

Westend Moor Geocross V71

Words for Facebook

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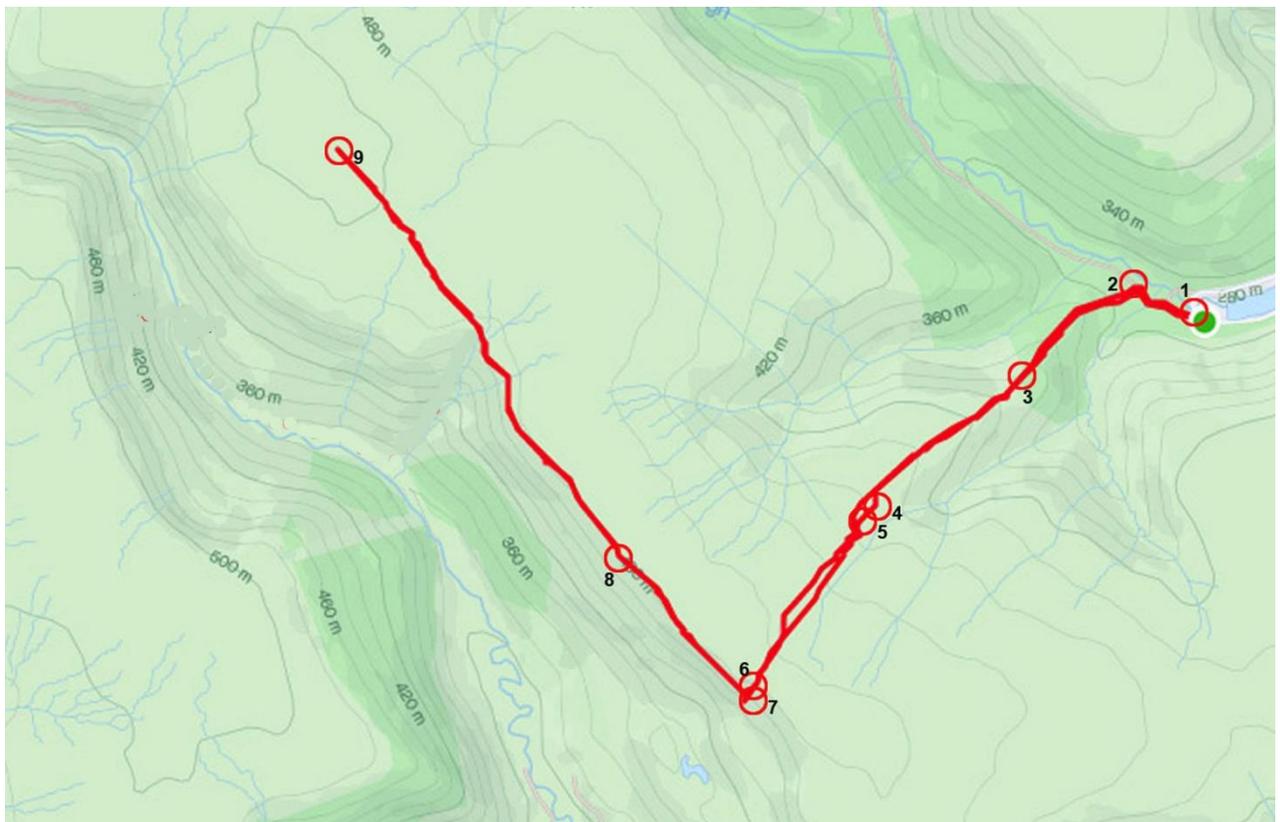
Westend Moor is my name for one of the least visited moors around the Derwent Valley. The paths are often grassy. In fact it is so little used that the OS map doesn't even give it a name!

The Westend Moor Geocross 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! And unlike Bleaklow, Howden and Derwent Moors, it has no stone tors!

This is an 'out and back' the same way Geocross for the simple reason that there are no features worthy of note in the four kilometres between Alport trig and Bleaklow Hill!

Westend Moor is the 'Empty Quarter' of Bleaklow.

Why did Westend Moor miss out?



Start from Westend bridge on the Howden Reservoir.

Location 1 OS ref SK 15498 92762

Westend bridge cycle sign

W3W scouting.educates.ocean



Prior to the Derwent Valley Dams project, Westend Valley was farmed 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).

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 mosaic of 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.

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 leads to Alport, 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. Birchinlee village lasted just 14 years.

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



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 – wall end

W3W conceals.fund.saucepan



Lower Alport Dale

This viewpoint 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.

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