

The Saddleworth Way

Section 3

Route: **Saddleworth/Kirklees Border on A635 Isle of Skye Road above Greenfield to Saddleworth Denshaw border on the A640 Rochdale Road.**

Distance: **10 miles**

Terrain: **Paths and tracks** Grade: **Moderate**

This third section of the Saddleworth Way takes you from the easterly reaches of Saddleworth to the northern border at Windy Hill and then down to Denshaw.

Following the old Pennine Way track it crosses Saddleworth Moor over White Moss and Black Moss and then across Standedge ridge high above Castleshaw then across Denshaw Moor to Windy Hill and finally following the Saddleworth border down to Denshaw.

The beginning of this Section is over numerous moss areas and can be very boggy. It is best attempted after a reasonably dry period.



Start at the car park on the Saddleworth border on the A635 Isle of Skye Road above Greenfield. Unfortunately, there is no public transport available on this road probably due to its very exposed position. This road often closes during winter snowfalls.



The old Pennine Way track which we are following heads northwest over White Moss and after a boggy start you soon find yourself on a flagged surface.



After ½ mile or so you will see a shallow boggy ditch running west, right to left. It is generally thought that the ditch is the remains of the Cotton Famine Road, construction of which was undertaken in the 1860s to provide employment for local textile workers when the supply of raw cotton dried up during the American Civil War. Another possibility is that it is an unfinished road from to Blake Gate built around 1811 and which can be seen on the 1854 OS map. The construction method seems to have been similar to the Roman one of digging ditches and piling the earth into the middle. Whatever the origins we can only imagine the terrible conditions under which people must have toiled during the building this "road to nowhere".



The track crosses several water channels and in places you may need to detour around any sunken flag stones. Eventually you arrive at a fence, go on through the kissing gate. Keeping the fence to you left continue on with views of Standedge starting to appear in the distance.



After approximately 11/2 miles the track turns to the north to cross Black Moss and heads towards our next goal of Black Moss Reservoir. After approximately 13/4 miles the flagged surface gives way to bare areas of peat. Eventually views of Black Moss and Swellands reservoirs come into view.



Head for the dam wall on the western side of Black Moss Reservoir. The track continues on along the dam wall and beyond in a NW direction. Immediately, after the reservoir the new Pennine Way route re-joins our track from the right and we are now back on a flagged surface. Proceed through the kissing gate to begin the gradual descent towards Redbrook Reservoir. The Great Western pub can be seen in the distance just behind the reservoir.



Just before Redbrook Reservoir the track now turns NW and heads towards Brun Clough reservoir and the car park next to the Standedge Cutting on the A62 Manchester Rd.



The A62 Huddersfield-Oldham road loops some way to the south on both sides of the watershed in order to cross the lowest part of the Standedge ridge. A substantial cutting has been built for the road but the real civil engineering feat of this area is some way beneath your feet. The railway and the canal between Marsden and Diggle, either side of the watershed, plunge through parallel tunnels more than three miles (4km) in length. The canal tunnel opened in 1811 and "working" it was quite a feat, as boats had to be propelled along it by canal barge crews "legging" or walking along the tunnel walls and roof. It could take up to four hours. The canal fell into disuse in the 1940s but has been recently restored, and it reopened in the spring of 2001.

The Saddleworth / Kirklees border sign is a little way up the cutting.



Walk down to the carpark at Brun Clough reservoir and take the track directly opposite on the other side of the road. This area was once an open area and the route onto Standedge ridge was a little confused but now well signed paths provide a more obvious route. The path pretty much follows the former Yorkshire - Lancashire county boundary, nowadays the borough boundary between Kirklees (to the east) and Saddleworth, Oldham (to the west).

Cross over the road from the carpark and take the track, again marked Pennine Way, directly opposite. Turn left at the track junction then right to take the track up onto Standedge plateau.



The track climbs gradually, sometimes in the open but more often alongside fences or walls, towards the rocky outcrops seen on the skyline a short distance ahead. Once you reach the first of these outcrops you discover that there's a considerable line of them stretching ahead of you. This is Millstone Edge which reaches a height of 448m or approximately 1470ft. Millstone Edge is a slab of gritstone, a dark and rough variety of sandstone. As befits its name, millstone was typically the stuff from which grinding stones were fashioned for the milling of corn into flour. The Edge faces west and looks down over the rural edge of Greater Manchester, towards Diggle and Saddleworth. Reservoirs glint in the sun. It's a nice spot to settle down out of the wind for a refreshment break.



