

SCRAMBLES IN THE DARK PEAK

EASY SUMMER SCRAMBLES AND WINTER CLIMBS

**by
Tom Corker and Terry Sleaford**

CICERONE

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

© Tom Corker and Terry Sleaford 2018

Second edition 2018

ISBN: 978 1 78631 016 3

Reprinted 2021 (with updates)

First edition 2011

Printed in Singapore by KHL using responsibly sourced paper.



A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All photographs are by the authors unless otherwise stated.

© Crown copyright 2018 OS PU100012932

Acknowledgements

This guidebook has had a very long gestation period involving many trips into the Peak District. Our heartfelt thanks must therefore go in no small measure to our wives Claire and Eileen, who have patiently supported us whilst we were out having fun. We would like to thank Claire Corker for typing the original manuscript. Photography has been greatly enhanced by the assistance and guidance of Chris Sleaford. Others have provided reassurance and encouragement over the years, in particular John Hammond and Gordon Allan. We would also like to thank the staff at Cicerone who have crafted such a professional book from our endeavours.

Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1016/updates), so please check before planning your trip. New routes added after publication will also be available to download. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: Scrambling in Crowden Clough (Route 34)

ROUTE 22

Alport Castles Tower

Start/Finish	Laybys on A57, SK 162 886, Birchen Clough Bridge on A57, SK 109 913, Fairholmes Visitor Centre, SK 173 894 or lay-by on Fairholmes Road, SK 181 885
Height gain	20m from the 'col'
Grade and rating	1 (summer and winter)

The area known as Alport Castles (SK 142 915) is the result of a major landslip in the dim and distant past, and this route is a relatively short but steep scramble over the prominent tower (SK 141 914) that has been left standing amidst the wreckage: an easy approach across a grassy ridge before a steep ascent and descent of the final tower. Some of the rock is a little shattered so will need handling with respect. The route is well worth doing for the impressive surroundings and in winter, after a good period of frost and snowfall, it can be linked with Alport Castles Gully (Route 23) to provide good value for an easy Peak District winter outing.

Approach

There are a few options for a starting point:

1) Parking is possible on the south side of the A57 about 2km east of **Alport Bridge** (SK 141 896) opposite the bridleway to **Hagg Farm** (SK 162 886) with small lay-bys nearby. From here the **Hagg Farm** bridleway leads up the hillside to join approach (3) near **Woodcock Coppice** (SK 164 891). Alternatively, another bridleway leads down to the **River Ashop** and crosses a footbridge. Almost immediately a concessionary path leads off to the right (west) through trees, then follows a water course to join (SK 149

890) the bridleway to **Alport Bridge**. Cross the A57 to enter Alport Dale (SK 140 896).

2) An interesting alternative is to park higher up the Snake Pass (A57) at **Birchen Clough Bridge** and follow the route of the old Roman Road down to the entrance of **Alport Dale** (SK 140 897).

3) Another approach is from the **Fairholmes Visitor Centre** pay-and-display car park situated on the northern arm of **Ladybower Reservoir**. Follow a path from the side of the access road up and through the woods (signposted Lockerbrook) leading to **Lockerbrook Farm** (SK 165 894). The path heads south here for about 300m before turning back north uphill and then west to pass Bellhag Tor (SK 160 895) and Pasture Tor over **Rowlee Pasture** towards **Alport Castles**. Take the descent path (SK 145 912) to the south of Little Moor and, where the ground begins to level off, move across the slopes to the north to find the grassy ridge that leads over to **The Tower**.

4) Bellhag Tor can also be approached by a longer path starting near the lay-by on the Fairholmes Road.

Approaching from Option 1 or 2, follow the track up **Alport Dale** to **Alport Castles Farm** (SK 135 911). Take the circuitous path that leads eastwards to cross the footbridge over the River Alport before climbing the slope towards **Alport Castles**. Well before the top, go left over a fence and head north below Little Moor towards **The Tower**.

