

Walk 25 - Brontë Falls & Top Withins by Charlie Webb

OS Sheet: Explorer OL21:
South Pennines

Description: This is a circular walk which starts and finishes at the National Trust car park at Midgehole (grid ref SD988293)

Distance: 13 miles.

Transport: Travellers by car should use the car park at the starting point.

Route:

1. From the car park entrance, take a track going North. Crimsworth Dean Beck is on the right. This is Haworth Old Road. Continue on this track and go NE for 4¾ miles. However after approx ¾ mile into the walk and just past a cattle grid there is a track on the left leading to Able Cross Farm. A detour of 200 yards brings you to Able Cross, an unusual two headed monument. Rumour says it marks the grave of two duelists killed whilst fighting for a maiden's hand. More than likely it's a boundary marker possibly monastic in origin.



2. Having viewed the cross return to Haworth Old Road and continue N. and then N.E. for 4 miles to Leeshaw Reservoir. Pass some large iron gates on the left and notice a finger post pointing left. Take this path and walk NW and climb steadily for 650 yards passing through Westfield Farm. Arrive at a stone stile, cross and notice a sign post indicating Top Withins and Brontë Falls. Turn left and walk SW for 400 yards to a sign post pointing right and indicating, Brontë Falls. At this point Harbour Lodge is in sight but not visited.



3. Take the path to Brontë Falls and walk for 300 yards to arrive at the top of the falls. The slender trickle that constitutes the falls pushes the description to the limit as it is no different to hundreds of other falls hereabouts.



The supposed Brontë connection has guaranteed them an international reputation, note the signposts in Japanese and a place on the O.S. map. The bridge is more interesting! Descend carefully to the bridge, cross the stream and climb to arrive at a multilingual signpost indicating a left turn to Top Withins. This is the Brontë Way.

4. Walk S.W. along this well used path for one mile to arrive at Withins Just before reaching the ruin the Pennine Way joins this path from the right.



This pile of stones was once a home.

Whether Emily Brontë actually visualised Heathcliff here is arguable, however it is easy to imagine him in this bleak place.

A plaque placed
by the Brontë Society
offers more explanation:



5. Continue SW gradually climbing to the summit, enjoy the view then continue on the same bearing (S.W.) and descend to arrive at Walshaw Dean Middle Reservoir. Turn left and walk S with the reservoir on your right, after 250 yards turn left onto a signposted permissive path going SE over Wadsworth Moor. This is Access Land. Climb out of the valley then descend gradually to arrive at the hamlet of Walshaw approx 1½ miles from the reservoir. You will have passed New Cote Farm and a path to Horodiddle on the right and left respectively.



6. With houses and farm buildings to the left and right, look half left and see a path marker. Take this path. (Ignore the obvious paths going left and right). Go through the stile and small gate and walk downhill S. for 200 yards keeping the wall on your left. Arrive at the edge of woodland and after entering the woodland turn immediately left and walk 25 yards. Join a path going right and downhill. Take care on this steep decent and arrive at a junction of paths. Turn left onto a track which bridges a stream. After 30 yards turn right down a path leading to Hebden Water. Turn left onto a path which crosses and re-crosses the stream, passes beneath Hardcastle Crags and arrives via settling ponds at the stone bridge leading to Gibson Mill. Cross the bridge and arrive at the mill yard.

The mill is a former cotton mill, operated here circa. 1800 and was in production for 100 years. After that it had a varied life as a centre for entertainment, offering roller skating, horse riding and a restaurant for 500 diners. A long period of dereliction followed. Recently the National Trust has restored the mill and the cottages.

A small cafe, information facilities, lecture rooms and toilets are now available



7. After walking 12 miles there are now 2 choices to reach the car park. The easier option is to exit the yard, use the main tourist track and walk S.E. on the signposted way. The harder but more interesting options is to use the path adjacent to Hebden Water, keeping the stream to the right. Be aware that in periods of heavy rain this option can be tricky and occasionally impassable.