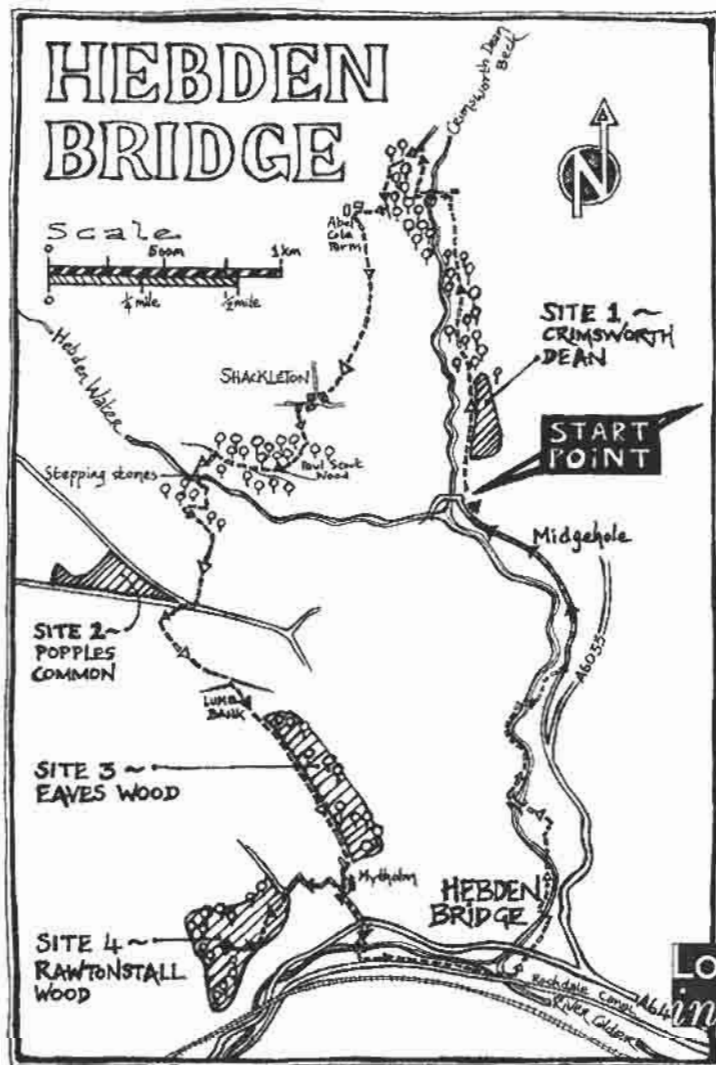


Hebden Bridge

One of a series of walks exploring the history and ecology of the Calder Valley and the influence of a diverse and independent people.



Echoe of Elmet

Local Heritage Initiative

Start – Midgehole Car park
Finish – centre of Hebden Bridge or Midgehole Car park.

Walk back towards Hebden Bridge and almost immediately go up the path next to the public toilet. Continue up the track until it ends. This is site 1 – **Crimsworth Dean**.

Follow this path forward to the top right corner of the field. Go through the gap and turn left along the mill runs. Bear right at some metal gates up through the wood. Turn left at the gate in the wall, going across the fields. Go through another gate and head towards the house, turning left down a track towards a bridge at the stream. Go across and turn left, emerging on the field. Goto the top corner. Turn left through the gate and wood, joining a track at the top. Turn right.

Turn left after 50 yards, up a track to Abel Cote farm. Here, go through a gate on your

Left, down the field to a curving wall and on towards Shackleton village. Go through a wooden flap gate. Stay along a wire fence, then over another stile. Go through a gate and follow wall around to the right. Emerge on track at top of village and go left.

At village, turn right and after 20 yards left through a gate to continue down a broken walled track. Emerge onto a path at the top of Scout Wood.

Go left, then sharply right down through the wood. Emerge onto a broader path. Go right to meet a stoney track. Right here. Left at white waymarker post. Right at red

and white marker down to the stepping stones at Hebden Water.

Cross over and bear left up a path before turning sharp right, zig zagging up through the wood to emerge at a field corner.

Go immediate right up the walled track to Slack Top.

Turn right along the MAIN road to arrive at **3 Popples Common** after 50 yards.

Explore the common and continue along the common edge from your starting point near the wooden sign.

After 30 yards or so turn left along the path signposted Lumb Bank. At path junction stay left down a well walled track. Bear right at next path junction past side of Lumb Bank and left along the bottom of **4 Eaves Wood**.

On emerging from Eaves Wood onto a lane go right and then left at the main road over a bridge and down to a junction at the church.