Route

The bottom of **The Tower** is reached by following a grassy ridge past a tree to a small 'col'. Now climb up rock and shale to an obvious ledge below a steepening in the rock. This can be taken direct up a small corner at Grade 2/3 (quite serious) or, for meeker souls, traverse left on the ledge around the corner to find a line to the top that keeps to the rock as far as possible. ► Follow the crest as closely as possible until near the western end. Descend to the left (west) down a slabby rock, then trend rightwards to the bottom. Alternatively, there is a corner chimney that could be descended. Now walk roughly northwest to the end of the big shale/rock cliff (Alport Castles Gully,

There is a good photo opportunity here, so stand on your head if you must!

From the small col a grassy traverse on the right leads to a wide gully as an alternative means of reaching the top.



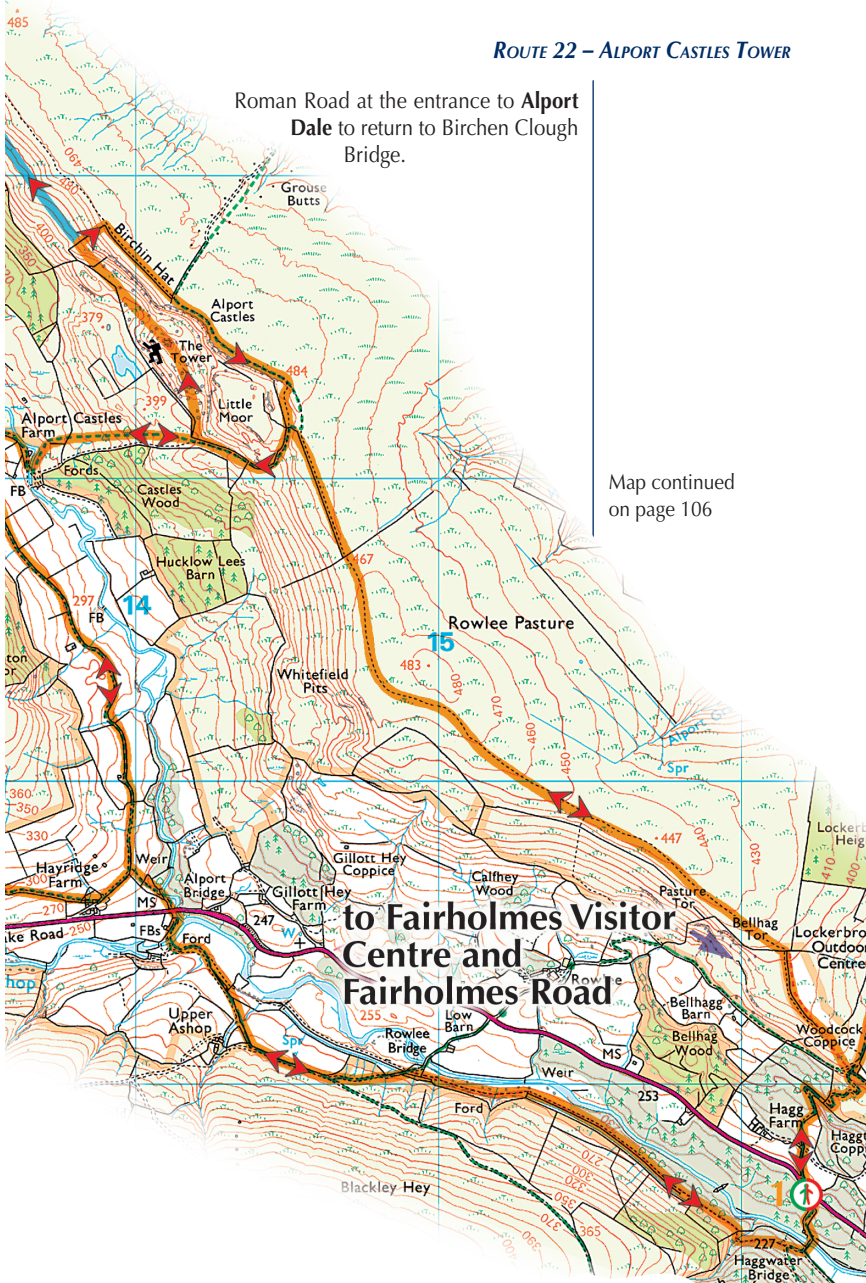
Route 23, is at the northern end of this) and ascend the hill-side to pick up the path at **Birchen Hat**.

