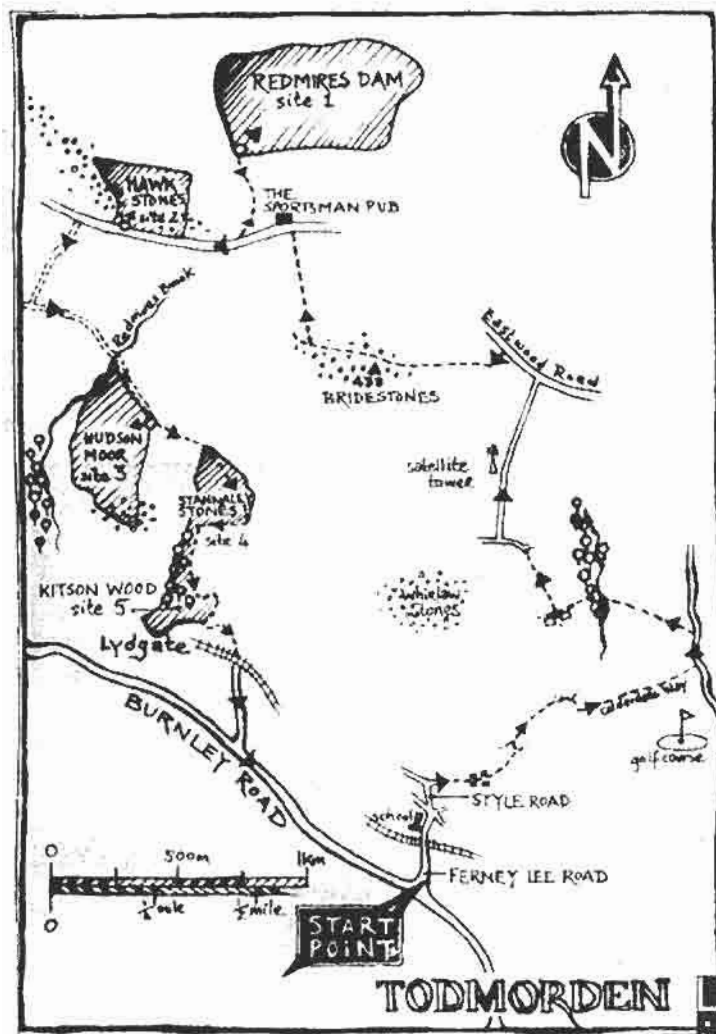


Todmorden's Stones

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



Ecology
of Elmet

TODMORDEN

Local Heritage
initiative

Start – bottom of Ferney Lee Road.

Go up past the school and at junction take Stile Road to waymarker right. Follow this path through two gates and past some buildings, bearing left through what appears to be a garden on the left. Go steeply across a field and over the stile. Bear right. Wind along this path, staying on it, ignoring a stile on right. Go through a gate and left up through the wood to emerge on a track. Turn right and up a flagged path at the junction. Left through a gate and up across a few fields to enter a golf course, continuing along path to emerge on a lane. Go left and left again by the next farmhouse, down across some fields to the right, with the Whirlaw Stones clearly in view.

Enter a small clough and emerge at Green Hurst Hey. Turn right at the farm up the first track to Windy Harbour above. Go past and past satellite tower to a junction. Turn left. Take waymarked path left to Bridestones, visible in the distance and return by way of the other path to The Sportsman's Inn. Turn left and right to a path to **Redmires Dam. Site 1.** Retrace your steps to the lane and turn right. **Hawkstones - Site 2.** Access is from back at Redmires. Continue along the road and turn left down a waymarked bridleway. Go left at a crossroads and across

Redmires Brook. **Hudson Moor - Site 3** is on your right. Access is a little further on by stone posted gate. Return to track and carry on towards **Stannally Stones - Site 4** on right. After the gate, go over stile on right, staying close to fence, eventually sloping down to join a track by a farm. Follow it down with top of **Kitson Wood** on your right **Site 5.**

After 400 yards, take left fork and snake down. At one of the bends, notice path into the woods on the right. Explore this steep and spectacular wood. Return to the track or continue down to Lydgate and thence to Todmorden via bus or foot. If returning, carry on down the hill under a railway arch, past some houses to main road. Turn left and back to Todmorden. **Finish.**



Bog Asphodel

Each of the sites we have chosen to look at within the project has some special significance – ecological, historical or archaeological.

