

The Saddleworth Way

Section 2

Route: **Tameside border at Royal George pub on A635 a tGreenfield to Kirklees border on the A635 Isle of Skye Road**

Distance: **10 miles**

Terrain: **Paths and open moorland** Grade: **Hard**

This second section of The Saddleworth Way takes you on a track high above Greenfield and the Saddleworth reservoirs – Dove Stone, Chew, Yeoman Hey and Greenfield. We have nicknamed this section, Sky Walk. The views down over Greenfield and beyond are spectacular. The final part of this section is particularly challenging as there are no set paths and you will need to navigate across open moorland. Only attempt this section on a good day and make sure you have a compass and map available.



Saddleworth Way Section 2 Map



Start behind the Royal George pub on B6175, Well-I-Hole Road. At this point Saddleworth meets Tameside. Proceed up Shadworth Lane which quickly turns into a steep rough track.



Continue up the track until you reach Moor Edge Road. Turn left and continue along until you reach Intake Lane. Turn right here and look out for the footpath sign on your right which will take you up onto Alphin Pike.



Continue on this footpath which climbs steeply. At the top you will find the trig point at 469m.



Look behind for magnificent views of Manchester and even the Welsh hills on a clear day.



Alphin Pike with its brother Alderman Hill stand guard over Greenfield and Saddleworth. In legend the rolling boulder-strewn hills were the abodes of the giants Alphin and Alderman, after whom the peaks were named. Alphin and Alderman were at first on friendly terms, until they both became enamoured with a beautiful water nymph called Rimmon, who lived in the valley below them in the bubbling waters of Chew Brook.

Alphin won the battle for the affections of Rimmon, which secured the angry jealousy of Alderman. Eventually the quarrelling gave way to aggressive action and they threw giant boulders at each other in a mortal contest across the valley. One of these rocks struck Alphin a mortal blow, and he died on the slopes of his hill. Rimmon was devastated at her lover's death and threw herself from the crags that overlook the Chew Valley.

She is said to be buried somewhere on the slopes of Alphin Pike in the giants grave. The many large boulders strewn over the valley and across the mountains were said to be the missiles thrown by the giants during their battle for the water nymphs affections.

This first part of the walk from Alphin Pike Hill past Chew Reservoir and on to Ashway Gap is fairly straightforward with relatively clear tracks.



Follow the path that leads on from the trig point and over Wimberry Moss. Occasional detours may be necessary to avoid boggy ground. Down to your left are views of Dove Stone reservoir and ahead the impressive Wimberry Crag will come into view. Locally this is known as Indian's Head because of the stones shape when viewed from a distance.



After enjoying the views from Wimberry Crag continue on the track. Down to your left is Chew Brook and the track now heads across Wilderness Moor and towards Wilderness Rocks



Take time here to take in the splendid views here down Chew Valley back towards Dove Stone reservoir. It was here early in 1963, that Graham West and Spike Roberts, members of the Manchester Gritstone Club, were killed in what is thought to have been the biggest avalanche recorded in England. Above the gully, another memorial, to Walter Brookfield, a Rambler and campaigner for rights-of-way. How pleased he would be that since the CROW act, the remainder of this ridge is now accessible.

After Wilderness Rocks the path heads towards Chew Reservoir although it can become very indistinct in places. Try not to lose height here and keep to the right, heading for the top right of the dam wall once it comes into view.



Chew Reservoir dates from 1912 and was apparently the highest reservoir in England until 1971 when Cow Green Reservoir opened in the North Pennines.

The actual Saddleworth border runs well behind and to the east of Chew Reservoir but there is very little to see. Instead walk along the top of the dam wall and at the end you will see the footpath sign pointing you towards our next goal of Ashway Stone or Ashway Gap as it is known locally.

Again, the path can get very boggy in wet weather and you can have trouble actually seeing it. However, there are a number of tracks here heading to Ashway Gap, try to keep to the moorland edge track that provides great views down to Dove Stone as you cross Dish Stone Moss and then Dove Stone Moss.



The path passes the remains of a building called Bramley's Cot, although its original use is uncertain. It was clearly a well constructed building, with holes cut into the crag itself for the roof, joists and beams.

Next you will pass a large cairn on top of a gritstone outcrop known as Fox Stone, with a memorial plaque commemorating Brian Toase and Tom Morton, two climbers killed in the Italian Dolomites in 1972.



As you continue along Dove Stone Edge towards Ashway Gap you will have views down of the dam wall between Dove Stone and Yeoman Hey reservoirs.



Note:

Once at Ashway Gap you are approximately halfway through the walk and a good place to take stock of progress. If you feel you are running out of daylight, or energy, then consider taking the path down from this point. The path is clearly visible and leads down to Dove Stone Reservoir.

The walk now continues along the edge of Ashway Moss and passes the Ashway Stone Memorial which marks the spot where James Platt, MP for Oldham, died due to a shooting accident in 1857.

