

# Chew Valley Skyline

**Start:** Binn Green car park. A635, Holmfirth Road

**Distance:** 16 km/9.9 miles

**Ascent:** 300 metres/984 feet

**Time:** 5 hours

## **Introduction**

This classic skyline route is best conducted on a clear day and offers fabulous and ever-changing views as it traverses the length of the Chew Valley edges. After a short, easy walk along the valley bottom, following Greenfield Brook, you will climb onto Raven Stones Brow and skirt along the valley edge visiting Platt Cross, Dove Stone Rocks, Chew Reservoir and Wimberry Rocks, before descending Rams Clough to return to the valley below.

## **Walk Description**

Binn Green is located on the northern edge of Dove Stone reservoir. When I was a young child, my parents used to bring me here for picnics and walks around the Chew Valley. The adjacent rocks and woods were the ideal location for a young, tireless boy to live out exciting adventures and it is here that I made my first climbing forays on the large boulders which scatter the area.

From the car park descend the steps which lead through the woods, turn down the lane and follow the broad track along the shores of Yeoman Hey Reservoir. At the northern end of the reservoir, on the valley's western flanks, is the Bill o'Jacks Plantation, named after an old pub which stood close to the site. On the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1832, the landlord, William Bradbury, and his son, Thomas, a local gamekeeper, were both violently murdered in an act that was reported at the time as "one of the most diabolical murders ever committed". An inquest, held at the King William IV public house, in Greenfield, returned a verdict of "Wilful murder by some person, or persons at present unknown". The graves of

William and Thomas Bradbury lie in the graveyard of St. Chad's Church, Uppermill. The large sandstone grave-slab, which has intrigued folk for over 180 years, bears the inscription:

*Here lie the dreadfully bruised and lacerated bodies  
of William Bradbury and Thomas, his son, both of  
Greenfield, who were together savagely murdered in an  
unusually horrid manner, on Monday night, April 2<sup>nd</sup>,  
1832, William being 84 and Thomas 46 years old.*

*Throughout the land wherever news is read,  
intelligence of their sad end has spread.  
Those now who talk of far-famed Greenfield hills,  
will think of Bill o' Jack's and Tom o' Bills.*

*Such interest did their tragic end excite.  
That, here they were removed from human sight.  
Thousands on thousands came to see.  
The bloody scene of catastrophe.*

*One house, one business, and one bed.  
And one most shocking death they had.  
One funeral came, one inquest past.  
And now one grave they had a last.*

The murders were never solved and the pub became a morbid attraction for visitors, who came from far and wide to see the location of this brutal crime. The Bill o' Jacks pub, actually named the Moorcock Inn, was eventually demolished in 1937.

Continuing past Greenfield Reservoir, the route ascends Birchen Clough before crossing Raven Stones Brow, close to where stands a tower of rock known as the Trinacle. This unique turret of gritstone rock is often frequented by local climbers. In fact, many of the crags and cliffs situated throughout the area are popular climbing venues and have been the training grounds of famous local climbers and high-altitude mountaineers such as Paul Braithwaite, who was part of the successful 1975 expedition to conquer the South-West Face of Everest and, in more recent times, professional climber and mountaineer, Kevin Thaw.

Following the precipitous edges of Raven Stones Brow, which offers stunning views of the valley below, you eventually arrive at Platt's Cross, which is a memorial to James Platt, MP for Oldham, who was tragically killed in a shooting accident on the moors. The inscription reads: "Here by the accidental discharge of a gun, James Platt, Esq, M.P. for Oldham, lost his life - 27<sup>th</sup> August 1857".

Continuing along the jagged, gritstone edges above Dean Rocks, you eventually arrive at a large cairn upon which is mounted a plaque in memory of two local climbers who lost their lives in the Italian Dolomites. The view from here across the valley is spectacular and offers a good opportunity to rest.

From here on, the route crosses rough, open moorland and careful navigation is required (see the guidebook, *Saddleworth Discovery Walks* for further description). After crossing the moor, you arrive at Chew Reservoir, which was once the highest reservoir in England. Some years ago, after a particularly harsh winter, a local fell-runner who was competing in the Chew Valley Skyline Race, cut straight across the reservoir's frozen waters en route to the trig point on Featherbed Moss. All of the other runners, astounded by his choice of route, lagged behind the now new race leader as they sensibly took the longer and safer route across the dam. Whilst they didn't dare follow in his footsteps for fear of breaking through the ice, they hadn't realised that he had actually been carefully monitoring the thickness of the ice in the days leading up to the race.

Beyond the reservoir, you now make your way across soft, peaty ground before once again following the valley's jagged rim. Reaching the locally named Indian's Head, descend a rocky gully known as Rams Clough allowing time to enjoy the views across the reservoir far below. At the bottom of the descent, pass through Chew Piece Plantation and turn left along the service road towards Dove Stone Sailing Club.

Beyond the club house, continue around the reservoir to return to the car park at Binn Green.

**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.**