

Distance: 4¼ miles (6.9km)

Ascent: 330m

Time: 2-4 hours

Public Transport: Mytholmroyd is on the main Calderdale train and bus routes.

Parking: Free car park in Mytholmroyd at Moderna Business Park, as well as by St Michael's Church.

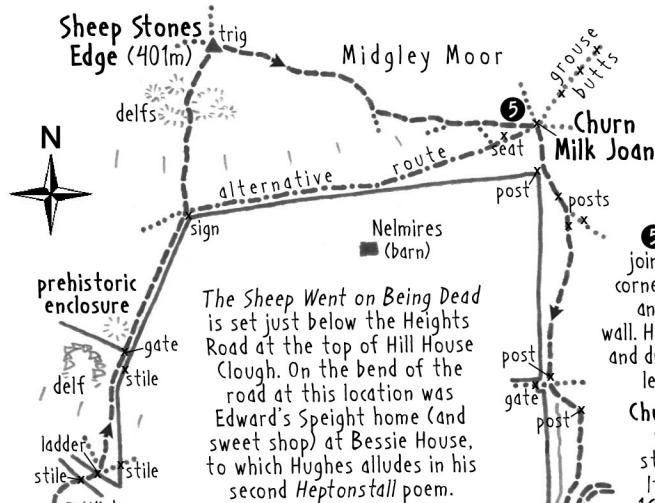
Refreshments: The Dusty Miller pub or Blue Teapot and Riverside Cafés in Mytholmroyd.

Character: An exploration of Ted Hughes's childhood home in Mytholmroyd, as well as several significant places in the immediate vicinity. After exploring Mytholmroyd, the route climbs steeply through Redacre Wood and up onto Midgley Moor, the site of Churn Milk Joan, before returning via Foster Clough. Some steeper and rougher paths.

④ Follow Raw Lane right across the slope and, at the next junction, climb up to the left to a stile and a slightly rough path weaving through the gorse up the hillside to **Heights Road** (if you prefer to avoid this rough path you can keep straight on up the track, then turn left along Heights Road to rejoin the route). Follow the road right briefly, then bear left up the track towards **Wicken Hill**. Before the farm, turn left through a gate and skirt around the property to a series of stiles. After the second (a wooden ladder), follow the middle path up some steps up the steep heather bank. You soon join the side of a fenceline, passing a **prehistoric enclosure** (a shallow circular earth bank dating from the late Bronze Age) just beyond the gate. At a sign you can either continue straight on up the edge onto the proper moorland to reach the **Sheep Stones Edge** trig point, or follow the main path right along the moor edge. Turn right at the trig onto a narrow path through the heather, keeping left to reach the prominent marker stone of **Churn Milk Joan**, where you rejoin the main path.

③ Fork right at a waymark post near the far end of **Redacre Wood**, then turn sharp right at another and climb steeply up the slope. As the slope eases at a slight shelf you can head right off the path for 50m to reach a slight mound that is the site of the **Ancient Briton's Grave**. Continue up the main path and bear left through the gate along the top of the wood. As you drop down to the second stream, one of Ted and Gerald's campsites is located 200m down to the left. Continue up the field and turn sharply right at Stephenson House onto a path that winds up through **Hill House Wood** to emerge on the track of Raw Lane.

② Return to the bridge and ascend the steps to Midgley Road. Over the canal turn left then right to reach **Ted Hughes's birthplace** on the corner at 1 Aspinall Street (see overleaf for details of Hughes's childhood here). The whole block opposite used to be taken up by the vast Methodist church of **Mount Zion**, while, at the top of Ribstone Street, Mouth Pleasant Mill is still in operation as a textiles factory. Follow Aspinall Street as it continues across Banksfield Road. At the end turn right, then at the top turn left past the former allotments. Take the left fork into the woods at the end, down the old stone surface of **T'Slope**. Keep straight on past the back of Redacre House then join the path along the foot of **Redacre Wood**.



The *Sheep Went on Being Dead* is set just below the Heights Road at the top of Hill House Clough. On the bend of the road at this location was Edward's Speight home (and sweet shop) at Bessie House, to which Hughes alludes in his second *Heptonstall* poem.

