

# **Saddleworth Church to Diggle**

**Start:** Saddleworth Church, Church Lane, Uppermill

**Distance:** 7.5km/4.6 miles

**Ascent:** 110 metres/360 feet

**Time:** 2.5 hours

## **Introduction**

Starting from St. Chad's Church, which is one of the area's most recognisable landmarks, this mainly flat, low-level route makes an initial foray across farmland to the ancient settlement of Diggle. Here you will see the entrances to both the Standedge rail and canal tunnels which were spectacular feats of Georgian and Victorian engineering. The return leg follows the course of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, along which you will see several examples of old mills and canal infrastructure. Upon reaching Brownhill Visitor Centre, a short steady climb over Brown Hill and across Ryefields completes the walk.

## **Walk Description**

There has been a place of worship upon the site of St. Chad's Church since 1215 AD, and is reputedly haunted by a Grey Lady who resides in the grounds. Ammon Wrigley, the beloved writer of Saddleworth folklore, prose and poems wrote one of his most famous poems about St. Chad's Church, titled '*Saddleworth Church*'.

From the front of the church, adjacent to the old stocks, dated 1698, the route follows a path which skirts around the church grounds and past Clerk's Cottage. From here the route continues along the Oldham Way across several fields, to Running Hill Lane. Crossing the lane, way-markers indicate the route across several more fields past Back o'th' Lee, to emerge onto a lane adjacent to the former Diggle Mill. Look closely in the undergrowth and you will find an old stone statue, which guards the entrance to this once prosperous mill which was powered by the second largest waterwheel in the country.

Heading west, follow the lane through the ancient hamlet of Diggle, which is believed to be the oldest settlement in Diggle. A few yards further on, you will reach the Diggle Hotel. Originally a beer house, it was granted a hotel licence in 1859. Serving fine ales and good food, the pub offers an ideal opportunity for some welcome refreshment.

Continuing across the railway bridge, you can see the entrance to the Standedge railway tunnels. The first tunnel was built in 1848, followed by a second in 1871. In 1894, a third tunnel was opened which remains in use today: at 3 miles, 60 yards long, it is the fifth longest rail tunnel in Britain. A regular service runs between Manchester and Huddersfield, and you will not have to linger long to see a train either entering or emerging from the tunnel mouth.

At the end of Sam Road, join the towpath of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, where you will find the western entrance to the Standedge canal tunnel. Opened in 1811, the tunnel took sixteen years to complete. The first boat to pass through the longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel in Britain was called the *Lively Lady*. Canal boats were originally horse-drawn, and with no towpath being built, boats had to be 'legged' through the tunnel by men who lay on the roof of the boat and pushed it along with their feet. The horses were then walked over the hill, via Boat Lane, to be reunited with their vessels on the far side of the Pennines. Special guided walks can be arranged with **Saddleworth Discovery Walks**, which pass through the tunnel on a narrow boat followed by a return walk along the route which the boat-horses took. To arrange a guided walk, email [info@saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk](mailto:info@saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk).

Continuing along the towpath, you will soon reach Grandpa Greene's Luxury Ice Cream shop. At weekends and during the summer months, you can rest here awhile and enjoy one of their fine home-made ice creams.

Continuing on, you eventually reach the Lime Kiln Café, where you should leave the canal, cross the main road and make the short but steep climb up Brownhill Lane, passing underneath the towering, Saddleworth Viaduct. With 23 arches, this massive stone structure has carried trains across the valley since 1849.

At the top of the climb, continue straight ahead along the track past a property called Ryemoor, beyond which a narrow footpath leads onto Ryefields Drive. Here a footpath crosses several fields to return to Saddleworth Church.

With the walk now complete, why not sit by the fire in the Church Inn, where they serve good food and fine ales? You can even sample their range of bespoke beers, brewed on site in their own award-winning microbrewery.

**This walk summary has been compiled from the original route which features in the local guidebook, *Saddleworth Discovery Walks*. The full route description, a map and detailed information about points of historical interest are contained in the book, which is available to buy from [www.saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk](http://www.saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk) or at local stockists.**