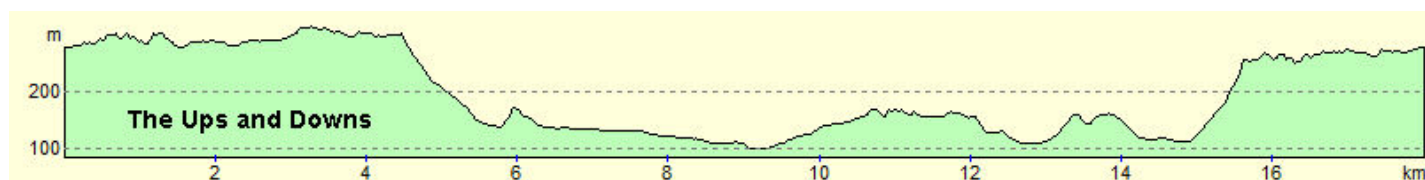
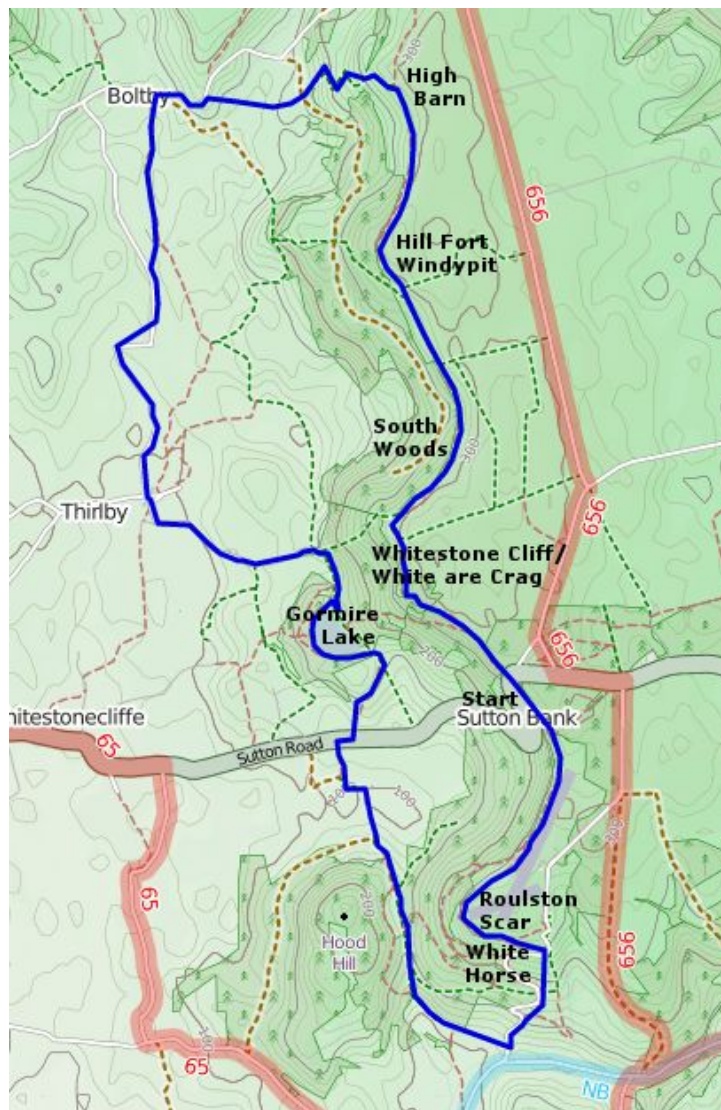


## A walk from Sutton Bank to Whitestone Cliff, Gormire Lake & White Horse

### Statistics:

Start:	Sutton Bank
Start (OS ref):	SE514830
Parking:	Sutton Bank Visitor Centre
Map (1:25,000):	Explorer OL26 - North York Moors, Western Area
Distance:	11.2 miles (18.0 km)
Time:	4 - 5 hours
Difficulty:	Moderate
Climbing:	628 metres
Hazards:	Some road walking & crossings
Refreshments:	Sutton Bank, Boltby, Thirlby
Route Maps:	<a href="#">Memory Map (.mmo file)</a> <a href="#">GPS (.gpx file)</a>



### Direction Map

[onlinemapfinder.com](http://onlinemapfinder.com)

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### The Walk:



**Gormire Lake as seen from the Cleveland Way**



**Whitestone Cliff also known as White Mare Crag**

Looking back in my photograph archives I came across the 10 photographs in this report which were taken in 1997 on a wonderful late summers day. It was Saturday the 6th of September and eerily the car park at Sutton Bank Visitor Centre was deathly quiet. Usually the car park would be busy with families parking up to walk to the White Horse along Roulston Scar, but not this day as a nation was in mourning. It was the day of the funeral of Princess Diana and rather than dwell in morbid my brother Dave and I decided to cheer ourselves up by taking a walk in the wonderful North York Moors which is exactly what we did. Arriving from Harrogate promptly thanks to extremely quiet roads we had no trouble parking up and after changing into our walking gear we were on our way. It was a hot September day with heat haze all around as we set off from Sutton Bank walking north along the edge of the North York Moors western escarpment and following the Cleveland Way. At first views were blocked by trees on our level and on both flanks but soon the trees were gone and replaced by fantastic views west, north and east. The lower ground to the west usually offers distant views but the heat haze kept it to just a few miles. In compensation the views in our locale were tremendous with densely foliage surrounded Gormire Lake below and soon later we were at Whitestone Cliff, a cliff of pink grit stone formed in the Jurassic period. Today Dave and I were alone to enjoy the peace of the place, Dinosaurs gone, people elsewhere. The cliff, so prominent in coastal regions is a rare sight inland but there is a geological explanation.