To return to Alport Bridge, follow the path south-eastwards and take the right-hand fork (SK 145 912) to descend to **Alport Castles Farm** and the outward path back to the A57. Similarly, take this route to rejoin the

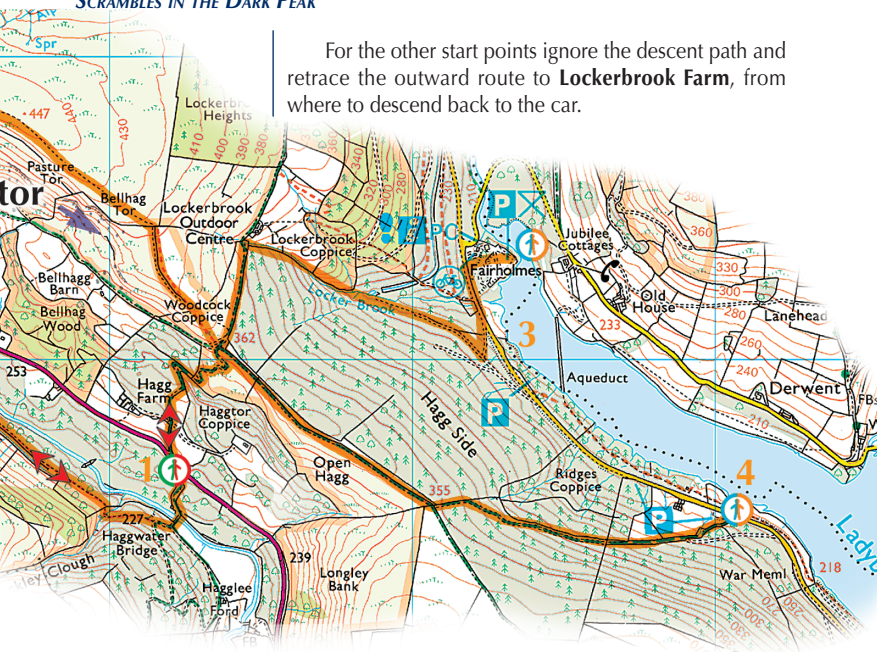
Roman Road at the entrance to **Alport Dale** to return to Birchen Clough Bridge.

Map continued on page 106

to Fairholmes Visitor
Centre and
Fairholmes Road



For the other start points ignore the descent path and retrace the outward route to **Lockerbrook Farm**, from where to descend back to the car.



The shooting cabin near the top of the clough contains a visitor's book and it can be nice to sit around here for a break.

LINKS/EXTENSIONS

Link A

For a longer circular walk from start points 1 and 2, this route can be linked with Oyster Clough. After descending **The Tower**, walk roughly northwest below the big shale/rock cliff and cross the fence. Below and to the left there is a large plantation, above which a narrow path traverses the hillside. Follow the path and, once beyond the trees and a small stream, descend steeply as best you can to the **River Alport**. The idea is to ascend the steep slopes opposite (around SK 127 923) and cross the moorland above in a southwesterly direction (compass at the ready) to the upper reaches of **Oyster Clough** (SK 119 917). ◀ A good path contours back to join the Roman Road (SK 115 905), which can be followed northwest to Birchen Clough Bridge, or to Alport Bridge in the opposite direction.



ROUTE 23

Alport Castles Gully

Start/Finish Laybys on A57, SK 162 886,
Birchen Clough Bridge on A57, SK
109 913, Fairholmes Visitor Centre,
SK 173 894 or lay-by on Fairholmes
Road, SK 181 885

Height gain 50m

Grade and rating 2 (winter only)

*The Tower provides
a great photo
opportunity once on
the top*