

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 47 Bleaklow and Old Glossop

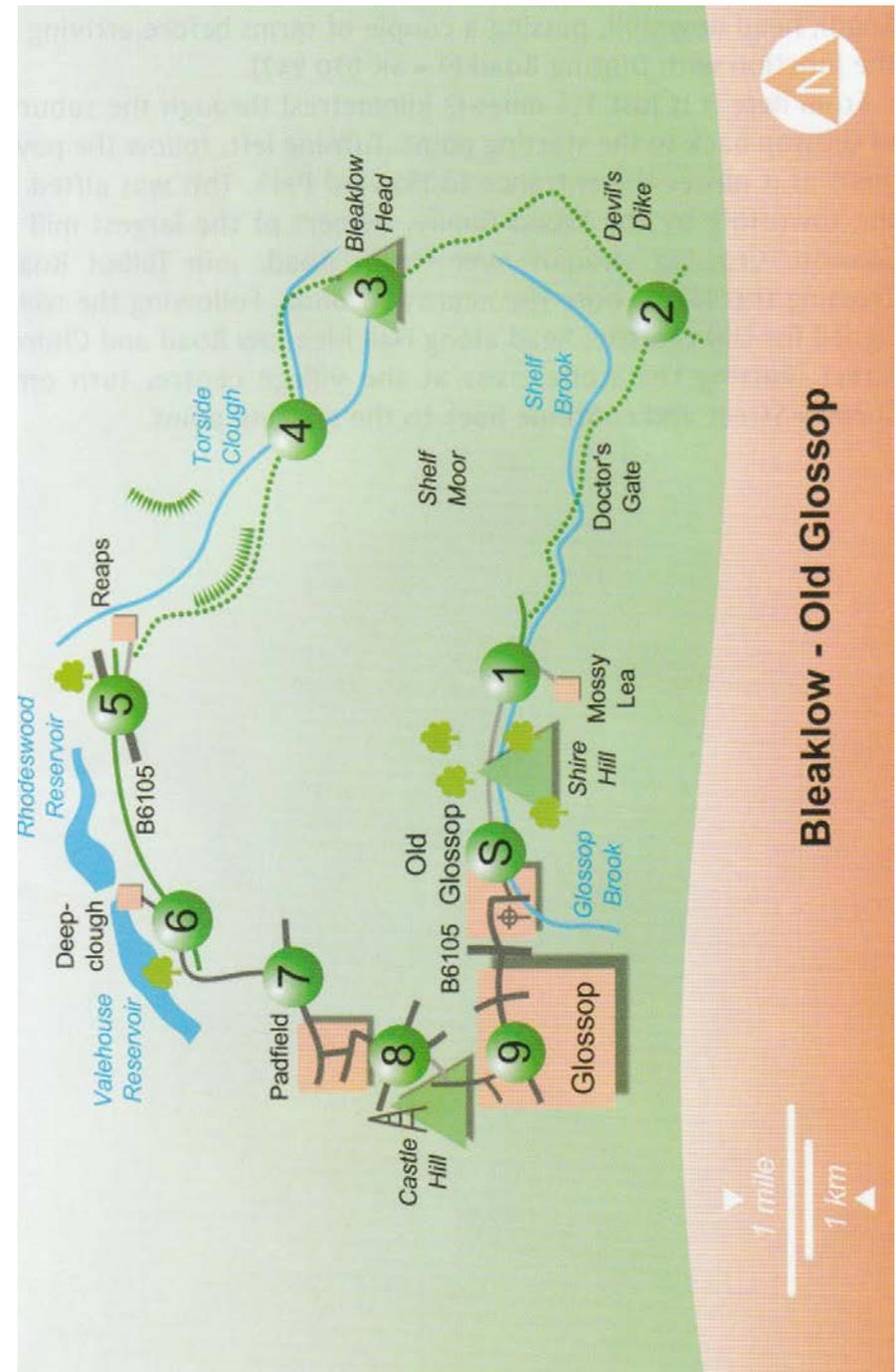
Following the course of a Roman road (Doctor's Gate) up onto the Bleaklow plateau, the Pennine Way is joined as it makes its way across difficult moorland terrain and along a cliff-edge path (Torside Clough). The return route includes a railway trail and quiet roads, passing through the suburbs of Glossop.



