



THE GHB WARD COMMEMORATIVE WALK: HOLMESFIELD TO LONGSHAW CIRCULAR

Introduction

In the autumn of 1900, GHB (Bert) Ward placed an advert in a newspaper inviting people to join him on a moorland walk. As a result, on 2 September 1900, 13 people came together for what is thought to be the first ever organised public walk - around the Kinder Scout plateau. This led to the formation of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers, a group still going strong, which became the forerunner of the great ramblers' movements we see today.

Ward himself became a notable campaigner for access to moorland, which back in 1900 was severely restricted by shooting interests and the gamekeepers who worked for them. Ward lived in Holmesfield for many years, at Storth Lodge on Moorwood Lane.

This walk celebrates Ward's work in establishing the outdoor movement. Its route takes you past his former home and out onto the moorland he loved.

Walk Summary

The walk starts at the bus terminus by the Horns Inn in the centre of the hilltop village of Holmesfield, near Sheffield (Grid Reference SK 322,777); at the time of writing there are regular bus services from Chesterfield and a less frequent one from Dronfield (where there are connections from Sheffield). There is car parking available at the village hall, a few yards behind the bus terminus; there is also a car park behind the church (not available on Sundays).

Organisers of group walks should obtain prior permission to use these car parks. Turn up the hill from the bus stop, past St Swithen's church, to the Millennium Garden. There's an information board here giving more details of Ward and his work. Other information boards have been installed at Totley, Millthorpe and the Shillito Wood car park; these give information about Ward and there are maps of showing the route of this walk, as well as several shorter routes in the extensive Parish of Holmesfield.

Total distance is about 11 miles (or 12.5 for people starting at Totley). Much of the route is across open country and the going can be difficult underfoot, especially in wet weather.

It is advisable always to wear hiking boots and have gear with you suitable for wet and windy weather – it can change quickly. It is also recommended that you have an Ordnance Survey map with you. Most of the walk is on the White Peak map (OL24), though a short section spills over on to OL1, The Dark Peak.

It is possible to join the walk by starting at the Cross Scythes pub (and bus terminus) in Totley (SK313, 800), walking over the fields up to Woodthorpe Hall then joining the main route along Fanshawe Gate Lane.

The walk follows woodland paths and quiet lanes before reaching open moorland. There are paths and tracks leading to Fox House and the Longshaw Estate (National Trust), where there is a pub/restaurant, café, and public toilets. It is also another convenient point for people from Sheffield to join the walk – there are 3 buses an hour and car parking is available.

The return route follows open moorland, along often indistinct (though not hard to follow) paths, which Ward almost certainly used. Reaching the A621 Sheffield-Baslow road, the route drops down into the Cordwell Valley and returns to Holmesfield along quiet country lanes.

There are waymarks – something that Ward himself may have disapproved of! So as to avoid extra “furniture” in remote areas, no new posts have been put in and only existing fences and gateposts, etc have been utilised. So the waymarks are not sufficient to guide you around the route and simply serve as occasional confirmation you are on the right path. There are, though, waymarks at all points where paths meet roads.

Walk Description

1) Walk up past the Horns Inn and church and turn right past the Angel Inn. At the bottom of Holmesfield Park Wood, turn left along the quiet Fanshaw Gate Lane.

Walkers starting at the Topley bus terminus (by the Cross Scythes) should turn along Topley Hall Lane, past the church and follow clear footpath into Gillfield Wood. At junction, carry on ahead to bridge over stream and follow path up the hill, passing Woodthorpe Hall. Turn right on road and pick up the main route.

2) Follow road past Fanshaw Gate Hall and at top of hill, (SK 308,782) take path off right. Go down and past the fishing pond, turning first right then immediately left on the track. Join Moorwood Lane and turn right. Storth Lodge (SK302,782) is where GHBW lived for many years –*if you pause to look at the house, please respect the privacy of the current occupants.* Further along the lane, you will see several large stone gateposts; these were originally part of the tollgates, on the turnpike at Owl Bar. At the main road, turn right and cross with care just below Moor Edge Farm (SK 295,787).

3) Take the waymarked concessionary path up onto the moor, turning right through the gate, and follow this splendid path, with fine views over Sheffield and well beyond. At fork, keep left and head for 2 rickety wooden posts (SK290,796) and Wimble Holme Hill. Take care at the wide rutted track (the Moss Road), as it's easy to take the wrong path here. Go straight over the Moss Road and take the narrow path- shown as a black dotted line on the OS map- slightly right which goes down (and very soon over a small stream) and then round to left around the edge of the hill, where the path is now obvious.

