

WALK 2

RED BRICK ROAD AND CYCLEWAY

Not a difficult walk. Short, never very steep, and terrain ok (although there is one short gloopy bit that's tenuously stepping-stoned). Largely sheltered, in that the walk lies well within the surrounding hills, but with good views, in the first half, of the Whitworth valley.

START RIVERSIDE CAR PARK

TIME An hour, if you get a move on

DISTANCE Not quite 3 miles

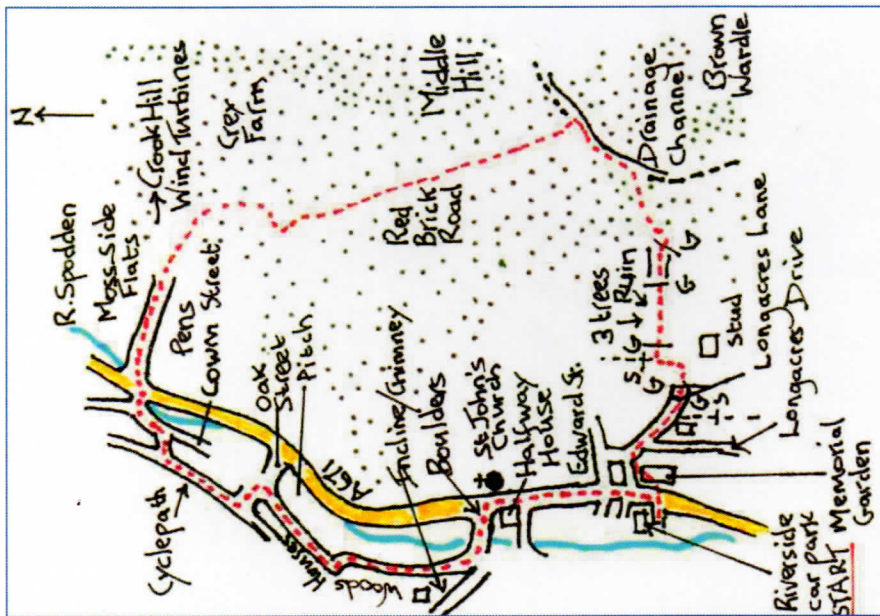
FOOTWEAR Sensible

*

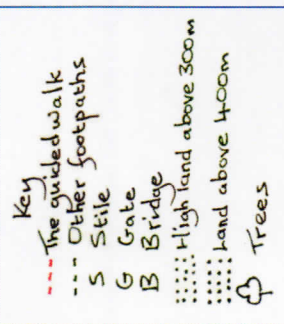
Cross the main road and bear left up through the Memorial Gardens. *Maybe pause at the memorial and consider the sacrifice of a multitude of Whitworth's young men. The number of the fallen is shocking, and must have had a considerable impact on those two generations.*

Exiting by the Scout HQ, turn right up Longacres Lane. At the top of the steps turn right, up Longacres Drive, then left, almost immediately, up the continuation of

Longacres Lane (though there's no road sign to tell you that). Go through the gate for Whitworth Stud, but just before the next gate bear left. At the end of the track go right, through a gate onto a sweeping old farm track – you'll see occasional flagstones peeping through the grass – that leads you up past three elegant trees to the ruined Hopwood Barn farmhouse. Go left behind it, then



Map by Steve Flood



immediately right, through another gate, into a rough path between two walls. At its top gate turn sharp left, almost back on yourself, onto a grassy path that leads you on a shallow diagonal uphill course. This intersects, at some big flagstones that span a drainage channel, with a flat, wide (if lumpy) path that heads left towards Middle Hill. That's the way you go. *Just above the path are two bunker-like buildings that were built for the WW2 Home Guard to practice their shooting skills – people find spent cartridges to this very day. Around here too you might well encounter moorland ponies and/or cattle, put out to graze by one or other of the Whitworth Commoners.*

Halfway along the flat path towards Middle you'll come to a boggy bit (with a newly-built cairn, one of only two in Whitworth) where you'll be going left, in a few yards stepping onto a red road made largely of broken pipes. If that sounds horrible, don't be alarmed – the walking's easy. At first it's flat, then it dips downhill, half a mile later pitching you out on a tarmac road.

The Red Brick Road dates back to the early 1970s, when a pipe-making firm used to dig clay from near Crey Farm – look out for the disused flooded quarry on your right as you drop down. They transported the material to their pipeworks at Sharneyford, then brought broken pipes back and started to construct the road you're walking on. Their idea was that they'd next start to quarry into Brown Wardle...but they'd not got planning permission to do that, and when they applied they were turned down flat, so the road was abandoned, but never removed. And here it lies still, a veritable road to nowhere.

Turn left, and stay on this road until it meets Market Street, the main road (A671). Cross, go left, then first right onto Old Lane, cross the mighty Spodden, then left

onto Cowm Street. Amazing to think that in 1838 this inoffensive little stream generated a 15-foot storm surge that swept down the Whitworth valley, damaging houses, mills and bridges. The same storm bounced 12-ounce hailstones onto Rooley Moor! Take the muddy path up the old railway embankment, then turn left onto the cycleway. This opened in summer 2008, as part of a route intended ultimately to provide a safe, off-road route for cyclists, linking Rawtenstall to Rochdale. The route still has its imperfections, but the section through Whitworth, using the line of the old railway for much of its length, makes for much more cheerful riding than negotiating the traffic on the A671.

Soon you'll arrive at Oak Street, where there used to be a bridge. Drop down to your left, then turn right alongside the old football pitch, the massive stones of the old railway embankment to your right. Follow this road as it kinks between the houses, until it runs out at a metal gate that marks the start of the next section of the cycleway. Follow this until it too runs out at a muddy little crossing of the Spodden and a broad road that ends in a selection of Facit Quarry's finest chunks of rock.

Turn right and walk 400 metres back down the main road to The Riverside. En route you'll pass the Halfway House: in the 19th century it was the halfway rest-stop for the horse-drawn tram between Rochdale and Bacup. If you need a brew, back at the Riverside the Leisure Centre is just down the steps at the left-hand corner of the car park. 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 2

RED BRICK ROAD AND CYCLEWAY

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



The Red Brick Road. Pen drawing by Krista Howell