This section of the guide presents information about the sites we have gained from our own ecological surveys, from books and from talking to various local experts, some of who are our partners in the project.

Site 1 – Redmires Dam and around.

This site is a fascinating example of what can happen when a man made structure, in this case the dam and reservoir, are partially abandoned to the natural world.

Patches of Blanket Bog and wet heath habitat can be found in this whole area, which extends north from the dam wall. The key species of Cotton Grass is distinctive and abundant throughout the area, forming tufty white balls of 'cotton' at its ends. The more elusive but very important indicator species for Blanket Bog – Sphagnum Moss – will be found by those who look carefully amongst the grasses in the wettest patches of this area.

Areas characteristic of wet heath will also be found. Heather and bilberry were important to people gathering resources from the area and also the delicate reddish crowberry, hidden underneath the heather clumps.

The rush beds, further to the North and East are also distinctive. Care should be taken in this area because the paths are few and far between, truly one of the wildest and wettest parts of the Upper Calder Valley.

Site 2 – Hawkstones

There is currently some dispute about the access to this site, although there is clearly a path marked on the OL21 Ordnance Survey map. Access is most easily gained by the path marked from Redmire Dam and way marked for climbers, who use the area for bouldering. This area forms an edge of habitat in that it forms a moorland, which is grazed by sheep and horses, and is also surrounded by improved pasture. It forms the steep south-facing slope coming down from Redmires Dam. Protruding Gritstone boulders mark this edge and the significance of the stones in the area – Whirlaw Stones, Bridestones, Stannally Stones, Orchan Stones is sagely debated locally. According to Paul Bennett in his excellent *The Old Stones of Elmet*, most authorities suggest that the site was used for Druidical worship in the remote past, and evidence can still be found in the form of stone 'basins' on top of many of the stones.

Further interesting information about the area emerged in Cornholme WEA's book *Shore in*

Stansfield, a study of landowning and the economic history of Stansfield Parish, which included Hawkstones. There were 31 farms in the area between 1700 and 1750, following the mixed pre industrial pattern of farming alongside home-based textile production and at this time the main road from Burnley passed this way, supporting an innkeeper, blacksmith, shoemaker and packhorse drovers.

The family names of three of the most important landowning families in the area – Fieldens, Stansfields and Greenwoods - will be familiar to anyone living in Todmorden or around.

Site 3 – Hudson Moor

Hudson Moor, as shown on our map, is the area to the right after the route crosses Redmires Brook. An alternative route from The Sportsman is to follow the path down to the left, along the brook, and avoid the road section between Hawkstones and the Bridleway.

Hudson Moor is probably not most people's idea of what a moor should look like and it very different from the peaty 'moor tops'. This is mainly due to the fact that the area is regularly grazed by sheep and horses. The conditions here do not favour the formation of peat, or blanket bog. However, there are purple moor grass, rushes and various sedges here, which indicate wet heath.

Site 4 – Stannally Stones

Looking closely at any of the sites reveals that they are not easy to 'classify'. This is particularly the case with Stannally Stones, the area falling away to the right, where the Orchan Stones* are visible below.

The area is made up of a patchwork of small areas, each with distinctive

characteristics. There are areas of Bracken and new trees, indicating possible woodland at some point, and heath areas, with grasses predominating elsewhere. To our surprise, in the wetter areas, we found bog *Asphodel*, an important Bog indicator species.

*(Bennett thinks that the name may come from Old Yorkshire 'okkad', meaning awkward, and again there is local folklore indicating their use for Pagan worship.)

Site 5 – Kitson Wood

Kitson Wood is a typical Pennine Woodland and follows closely the pattern of many other gulleys, or 'cloughs', in the area, notably Jumble Hole Clough (Close to Hebden Bridge) and Nutclough (Ibbot Royd Clough), also in Hebden. Most of the woodland on the tops was cleared many years ago, for farming or fuel, to leave moorlands, and the valleys with inaccessible trees on steep-sided cloughs. Since the first water mills vanished from the valleys, and migrated into the towns to be powered by steam, these woodlands have been enhanced, and now form precious fragments in an area that is one of the least wooded in the country. The work of Treesponsibility and others ensures that new native trees are planted in the upland areas, which will bring back some woodland to the tops, and prevent erosion and flooding in vulnerable places.

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