- Length: 13¾ miles (22¼ kilometres)
- Ascent: 2,297 feet (700 metres)
- Highest Point: 2,077 feet (633 metres)
- Map(s): OS Explorer OL Map 1 ('The Peak District - Dark Peak') (West Sheet)
- Starting Point: Doctor's Gate (start), Old Glossop (SK 045 948)
- Facilities: Public toilets at Manor Park. Inn at Old Glossop.
- Website: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-47-bleaklow-and-old-glossop>

The Doctor's Gate

There is roadside parking near the start of the Doctor's Gate, on a side road (Shepley Street) leading to a bus turning circle between some factories and a stream. The first part of the walk follows the Doctor's Gate for 3¼ miles (5½ kilometres) up the valley of Shelf Brook. A finger sign marks the start of a hardcore track, which is followed east. On the far side of the stream are the wooded slopes of Shire Hill, while dotted about the valley floor are mature oaks and sycamores. As the track veers towards a stone bridge leading to a farm, turn through a gate on the left (1 = SK 060 947).



The Doctor's Gate

To the west of Glossop is the Roman fort of Ardotalia, known popularly as Melandra Castle. This was built around AD 75 on high ground above the confluence of Glossop Brook and the River Etherow, at the western end of a route running over the Pennines from Navio (Brough-on-Noe). This route is known as the Doctor's Gate, after Dr. John Talbot, vicar of Glossop (1494-1550), who often travelled it on horseback. It was eventually superseded by the A57 Snake Pass, and although a section of medieval blockwork remains, it is hard to imagine that it was once an important thoroughfare.

Joining a stony track as it continues up the narrowing valley, there is rugged terrain ahead, with views towards the hard edge of the Bleaklow plateau. Ignoring an 'open country' sign off to the left, another sign straight ahead confirms the route of the Doctor's Gate. Converging with the winding stream, follow a stony path through bracken to arrive at a footbridge. Crossing over, the path heads steeply uphill, with little to suggest that this was ever the course of a Roman road. Climbing out of the valley and heading across open moorland, at last there are visible remains of the old road. A short way to the south, traffic can be seen moving on the A57 Snake Pass. Eventually a marker post indicates a left turn onto the Pennine Way (2 = SK 090 933).

Bleaklow

The next part of the walk follows the Pennine Way for 2 miles (3½ kilometres) to Bleaklow Head. A gravel path heads north-east along a deep channel cutting through an expanse of bilberry-crowned peat hags. This is the Devil's Dike, and is probably an Anglo-Saxon boundary. As the channel branches, marker stones confirm the route. Turning down a flagged section of path, drop into a gully (Hern Clough), which is followed upstream (north-north-west). Marker stones once again provide a degree of guidance as the route weaves around a bewildering maze of grouchs, flanked by towering walls of peat. Clambering up onto open moorland, Bleaklow Head lies to the north. However, if visibility is good it is worth visiting the Wain Stones before continuing on towards the summit (3 = SK 092 959).

Bleaklow

Bleaklow is an appropriate name for such a forbidding place. The plateau is overlain with blanket bog and scattered with Millstone Grit boulders. The 'summit' - at 2,077 feet (633 metres) - is marked by a cairn surmounted by a pole. However, it is the nearby Wain Stones that attract most attention. These look like a pair of heads, and when viewed from the right angle seem to be kissing. The plateau is home to cottongrass, mosses and sedges, as well as patches of heather, bilberry, crowberry and cloudberry. The rare black grouse can still be seen here. Unfortunately, the plateau is also littered with the remains of air crashes.

