

# Walk the Way in a Day

## Walk 44 Millstone Edge and Blackstone Edge

A long walk following the Pennine Way through a landscape of rugged charm, with moorland paths running along Millstone Grit scarps. The return route follows tracks and lanes through the Saddleworth area, with its scatter of reservoirs, functional villages and untidy farmsteads.

Length:	17½ miles (28 kilometres)
Ascent:	2,704 feet (825 metres)
Highest Point:	472 metres (1,549 feet)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Maps 1 ('The Peak District - Dark Peak') (West Sheet) and 21 ('South Pennines') (South Sheet)
Starting Point:	Standedge parking area, Saddleworth (SE 019 095)
Facilities:	Inn nearby.
Website:	<a href="http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-44-millstone-edge-and-blackstone-edge">http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-44-millstone-edge-and-blackstone-edge</a>

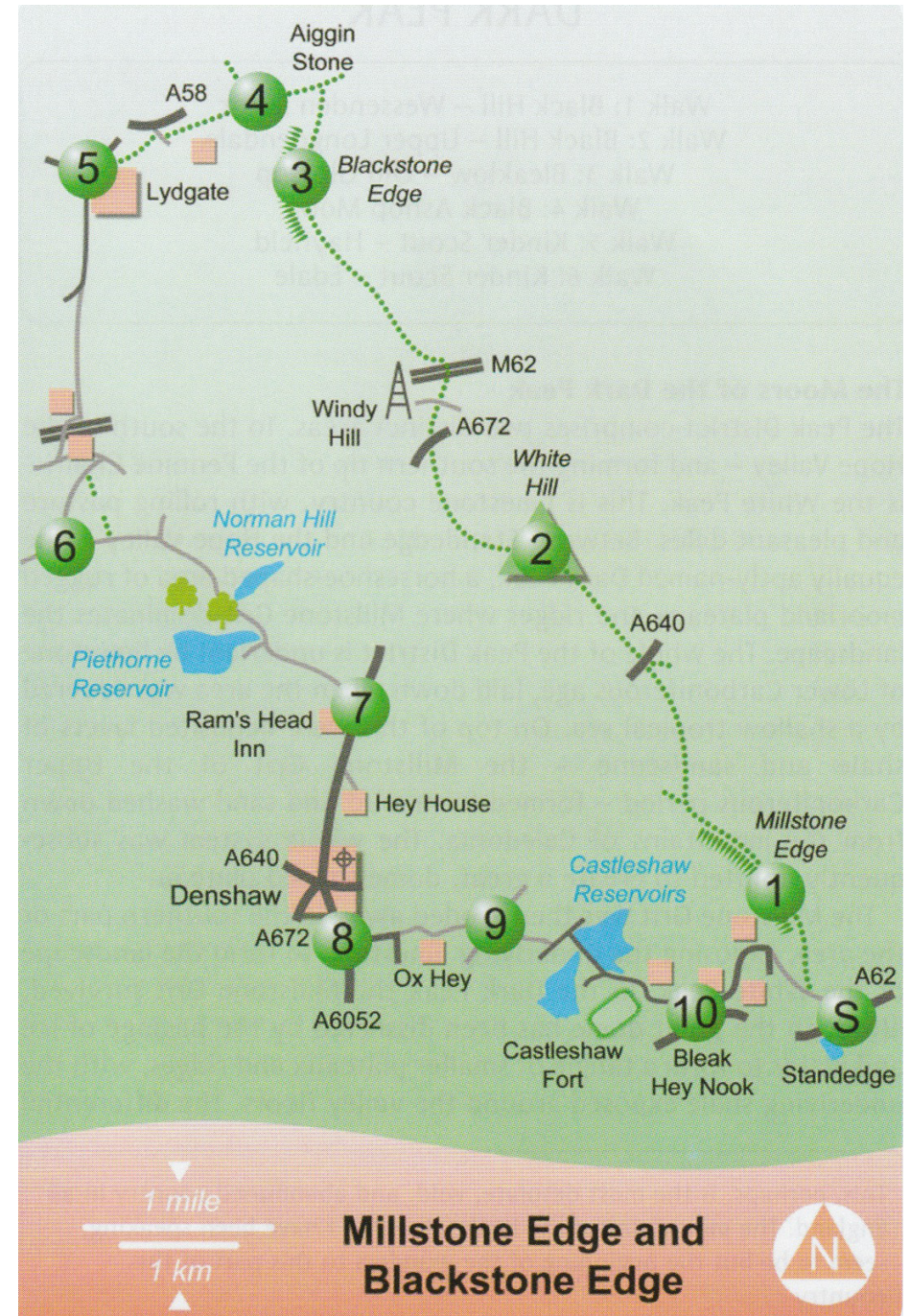
### Millstone Edge

The starting point is located at the west end of the Standedge Cutting on the A62. The first part of the walk follows the Pennine Way north-west along Millstone Edge for 3¼ miles (5¼ kilometres). Crossing straight over the busy main road, a finger sign points along a hardcore track. Soon another sign marks a right turn over a fence stile, joining a path running along the edge of the moorland plateau towards an OS pillar (1 = SE 012 104).

### Standedge

Standedge has long been an important transportation route. Since 1811, the Huddersfield Narrow Canal has run through a tunnel beneath the Pennine ridge, connecting Marsden in the Colne

## Pennine Way



*Valley and Diggle in Saddleworth. This was joined in 1849 by a railway tunnel, which at around 3 miles (5 kilometres) was then the world's longest. Another railway tunnel was added in 1871. The three tunnels are inter-connected - the canal being used to deliver materials and remove spoil during construction of the railway. A twin track railway tunnel opened in 1894 and is still in use today. The A62 Huddersfield to Oldham road running over Standedge was built as a turnpike by 'Blind' Jack Metcalf, replacing earlier toll roads. It was completed in 1839, with a cutting providing passage of the Pennine ridge at 1,273 feet (388 metres) above sea level.*

This stands at 1,470 feet (448 metres) - not quite the highest point on Millstone Edge, but offering fine views over the Saddleworth area. Fixed to a nearby boulder is a memorial plaque celebrating the life of Ammon Wrigley (1861-1946), a poet and artist from Delph, whose ashes were scattered on the moors hereabouts. Continuing along the edge of the scarp, this is marked by blocks of soot-blackened Millstone Grit. Whilst the path itself is easy-going, to the right is an expanse of grassy moorland with areas of exposed peat. Dropping into a gully, a marker stone shows the Pennine Way turning right, joining a gravel path heading north-east.

