

# Walk the Way in a Day

## Walk 46 Black Hill from Torside Reservoir

An enjoyable hill-walk following a cliff-edge path above Laddow Rocks and a flagged route leading up onto the summit of Black Hill. The descent is via a broad ridge with some difficult terrain. A circuit of Torside Reservoir - including a section of railway trail - adds variety.

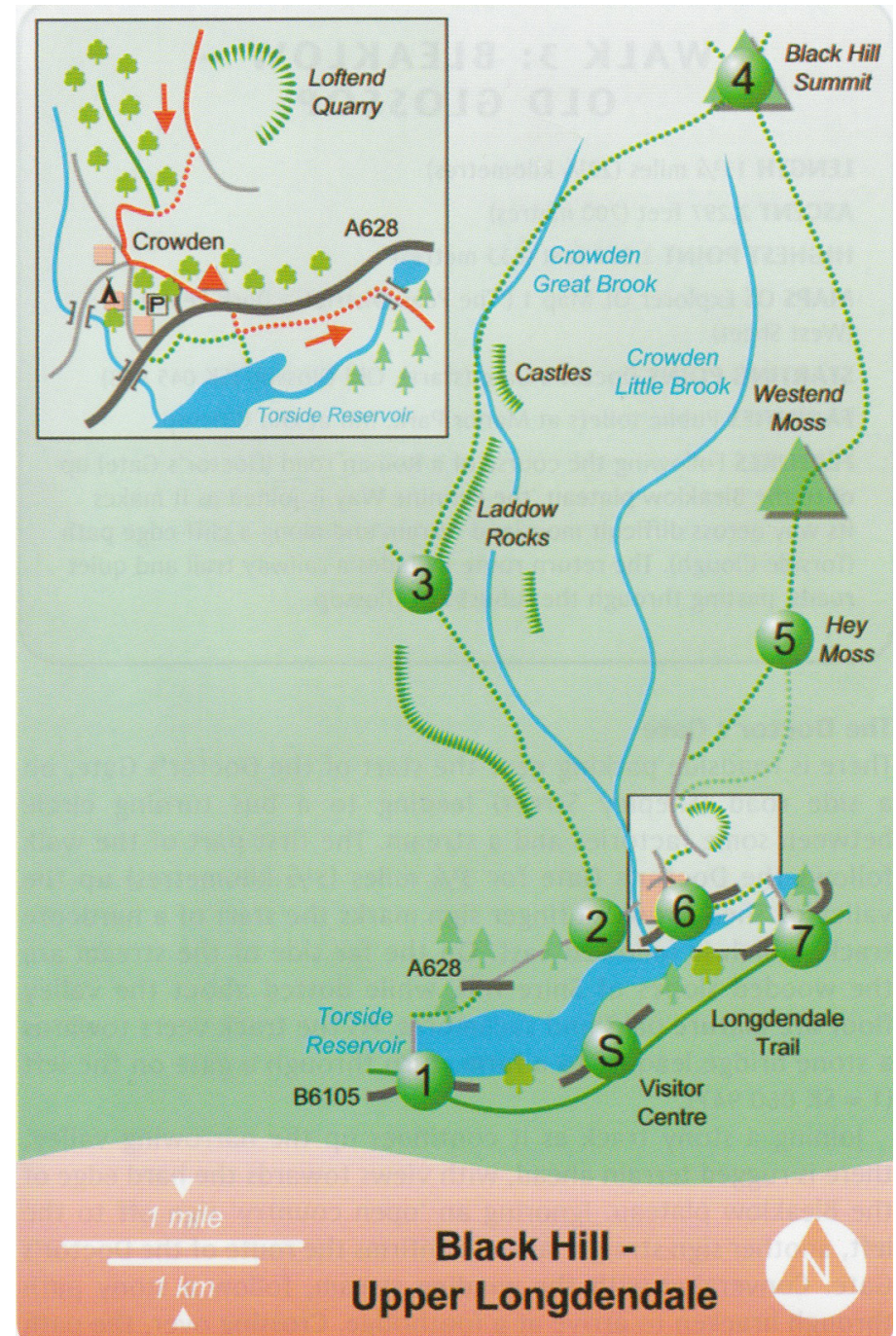
Length:	12½ miles (20 kilometres)
Ascent:	1,788 feet (545 metres)
Highest Point:	1,910 feet (582 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 1 ('The Peak District - Dark Peak') (West Sheet)
Starting Point:	Torside Reservoir car park, Upper Longdendale (SK 068 983)
Facilities:	Public toilets.
Website:	<a href="http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-46-black-hill-torside-reservoir">http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-46-black-hill-torside-reservoir</a>