4) Carry on down to gate, go through and take the less distinct grassy path, going slightly left and head towards a Peak and Northern Footpath Society metal sign. At sign, turn left and at next finger post (SK284,799), go left again head round flank of hill along a narrow but distinct path veering right. This soon brings you to the remains of a wall; carry on up and across Topley Moor to another wall. Go over the stile in the wall, through gate and turn right on clear track to the road (SK269,804) There are superb views across to Higger Tor and beyond to the looming bulk of Kinder Scout. This must have been one of the views that so encouraged GHBW on his (usually very long!) walks in these parts. Path continues across road, with a wet section as you drop down to the main road from Sheffield.

5) Climb stile and go left down pavement to Fox House Inn (SK266,803)-. Unless you are tempted to go across for some refreshment stay on your side of road and go straight over the B 6054 at junction, cross very carefully then turn right and left through stone gateway into the Longshaw estate. Follow signs to Visitor Centre, where there is a National Trust shop, café and toilets.

Walkers from Sheffield may wish to start the walk at Fox House – there are around 3 buses an hour from and to the city centre and there is also car parking available. Should you have started at Holmesfield or Topley and bad weather has set in, this is the only point where there is an 'escape route' by public transport

6) Retrace your steps from the Visitor Centre for a few yards and take path, which goes behind the building (signed Estate Office). Follow this onto the broad

green drive towards Wooden Pole and up to gate at road junction (SK269,789); cross busy junction with care and turn right on broad track to White Edge Lodge. At lodge, leave the clear path and follow path round to left, left again at junction and up onto the edge (SK266,783), Go through gate -the path you want is a few paces to left of the finger post -and head across the flat plateau with its wide vistas. Path passes to left of Lady's Cross, with its date inscription of 1810 (SK272,782). Now only a stump, it is no longer the marker for travellers it once was. Keep straight on, heading in an easterly direction, towards the road at Barbrook Bridge (SK275,783).

7) Although the views are as GHBW would have known them, traffic noise from the busy road can be intrusive here. Keeping on the moorland, take the stone slab bridge very close to the boundary wall and follow the newly repaired path a by the wall for a few yards then follow grassy path. Keeping parallel with the road, go on past the sheep pens and straight ahead on the narrow path (ignoring the tempting green track veering to right) to a gate in the fence and carry on ahead. As you pass an access gate in the wall to your left, go to right as the grassy path becomes quite broad and distinct and soon quite boggy. Part way down this path, at the end of a row of stunted hawthorn trees, you will reach a fork where you should take the right branch (SK285,774) (*If you miss the fork, you will emerge onto the tarmac track by a gritstone guide stoop – simply go right on the road as far as a cross track in line with three hawthorn trees. Go left here on the intended route*). The path soon crosses the metalled access track to Barbrook House. Keep ahead and follow track –rather indistinct in summer and pretty wet in winter. Ignore side paths and keep on ahead to a gate leading out onto the main A621 road (GR SK 286,765)

8) Cross the road with care. There is a new access point opposite, kindly put in by the Peak Park Authority to facilitate this walk. Go through – there is no path, but simply keep the woodland and fence to your left and work your way down the hill over the access land. At the bottom, there is a track; turn left and follow this to the gate, then turn right down the rough broad track that is Carr Road

9) At the stile/gate (SK 297,765), cross and turn left on to a broad and well-defined path through Smeekley Wood. Bear right at the junction of paths (SK 301,767), and continue on to reach a gate (SK 305,766). Cross the stile to the left of the gate then take the indistinct path off to the left alongside the wall to reach the Horsleygate Road. There is a stile in the stone wall, partly hidden by a large holly bush. Take care when crossing the road –visibility is poor and traffic often travels quite fast here. There is a path directly opposite– take it and turn right when you come to Horsleygate Lane. Follow this to right and up to the main road, turn right again and you are soon at the end of the walk

Walkers who started at Toley should take the track beside the Angel Inn, down through the wood, then retrace your steps back past Woodthorpe Hall

DB 11/08

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THE WALK

COMMENTS/PROBLEMS/FEEDBACK TO: paul@upperdenby.org.uk