Arriving at the head of the gully, the path turns north before dropping into Haigh Gutter. Ignoring a flagged path off to the right (part of the Station to Station Walk, which follows an old pack-horse route from Marsden and Rochdale known as Rapes Highway) head up to a parking area beside the A640. Crossing straight over the road, a sign marks the edge of the National Trust's Marsden Moor Estate. The path runs alongside a broken wall before heading gently uphill towards the OS pillar marking the top of White Hill (2 = SD 991 132). This stands at 1,529 feet (466 metres) and offers wide views of a moorland landscape that is by no means pretty ('bleak' would be a more appropriate term), but it is nonetheless inspiring.

### **Blackstone Edge**

From here the Pennine Way is followed north-west along Blackstone Edge for 3¾ miles (6 kilometres). A cairned path leads off in a westerly

direction, crossing a mossy area (Green Hole Hill) as it swings around to head north-north-west, following the broad ridge down towards the A672. Passing through a parking area near the Windy Hill transmitter, a finger sign points along a gravel path. Crossing over the M62 by an elegant footbridge, turn left and join a stony path that soon swings around to head north-west (the Pennine Way used to head north, across the aptly-named Slippery Moss).

### **M62 Footbridge**

*The M62 is a brutal intrusion upon the moorland landscape of the South Pennines. Crossing the Pennine ridge between Huddersfield and Rochdale, the summit reaches 1,221 feet (372 metres), making it the country's highest section of motorway. Since the Pennine Way was already established when the road was built during 1966-71, a 220 feet (67 metres) long footbridge had to be provided. The combination of a high, narrow bridge, strong crosswinds and the roar of traffic below creates a sense of vertigo.*

Stepping stones provide passage of a small stream at the head of Longden End Brook. Crossing another stream, the view ahead is now dominated by the boulder-strewn humpback of Blackstone Edge. Green Withens Reservoir can be seen off to the right. Following a chain of cairns, the path heads up onto the broad ridge, the flanks of which are once again marked by massive blocks of Millstone Grit. In hill fog the summit could be missed, so keep a look out to the left for an OS pillar atop one of these blocks (3 = SD 972 164).