Go steeply left up Church Lane round a couple of bends and enter **5 Rawtenstall Wood (not marked on OL 21 Map)** by a path to your left. Explore the wood and return to Mytholm Church. Continue down the hill to the main road and cross over, following the river over a bridge to a passage. Go up the passage to the canal and turn left to walk to the centre of Hebden Bridge.

Either take a bus to return to Midgehole or walk via Lee Mill Bridge.

Site 1 - Crimsworth Dean

This grassland site is the area of fields between Midgehole and the woodland we enter as the walk continues its way up the valley. The area has been managed for some considerable time, with tumble down walls showing old field boundaries. Cattle still graze here, on fields surrounded by National Trust-owned woodlands known collectively as Hardcastle Crag. The area has been popular since the advent of mass tourism, as charabancs made their way from the grimy towns of nineteenth century industrial West Yorkshire to the Crag. Planted trees, including Beech and Scots Pine, mix with the twisted dwarf Oaks of an earlier age.

The fields themselves teem with Tormentil and Eyebright (its name derived from its use in herbal treatment of eye problems) in late spring and early summer. There are also spring displays of Stitchwort, Bluebells, Celandines and Wild garlic.



Bluebell

Mill runs and holding ponds are evident as the walk passes into the woods, pointing to an early industrial revolution in these valleys – hand looms and spinning wheels replaced by water mills replaced by steam, as the pace of change quickened. Gibson Mill, in nearby Hebden Dale, is now being renovated as a visitor centre.

Hardcastle Crag was also the founding place of the British Mycological Society – which means that it is one of the best-researched areas for mushrooms and fungi in the country. Midgehole, at the start of this walk also boasts probably the best pub in the area, Midgehole Workingmen's Club, also known as the Blue Pig.

Site 2 - Popples Common

It is said that the name of this area of Heath and Grassland comes from the sounds made by bubbling springs, 'poppling' from the earth. Originally it was a medieval common, available to the 'Commoners' for grazing and gathering of other resources. Incredibly, when Calderdale Council was formed in 1974 they allowed motorcycle scrambling on the common until the 10 commoners who had registered an interest in Popples objected. They took the council to the High Court, and won, and again when builders were removing soil from the site. In 1983 a truce was called and the Popples Common Advisory Group was set up with representatives from the local area, to keep a watchful eye. A recent ecological survey of the area reveals just why this was such an important advance.

Popples makes a fascinating mixture of habitats, mainly of heath

and grassland. Near the cricket ground Lady's Smock is important for butterflies, and moorland grasses such as Wavy Hair-grass, Common Bent and Red Fescue crowd in around the mown area. Indeed, the influence of disturbance and use, such as dumping, resulting in higher productivity of the soil and the appearance of Rosebay Willowherb, is evident throughout the site. There are also good areas of Heather, Bilberry and Gorse, forming a classic Calderdale moorland combination, locally supporting the delicate Cowberry. This area is important for breeding Meadow pipit and Skylark. The area could benefit from more careful management, particularly the removal of Rosebay Willow Herb and the prevention of further encroachment by trees, although existing areas could be left for the protection they provide for bird life. The reintroduction of management by grazing would be difficult because the area is mainly unfenced and is used for amenity by large numbers of the general public. This is a general dilemma in the management of common land, affecting a number of other sites within Calderdale. Popples Common repays any time spent in careful study of this diverse and open mosaic of habitats.

Site 3 - Eaves Wood

Many of the trees in this lovely wood are relatively young. The oldest are Beeches, planted in the 19th century and remnant oaks from the past. Various stages of ecological succession can be seen; from ling-dominated heath to oak and birch woodland, the dominant type in the northern English uplands. The lower part of the woods was planted with beech in the 19th century.

Beech was a very popular tree to plant at the time, and would have expected to be felled and replanted on maturity. The collapse of the British timber industry due to cheap imports means that a lot of the trees have now become over mature and present something of a management problem in a woodland busy with local and visiting walkers. Another feature of beech is the large amount of shade it casts, preventing the establishment of ground covering plants. You will notice a striking difference between the abundance of bilberry and heather in some parts of Eaves wood, and almost completely bare soil in others.

The Arvon Foundation's writers' centre at Lumb Bank, founded by Ted Hughes is tucked away in the wood, as well as abandoned Mill chimneys and factory floors, found under the leaf litter.

Site 4 - Rawtonstall Wood

This wood is on the other side of Colden Clough – its name refers to a medieval Viking cattle farm above the woods.

Rawtonstall wood forms an oak – birch woodland with very limited ground flora. The lower western part of the wood was quarried extensively in the late 1880s and this has resulted in large stands of Sycamore and Beech in these areas. The upper portion is more in keeping with other steep sided woods in the area

Work could be undertaken to try to increase and re-establish ground flora, but this would require careful surveys and mapping.

Contact:

Christina Hooley 01422 845990