

Bleaklow B29 Bomber



By Bethan Cann

At the start of the year, I made a small bucket list of trails to walk before 2025 comes to an end. I tasked myself to do one a month, although we're now halfway through the year and I can't say I've done more than one! Disappointing, I know.

I'm determined, as the weather is warming up, to spend more time outdoors, including sticking by my 'one hike a month' rule. There are some amazing walks to do in the Peak District and we're lucky it's not a far journey to explore.

An area of the Peak District I certainly hadn't heard much about is the Dark Peak, known for its dramatic landscape with rolling high moors and dark colour from the gritstone and peats that make it. It sounds almost ominous! There are trails within the Dark Peak, although most of it is unsurfaced and often boggy thanks to our Great British weather. One trail in particular is far from your ordinary walk.

Bleaklow Moor is the crash site of a B29 bomber plane. Situated near Glossop on the moorland of Snake Summit, you can see the rusted remains of a U.S. Air Force Superfortress aircraft which sadly crashed near Higher Shelf Stones in 1948, during a routine domestic flight between air bases in the UK.

Parts of the wreckage are still exposed today including the engines, wing sections, fuselage sections, undercarriages and gun turrets, and are all visible from the trail. It is incredible that this small piece of history has been preserved for almost 60 years in the Dark Peaks. In 1988, a memorial was created to remember the 13 crew members who passed away in the Bleaklow crash, so it is important to be respectful at the site.

There are several places you can begin your hike up to the B29 plane site, including starting along the Longdendale trail which offers beautiful views of Torside Reservoir, or taking Pennine Way climbing past Skyes Moor, offering a little more of a challenge. Either way, the Moors can be difficult terrain. Bleaklow is part of the National Trust's High Peak Estate, so conservation efforts have been made in the past to avoid erosion of the grounds further. From the High Peak, you can see views across Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire West.

Interestingly, there are another 175 military air plane crash sites across the Peak District from various decades. There are many reasons these crashes happened, but most are put down to poor visibility of the landscape and inexperienced pilots with the nearby air bases training personnel.

By the sound of it, the Dark Peak may be more menacing than once thought, living up to its rather sinister name. Even so, it's amazing that a simple (or perhaps not with the harsh terrain) walk can have historic value as well as panoramic views across some of the UK. It goes to show, there's so much to see in the British countryside.