

STROLL 11 COWM RESERVOIR

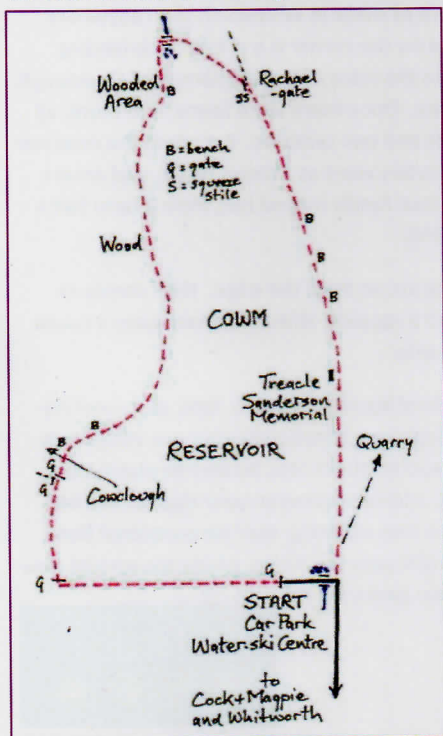
START Reservoir Car Park

DISTANCE A mile and a bit BUS STOP Tong Lane, half a mile away

NATURE OF WALK This is already, by far, Whitworth's most frequented walk. On summer evenings it's like a valley *passigiata* without the fashion show. Unless you don't much care for people, what's not to like? No navigational difficulties; flat; a manageable distance, for most – with benches if it's at the edge of your capacity; you can get round on a mobility scooter, though one section of the far side does require caution. If you keep away from the water, as you should, it's safe for children and dogs alike. There are bins for dog muck, so dog-walkers

have no excuse - indeed the vast majority use the bins gratefully. There are blackberries in season, sheep and water-skiers to admire, ducks and geese and gulls to feed, and often a supply of puddles for colourfully-wellied three-year-olds to splash through. And a café. The location's not bad either.

The majority of walkers seem to go clockwise, so off we go through the wooden gate at the end of the car park, and across the dam. There may well be sheep on the sculpted slopes to your left, so please control your dog. In snow these ramps are full of sledges, littl'uns on the shallow short slopes at the bottom, while daredevil teenagers attempt the mighty piste at the far end. Notice, up above, a toothy





Serene, even under autumnal sky

Water-colour by Lindsay Ellis-Fairhurst

flagstone wall: apparently there are more of these in Whitworth than anywhere else in Lancashire. Just through the gate on the corner is a prime duck-feeding location. At gate 3, look up to your left to the ruins of the old hamlet of Cowclough, in 1852 home to no less than 52 residents. Once there were farms, and more, all over Cowm, including a smithy, two mills and two quarries. But when the reservoir was built (it opened in 1877) some properties went as a direct result, and others were gradually abandoned, though the final family moved out, from a farm half a mile further along this side, as late as 1950.

There's a rougher section of path coming up, so mind the edge. Next comes an area of trees, then a wooden bridge, and a squeeze-stile at Rachael-gate: a board the other side of the stile explains the name.

There are two more info boards on the final leg of the circuit. One, at a carefully-located wall, tells you about 'Treacle' Sanderson, a nationally-famous Whitworth runner from the Victorian era. Having read all about him, be sure to plant your backside against the wall, bend forward, and look between your legs for the 440. The other notice, further on, explains the tree-planting, and the occasional floral tributes. Pop through gate 4, and turn right over the sluice, where the annual New Year duck race takes place, back to the car park. JF

POSSIBLE WALK EXTENSION:
try **walking WHITWORTH** leaflet 15

