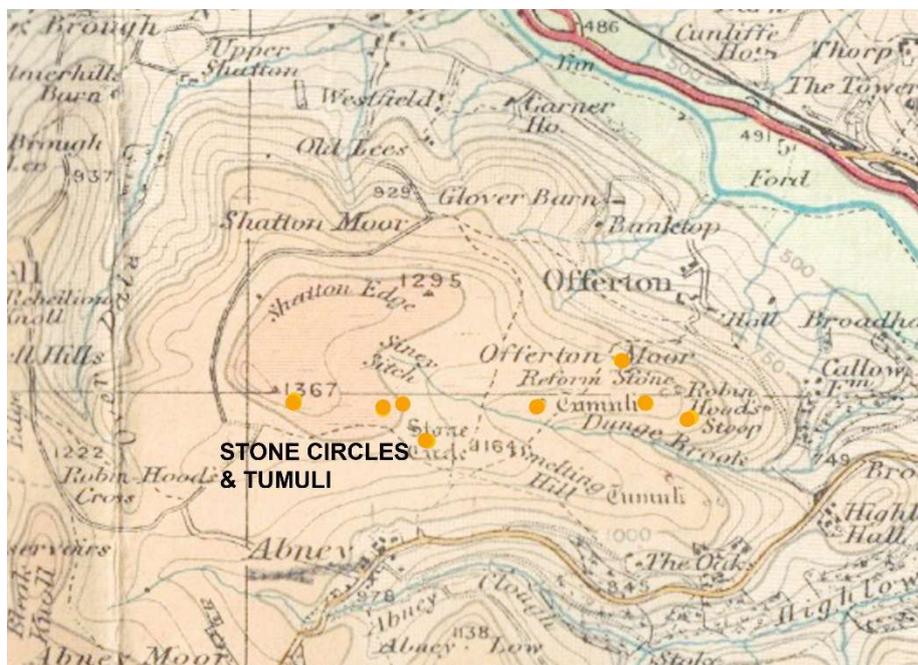


Robust and well placed benches facing south with views over Bretton Clough to the Barrell Inn. Possibly provided for game-beaters.

Location 4 OS ref SK 20274 80387

Offerton Moor stone circle

W3W late.symphonic.carpentry



The central stone is still standing, and one of the encircling stones remains flat on the ground.

There are two known Stone Circles on Offerton Moor today, and at least 5 stone piles shown as Tumuli on the current OS map.

Location 5 OS ref SK 20548 80351

Smelting Hill workings

W3W [twist.graduated.surprises](https://www.twist.graduated.surprises)



Offerton Moor was an important site for lead smelting. The far west end is named Burton Bole, bolehill being a common term for places where smelting occurred. This part of the moor is named Smelting Hill.

Lead smelting needed good hot fires with plenty of quick burning wood. A smelt might need two days to complete. Access is needed to fetch the ore from the lead mines, and to carry away the finished pigs of lead. When smelting stopped the land was heavily contaminated by lead and was poisonous to plants and grazing animals.

Upland bolehill lead smelting stopped in the 19th century when the Hathersage Leadmill on the River Derwent opened. It had waterpowered bellows to blast air into the smelter.

The bolehill had large supplies of lead-rich waste slag which was later reworked to abstract the remaining lead. Today the land grows heather and grasses.

Location 6 OS ref SK 21275 80540

Cairnfield – centre of large circular ring cairn

W3W pipe.engulfing.overused



At the east end of Offerton Moor is a Scheduled Ancient Monument described as a cairnfield. This dates from the Bronze Age 4000 years ago. It covers a large area and many of the cairns are field clearance piles of rocks.

The most impressive is this 27 metre diameter banked ring cairn, a pre-historic ritual monument comprising a bank made of stones and a central hollow. Nearby is a smaller similar ring cairn. It may have been a stone circle with standing stones. These may have been removed to form stone boundary walls when the land was enclosed.

Location 7 OS ref SK 21365 80658

Burial cairn

W3W junior.station.browsers



A large natural stone forming part of a burial cairn. Nearby is a small pond and standing stone. Stones have been rearranged to form a shooting butt.

To the north are several small quarries on Offerton Edge which produced building stone and millstones. The steep north slopes of Offerton Edge have very well defined holloways which were used to extract the millstones.

Location 8 OS ref SK 20632 80524

Bridge over Siney Sitch

W3W passively.sensibly.exist



Offerton Moor is drained by the Dunge Brook, which rises on Shatton Edge. The central part is a meandering marshy stream known as the Siney Sitch. In some places it forms quite deep pools. 200m east of this bridge the stream begins to fall steeply down to Dunge Wood. A second and more substantial bridge here gives vehicle access for moorland management.

The tumulus shown in the rear of this picture is one of many on Offerton Moor. The OS map names five but there would have been many more, now gone to be used as walling stone.

Location 9 OS ref SK 20675 80623

Tumulus

W3W unfit.mondays.forgiving



This Bronze Age burial mound dates from around 4000 years ago. It is formed by a circular stone bank and a central hollow.

Location 10 OS ref SK 20451 80570

Boundary stone by the Dunge Brook

W3W plank.innocence.diplomats



Situated in a very marshy area. Initials CB may have been a landowner.

Location 11 OS ref SK 19353 80748

Burton Bole shelter

W3W being.goes.harshest



The ridge leading west from the track passes twelve pits which would have been smelting 'boles'. The final pit contains this well built curving shelter, facing south. It may have been built as a shooting butt.

Location 12 OS ref SK 19507 80503

Wolf's Pit - stile

W3W slang.strange.fractions



Wolf's Pit is an interesting name but there is no obvious pit. The footpath passes through a silver of land that is enclosed at the south by a stone wall, with a post and wire fence to the north. There is a natural spring and pond but no sign of wolves.

Location 13 OS ref SK 20103 80294

Ruins of stone shooting butt

W3W encloses.ballparks.spooked



On the side of the main west-east footpath, a solitary ruined butt.

Location 14 OS ref SK 20153 80198

Shelter by quarry delf

W3W shuttered.thanks.ripe



Possibly a charcoal or quarry workers shelter or store.