Limestone hushing

The moorland in which Shedden Clough is located was covered by an ice-sheet between about 27,000 and 18,000 years ago.

The ice brought rounded cobbles of sandstone from east Lancashire and limestone from the Yorkshire Dales, which were deposited in a thick layer of boulder clay, now called till, across the landscape as the ice melted about 10,000 years ago. A considerable thickness of till can be seen around Shedden Clough.

A labour-intensive process called hushing was used to extract limestone from the till. A dam was built at the top of a slope to collect water in a pond or reservoir. In the dam was a gap surrounded by large flat stones and sealed with wooden planks.

The ground below the dam was broken up with picks and shovels. The planks were removed and water ‘whooshed’ down the hillside, washing the fine material from the till, leaving the boulders behind. Some of the hushings are so steep that it seems likely that a series of dams at different levels was used sequentially. Streams and goits provided an abundant supply of water. The boulders were sorted

How a lime kiln works

Quicklime is made by heating limestone to a temperature of about 800°C. At Shedden this process was carried out in kilns like the one shown on the front cover.

The kiln chamber is cylindrical with a conical outlet at the base and sits within the beehive shaped structure, which provided weather protection and heat insulation.

The kiln chamber was filled with layers of limestone cobbles and fuel, and the fuel was ignited. Coal from Balance Colliery was probably the main fuel used for lime burning. After all the fuel had burnt, which may have taken more than two days, quicklime was removed from the base of the chamber via the arch at the base of the kiln.
Walk 11 Shedden

Locations (with National Grid References in brackets)

Shedden trail explores the geology and industrial heritage near the source of the river Brun in the catchment of the river Calder. The power of water was harnessed by constructing a series of dams to hold water in ponds. The landscape records the effects of this work which took place over hundreds of years.

1. An inlet goit can be seen from the trail. (SD 8927 2914)

2. The depression here marks the site of a pond, originally held back by a dam. A more dramatic example can be seen if you made a detour over the next stile on your right towards two prominent oak trees. Return to the main track to continue the trail. (SD 8926 2930)

3. Here the trail crosses a walled drove road, built at the time of the Enclosure Act, to enable herds of animals to be driven across the area. The drove road crosses the hushings and is therefore later. (SD 8930 2940)

4. From here (SD 8931 2956) look down the valley towards the wooden post which indicates the site of a hushings dam.

5. Hushing for limestone took place over hundreds of years has created the landscape in front of you (SD 8932 2963)

6. This lime kiln (SD 8929 2976), typical of those used in this area, was reconstructed in 1985. The sinuous waste piles of discarded sandstone are known as sheddings, from which the valley and stream probably take their names.

7. The walled structure (SD 8941 2983) was a sheep pen, used to collect up to 1000 animals for washing before shearing. The stream was dammed near the ford and the sheep were forced to swim upstream for the length of the pen. On the hillside south of the sheep pen, an area of wetland vegetation indicates the site of a large hushing pond.

8. A wooden finger post (SD 8996 3013) indicates where the Burnley Way diverges from the Pennine Bridleway.

9. Middle Pasture Farm (SD 8868 3045) was the home of Titus Thornber from 1947 until his death in 2009. He investigated the unusual landscape near his home and discovered the lost history of the Shedden limestone hushings.

10. The track from the stone bridge to Ormerod Hall was built by Sir John Thursby in the early 20th Century so that hunting parties could travel by carriage from the Hall to Shedden Farm. Part of the track (at SD 8852 3052) is constructed from high quality sandstone sets.

11. At Foxstones bridge, Hurstwood Brook and the streams from Cant Clough and Shedden Clough meet to become the River Brun, which joins the River Calder in Burnley. The trail arrives in Hurstwood (SD 8882 3132), opposite the house of Edmund Spenser, author of the epic poem 'The Faerie Queene', written in the 1590s in praise of Queen Elizabeth I.

12. The trail continues through a wooded area and passes a pond on the left on its way to Hurstwood reservoir (SD 8889 3146).

13. From the marker post 50m south of the track (SD 8899 3151), look towards Burnley. You can see ‘fingers’ of quarry waste material, transported here by tubs on rails. Although superficially similar to the hushings, these waste heaps have horizontal tops and are well vegetated, because quarry waste was sand and crumbly rock, not individual lumps of stone as seen in the sheddings. The flat platform between the marker post and the track is an old quarry floor.

14. The trail crosses the dam of Cant Clough Reservoir (SD 8901 3067). From here Burnley receives over 21.5 million litres of clean water every day. Thornber’s map shows a long goit which gathered water from Black Clough to feed the hushing ponds.

15. The small fenced woodland on the left (seen from SD 8931 3028) is the site of Shedden Farm, where the Ormerod Hall gamemaker lived, raised game birds and kennelled the hounds. In the 1920s when Burnley Corporation Water Works bought the land for reservoirs, they banned farming and demolished most of the buildings in order to ensure clean drinking water.

Walk 11 Shedden

ROUTE

3 is at the junction with the walled drove road (100m). Cross the drove road on the track to 4 (160m). The viewpoint at 5 is on a nearby promontory (70m). Rejoin the main track and walk downhill through the rhododendrons to the reconstructed kiln, 6 (120m).

Continue downhill to the right to 7 at a large enclosure beside a footbridge and ford (75m).

[For a shorter route turn right up the drove road to 3, where you take the left hand path past 2 and 1 to return to the car park.]

Follow the path north, with the wall on your left, past two interpretive boards. Cross the ford to 8, a gate beside a finger post (300m). Follow the Burnley Way past Middle Pasture Farm, 9, Crow Holes and the setts at 10 (750m). Turn right down a track in front of a row of cottages just before Foxstones Farm, 11. This track becomes a path leading over Foxstones bridge to Hurstwood (100m).

Turn right in Hurstwood, cross the car park and join the farmyard uphill into the woodland. Pass 12 to Hurstwood reservoir (850m).

Go through the kissing gate, turn sharp right and follow the track, taking the left fork up the hill to a seat beside the path, 13 (300m).

Follow the track across Cant Clough Reservoir embankment, 14 (500m). Go through the gate and turn right on the Pennine Bridleway. As you walk downhill, you pass an area of trees hiding the remains of Shedden Farm, 15 (600m) and cross the bridge to the finger post 8 (200m).

Turn left on the Burnley Way to 7 and follow the drove road between dry stone walls to 3 where you turn left to return to the car park (1300m).