View over Diggle from Standedge

Saddleworth Way
www.saddleworthvillages.com



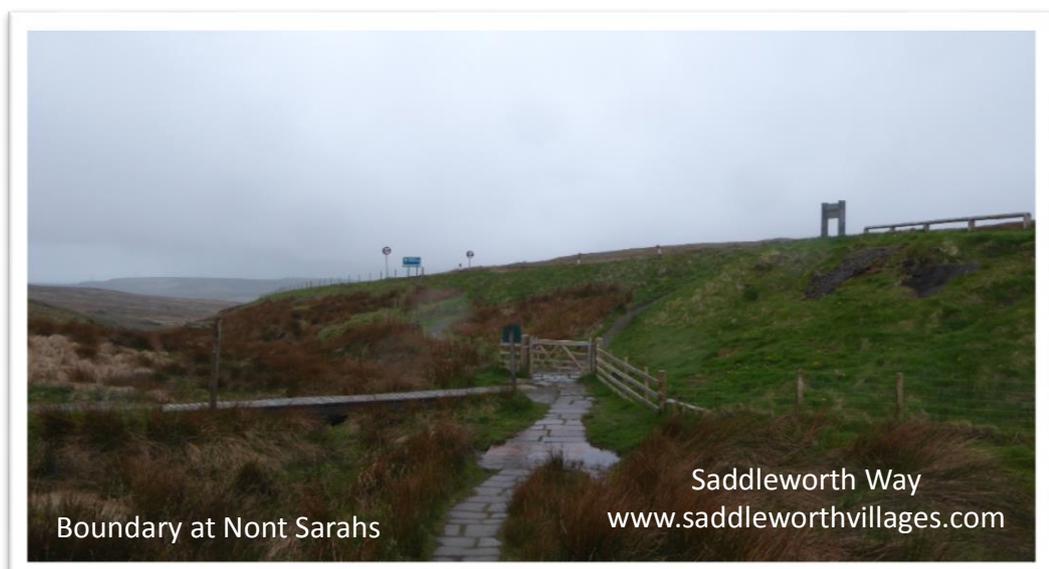
Millstone Edge, Standedge

Saddleworth Way
www.saddleworthvillages.com

After approximately 1 mile on the edge the track bears right (N) to head across Close Moss towards the Saddleworth border on the A640. Marker stone marks the turn.



Close Moss is a wilderness of rough grassland and peat but walking is reasonably firm and dry. The track curves very gradually around to the left, running alongside a shallow watercourse. The track finally arrives at our next border point on the A640 Huddersfield Road, known locally as Nont Sarahs. This is truly one of the loneliest roads in Saddleworth.



The track continues directly opposite on the other side of the road. A gentle climb towards the summit of White Hill. As you climb views of Readycon Dean Reservoir come into view on the left.



As you approach the summit you will cross a stile with a boundary marker behind it stating that you are at the most easterly point of Lancashire. This is the old border line between Lancashire and Yorkshire.



Road noise from the nearby M62 motorway now starts to be heard and the top of Windy Hill Transmitter can be seen.



Views from the trig point at the summit of White Hill are tremendous. On clear days you will be able to see the hills in Wales, Derbyshire, Cheshire and Yorkshire.



The track heads almost west off White Hill but then gradually curves around to the right as it descends to the A672 Ripponden Road.



You've now reached Saddleworth's most northerly boundary, where it meets Rochdale and Calderdale.



The Saddleworth/Rochdale boundary runs down the A672 road with the land to the right being in the district of Rochdale. Unfortunately, this means a trek down the road towards Denshaw. Keep to the right to face the oncoming traffic and use the wide grass verge which provides a reasonable walking surface.



You soon gain views to the right of Ogden and Piethorn Reservoirs.



Eventually views of Saddleworth return in front of you as you arrive at the Rams Head Inn. At over 450 years old the Rams Head sits at 1212ft above sea level and was a favourite haunt of the famous Saddleworth poet Ammon Wrigley.



This final leg of Section 3 can be a little tricky so we have provided a satellite map of the route.



At the footpath sign immediately before the Rams Head turn right down the stone track passing the pub on your left.



On your left you will come to two lanes, the track continues down the second lane but only for five yards or so, before crossing a stile on the right and then heading across the field just to the left of the windmill.

note - footpath sign missing at the top of lane.



Cross the stile out of the field and great views Denshaw and Delph open up on the left and views of Rochdale and beyond to the right.

The track now descends to Rooden Reservoir. Cross the metal footbridge over the water channel and turn towards the dam wall. Follow the track round the western side of the reservoir keeping the reservoir on your left. Look back here for a view over the reservoir back to the Rams Head. At the far top corner go through the kissing gate and continue ahead on the track. This section of the track is often used by horses and can be very churned up.



At the houses keep on the now tarmac lane heading up to the conifer trees. The track follows the lane left just before the trees and 100 yards on meets the A640 Rochdale Road. The Saddleworth Way has now reached the boundary with Rochdale and the Denshaw Saddleworth boundary sign is just 10 yards down the road.



This is the end of Section 3 Saddleworth Way.

Note: section 4 starts here.