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Midgley Moor

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Roadside parking at Walker Lane at Old Town/Chiserley (SE 001284)
Ordnance Survey map	OL21 – South Pennines
Distance	7.3 miles
Date of Walk	9 January 2019
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Midgley Moor sits in the triangle between Hebden Bridge, Halifax and Oxenhope, rising to its highest point at White Hill (1463ft or 446 metres). It is heather moorland with a number of standing stones, cairns and other interesting rock formations, although I did not set out to visit them all!. There are also superb views across Calderdale to the Stoodley Pike Monument, Heptonstall Moor and Wadsworth Moor.

It is all Access Land, which means on the plus side, you can wander at will but on the downside means there are a number of paths created by common use, which are not shown on the OS maps. This makes it quite difficult to describe routes accurately. Indeed, one path I took, shown on the OS map, did not exist at all on the ground! It therefore represents a navigational challenge.

Being moorland, it is relatively featureless and in poor visibility, you would need to have confidence in your compass skills or have GPS.

My route was also very boggy in places, so gaiters are recommended.

There are “conduits” on the moor which channel water to Wharley Moor reservoir.

The walk climbs to the trig. point on High Brown Knoll and close by is the first standing stone. Unlike some, this does not seem to have a name and is believed to be a boundary stone and/or way marker for the Limers Gate path on which it stands.

The route then crosses the moor to Winny Stone, a large flat rock, believed to be a site important in Mesolithic times. Its prominence in the landscape probably would have made it important, perhaps the site of sacrifices!

Having negotiated more “wild” moorland, eventually you arrive at Milk Churn Joan, also known as Savilles Low or Churnmilk Peg, possibly the most interesting of the standing stones with the inevitable legends.

Take your pick!

- A milkmaid called Joan froze to death in a blizzard and the stone was erected in her memory.
- Named after an old hag, the guardian of nut thickets.
- It spins round three times on New Year’s Eve when it hears the midnight bells at St. Michael’s church at Mytholmroyd, in the valley

- Coins used to be left in a small hollow on top of the stone to bring luck. I could not see as the stone is about 7 feet high but my camera did indeed reveal a 20p coin nestling in the recess. I could not resist leaving my own contribution, just in case, although I suspect the only “luck” occurring is for the next person to visit the stone!

What is certain is that the poet Ted Hughes penned a poem about Milk Churn Joan in his anthology *Remains of Elmet*. It begins “A lonely stone, afloat in the stone heavings of emptiness”.

Finally the route passes the trig. point at Crow Hill Nook, which was dazzlingly white on my visit.

There are some circular stone airshafts on the moor. These service an aqueduct which takes water to Halifax from Widdop Reservoir, built 1870.

The walk begins in an uncertainly (to me) named no-mans land between Old Town and Chiserley, not helped by the fact that the post office’s name seems to be Wadsworth PO! The easiest route to describe there is to take the A6033 north out of Hebden Bridge. As you approach Peckett Well, turn right following the sign for “Old Town ¾” and “Midgley 3 miles”. There is also a brown tourist sign for the Hare and Hounds Country Inn. If coming south on the A6033 from Oxenhope, take first left after the Robin Hood Inn.

Continue along this road (Ackroyd Lane) for three quarters of a mile, until you reach a playing field with children’s playground and picnic tables on the right. Down the side of the field is Walker Lane, where you can park by the small triangle of grass. The footpath to start the walk is immediately opposite the road.

Start: From the parking by the playing field, cross the main road and ascend the footpath opposite, indicated by a public footpath fingerpost.

Keep ascending until reaching a broad track with concrete wheel strips and turn right. Follow this to the Hebden Bridge Equestrian Centre and keep straight ahead through its yard.

On to the moor, follow the track as it bends left.

At a junction with another path, turn left and follow the wall briefly. Just as the path is about to pass under some power lines, branch off right.

Join another track by a stone cairn and turn left.

You arrive at the trig point (SE 010304). Turn right for almost three hundred yards to visit the standing stone (SE 011303).

Return to the trig. point and turn right towards the rocks you can see, one flat on another like a table (SE 009305).

Follow the path beyond ‘Table Rock’ to a marker post, the next one after ‘Table Rock’, at SE 009306 and turn right. There was no obvious path here, despite it being

marked on the OS map. Your next stop is Winny Stone, which you can make out on the near horizon. If you are not sure, your best bet is to walk a compass bearing of 020° magnetic for about half a mile then 000° magnetic (i.e. North), if you still cannot make out the rocks. It is not easy going due to the tussocks and there are some boggy bits.

From the Winny Stone (SE 011317), retrace your steps to the point where the land starts to dip (SE 012314), then turn left to more or less parallel the watercourse. The bearing is 122° magnetic. The only landmark I can suggest is the radio mast on the far horizon. Head well to the right of this, towards the little valley. The photo with my walking friend in it shows the direction you need to head.



Drop down to cross the conduit (water channel) via a bridge (a wide one with wooden rails) (SE 016312), then turn right to follow the path as it circles left and follows the course of the conduit, along its left hand side, heading south.

At SE 014301 arrive at Limer Bridge, where there is a post indicating a bridleway to the left. Ignore this and continue following the conduit.

The conduit ends. Go right round its end, then left within a few yards (SE 013300).

The path divides at SE 022286. There is no landmark here but you are opposite the very last windmill on the horizon, in line with a farmhouse in the valley. Basically, do not take any descending paths. Take the right fork, which quickly starts to climb.

Come to a dilapidated wall. Turn right and at the corner of the wall, keep straight ahead. The path passes a number of dilapidated shooting butts.

Arrive at the large standing stone, Milk Churn Joan (SE 020287), perhaps pausing to leave a coin in the hollow on top. Keep straight ahead, passing Cranleys Seat.

Meet another path, where a post advises you are joining the Churn Milk Joan circular walk. Turn right.

Stay on this path as it crosses another with a post showing the Calderdale Way sign, an approximation of a tree with three yellow circles.

You start to follow a wall.

Just past a two way finger post for the Calderdale Way, turn right up a climbing path to the trig point on Crow Hill Nook (SE 015279).

Turn left at the trig. point, following the narrower of the paths on offer.

Follow the path down to a fence then downhill to where it meets the wall and turn left over one stile and immediately right over another.

Head left downhill after the second stile, at about 30° to 40° right of the wall on the left.

Arrive at a tall stone next to a marker post with a yellow arrow. The track beyond is obvious and heavily rutted. Follow this down to the fence and a dilapidated wall and turn left. In the bottom right hand corner of the field is a stile. Cross this and turn right. Follow the path down to the road and turn right. Follow the road back to the parking.

