

## WALK 1 SHAWFORTH

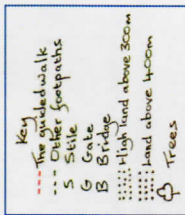
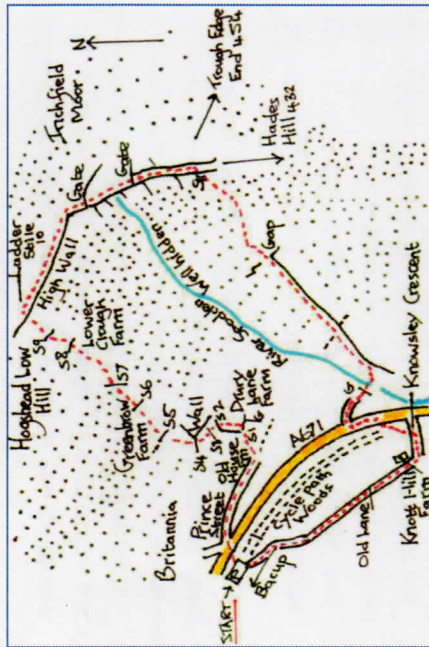
Save this walk for a clear, sunny day. It will take you into a landscape of ancient farm settlements, wild moorland and extensive views of the Rossendale valley. It features a fine collection of stiles, one glorious downhill stride-out, and a few places that will come as a surprise to most.

**START** Britannia, car park on main road opposite Merlyn Wealth Management (ex Travellers Rest)

**TIME** 2 hours or so

**DISTANCE** Not quite 4 miles

**FOOTWEAR** Sturdy. Moorland section can be wet.



Map by Steve Flood

Where you begin was once Britannia Station. Britannia itself was once just a dot on the map, but with the coming of the railway it had something to shout about, and, with coal underground, stone, Britannia Mill (now Lancashire Sock) and the Travellers Rest, it thrived for a while. The station boasted an island platform and sidings to receive stone from the quarries above, and was the highest on the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway network. Indeed when the line closed in the 1940s the last train was marooned in the station by snow for five days.

Cross the main road and walk up Prince Street. At the top this becomes a terrace from which you'll get a wonderfully elegant display of the sweeping curve of the north end of the Whitworth valley. Suddenly, when you turn the corner at the castellated gable of "Gormless End" – Old House Farm – the walk becomes rural. Pass New Hill Farm, then at Drury Lane Farm climb over the stile at the left of the gate and walk up the left edge of the field to cross a second, slightly awkward stile; then a third stile at the top right corner of that field; and a fourth where the wall to your right stops. You should now be pointing at Green Brow Farm – the fifth stile, to let you out of this field, is ahead, slightly to your left.

Go up the broad track that leads to the right-hand end of Green Brow, where, to your right, you'll see two gates. If you are a veteran of the annual Skyline Walk you'll remember going through the right-hand gate, then, around the bend, through a farmyard: but this path is only available on Skyline day by kind permission of the farmer, Alec Thorp, so today you must go through the left-hand gate or, if that's shut, over stile no.6 about 5 metres higher. Go uphill diagonally across this field, aiming at yet another stile, one with a water/squelch obstacle in front of it – this is why Alec's kindness is so welcome for Skyline! The track across the next field is faint/non-existent: continue diagonally and you soon pick up a narrow track that contours round the hill above Lower Clough Farm before dropping down to an open barn with a confusingly arrowed signpost. At the barn look up to your left to the easiest stile on the walk(!), and up there pick a diagonal uphill route through the rushes to stile no.9 in the

stone wall. Step boldly straight out into the top field – you're aiming straight across – keeping your eye on the horizon: after not many paces you'll see two or three poles sticking up, and that's where you're going. It's a tall ladder-stile, and you should climb it with care – it's a bit rickety, and as you go down the other side beware of the barbed wire.

Now turn sharp right (away from the nearby wind turbines), and walk along this intermittently boggy section with the amazingly constructed wall on your immediate right – it looks built to keep the moorland out! This is a broad expanse of wild moorland, stretching to Ramsden, Rough Hill and Hades. In autumn it assumes a deep russet colour. In spring and summer it provides nesting habitat for a variety of birdlife. Where the wall elbows right, so do you, heading for the big gate, which you should shut, please, once you've negotiated your way through. The obvious path now leads you straight ahead, on the flat, to a second, smaller, simpler gate. Again, please close it behind you.

This section of the route was for centuries an important route down which all manner of goods – lime and coal chief among them – were transported up and down the county by teams of packhorses. The drivers of these teams, en route from Clitheroe or Townley and heading to Bacup and Rochdale, would often sleep out on the moors with their horses. The best known locally of these hardy drovers was Mary Alice Hartley, known by all for reasons lost in time as Ailise O'Fussers. Ailise followed – quite literally – in the footsteps of her father and was the proud owner of twenty Galloway ponies – she also had a donkey called Jerry that she would bring indoors at night hitching his halter to her bed post.

