

# West Yorkshire Mountain Biking

South Pennine Trails



Written by  
**Benjamin Haworth**



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Back cover: Tom Fenton in Newsholme Dean. Photo John Coefield.

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**PLEASE GIVE WAY TO HORSES AND PEDESTRIANS.**

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### ROUTE GRADES

▲ = MEDIUM ▲ = HARD ▲ = EXTREME (see page ix)

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BUFF TRAILS ABOVE HEBDEN BRIDGE PHOTO: BENJAMIN HAWORTH

# Introduction

West Yorkshire is a unique area to ride. The mix of nature and industry, bleak remoteness and accessibility. It contains what the National Office of Statistics call the 'West Yorkshire Urban Area'. This is the 143 square mile conurbation of Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield that is highly urbanised and populated (1.5 million people) but also incorporates substantial areas of agricultural land within it. And it's incorporated in various beguiling, bizarre and beautiful ways.

Unlike pretty National Parks, West Yorkshire doesn't get overloaded with other outdoor users. Its lack of obvious scenery and lofty peaks means it doesn't appear on a lot of people's radars. West Yorkshire isn't about clambering to the top of a summit and taking in the majestic vistas below you. West Yorkshire is about valleys. Steep sided valleys. West Yorkshire is about trails. Oodles of noodle trails. West Yorkshire is quite clearly made for mountain bikers.

Having said that, it can be beautiful. But the beautiful moments you encounter are modest and surprising, which makes them strangely potent. It's all about juxtaposition. To be frank, you'll pass through some pretty grim places on your way to some pretty amazing places. The routes in this book take you on a journey – mini-adventures – taking in bleak moorland, ugly suburbia, woodland singletrack, quaint rurality, forgotten packhorse trails, motorway bridges, reservoirs and housing estates.

You're not getting away from it all, you're taking it all in.

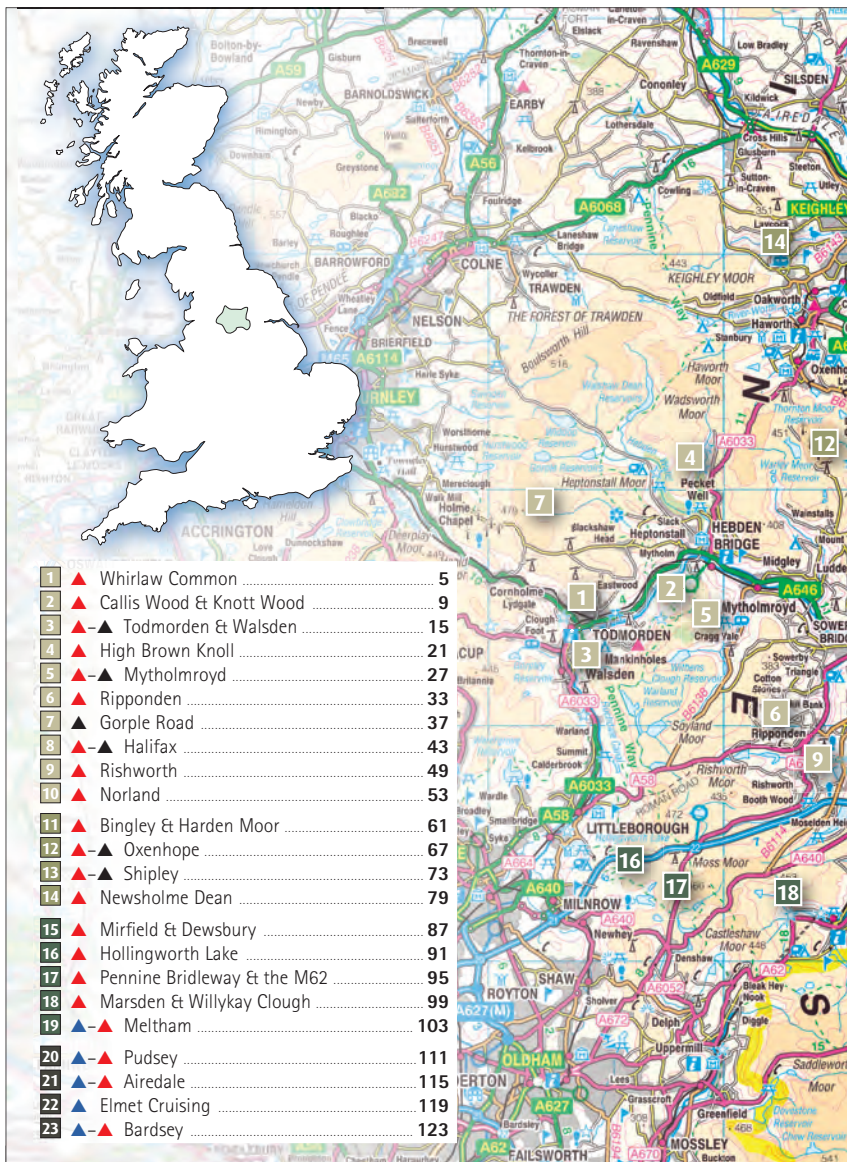
Geologically speaking most of West Yorkshire is on a massive lump of Carboniferous rock. So you don't encounter the rolling greenery of limestone areas. It may not ever reach particularly high altitude but it makes up for that in gradient. Look at the contour lines on a map of the South Pennines and you will see that it's a mix of broad flattish moorland tops with super-steep slopes falling off the edges into the myriad valleys.