Follow **Heights Road** left past a building, then turn right at a sign and descend steeply down Han Royd Bank. Reaching a sign, Hughes's first ever campsite can be seen in **Foster Clough** at the bottom of the field, but the onward route heads straight on through a gate. Fork right soon after and descend the walled path of **Dark Lane** to emerge at the bottom of Foster Clough. Up the track to the right is **Throstle Bower**, built by Hughes's uncle Thomas.



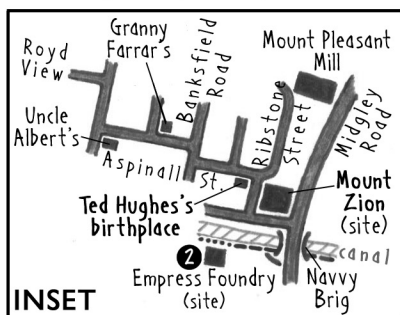
Hughes's uncle, Tom Farrar had the red brick villa at **Throstle Bower** built in the 1930s. In nearby **Foster Clough**, Hughes had his first camping experience and caught rabbits and weasels with Gerald (recounted in *The Weasels We Smoked Out of the Bank*). They had another campsite along-side the stream in Hill House Clough.

The **moors** form a recurrent image in Hughes's poetry. He writes of them being 'where the division of body and soul, for me, began' and it features in the poems *Moors*, *Heather* and *Grouse Butts* (some of which can be seen just beyond Churn Milk Joan).

⑤ Turn right at **Churn Milk Joan**, joining a line of posts past the wall corner. Fork right at the second post and descend steeply parallel to the wall. Head straight across a larger path and drop down to a vehicle track that leads back down to **Heights Road**.

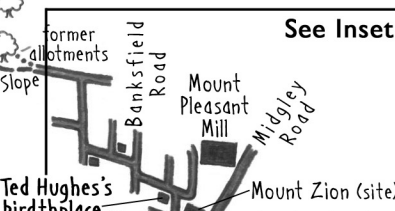
Churn Milk Joan is a lean seven-foot-high standing stone that stands out across Midgley Moor. It was probably erected around 1600 as a boundary stone. Then known as **Nelmires Stoop**, its common name was given to it after a girl fetching milk for nearby Mount Skip Inn was caught out in bad weather. Joan is said to have died here clutching her milk churn and in Hughes's poem she is eaten by foxes. People still leave coins in the hollow on top of the stone for good luck, and it is said the stone spins round three times on New Year's Eve.

⑦ Descend to **Midgley Road** and follow it right down the hill. Before the school, turn second left into **White Lee Croft** and follow a footpath right along the wall. At the junction turn right and join **Brier Hey Lane** to reach the main road through **Mytholmroyd**. Follow it left to the crossing, then turn right soon after on **Moderna Way**, which leads you right over the canal back to the cricket club.

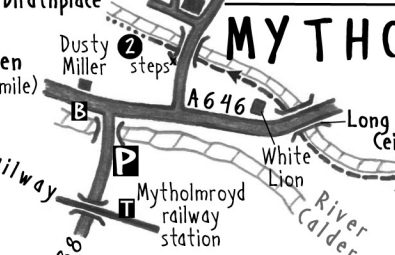


INSET

The **Long Tunnel Ceiling** takes the canal under the main road and inspired Hughes's poem of the same name. The *Canal's Drowning Black* mentions fishing for stone loach along the edge of this canal, scooping them up in homemade nets to put in jam jars in the kitchen.



See Inset



Ted Hughes watched cricket at Mytholmroyd's own M.C.C. with his Uncle Walter, an experience recounted in his poem *Sunstruck*. Walter Farrar was a prosperous local factory owner and his house **Southfield** one of the most imposing in the village. He was a particularly important figure in Hughes's life and the poem *Under High Wood* recounts an experience of Walt's from WWI, when, pinned down in a shell-hole, he re-imagined himself back in his native Calder Valley landscape.

① Start the route at M.C.C. (**Mytholmroyd Cricket Club**), with Scout Rock's imposing presence looming across the valley behind. Cross the road and join the canal path heading left above the Moderna Business Park into Mytholmroyd. Pass under the main road through the **Long Tunnel Ceiling**. Beyond the next bridge (known as **Navy Bridge**), the large car park to your left was the site of **Empress Foundry**, whose wharf is still visible on the canal side.