

All walks start and finish at:
 Platform 3
 Marsden Railway Station
 Station Road
 Marsden
 HD7 6AX

The weather in Marsden can be cold and unpredictable on high ground even in summer.

Wear suitable clothing and footwear, and take an OS map.

The route is on public rights of way. Report problems to-
highways.ross@kirklees.gov.uk

Marsden Library and Information Centre
 Marsden Mechanics Hall
 Peel Street
 Marsden
 HD7 6BW

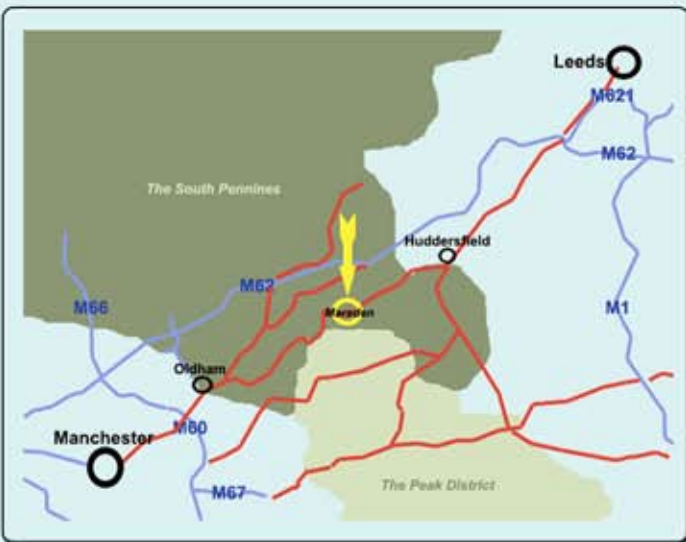
Email- marsden.walkersarewelcome@yahoo.co.uk
 Web- www.marsdenwalkersarewelcome.talktalk.net

This leaflet has been produced with the help of the Marsden History Group.
 Visit- www.marsdenhistory.co.uk

Funded by-
 The Cuckoos Nest
 38/40a Peel Street
 Marsden
 HD7 6BW

Supported by The Valleys Area Committee, The South Pennines Leader Fund and The Kirklees Countryside Unit.

Full historical notes available from our website.



Marsden Walkers Are Welcome



Cat Holes

This is a 2.5 mile walk exploring a variety of terrains in the upper Colne Valley in West Yorkshire with one short uphill climb.

The route follows a section of the historic Huddersfield Narrow Canal passing sites of industrial heritage, picturesque woodlands and characteristic farmlands typical of this part of the South Pennines.

Important information for visitors
Country Code Note
 -Take your litter home.
 -Close gates behind you.
-Keep dogs under close control at ALL times.

Marsden Walkers Are Welcome ©2012

Cat Holes Walk Route And Historical Notes

2.5 miles/ 4 km (page 2)

From the railway station join the towpath eastwards away from the road bridge (which crosses the canal and railway). Immediately pass under two bridges.

A Shortly the towpath drops down under a road bridge and there are houses on the left (north) side of the canal.

As you walk along the towpath, notice the raised ground to either side. The ground to your right was raised in 1912 when Tunnel End Reservoir, which had become silted up, was dredged out and the silt dumped here. The land to the left was raised by dumping of spoil from the excavation of the Standedge double railway tunnels (completed 1894), and at various times held railway sidings and buildings including a railway ironworks.

Pause just before the road crosses the canal (the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which reached Marsden in 1804). On the opposite bank there was originally a wharf. During the 20th century, lorries would pass along it to load up with coal from seven coal "shoots", which were filled from railway trucks on a siding on the land above. On the near bank, where the cottages now stand, there was a warehouse in the early 19th century; this probably gave the road (Warehouse Hill) its name.

Across the road, on the site of the terraced housing, stood a large early mill, The Factory; and below it was another, Upperend Mill, with a millpond fed by the river Colne. They were used for cotton spinning from the 1790s to 1809; possibly then for woollen manufacture; for silk spinning between c.1830 to the 1870s, and again for woollens, including shawl weaving, from about 1880. They were powered both by a water wheel and by a steam engine which burned coal brought in on the canal.

B Pass a winding hole.(A circular pool used as a passing place for narrow boats)

The canal descends a series of locks here. Just before you reach the pool between locks 35E and 34E, look to your right across the river Colne; along the far bank remnants of stonework provide evidence of the former Sewage Works, constructed by Marsden Urban District Council around 1900. At that time, the river was heavily polluted by the woollen mills, but has now been returned to purity.

C After about ¼ mile you enter a wooded section with trees on both sides and the river close by on your right.

To your right is a millstream taking water from the river above a weir in order to maintain the level of the millpond. Once every mill had one; now this is a rare survivor.

D You emerge to see a large millpond on your right and a canal reservoir on your left.

The reservoir, called Sparth Reservoir, held 8.15 million gallons when it was constructed to store water to feed the canal. Previously, the river Colne took a wide bend to the north across the present reservoir bed, and it had to be re-routed. Since at least 1950 the reservoir has been used by local people for recreational swimming; a favourite activity was to slide down the muddy bank on the northern side into the water!

Immediately after Lock 33E cross the canal on a stone bridge and join a flagged path beside the reservoir. Continue along until you reach a broad track.

Cat Holes Walk Route And Historical Notes

2.5 miles/ 4 km (Page 3)

As you near the end of the reservoir, look right at the millpond and beyond it to Cellars Clough Mill, to which it belongs. A mill has existed here since 1801 at least; between c. 1851 and 1887 it was a cotton spinning mill owned by Dowse and Collins; in 1888 it passed into the ownership of Fisher, Firth & Co, woollen manufacturers, and the Firth family ran it, grandfather, father and son, until manufacturing ceased in 1994. Just to the left of the mill you can see Sandhill Cottages, back-to-back housing built in the 1850s for the mill workers.