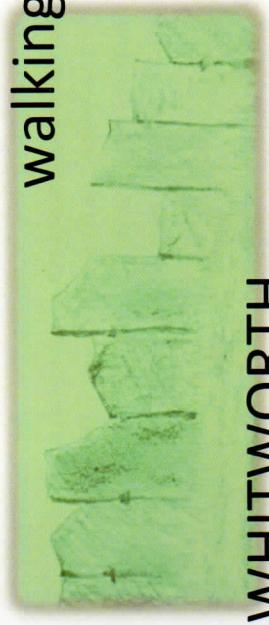
Ailise cut a striking figure – short, stout and with a handkerchief tied round the top of her hat to stop it from blowing off. She wore a male topcoat, and as a result was often mistaken for a man by the folk who'd pass her as she led her team up over the tops.



Now start looking for stile no.11 in the fence to your right. It's marked by a dip in the electric fence wire; and by an old, almost unreadable, notice that explains that this is a permissive path. Say a silent thank you to Andrew Thorp for extending this permission beyond its contracted time, because what you're about to travel down, bar the jumbly first 200 metres, is possibly the best stride-out downhill path in Whitworth, one where you can confidently get your head up and enjoy a wonderful, and little appreciated, panorama. You'll have views of Rooley Moor and the quarries on the other side of Whitworth; the plain of Manchester is to your left; and to your right the beautiful valley of Rossendale opens its vista to you. From the stile you go left – a path becomes obvious after a few paces. Pick your way down carefully, particularly around the spoil-heap...but then you're away. Enjoy! Walk straight down, through one obvious pair of gateposts, straight on again, then through a cross-wall, just to the right of the wall that leads down. *Setting out somewhere to your right, probably not travelling as fast as you, is the River Spodden. It was a bit swifter in 1838, when it smashed its way right down the Whitworth valley, becoming a 15-foot storm surge that did considerable to houses, mills and bridges all the way down to Broadley.*

At the bottom bear right, through a couple of metal gates, and walk along the track to the main road, where you'll go left for 50 metres before crossing to some railings and an old, settled railway approach path. At the top, look up to your right for a blue cycleway signpost. Scramble up the banking to it. Now you've a decision to make. You can either turn right, and follow the cycleway gently back up to your car – a perfectly pleasant walk, which needs no further instructions; or you can follow the blue sign straight ahead along this little section of Knowsley Crescent. If you take this, simply go right at the end, and up Old Lane past Knott Hill Farm. Old Lane will pop you out at the car park too, but by a quieter, more up-and-over route. JF

walking



## WHITWORTH

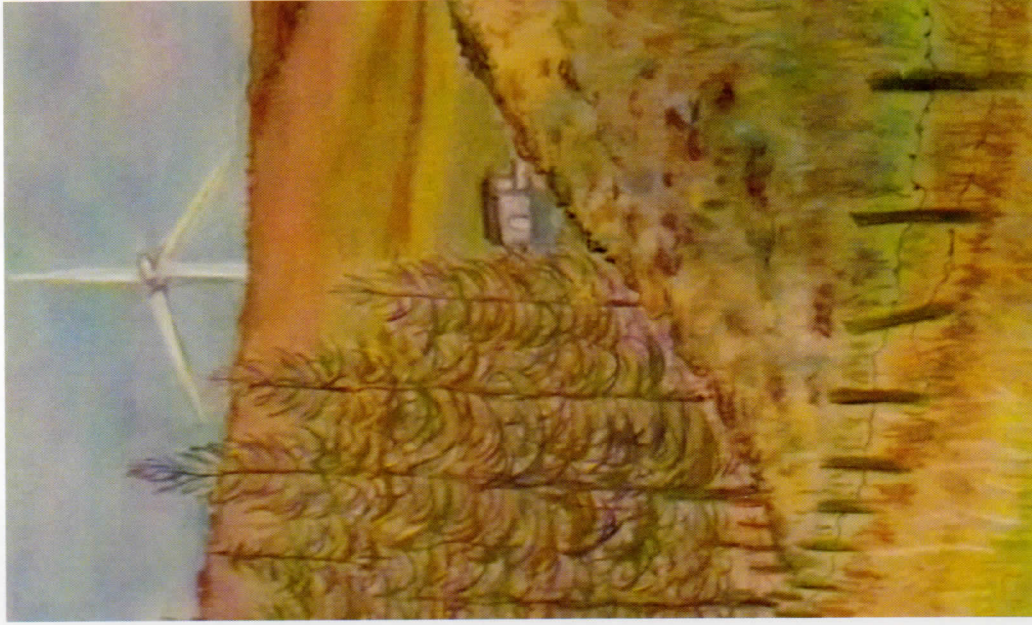
There are good walks in Whitworth around Cowm Res, and into Healey Dell - but how about something a *bit* more adventurous? You know there are moorland paths, but how do you get to them; are you allowed; and can you get back without retracing your steps?

Well, you could be brave and just *go*...or you could take one of these guides. All are circular; all start from a place where you can leave a car; all fit comfortably into a morning or afternoon; all have ups (to give you views) and downs (obviously); and all have route instructions along with a clear, simple map and a small helping of history.

Whitworth, you'll find, has a fantastic network of paths that can be knitted together into satisfying walks. And then? Invest in OS Explorer map OL21 (South Pennines) and explore. You might even find some walks that are half as good!

### WALK 1 – SHAWFORTH

These walks are part of the Spodden Valley Revealed eco-museum. Visit: <https://spoddenvalleyrevealed.wordpress.com/>



Shawforth. Pastel drawing by Claire Entwistle