



# HERITAGE trail 1

## ROOLEY MOOR & THE COTTON FAMINE ROAD



**KEY:**  
- Heritage Trail 1 (Catley Lane Head)  
- Walking Distance

Access all Heritage Trail information through this QR Code

[www.RMNF.org.uk](http://www.RMNF.org.uk)

Produced by Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum CIO

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# What was the Cotton Famine (1861-65)?

**The late 1850s were boom years for the cotton industry. More cotton was produced than could be sold and the market was flooded with finished products. This led to a collapse in the price, and a fall in the demand for raw cotton.**

The oversupply of cotton coincided with an interruption of cotton imports due to the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln, US president from 1861, supported the abolition of slavery and issued his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, freeing slaves.

The result of the reduction in demand for, and the lack of supply of cotton in the early 1860s left previously prosperous cotton industry workers impoverished. Over 300,000 workers in Lancashire were employed in the mills at the time and 80% of the cotton supply came from America.

A number of relief funds were set up in to help alleviate the hardships of cotton workers, including the Poor Law Act which required the Poor Law Guardians to find work for the fit and for those receiving aid. This included stone breaking in the quarries and mines, as well as construction work such as building parks, rebuilding sewerage systems and constructing and resurfacing roads.

Rooley Moor Road has been a packhorse route as far back as records allows us to identify, and during the cotton famine, workers were set to task developing the road and resurfacing the track with cobbles.

The "Cotton Famine Road" on Rooley Moor, as it is known today, consists of approximately 327,600 cobbled setts along a length of 1,950 yards, stretching from Catley Lane Head Village in the South, to Ding Quarry in the North. The road reaches an altitude of 1,500 feet above sea level making it one of the highest roads in Britain.

The historical significance of the Cotton Famine Road on Rooley Moor Road was recognised in the BBC TV series presented by historian David Olusoga - Black & British: A Forgotten History. David has since become the Honorary President of the Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum.

As well as being a widely visible landmark, the road is now preserved for leisure activities, and we hope that you enjoy the views and the history and appreciate the extraordinary hardship the Rochdale people experienced during the 1860s in support of the abolition of slavery.

# The Heritage Trail Description

**Recommended Start Point:** We recommend you start the walk from Catley Lane Head village on Rooley Moor Road, OL12 6BN. OS Grid Reference SD 872 158. There is ample roadside parking in and around the village, but please park with consideration for the local residents. There is also a regular bus service from Rochdale and Bury to Daniel Fold, from where it is only a short walk uphill to the village.

**Distance:** 3.8 miles (6.2 kilometres)

**Walk Overview:** Uncover the past and find out more about the rich history of Rooley Moor on this moderate circular walk with spectacular open moorland views. The route is hilly and uneven but there are no stiles, gates, or bridges to negotiate and no streams to cross. It is important that you wear appropriate footwear and warm waterproof clothing as some sections of the walk can be muddy and the weather can change very quickly. In poor weather the route can be encased in cloud. We suggest you take some food and a drink with you as well.

The route is suitable for walkers and may also be used by horse riders. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on a lead at all times. You may encounter some farm animals and farm traffic on your route as the moors are still farmed by the Commoners.

There are litterbins at the top and bottom of the village – please put any rubbish in there (including from your dogs).

The last page of this booklet gives you some other ideas of places to visit in the area, and we recommend you take a look at the Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum website ([www.rmnf.org.uk](http://www.rmnf.org.uk)) for more information about the routes and about the tremendously varied history of the area.



# THE ROUTE

## Catley Lane Head (A) to Whimsy Hill (H)

Starting from the bench on the South side of Catley Lane Head village (A), with the bench on your left start to walk up hill through the village towards the moors. The first thing to notice is a gap between the houses on your right, this is the original site of the Black Dog pub (B), which is now located further down Rooley Moor Road in the housing estate. As you walk through the village, notice the terraced houses on your right called the Doldrums (C). For many years this was also the site of the popular village tearooms.

On your left opposite the single storey building you will see a raised plot of land, which is now a wildlife meadow (D). This is the site of the Catley Lane Head Chapel, which was operational until the 1960s. Have a look at our website ([www.rmnf.org.uk](http://www.rmnf.org.uk)) for more information about the Wesleyan movement and the religious and educational work that was done in this area.

On your right-hand side just past the bridge, notice the fishing lodge (E) and Smallshaw Road that runs alongside it. The end house on Smallshaw Road was once the village shop and it still houses the village post-box. If you have time, take a detour down Smallshaw Road to look at Smallshaw Farm (F), which is an impressive Grade II listed building.