Turn left, pass a house on your right, up to a road.

The house is Sparth. As you pass, notice traditional "water-shot" stonework on the end wall. Stones were laid sloping downwards to the outside, to help water drain out along the natural grain of the sandstone to keep the building dry.

Here turn left for a few yards then right under the railway on Netherwood Lane.

E Ignoring the track immediately on your right, keep straight ahead to a fork and then bear right and upwards towards a wood.

You are walking up the west side of a steep wooded clough; the stream marks the boundary between the parishes of Marsden and Slaithwaite. Look across the clough at the ancient hamlet of Slaithwaite Hall standing high on the opposite ridge – it contains a cruck-framed house which dates from the early 16th century.

The track goes to a large disused sandstone quarry, which was owned at one time by Dowse and Collins, and may have been used to construct Cellars Clough Mill. About 100 yards before a sharp left turn in the track, look down the hillside to your right, and you will see a well-graded track which leads up to the quarry. Horses will have pulled loads of stone on sleds or carts, which may possibly have run along tramlines – a "Tram Road" is shown on an 1852 map. Pause at the turn in the track to appreciate the scale of the quarry.

The track eventually turns sharp left by a quarry then curves right and left again.

Ahead is a house.(Netherwood Farm)

The house, one of two called Nether Wood, has farm and barn "in one range" (under the same roof), a common South Pennine pattern; it has a 1785 date stone. Judging by the extensive mullioned windows in the house, woollen weaving (which required much light) also took place here. In the "domestic system" of woollen cloth manufacture, the home spinning and weaving of wool was frequently combined with farming.

F About 100 yards before you reach it turn left over a stile into a field. Cross the field and pass over a broken-down wall to a stile in the far wall and onto a track.

Turn left, drop down for several yards.

G Join a narrow path on your right with woodland on the left and open fields on the right. Continue along the path eventually crossing a stream which falls into a deep clough. The path turns left along the edge of the clough then right and reaches a track below a farm. Turn left and follow the track as it curves left and climbs to a stile and gate.

Cat Holes Walk Route And Historical Notes

2.5 miles/ 4 km (Page 4)

As you enter the woodland, consider that the sides of the Colne Valley will originally have been entirely clothed in forest, before it was cleared, over many centuries, for cultivation and for fuel. Due largely to the efforts of the Colne Valley Tree Society, attractive woodland is once more spreading on the hillsides and cloughs.

This area is Cat Holes; the origin of the name is a mystery. Pause as you cross the stream to examine the channel, which appears to have been hollowed out at this point, perhaps to protect the track which connects several isolated farms. There is a sluice gate and a blocked-off pipe emerging from it; this is another mystery.

This is Lower Green Hill farm; in the 1841 census it was called "Shoulder of Mutton" and was possibly one of the many small beer-houses which sprung up after the Beerhouse Act of 1830. Doubtless the inhabitants of these isolated farmhouses would have welcomed a convenient drinking-place.

H Past the gate another track climbs steeply on the right. Ignore this and carry on, soon dropping down to an open area with views of the Colne valley and Marsden.

Where the road levels out, pause to enjoy a fine view of the southern side of the Colne valley. Below you to the left you can see Sparth reservoir and Cellars Clough with its millponds. On the opposite hillside is the hamlet of Gate Head. The turnpike road from Marsden to Huddersfield formerly ran through Gate Head to pass over the hilltops; the valley-bottom "third turnpike" (A62) was not completed until 1839.

Below Gatehead, nestling beside the river Colne, is the characterful Wood Bottom Mill; you passed close to it earlier on your walk, but it was hidden by woodland. When it was threatened by the Luddites in 1812, "The windows were carefully barricaded, and the doors covered with sheet iron ... All communication between the first and upper stories could be cut off, and the defenders inside were able to fire upon an attacking force from the upper windows. A trapdoor on a floor over the water-wheel was so cleverly planned that if the rioters had stepped on to it they would have been pitched headlong into the water-race below". The mill survived the Luddites, but has been very prone to fire, and so has changed its form several times.

Keep right along the road past houses on your left.

On the left are a series of old settlements, including Old House, Dirker Bank and Dirker (sometimes spelt Dircarr). These were, again, inhabited by clothiers who combined a little farming with woollen weaving. For example, in 1694 John Mellor of Dirker died leaving goods which included three cows, a calf, a mare, and 88 sheep; and wool, yarn and cloth worth £5 13s 4d.16

Past Dirker Bank, there is a fine view down into Marsden. The giant New Mills, the Mechanics Institute and St Bartholomew's Church, all in the village centre, can easily be identified. Beyond the village, at the entrance to Wessenden valley where the embankment of Butterley Reservoir can be seen, stand the magnificent Bank Bottom Mills. Until mechanisation expanded the mills from the early 19th century, Marsden village was very small, and most Marsden inhabitants lived in outlying farmhouses and hamlets like those you have passed on your walk.

Further to the right is Pule Hill, where the routes of the "first" (old Mount Road)(1759) and part of the "second" turnpike (Mount Road) probably constructed about 1780 pass around the eastern (left-hand) side of the hill towards Oldham – the third turnpike (A62) was built in 1839 to pass around the western (right-hand) side.

Continue along the road which eventually becomes a short grassy track, follow the grassy track until you reach a large white house on your right and turn left down the steep tarmac tree lined track. At the bottom turn right onto Dirker Drive then left onto Station Road and return to the start.