

Circuit of Darwen

Distance: 20.1km **Height:** 540m

Suitable for: Mountain bikes - Intermediate level

Start / Finish Point: Hoddlesden Village Centre (GR:715222) – in front of Ranken Arms pub **Parking:** On-street parking in the village

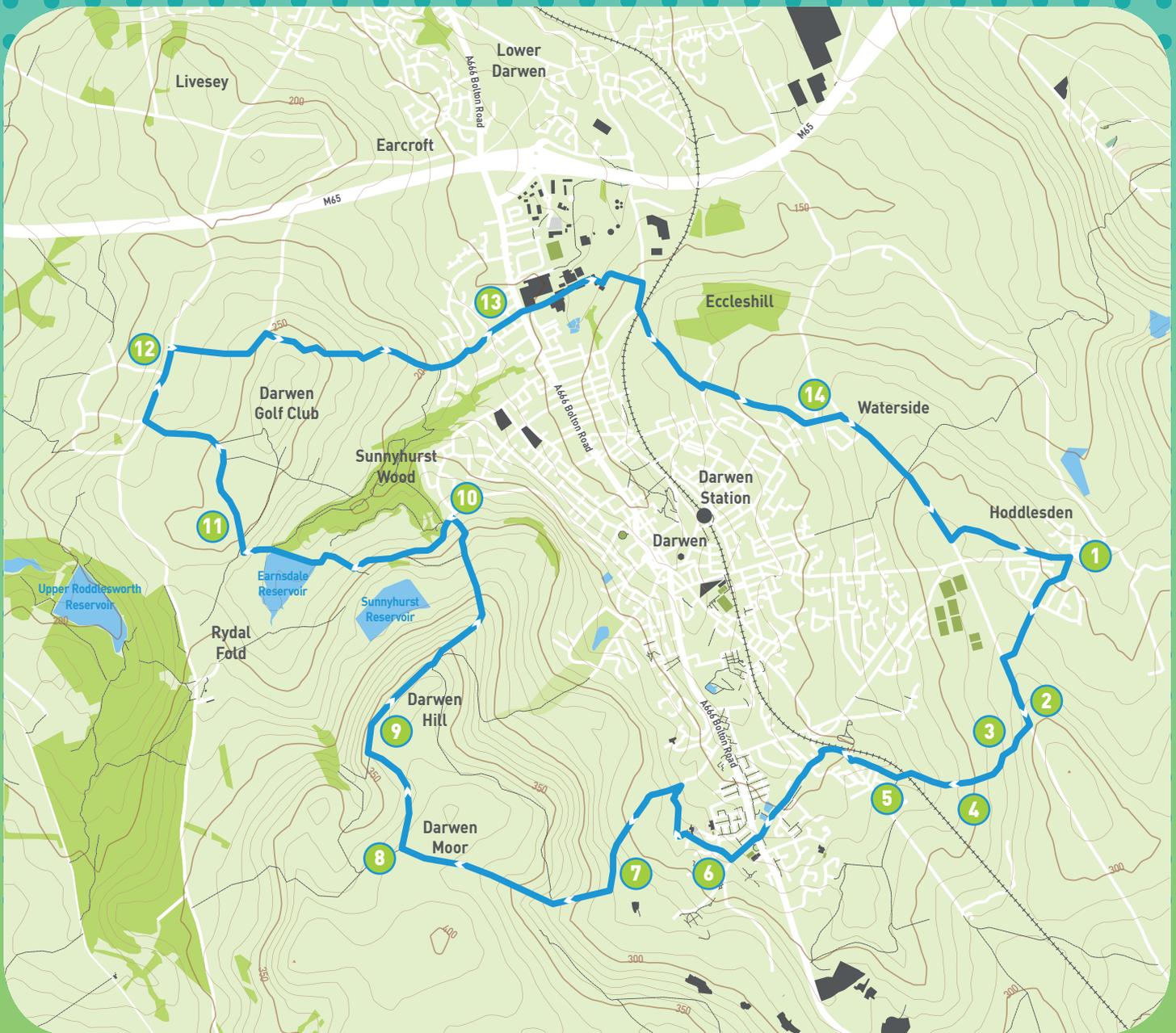
Arrival by train: Darwen Rail Station (approx 2km from Hoddlesden)

Refreshments: Store & pub in Hoddlesden, various pubs & shops on route **Toilets:** None specifically on the route

General description:

A ride of changes and contrasts, encompassing bleak and rugged moors and the verges of industry in a circular sweep around and across the Darwen valley.