Continue through the gate past the cattle grid (G). On your left you will see Syke Barn Farm, which until recently lay derelict for many years. As with many other properties in the area it has been sensitively restored to retain its original architectural features.

Walk up the cobbled road that stretches for some distance in front of you. You will stay on Rooley Moor Road for just over a mile and a half before reaching the ruins of the Moorcock Inn (K), which also includes a pet cemetery.

The first section of the road is cobbled but over the next mile and a half the road surface will be a mixture of cobbled areas and crushed stone. In front of you in the distance you will see two lines of pylons and overhead power cables crossing the road.

Before you reach the overhead cables, the road is crossed left and right at Knacks Lane. To the left you will see some farm buildings and the road to the right takes you to Prickshaw. At this junction on your right you will see a wooden finger post indicating you are now on the Pennine Bridleway.

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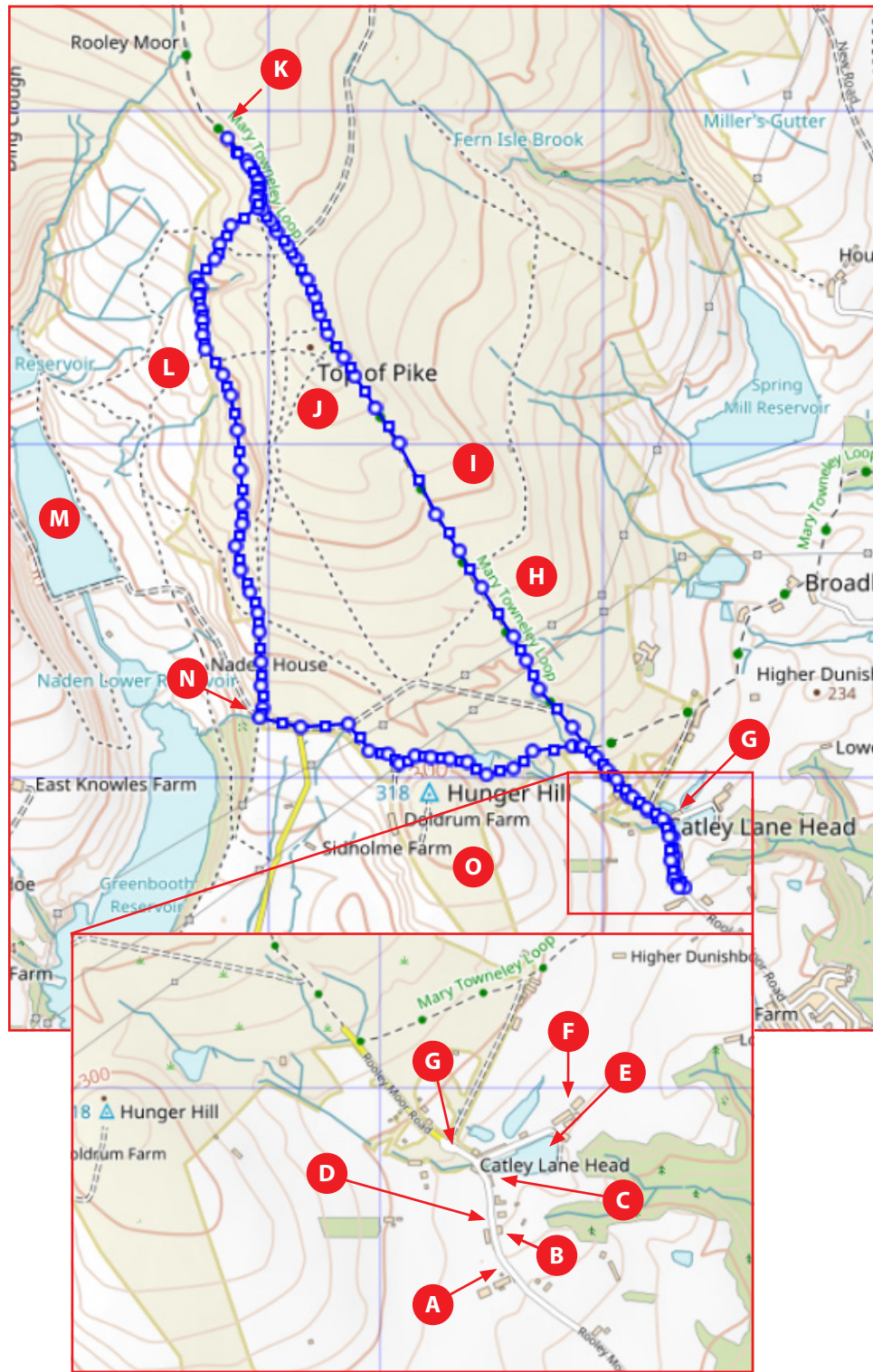
A - Catley Lane Head – ROUTE START