Torside Clough

From here the Pennine Way continues across the Bleaklow plateau, then along the edge of Torside Clough, a total of 3¼ miles (5¼ kilometres). Heading off from the summit cairn at 340 degrees, the route passes a marker stone and continues between the peat hags of Far Moss. Converging with a fence line, this is followed for a short way before turning onto a path heading west along the edge of a gully. In the distance is Torside Castle, a grassy mound among a sea of heather, thought to be an ancient burial site. Arriving at a confluence of streams, turn right and head down to a good crossing point (4 = SK 081 965).

From here a narrow path runs above Torside Clough, passing towering Millstone Grit buttresses. As heather is replaced by bilberry as the dominant vegetation, the valley deepens dramatically and the path becomes increasingly exposed, running above terraced outcrops (as with the route above Laddow Rocks, the rough moorland to the left offers a poor alternative). Eventually the path heads down towards Reaps farm, where an access track is joined. Arriving at the B6105, cross straight over to join the Longdendale Trail (5 = SK 057 981).

The Longdendale Trail

The return route initially follows the Longdendale Trail for about 1¼ miles (2 kilometres) along the valley side above Rhodeswood Reservoirs. Arriving at a finger sign indicating a route to Deepclough, as the railway trail continues on towards Hadfield (where the line from Manchester now terminates), we turn through a gate on the left (6 = SK 041 975). Passing through a tunnel under the embankment, an access road is joined. This follows a lane running above the wooded banks of Valehouse Reservoir before crossing back over the Longdendale Trail by a stone bridge and heading south towards a junction beside a water treatment works (7 = SK 036 966).

Turning right, follow a quiet road as it heads into the attractive village of Padfield with its Millstone Grit cottages. Taking the first turning on the left, head south along Temple Street, passing the Peel's Arms pub. This joins Platt Street before heading up Redgate. Arriving at a staggered crossroads, cross over to join North Road. A short way along the pavement, turn onto a stony lane heading towards Castle Hill (8 = SK 030 957).

The track runs around the east side of the hill, which as well as sporting a prominent radio mast is home to an old motte known as Mouselow Castle (a beaten path runs up through oak trees towards the grassy remains on the hilltop). From the hillside there are good views over the industrial town of Glossop and its older neighbour, looking towards the surrounding hills. Joining an access road (Hilltop Road), head downhill, passing a couple of farms before arriving at the junction with Dinting Road (9 = SK 030 947).

Glossop

The industrial revolution brought about a dramatic change in Glossop. As the cotton industry expanded during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the population of the town grew six-fold and the centre moved from Old Glossop to the area around the turnpike crossroads at Norfolk Square. The new settlement was originally known as Howardtown, after the Howard family, the Dukes of Norfolk, who had inhabited Glossop Hall since 1606. The town hall

was built in 1837, with the market hall and railway station following in 1844 and 1847 respectively. The town received its Royal Charter in 1866, creating the Borough of Glossop. At one point there were 56 cotton mills operating within the area, although today there are none. Instead the town serves as a gateway to the Peak District National Park.

From here it is just 1¼ miles (2 kilometres) through the suburbs of Glossop back to the starting point. Turning left, follow the pavement as it passes the entrance to Howard Park. This was gifted to the townsfolk by the Wood family, owners of the largest mill in Glossop. Crossing straight over North Road, join Talbot Road. Crossing the B6105, note the nearby rotunda. Following the route signed for Old Glossop, head along Hall Meadow Road and Church Street. Passing the stone cross at the village centre, turn onto Shepley Street and continue back to the starting point.

Old Glossop

In contrast to its industrial neighbour, Old Glossop is a picturesque village of Millstone Grit cottages, built around a square that is home to a 12th century stone cross. The name is Anglo-Saxon, from 'Glott's hop' ('Glott's valley'), and seems to refer to a local farmer. The village grew steadily during the 16th and 17th centuries, with wool then cotton being woven on domestic hand looms.

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