The obvious necessity for climbing is more than matched with some thrilling descents. An equal mix of road and off-road riding.



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Route Description:

- 1** From the pub turn immediately left into Carus Avenue and ride straight up to the top. Then continue ahead onto a track between two bungalows. Follow this rough track until it comes out into Blacksnape Village opposite the Red Lion and turn left.
- 2** Approx. 400m after passing the pub, turn right down a track heading towards a farm (just by the 40mph sign).
- 3** Pass anti-clockwise around the farm through a series of gates, initially a right turn then a left.
- 4** Next section is downhill across a field – turn at wooden post dropping into a tree-lined cutting. Then across a railway bridge into a housing estate.
- 5** Turn right and descend to a T junction. Turn right onto Cranberry Lane then left into Causeway Street with Watery Lane at the next junction. Follow as it climbs slightly up to the A666. Go straight across onto Queen's Road, passing Darwen Cemetery on the left.
- 6** Take the next right into Whitehall Terrace (signed to Whitehall Hotel) and then after 50m bear left onto a signed bridleway. This rough track twists and turns a little bit and will bring you out onto Bury Fold. Take a sharp left here and start climbing up to the moor.
- 7** This is a steady but gruelling 1.2km climb but if you've breath to spare and look around you'll savour the rewards of your efforts. As you pass the West Pennine Moors board, bear right onto a rough track which continues to climb further. After a short distance however, the gradient eases. Make sure you keep heading straight and avoid the track forking off to the left. Soon after this junction you reach the top and can enjoy a recovery roll along this heather-clad moorland track with unbroken views across West Lancashire and to Jubilee Tower.
- 8** As you reach a gate and track junction turn sharply right and follow the track in the direction of the tower. Although it then appears to sweep left away from the tower, after a short distance it contours back round towards it. Glancing to your left you'll see how high you still are with Earnsdale and Sunnyhurst reservoirs shimmering below. Your technical skills will then be called upon on the rocky last section up to the tower. You may wish to pause here or even climb to the top of this monument built in 1898 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. On a clear day you may even catch sight of the Isle of Man, along with many other closer natural attractions such as the Yorkshire Dales and Morecambe Bay.
- 9** Prepare for an exciting, eye-watering descent on the track that heads down away from the tower in a north-easterly direction down to Sunnyhurst (you will be looking initially towards Blackburn centre). The drainage channels and ruts require full concentration whilst the adrenaline pumps round. Take special care on the final section above the village as the surface loosens, track narrows and there may be walkers about.
- 10** Turn left heading back into open country. Just past a solitary cottage turn right onto a track that drops down and across the reservoir. On the far side turn left up a steep, rough narrow track. At the next track junction (where the gradient eases), turn sharp right. This bridleway soon levels out passing a few houses and stables before dropping down into the village of Tockholes.
- 11** Turn right onto Weasel Lane passing Tockholes United Reformed Church. Approximately 400m past the pub, take right onto a bridleway (beside two cottages). This track climbs for approx 400m, then turns 90° left, levels out.
- 12** Turn right on the new stone track passing between wooden posts heading up to the mast. Continue passing the mast on your left through a couple of gates. 100m past the mast go left through a gate across a field heading towards farm buildings (Winter Hill). Continue on the waymarked track heading downhill. This will pass the golf club house and come out on to Duddon Avenue. Continue down Duddon Avenue and Lynwood Avenue to reach the A666.
- 13** Turn right and follow the main road for approx 400m before turning left in to Hollins Grove. At the top of the hill turn right in to Goose House Lane. Continue up the lane towards the village of Chapels. As you enter the village and the road levels out turn left into Knowle Lane.
- 14** Continue along to T junction with Roman Road and turn right following the road towards the TV mast. When opposite TV mast, turn left onto Harwoods Lane and follow this onto a rough track for a final, gradual descent into Hoddlesden.