D - Closing Ceremony – Lane Head Methodist Chapel



F - Smallshaw Farm - listed building



K - The Moorcock Inn – only a few ruins now visible



L - Views Across Greenbooth From Reddishore Top



O - Hunger Hill Farm (nearby)



# THE ROUTE continued

Stay on Rooley Moor Road as the road climbs and passes under the overhead power cables. Once under the power lines you are now in the area of Whimsy Hill (H). Because this is now a bridleway you may encounter people on horseback. It is best practice to step aside and allow the horses to pass. You will also see another public bridleway sign at the turn off left to Forsyth Brow.

## Whimsy Hill (H) to Cat Stones (I)

Carry on uphill to the area known as Cat Stones. Where the cobbled road levels out and the grass banking is quite low, go to the right-hand side of the road and take a moment to enjoy the views across the moor.

## Cat Stones (I) to the Moorcock Inn (K)

Continue the climb up the road passing Top of Pike (J). On your right you should see a small green way-marker post indicating the Rossendale Way off to the right. Do not follow the Rossendale Way but carry on up Rooley Moor Road. The road bends slightly to the right then to the left before you reach the two standing stones on your left, which are the ruins of the Moorcock Inn (K) (below).



You are now at the highest point on the trail at about 1,300 feet. Take a moment to rest and take in the views all around you including Knowl Hill, the Scout Moor Wind farm, the rolling moorland hills and the Naden Valley with its four reservoirs stretching out along the valley below.

## The Moorcock Inn (K) to Reddychore Top (L)

The Moorcock Inn (K) was originally built to serve the quarrymen working the area, landowners, farmers and travellers. Now the Inn's remaining

stone pillars serve as a well-known landmark for those walking in the area.

Look over to Greenbooth (M) and having taken in the views, retrace your steps back down Rooley Moor Road for about 200 metres to a way-marked post on your right which will invite you to cross the moor at Windy Hillock and over to Reddychore Top. It's nearly all downhill from here!

The path across the moor is undefined in places so a series of timber marker posts have been placed at intervals to help guide you across the moor. This section of the trail can also be very muddy at times. As you cross the moor keep the reservoirs to your right and take time to stand and enjoy the views from Reddychore Top.

## Reddychore Top (L) to Forsyth Brow (N)

From Reddychore Top follow the marker posts across the moor down to Forsyth Brow (N). Experience the stillness and quiet of the moor broken only by the sound of Curlew and Skylarks and the many other resident moorland birds. Keep your eyes open for the summer and winter migrant birds visiting the reservoirs, and if you are lucky you may see a Merlin or a Hen Harrier.



As you descend the track across the moor you will see a stonewall in front of you. Keep the stonewall on your right and you will start to see the car park at Forsyth Brow. Make your way off the moor on to the car park and to the left. There is a litter bin on the car park.

For those who don't have a vehicle at Catley Lane Head and want to leave the trail at this point the car park exits onto Woodhouse Lane. If you follow Woodhouse Lane downhill, it will take you

in to Norden Village where you can access the local bus network into Rochdale and beyond.

### **Forsyth Brow (N) to Hunger Hill (O)**

For those completing the last leg of the trail walk across the car park, past the Woodhouse Lane cattle grid exit on your right and look ahead. You will see Hunger Hill in front of you with a farmhouse on the right of the hillside and a radio mast on the top of the hill. The track from the car park to Hunger Hill is tarmacked. Make your way along the road as if you were going to the farm on the hillside. Before you get to the farm entrance, which is a private residence, you will be at the base of the pylon on your right. On the opposite side of the road from the pylon there is a line of large rectangular stone blocks. This is the start of the footpath taking you around the base of Hunger Hill (O). On a clear day you can see as far as Cheshire and can make out the Jodrell Bank dish from here.

### **Hunger Hill (O) back to Catley Lane Head (A)**

Follow the path clockwise around Hunger Hill keeping the hill on your right. After a short distance you will see a small pond on your left. Watch out for herons feeding in the shallows.