*Why is this cliff here? In the last ice age, which peaked around 20 thousand years ago, an ice sheet pushed its way down the depression that lay between the upland areas of the North York Moors and the Pennines. As it scraped along the western edge of the moors, the tremendous force of the ice gouged out the soft underlying rocks, causing the hard tops to tumble down. The result was a near-vertical escarpment, of the type usually seen at the coast. As the ice melted it left layers of mud along the bottom edge of the cliff, in what are known as lateral moraines. These mud deposits blocked up normal drainage channels causing small lakes to form. Gormire Lake, below Sutton Bank, is the last remaining glacial lake. The edge of the bank is not a perfect straight line, and a little to the south of Sutton Bank, Hood Hill stood out above the ice sheet and became detached from the moors. A small cap of hard Upper Jurassic grit sits on top of the hill, giving it a spectacular profile. So now you know*  
(Source: <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk>)



**Looking to High Barn from Hill Fort Windypit**



**Roulston Scar and Hood Hill, destinations two hours on**

After staying a while at Whitestone Cliff, which is also known as White Mare Crag (inspiration for the White Horse on the escarpment to the south?) Dave and I walked on the level high ground close to the cliff and walked north to Hill Fort Windypit. Finding no evidence of a fort there we continued on to High Barn at which point we descended down off the escarpment by

tracks, through fields and finally on road into the quiet North Yorkshire village of Boltby.

*I have since researched that Hill Fort Windypit is a site of interest to cavers who regular spend time below ground. Is that where the Hill Fort is hidden? For the cave information see [Cave Maps](#)*



**Contemplating in the village of Boltby**



**Gormire Lake**

Like it was at Sutton Bank Visitor Centre and like it was while on the popular walk along the Cleveland Way the village of Boltby was so quiet. Walking through the village seemed like we were exactly in the central moment of the iconic science fiction film 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' Looking back at the photograph of me looking back down the main street of the village which was taken by Dave I wonder if I was thinking that very thought. It is so clear to me now 13 years on that the fantastic walk which should be walked by many was absent of people at all, bar me and Dave of course. Still, no problem, the silence and tranquility was beguiling as we left the village by following a track due south across fields to Gurtof Beck which we followed for a while before leaving the beck side to meet the quiet Boltby to Thirlby Road. I recall we saw a Hare standing proudly in one of the fields by the road side but he scampered off before Dave could get a camera shot. Then after following the so peaceful road for about a mile we reached Thirlby, a lovely village, so attractive and more so because all the gardens were on show for a competition. We looked at all front gardens as we passed through Thirlby, all expertly presented. It was a joy and with the unbroken sunshine with us we continued in high spirits to Gormire Lake. Once at the lake it was still difficult to see it clearly as trees densely protected the edge. Only very occasionally gaps in the tree line provided opportunities to take a close photograph of the lake with the best chance snapped up by Dave in the picture above right.



**Rooftops of Gormire Farm with Hood Hill beyond**



**Beautiful English Green at Hood Grange**

From Gormire Lake we could have followed a track up the escarpment and back to the car but we were so enjoying ourselves that we extended the walk by tracking past Gormire Farm and to an easy crossing of the usually busy A170 to follow a track to Hood Grange. From here we could see the imposing mass of the cliff at Roulston Scar and to its right the pyramid of Hood Hill, a hill swathed in green all around and from top to bottom. A track bisecting the scar and the hill took us through the gap and into the dense conifer of the Hood Hill Plantation. My word, this walk was so memorable I still recall the midges attacking as soon as we were in the shade from the hot late summer sun. I remember taking my T Shirt off and throwing it over my head while we walked through the plantation. Only when we reached Low Town Bank Road did I put my T Shirt back on.



***The road to the White Horse from Kilburn***



***Kilburn White Horse***

The finale of the walk was exciting as we made our way to the White Horse but it was also the hardest part as we made a steep climb of 150 metres at over 25% gradient to get to the top of the escarpment. The climb was eased by the expectation of reaching the White Horse though, for a reunion and for continuing the adventure Dave and I had with brother Ray times before on visits as youngsters growing up nearby. The White Horse of Kilburn has always been part of my life and always a joy to reach so pained as we were on the climb we got there and were immediately thrilled. We rested beside the horse for a good while. Then the time came when we had to leave the horse again and complete our walk which we did by following the escarpment top of Roulston Scar and past the Sutton Bank Gliding Club. Past the Gliding Club and then past Knowlson's Drop saw us back to the starting point of our great adventure. I bet when we do this walk again it won't be so quiet.

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*The walking Englishman*

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