

**AA**

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The Bridestone Rocks from Lydgate

Ancient tracks and gritstone outcrops, with terrific views of the steep-sided Cliviger Valley.

Distance 5 miles (8km)

Minimum time 2hrs 30min

Ascent/gradient 984ft (300m)

Level of difficulty Medium

Paths Moorland and packhorse paths, some quiet roads, 3 stiles

Landscape Steep-sided valley and open moorland

Suggested map aqua3 OS Outdoor Leisure 21 South Pennines

Start/finish SD 924256

Dog friendliness Be careful around sheep grazing on the moorland

Parking Roadside parking in Lydgate, 1½ miles (2.4km) out of Todmorden, on A646, signposted to Burnley

Public toilets None on route

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1 From the post office in Lydgate, take Church Road. At the end go right, down the drive towards a house. Look immediately for a path that passes to the right of this house and soon goes beneath the arch of a railway viaduct. Join a stony track, as you walk steeply uphill, the track is sunken, between walls. Where the walls end, the track gives access to open moorland. Keep right, along a track towards a farm. Keep left of the farmhouse, continuing along a walled track uphill. When you meet another walled track, go right towards a rocky outcrop on the first horizon. Beyond two gates you are on open moorland again: Whirlaw Common. Cross pasture on a section of paved causeway to arrive, via a gate, at Whirlaw Stones.

2 Keep to the causeway that bears right, below the stones, with panoramic views of the Cliviger Valley, Todmorden and, ahead, Stoodley Pike. Leave Whirlaw Common by a gate on to a walled path. Bear sharp left at a farm, on a stony track that follows a wall uphill. Bear right around the rocks, to join Windy Harbour Lane. You have a steep climb, before the road levels off to meet Eastwood Road. Go left here for just 150yds (140m). Where the wall ends, take a stile on

the left. A grassy path leads you to another fascinating collection of rocks, known as the Bridestones.

3 Continue past the Bridestones through a landscape of scattered boulders, before turning right to follow an indistinct path across rough terrain. When you meet a road, you'll be greeted by the sight of the Sportsman's Inn.

4 Go left, along the road; you have a mile (1.6km) of level walking, passing the Hawks Stones on the right and a handful of houses, until you come to a minor road on the left. This is Mount Lane, signed to Shore and Todmorden. Walk down this road and beyond a farm on the right, take a good track to the left, slightly downhill. Look out for Mount Cross in a field to your left.

5 Detour past Lower Intake Farm on a path, soon enclosed by walls. 200yds (183m) beyond a small bridge over a stream, look out for a stile on your right, by a gate between heavy stone gateposts. Follow a field path downhill, keeping a wall to your left. This grassy track takes you beneath another gritstone outcrop, known as Orchan Rocks.

6 Where the wall bears left, beyond the rocks, follow it downhill to a stile. You now join a farm track that takes a serpentine route downhill, through woodland. Your way is clear: down into the valley and back into Lydgate.

The Long Causeway, between Halifax and Burnley, is an ancient trading route, possibly dating back to the Bronze Age. Crosses and waymarker stones helped to guide travellers across the moorland wastes, though most of them have been lost or damaged in the intervening years. Amazingly, Mount Cross has survived intact: a splendid, though crudely carved, example of the Celtic 'wheel-head' design. Opinions differ about its age but it is certainly the oldest man-made artefact in the area, erected at least a thousand years ago.

The Sportsman's Inn, visited on this walk, is one of many isolated pubs in the South Pennines that seem to be situated 'miles from anywhere'. In fact they were built on old routes, and catered for customers on the move, such as drovers and the men who led the trains of packhorse ponies across the moorland tracks. The Sportsman's Inn lies on the Long Causeway, now upgraded to a high-level road between Todmorden and Burnley. These days the pub caters for motorists and walkers, with good food and beers.

The hills and moors to the north of Todmorden are dotted with gritstone outcrops. The impressive piles of Orchan Rocks and Whirlaw Rocks are both encountered

on this walk. But the most intriguing rock formations are to be found at the Bridestones. One rock in particular has been weathered by wind and water into a tear-drop shape, and stands on a base that looks far too slender to support its great weight. It resembles a rock in the North York Moors National Park, which is also known as the Bridestone.

The Cliviger Valley links two towns - Todmorden in West Yorkshire and Burnley in Lancashire - that expanded with the textile trade, and then suffered when that trade went into decline. The valley itself is narrow and steep-sided, in places almost a gorge. Into the cramped confines of the valley are shoe-horned the road, railway line, the infant River Calder and communities such as Portsmouth, Cornholme and Lydgate that grew up around the textile mills. The mills were powered by fast-flowing becks, running off the steep hillsides. The valley is almost a microcosm of the Industrial Revolution: by no means beautiful, but full of character. This area is particularly well provided with good footpaths, some of them still paved with their original causey stones.

Where to eat and drink

The Sportsman's Inn is directly on the route of this walk. Better yet, it specialises in good food, as these isolated Pennine pubs now tend to do. The Staff of Life, on the main A646 at Lydgate, is another cosy 'real ale' pub where walkers get a warm welcome.

While you're there

If you continue along the Long Causeway, you'll soon come to Coal Clough Windfarm. These huge wind turbines can be found on the crest of many a South Pennine hill, attracting strong winds and equally strong opinions. To some people they represent a sustainable future for energy, to others they are ugly intrusions in the landscape.

What to look for

In geological terms, the South Pennines are largely made up of Millstone grit and coarse sandstone. Where the gritstone is visible, it forms rocky crags and outcrops, like those encountered on this walk. The typical landscape is moorland of heather and peat, riven by steep-sided valleys. Here, in the cramped confines of the steep-sided Cliviger Valley, road, rail and river cross and re-cross each other - like the flex of an old-fashioned telephone.



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