And what about the trails? The riding in West Yorkshire is all about the trails. Sociologically speaking we have history to thank for these. The industrial heritage of the textile industry and the maze of horse-friendly tracks and trails that that industry required and created. A great deal of these routes have avoided being turned into roads as they're just too skinny or precipitous to cobble or tarmac. Other routes have been simply abandoned in their ancient state as there's no longer any practical reason for people to use them.

So yes, West Yorkshire is full of skinny, precipitous, abandoned impractical paths. What more could any mountain biker want?

## Benjamin Haworth









# West Yorkshire MountainBiking Area Map & Route Finder

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# SECTION

# 1

## Calderdale Borough

*Calderdale has the largest amount of high quality riding of all the boroughs in West Yorkshire. The area is covered with bridleways, byways and broken roads. Packhorse slab tracks, moorland trails, rubbly chutes, slippery singletrack, stupidly steep climbs, scary fast descents, eye-popping scenery, forgotten worlds, unexpected technicality, unpredictability and an impressive all-year round rideability. You can see why some people never ride anywhere else.*



LUMB FALLS (ROUTE 04) PHOTO: BENJAMIN HAWORTH



HALIFAX HEATHER PHOTO: BENJAMIN HAWORTH





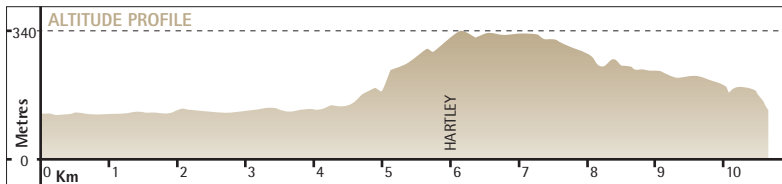
APPROACHING WHIRLAW STONES PHOTO: BENJAMIN HAWORTH

## Introduction

Starting at the very handy Rodwell End picnic site situated in between Todmorden and Hebden Bridge this route is a tale of two halves. The first half is about going up. The second half is about going down. A veritable hardy perennial that always delivers the goods.

## The Ride

A warm up along the canal towpath takes you into the centre of Todmorden. Then the not-too-busy Burnley road takes you out of town past the recently renovated park (which you can cycle through if you'd rather avoid road riding as much as possible). Then the hard work begins – getting yourself up on to Whirlaw Common. Although the tracks are quite wide, their steepness and unrelenting nature is always a test – they always seem to get steeper and rougher as they near the end as well. Thankfully once you're up, you're up. The rest of the route makes great use of the hills. It includes the area's trademark stone slabbed packhorse trails as you pass below Whirlaw Stones, tight technical trails past the golf course, fast flowing singletrack down to Cross Stone and the final twisty, rocky descent to Rodwell End never fails to raise a grin.