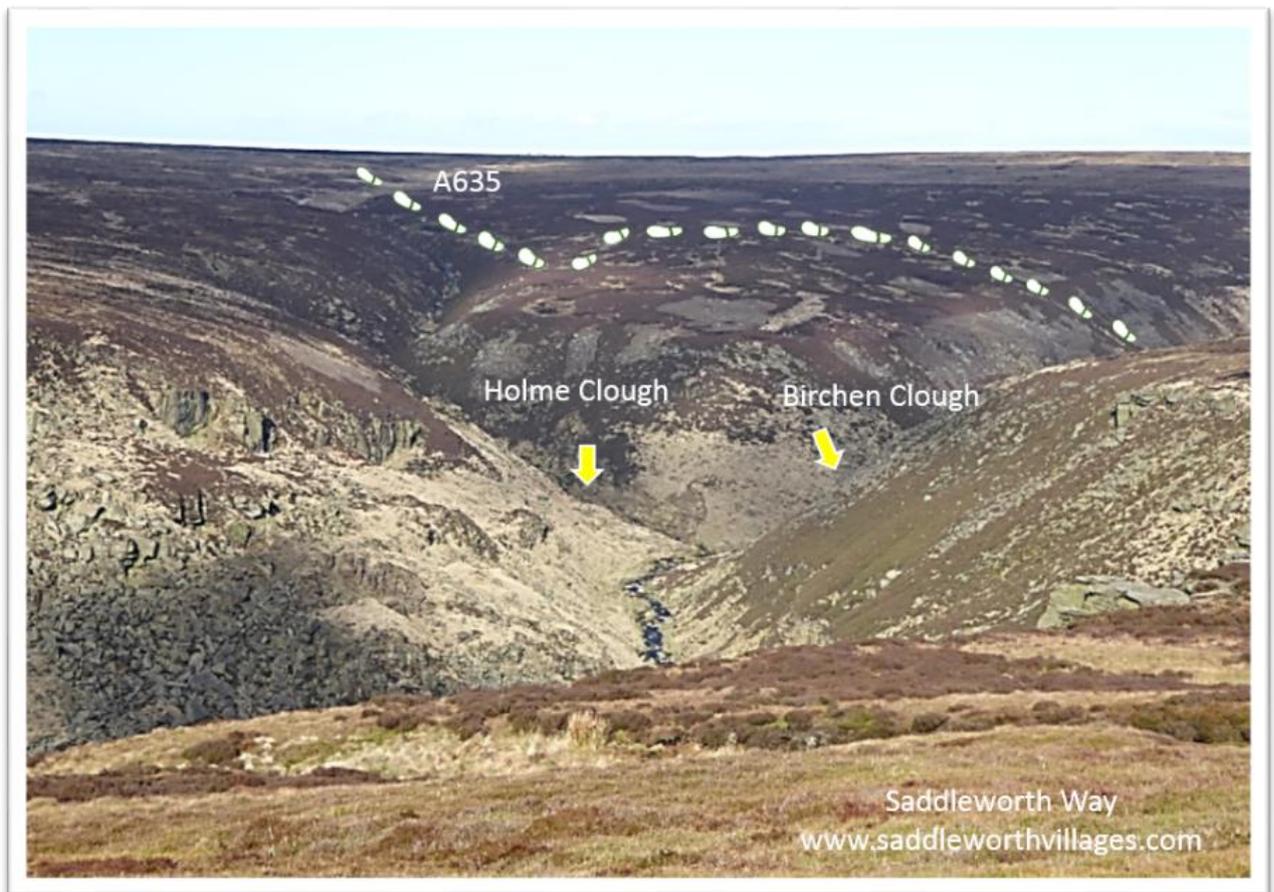


The track now heads for Ashway Rocks before turning East to run above Greenfield Brook in Birchen Clough. Take time to view the impressive rocks of Raven Stones Brow, including the famous Trinnacle and Hanging Rock.



The route now continues following the ridge above Birchen Clough. At this point the path becomes more or less non-existent. The Holmfirth, or Isle of Skye Road as it is known locally, becomes visible on your left and you can use this as a landmark.

This final leg of the walk involves plotting a route across Birchen Clough, then across Holme Clough to finally walk across Little Moss Moor to the A635 Holmfirth Road.



Continue along Birchen Clough for approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and then as the clough turns East begin your descent. The aim now is to find a suitable place to cross Greenfield Brook. This will depend on how much water is flowing down. After particularly wet periods it may be necessary to walk much further up the clough.

After crossing the brook climb out of the clough heading North and you will next come to Holme Clough. Fortunately, this clough is a lot less formidable than Birchen Clough. Turn right and head up the clough edge trying not to lose height as you make your way. Up ahead you will see the Holme Moss transmitter, keep heading towards this recognisable landmark. You will eventually come across a water channel that runs down into Holme Clough. This is the best place to cross Greenfield Brook, again!

There are usually tyre tracks visible next to the brook, presumably made by the 4 wheel drive vehicles used by the gamekeepers.



Once across the brook climb out of the clough and head North to reach the A635 Holmfirth Road which is now within ½ mile.

Depending on your position as you arrive at the road go right or left to find the exit stile off the moor which is at the Saddleworth boundary sign with a small carpark directly opposite.



This is the end of Section 2 Saddleworth Way.

Note: section 3 starts directly opposite via the carpark gate.