

# Stocks Reservoir circular

We start from a car park at the site of the old St James church. There is a modest charge for parking – although our experience has been that the machines are often out of action. If parking is not available there, try roadside parking at the causeway, or at the AONB “Hub”. Both are visible from the road and are just a short walk from the suggested start. To help with navigation, satnav users can enter the postcode BB7 4TS or Hole House Lane, whilst the grid reference on the OS map is SD73205653. If What-3-Words is your preferred tool, then the tag **defenders.aware.destiny** pinpoints the car park.

At the far end of the car park, we see a wide gate leading onto a well surfaced track – we follow this route for a while, ignoring smaller paths leading off on either side. The further we progress, the smaller the track becomes, but at no time is navigation difficult, or anything other than obvious.

We soon arrive at a five bar gate with a kissing gate to the left, and we pass through here to follow the track down and slightly to the left through a field and down to a concrete slab bridge over a beck. On the far side of the bridge, the lane heads uphill, and we follow it with a drystone wall on our left until we see an atmospheric abandoned farmhouse ahead of us. Once at the old farmhouse, look out for a track on the left just before the farm and follow that downhill to a gate. This takes us onto an area of open pasture with good views - both across the valley and down to a wooden footbridge, which is where we need to head. The sides of the valley are steep at this point, and the path meanders down in a zig zag fashion, so don't feel too concerned if it feels like we are heading away from the bridge initially.

At the bridge, we cross the river and at the far end of the bridge, there is a clear route diagonally across the field to a gate – this is easy to see but does not really coincide with the path noted on the OS map, so don't worry too much if you are using the OS app and we seem to be off track. From here the path follows a beck upstream – with the water on our right at all times - and as we climb further up the slope, we see a larger track crossing the path we are on. We turn left at the track and head slightly downhill.

We follow the track for a while now, generally in a southeasterly direction, and again we find that the clear and obvious route on the ground differs from the published route on the OS map by a few metres. The track soon starts to bend to the right, following the contours of the adjacent Eak hill, and we now start to get good views over the water toward the dam at the Southern end of the reservoir.

A little further round Eak Hill, and we find ourselves at the shore of the reservoir with a building (until recently a café) ahead of us. We pass the building on the right, and head downhill now on a small, metalled road.

Further on, the road starts to bend left, and we see the Board House – the grand house used by the Fylde Water Board, and more recently by United Utilities as a meeting place and training centre. It seems safe to assume that the conditions in Hollins were somewhat less plush than Board House.

We are now at the northwestern end of the dam, and as we pass along the top of the dam we have good views down the length of the reservoir, to our right, whilst to our left we note the two water treatment plants on site – collectively known as Hodder water treatment works: Looking down from

the dam, the original works are on the left, with a larger and more modern addition recently completed on the right.

At the southeastern end of the dam, we cross a foot bridge over a spill way. The path now continues North following the shore, keeping the woodland of Ten Acre Hill on our right. As we follow the shore around, we see elements of the route we walked earlier in the day on the far side of the water.

We soon approach a very high fence – this is a deer fence designed to stop deer accessing the recently planted woodland beyond and eating the tender shoots. We enter the woodland via the gate – please be careful to close it.

We continue through that woodland – the path remains clear, and soon arrive at the minor road which is an extension of the road we arrived on. We turn left here, but we don't need to walk on the road for more than a few meters – there is again a path on the left of the road which safely separates us from the traffic.

This path heads back to the carpark – via a wooded area that despite being just a few metres from the road feels ancient and isolated – almost “middle earth” in character. This is a great place to forage in the autumn.

We press on passing the causeway, and soon emerge from the woodland at the St James car park.

- **Total distance 12.6 km (7.8 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 190 m**
- **Moderate walk**