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Steeton to Ilkley via the Doubler Stones

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Steeton Railway station (SE 038449)
Ordnance Survey map	Explorer 297 – Lower Wharfedale & Washburn Valley OL 21 – South Pennines
Distance	7.25 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This is a linear walk best done by train or bus. It traverses the western side of Rombalds Moor from Airedale to Wharfedale with good views of both. It also takes you past the Doubler Stones - rocks weirdly shaped by the elements, and other well known rocky landmarks. Rombalds/Ilkley Moor is well known for its cup and ring and other ancient rock art. Rocks are scattered all over the moors hereabouts although finding some of them can be something of a challenge amongst the heather and bracken. There should be no problem I respect of the items listed here.

The directions start at Steeton and end at Ilkley railway stations on the assumption the train is used but buses also serve both destinations. Refreshments aplenty and toilets are available in Ilkley.

The walk spans two maps but you are more likely to need OL21 in terms of route finding which includes Wingate Nick. The section on Explorer 297 as you get closer to Ilkley is very clear on the ground and you would have to work hard to get lost!

Start: Exit Steeton station turning right and climb the steps to Station Road. Cross Station Road and turn right and walk to the roundabout. Cross the main A629 to the left of the roundabout (the footpath soon runs out on the right once you cross). This is an extremely busy road so take care.

Once across, walk along the pavement in the direction of Silsden. Look out for a green finger post on the right **after** crossing the River Aire. Cross the little stone footbridge here (SE 039453).

Cross over a broad track following yellow arrow signs for the Millennium Way. When you reach the low flood prevention banking (levee), as the stream curves away, bear left and follow the fence line.

Pass under two sets of power lines and go through the small stone stile on the right and turn left. On approaching a very large property (Howden House), exit on to the broad track and turn left to the road. At the road turn left again for only 100 yards or so.

Go through a metal kissing gate by a green public footpath sign on the right (SE 051450). This crosses a beck and takes you to the Leeds Liverpool Canal which you cross via Holden Swing Bridge.

Walk through the farm complex of Howden Park and on reaching the road turn right. Walk up the road as it climbs steadily for $\frac{1}{3}$ mile and as it bends sharply right, turn off left by the green finger post indicating public bridleway (SE 060453). There are good retrospective views here of Airedale across Steeton and Silsden.

Follow the broad track and just past the barn, fork right on the grassy track, ignoring the footpath which soon appears on the left. Go through the gate at the top of the rise and bear right. Keep straight ahead at the next gate, following the wall on the right.

Go through the next gateway and immediately turn left over a wooden stile and follow the broad track to the left. Stay on this track, climbing gradually, going through another gate. Bear left heading towards the ruined barn. To the left of the barn are two stone slit stiles in line. Go through these and go right round the back of the barn. On the near horizon ahead of you is a gateway. The route is now a little indistinct but head slightly to the left of the line to the gate. This leads down a little valley where a stone slab bridge crosses the stream.

Over the stream, turn right then left through a dilapidated gateway and climb the hill directly ahead. Come to two gates, go through the left one (or over the stile next to it) and bear right following the line of the wall on the right.

Pass Far Ghyll Grange Farm and immediately after crossing the stream, turn right (SE 072460) (the path may be very faint) climbing the little hill to a gateway in the wall. Through the gate and follow the wall on the left.

Go through gate by a massive boulder and in the farmyard, turn right (SE 072464) and follow the concrete track to the bungalow. Climb the faint footpath to the right of the bungalow and the clear path across the moors soon becomes visible. However look to the right and you will see the outermost Doubler Stone. To get the best view (as in the photo on the website), you need to climb up to the Doubler Stones (SE 072465).

Return to the main footpath below the stones and turn right (north). Stay on this path as it crosses the long Parish Boundary wall via a stone step stile. Initials carved in a step indicate its boundary status.

Follow the path to a large stone cairn with a Millennium Way arrow on a post in its centre at Windgate Nick (SE 072471). There are good views here along Wharfedale. Turn right here to follow the clear track along the edge of the moor.

After crossing three walls, the track passes to the right of a huge boulder. This is the Noon Stone (SE 081471). According to one theory, the name may (or of course may not!) indicate it was used in ancient times for timekeeping.

Cross five more walls and look out for a boulder on the left which looks as though it has molten folds. This is the Sepulchre Stone (SE 091470). On its top are possible ancient "cups" but it is difficult to tell what is natural and what might be manmade.

Cross the next wall and look out for the Anvil Rock over the wall on the left. Again, markings on its surface may or may not be manmade (SE 093470).

Continue to follow the wall along and very soon you come to the Swastika Stone (SE 096470). There is no mistaking this behind its iron fencing. The carving nearest you is a Victorian reproduction of the truly ancient one behind it so visitors could more clearly see what the carving was. You can clearly see the swastika shape with cups in each leg. As far as I know, no-one knows what it means.

At this point, rather than remaining on the main track, bear off slightly left on a fainter track towards the corner of the trees. This will give you a good view of the waterfalls at Heber's Ghyll as you cross it on a wooden bridge (SE 099469).

Stay on the track by the wall as it passes Panorama Reservoir and the rear of the houses. On reaching the road (Keighley Road), turn left. At the junction turn left again then right down Queens Road. Walk along this road as it descends and immediately after passing the junction with Princess Road, on the left behind iron fencing are the Panorama Stones. The carvings on these rocks could be 4-5000 years old so not surprisingly, they are badly eroded. A placard tells you their history.

Follow Queens Road to its end then left down Wells Road to the station.