### Torside Reservoir

The starting point is located on the south side of Torside Reservoir, 1 mile (1½ kilometres) along the B6105 from its junction with the A628. There is ample free parking, as well as toilets and a National Park information centre. From here a path links to the Longdendale Trail, which runs along a former railway track-bed. There are actually two tracks - an all-weather path on the right and a grassy bridleway to the left. Following the trail west for about 1 mile (1½ kilometres), the views over the reservoir are unfortunately marred by pylons. To the left is the dramatic gorge of Torside Clough. Converging with the B6105, the Pennine Way joins from the left (1 = SK 057 981).

Pennine Way

50 YEARS



## **Trans-Pennine Communications**

*Upper Longdendale has long been an important trans-Pennine route. From the Middle Ages, pack-horses carried salt from Cheshire to Sheffield and Wakefield. The construction of a turnpike was authorised in 1731. The railway followed in 1845, creating the first rail link between Manchester and Sheffield. This passed through the first Woodhead Tunnel, which despite being 3 miles (5 kilometres) long was built entirely by hand. Until its closure in 1981, the railway carried coal from Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire to supply the industries of Lancashire. In 1992 the track-bed was established as a recreational route - the Longdendale Trail - forming part of the Trans-Pennine Trail. The A628 remains one of the principal trans-Pennine routes, with lorries running bumper-to-bumper like modern-day pack-horses, straining to reach the summit.*

Crossing over the road, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning down an access road towards the dam. Torside is the largest of a chain of reservoirs in Upper Longdendale, covering 160 acres (66 hectares). Climbing some steps at the north end of the dam, signs confirm the route as it runs through a pleasant stand of fir-trees. Turning up a stepped path leading to the A628, cross over the busy main road to where a finger sign points along a tree-shaded farm track heading towards Crowden. Passing a stand of conifers, another finger sign shows the Pennine Way leaving the track and turning over a fence stile on the left (2 = SK 068 991).

## **Upper Longdendale Reservoirs**

*Upper Longdendale is home to a chain of five reservoirs (Woodhead, Torside, Rhodeswood, Valehouse and Bottoms), with the impermeable shale of the valley floor permitting capture of the waters of the River Etherow. The chain was conceived as the world's largest, with the aim of helping to eradicate disease in Manchester. The engineer, John Frederic La Trobe Bateman, began work in 1848, with the first reservoir - Torside - being completed in 1864. Work did not finish until 1884. Some of the cotton mills built beside the River Etherow during the 18th and 19th centuries were submerged beneath the reservoirs.*

## **Laddow Rocks**

From here the Pennine Way starts its long climb towards the summit of Black Hill, 4½ miles (7¼ kilometres) away. Heading north-north-west, the stony path runs along the bracken-covered slopes, with fine views up the valley towards the confluence of Crowden Great Brook and Crowden Little Brook. Gaining height, the path skirts a rushy mire before crossing a side stream (Oakenclough Brook) and zigzagging steeply uphill. Continuing above the terraced outcrops of Laddow Rocks, a small cairn marks a division in the path (3 = SE 056 013). At this point there is the option of a 'there and back' detour of 2¼ miles (3½ kilometres) to Chew Reservoir, following a cairned path running north-west over Laddow Moss. This was constructed in 1912, and at 1,607 feet (490 metres) is England's highest reservoir.