Walk past the pond and you will see a cluster of farm buildings with corrugated roofs on your right. Walk past the farm buildings and out on to a stone flagged path which takes you to a steel gate. Go through the gap at the side of the gate and turn right back on to Rooley Moor Road and back down to the start of the trail. Look out for Hunger Hill Farm off to the right as the road continues down. Notice the mullion windows picked out in lighter colours. These are typical of the local 16th and 17th century cottages, designed to let as much light in as possible for the weavers to work.

## **About Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum CIO**

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Working together to protect and enhance our environment! We created the Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum because we share a common purpose and objective to protect and enhance our neighbourhood and to make it an area that is vibrant, socially inclusive, and generally the greenest, safest place to live, work and enjoy. Forum members are individuals who either live, work or regularly pursue leisure activities (walking, horse riding, cycling, ornithology, fishing, etc) in the Rooley Moor area.

Rooley Moor Neighbourhood Forum is a registered charity, Charity number 1165601

Contact us for more information at [www.RMNF.org.uk](http://www.RMNF.org.uk) and if you would like to support our aims, please join us or make a donation! Email: [info@rmnf.org.uk](mailto:info@rmnf.org.uk).

## **Thanks to our Supporters**

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The work of the forum would not be possible without the fantastic support of the local community. We are truly fortunate to have a network of people who are interested in understanding and sharing the fascinating and varied heritage of our area.

We would also like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund who are supporting us with a Sharing Heritage grant to research and develop our website, area signage and heritage trails. The Ramblers Association have helped us to develop and present this trail, and we continue to work alongside Rochdale Council to develop our Neighbourhood Plan and promote this amazing area here on the outskirts of the Borough.

# Other Things in the Area

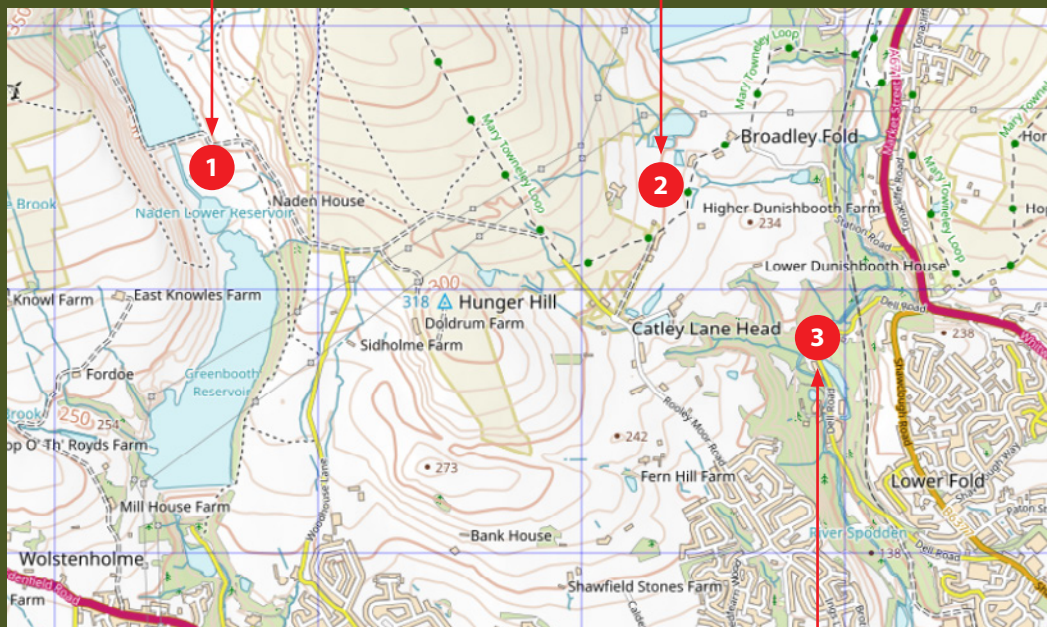
We really do hope you enjoyed your walk around Rooley Moor. The Neighbourhood Forum have been doing lots of other work in the area and we recommend you visit our website to find out more about other local history and alternative routes.

## 1. Greenbooth & Naden

Greenbooth Village, which once stood here, was flooded in the mid 1960s to make way for the larger reservoir which serves the majority of the Rochdale area. There is parking at the top of Woodhouse Lane giving easy access to the reservoirs.

## 2. Prickshaw & Broadley Fold

A former textile hamlet, designated a conservation area in 1987.



## 3. Healey Dell

Formerly the site of a WW2 munitions factory. Here you can cross the old railway viaduct and take a walk through the nature reserve. There is also parking, tea rooms and heritage centre to visit.



Please scan the QR code to find more information about the Rooley Moor area.

You can also pick up a GPX of the route from our website.

Pictures provided by Forum members.

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