At 1,549 feet (472 metres), the top forms a fine vantage point and a good place to stop for lunch (the boulders serve as ready-made picnic tables). To the west, close to Littleborough, is Hollingworth Lake. To the north, beyond rough moorland strewn with boulders are the Summit reservoirs, among a forest of electricity pylons. Heading north-north-east from the summit, cairns and marker posts provide guidance in poor visibility, with the path weaving through the jumble of boulders as it heads gently downhill. In places the path is made of stone blocks - a discrete form of improvement that helps to reduce erosion. Arriving at the Aiggin Stone, turn left and



head down the Roman road. When the Pennine Way turns along the line of Broad Head Drain, instead continue downhill (4 = SD 969 170).

### **Hollingworth Lake**

*Hollingworth Lake was created around 1800 to supply the Rochdale Canal. Workers from the local cotton mills took their holidays beside the lake, which thus became known as the 'weavers' seaport'. It is now a country park and nature reserve, as well as a location for sailing and water-skiing.*

### **Clegg Moor**

The first part of the return route follows good tracks along the fringe of Clegg Moor for 3½ miles (5½ kilometres). Looking to the right, the A58 can be seen snaking down the steep slope. Crossing over a farm access, follow a path running through bracken then alongside a drystone wall towards the hamlet of Lydgate. Passing a row of cottages and a whitewashed farm, a finger sign marks a left turn onto an access road heading south (5 = SD 955 165).

Veering onto a hardcore track, follow a line of electricity pylons running along the edge of Clegg Moor. Ignoring a path on the right, stay on the track as it passes under the pylons and turns through a gate to arrive at a farmhouse perched above the M62. The roar of the traffic is deafening as the motorway is re-crossed. Following a hardcore track heading down into the valley of Longden End Brook, turn left and continue past a derelict mill and a farmhouse to arrive at a crossroads of routes. Switching-back onto a stony track heading steeply uphill, follow this south-west until it meets Tunshill Lane (6 = SD 952 133).

### **Station to Station Walk**

The next part of the return route follows the Station to Station Walk for 2½ miles (4 kilometres). The stony track heads east, following a sunken lane bounded by broken walls. Ignoring a left turn through a gate, stay in the lane as it swings around to head south-east. The valley on the right is

occupied by a group of reservoirs, built 1858-1901 to provide water for Oldham. Veering right at another fork, follow the track as it heads down towards Piethorne Reservoir. Crossing over the dam, to the left is Norman Hill Reservoir. From here the track climbs steeply, passing a right turn leading to a supply reservoir. As the track levels-out, continue along a walled lane until arriving at the A672 beside the Ram's Head Inn (7 = SD 978 119).

### **Denshaw and Castleshaw**

It is here that we leave the Station to Station Walk, following the road for ¾ mile (1¼ kilometres) down to Denshaw. There is no way to avoid this section of busy main road, although there is a grass verge, then a pavement on the right hand side. Several main roads meet at a staggered crossroads in the centre of the village, which is the location of the Junction Inn - a former coaching inn built to serve the turnpikes. Following the pavement beside the A6052 (Delph Road), as this leaves the village, cross over to join a hedge-lined lane (Wham Lane) heading east. As the narrow road turns right, join a stony track running along Ox Hey Lane (8 = SD 975 102). In the valley on the left is another group of reservoirs, this time capturing the waters of the River Tame. Eventually the track arrives at a crossroads of routes (9 = SD 989 102).

Ignoring routes signed for the Pennine Way and Delph, turn right (south-east), heading down Low Gate Lane. The sunken lane runs steeply downhill between retaining walls, with views across Castleshaw Upper and Lower reservoirs and the site of a Roman fort. Turning left, follow an access road over the upper reservoir dam. Joining an unclassified road as it snakes uphill towards Bleak Hey Nook, another junction is soon met (10 = SE 005 094). Turning left again, follow the quiet road as it heads north-east through an area of untidy farmsteads. As the road turns down towards Globe farm, instead continue up a hardcore track to rejoin the Pennine Way, which is followed back to the starting point.

### **Castleshaw (Rigodunum) Fort**

*The Roman fort at Castleshaw was apparently named after a nearby*

*Brigantian settlement, Rigodunum ('King's Fort'). It was built by Agricola around AD 80 on the trans-Pennine route between Chester and York, before being demolished and replaced by a fortlet during the Trajanic period. This in turn was abandoned around AD 125. Today little can be discerned without the benefit of an aerial view - just a trace of the grassy ramparts on the high ground above the Castleshaw Reservoirs.*

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