### WHIRLAW COMMON

GRADE: ▲

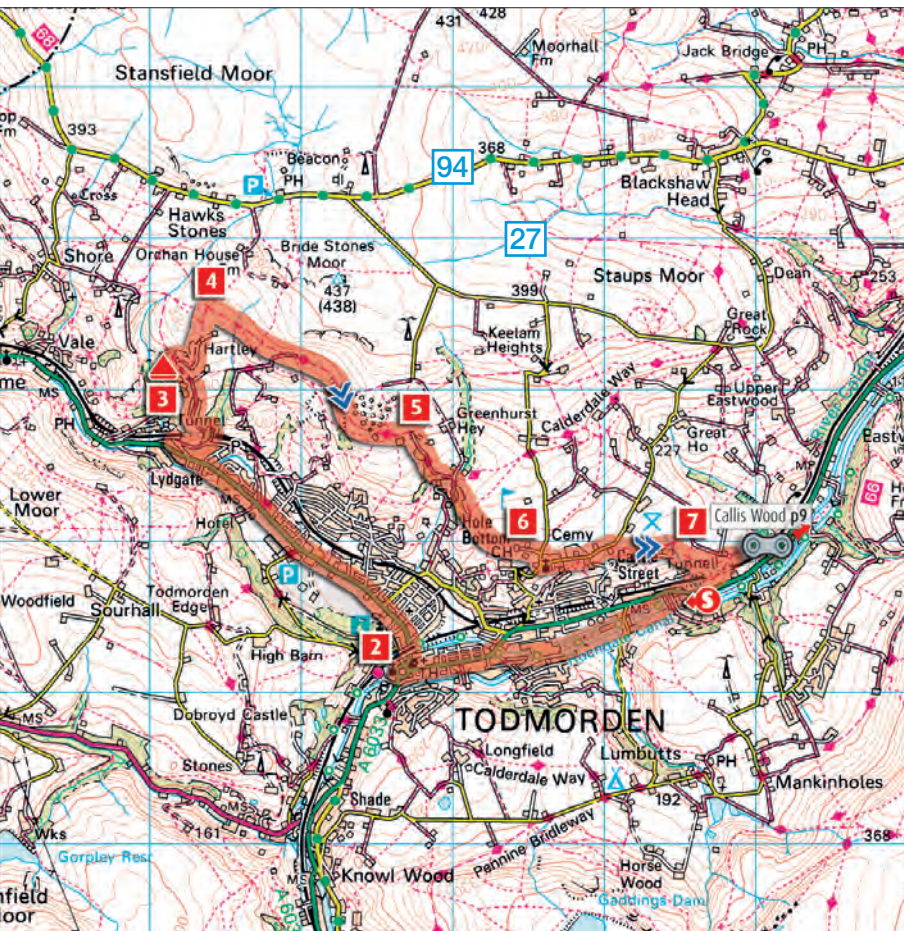
TOTAL DISTANCE: 11KM » TOTAL ASCENT: 250M » TIME: 1.5-2 HOURS » START/FINISH: RODWELL END PICNIC SITE CAR PARK » START GRID REF: SD 956247 » SATNAV: EASTWOOD » PARKING: RODWELL END PICNIC SITE CAR PARK » OS MAP: EXPLORER OL21 » PUB: NONE » CAFÉ: THE BEAR CAFÉ, TODMORDEN TEL: 07714 333 230

## Directions – Whirlaw Common



- 5** Turn **R** out of the picnic site car park and follow road for 200m before turning **L** and meeting canal towpath. Turn **R** and follow canal towpath for 2km. Pass under the road via a dark narrow tunnel. Once through the tunnel turn around 180 degrees and get on the road you just passed under. Turn **L** along the road.
- 2** **R** at roundabout and follow road for 2km into Lydgate. Branch **R** off the main road opposite some industrial units and head up single track road. This road turns sharply right after 150m and becomes rougher. Follow this main track as it snakes its way uphill for 500m to a gate.
- 3** Go through the gate and climb up the grassy track alongside the fence. After 100m turn **R** away from the fenceline and climb up track for 100m to a gate. Go through the gate and climb up the track past Orchan Rocks for 350m to meet a junction with the Calderdale Way bridleway.
- 4** Turn **R** and follow the bridleway for 1km. After 1km go through gate and follow stone slab packhorse trail for 200m to a gate. Go through the gate and head downhill passing below Whirlaw Stones on more packhorse trail for 500m.
- 5** Upon joining a farm road turn **R** and follow double track downhill for 400m. **SA** at track crossroads up a steep, rough, walled climb that levels off after 50m before heading downhill on tight singletrack. After 250m turn sharply **L** up a short awkward walled climb and then descend into golf club car park.
- 6** **Ride slowly** out of the car park and turn **R** at junction with a road. After 50m turn **L** at the road and follow road for 500m to Bean Hole Head House. Turn **R** after the house down walled bridleway and follow this track for 500m until it ends with a short sharp climb to join a farm track.
- 7** Turn **R** along farm track, bending **L** after 50m and then after 150m turn **R** and head into farmyard area (watching out for children and animals). Turn **L** in the farmyard and head down walled singletrack that then zigzags you down the hill. Be careful as you enter the picnic site car park at the bottom.





### ← Making a day of it

This route can be added to the *Callis Wood & Knott Wood* route (page 9). Link them together by the section of canal towpath between Rodwell End picnic site car park (SD 956247) and where *Callis Wood & Knott Wood* joins the canal (SD 965254).

## 01 WHIRLAW COMMON