The Pennine Way continues north-north-east along the exposed cliff-edge path, with rough moorland to the left offering a poor alternative. On the far side of the narrowing valley of Crowden Great Brook are some distinctive rock outcrops known as the Castles. Heading downhill to converge with the brook, a significant amount of height is lost. Forging a couple of side streams, then crossing and re-crossing the brook itself, the flagged path heads gently up a broad ridge (Grain Moss) towards the OS pillar marking the summit of Black Hill (4 = SE 078 047).

## **Hey Moss**

The first part of the return route follows the original line of the Pennine Way down a broad ridge towards Crowden, a total of 4 miles (6½ kilometres). The initial bearing is 155 degrees, with extreme caution required as an area of treacherous bog is traversed. Crossing a fence stile, follow a cairned route across stony ground until the path enters a grough, threading its way through the heather-crowned peat hags of Tooleyshaw Moss. Dropping to a boggy saddle, to the right is the deepening valley of Crowden Little Brook. Turning south-west, a couple of poles act as guides as the faint path runs over White Low and Westend Moss. Passing a cairn, the

route heads steeply downhill before levelling-out at Hey Moss (5 = SE 079 013).

The official route from here to the foot of Loftend Quarry has been diverted, and now continues along the ridge to Hey Edge before turning steeply downhill, keeping to the right of the quarry and its dangerous cliffs. The original (and better) route veers south-west, tipping off the ridge to join a stony track heading towards the spoil heaps at the foot of the quarry. This place is known locally as 'Moses Quarry', and once employed around a hundred people producing paving stones for the streets of Manchester. Continuing along the track, at a sign marking the boundary of open country, turn over a fence stile on the right. Heading down the steep, bracken-covered valley side towards Crowden, a farm track is joined. Arriving at a crossroads of routes, the track straight ahead runs past a campsite towards some public toilets. However, we turn left and follow an access road past the youth hostel towards the junction with the A628 (6 = SK 073 993).

### **Crowden**

*Crowden was once a busy little settlement, complete with shops and pubs. When the valley was flooded, a few isolated buildings was all that survived. Crowden Hall was built in 1692 by the Hatfield family, who by the early 18th century had become the squires of Upper Longdendale. It was demolished by the Manchester Waterworks Company in 1937, and is now the location of a campsite. The railway station on the south side of the valley closed in 1957. Crowden is notable for its youth hostel, which opened in 1965 to provide accommodation for long-distance walkers, being the first habitation on the Pennine Way heading north out of Edale.*

### **The Longdendale Trail**

The final part of the route runs around the head of Torside Reservoir to rejoin the Longdendale Trail. Crossing over the busy main road, head along a permissive path until a finger sign marks a left turn through a gate, following a drain towards Woodhead Dam. Off to the right are the reedy

wetlands around the head of Torside Reservoir. Arriving at a weir, climb up some steps leading to a lagoon, beyond which is the dam. Crossing the weir by a metal bridge, an access road heads up through a larch wood to arrive at the B6105, where a gravel path connects to the Longdendale Trail (7 = SK 080 992).

### **Woodhead Reservoir**

*Work began on Woodhead Reservoir in 1848, although problems with water seepage meant that it was not finally completed until 1877. The dam was raised in 1990 to help prevent flooding. Perched above the reservoir is St. James' Chapel, which was founded in 1487 by Sir Edward Shaa, later Lord Mayor London. An unmarked grave in the churchyard holds the remains of 28 navvies who died as a result of a cholera outbreak in 1849, during construction of the second Woodhead Tunnel.*

This is followed back to the starting point, providing a pleasant end to the walk. The tree-lined route runs along the valley side, offering fine views over the chain of reservoirs. To the left is the steep, boulder-strewn scarp of the Bleaklow plateau, cut by deep cloughs and delicately wooded in places. After around 1 mile (1½ kilometres), a sign marks a right turn onto a path heading down to the car park.

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