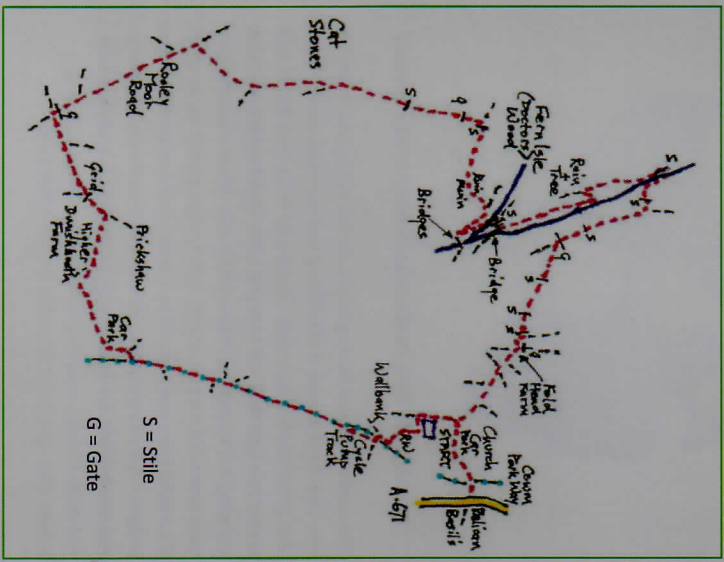


cross the stream at the equally obvious bridge immediately below the track up the hill. The ascent of this track up Robin Bank is part of the Rossendale Way, but just round the corner at the top the RW (signed) goes straight on along a mind-numbingly rushy path with the plunge to Doctors' Wood on its right. You, however, should go left, just to the right of (and above) a sunken track. Two buildings will come into view. Head between them, and up. Level with the higher building there's an easily-missed fork in the faint path: take the right fork, which leads to the corner angle of two very low walls. Cross the wall that heads right towards the wood, take a pace or so forward, and stop. Look back at the wall you *didn't* cross, then turn and see if you can spot its one-time continuation up the hill. It goes dead straight for about 400 metres – and it's a handy guide, because the little, rarely-trodden path you're going to follow up the hill is a meandering 10 metres to the left of that ruined little wall.

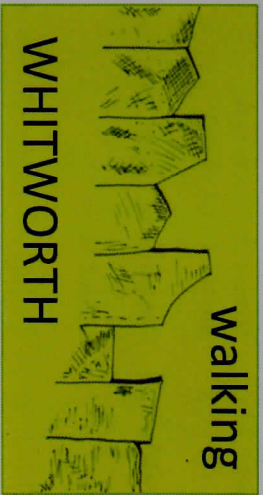
So, off you go. To begin with the traces of wall are obscured by rushes, but higher up you'll spot it – give it a wave. Eventually the path improves, and leads you to a stile. Over and left, just a few more uphill metres, and there's a gate, with a blissfully flat tramway beyond. Walk the tramway, hopefully enjoying the wide views to the left. Halfway along, the tramway is interrupted by a deep dip – use the little path down at the right. The bottom is still a challenge, especially in wet weather. At the end of this tramway there's a stile. The direction arrow is on a post that's become detached – whichever way it points, you need to go straight ahead on the obvious, if narrow, path. Notice all the scattered boulders to your right: Cat Stones. Soon the path joins a broader one – another tramway. This in turn soon forks – go right/up, to pass in front of a large derelict container, and you're set fair for Rooley Moor Road.

There, turn left, downhill and, at the crossroad just beyond the substantial gate, turn left again, heading for Prickshaw. Go down over the cattle grid, then, at the junction 200 metres on, turn right. Take this bridleway past Higher Dunishbooth Farm, and simply stay on it (don't turn right at the cattle grid) all the way down to a car park at Broadley Wood. Go down the steps

opposite onto the main footpath/cycleway through Healey Dell. Go left, walking the length of the path, coming off at the pump track. Go up the ramp, left over the little bridge, then immediately right onto the path marked with another RW symbol. Take the only turn (left) just before Wallbank Lodge, go right at the end, then, at the road junction, right again onto Hall Street. The car park is just down the hill, on the left.



Peewit Parade. Mary Cawley again....and again.



This second series of guides follows the same format as the first - all the walks are circular; all start from a place where you can leave a car; most fit comfortably into a morning or an afternoon or a summer evening (this walk may be a bit tight); all have ups, to give you the splendid views that Whitworth is blessed with, and downs (obviously); and all have route instructions supplemented with a clear, simple map and a small helping of history.

Whitworth has a fantastic network of paths that can be knitted together into many satisfying walks. But there is a big wide world of walking beyond our valley walls too, of course. Invest in OS map 21 (South Pennines) and explore. You might even find some walks that are half as good as these!

14 PRICKSHAW BROOK AND CAT STONES

Produced by Whitworth Sports Council and funded by



ERIC WRIGHT
CHARITABLE TRUST

WALK 14 · PRICKSHAW BROOK/CAT STONES

START Halfold Church Car Park
(bottom of Hall Street)

DISTANCE Getting on for 5 miles

TIME Allow 3 hours

NATURE OF WALK The first half involves a lot of up, and there's another climb around halfway. This is a fair-weather route, partly because there are places where it can be rather boggy, and partly because you don't want to be marching with your head down and miss the spectacular wide views. Sturdy footwear is essential, and the route-finding often requires you to be alert.

Turn right out of the car park and walk up Hall Street past the two school entrances, then right up Hall Fold, up, ignoring all turn-offs, until, having gone up a roughly-paved gully with no houses, you encounter the wide gate of Fold Head Farm on your right, and the blue plaque high on *Fold Head High Barn*, which is worth a read. *There are a number of these deliberately remote 'illegal' chapels dotted around the hills of Rossendale.*

Now look left. Ignore the gate next to the farm – left of that is a rough 10-metre-long path up that will put you on the broad track up towards Lined Farm. However, there's a waymarked stile on the left just 10 metres up this track – hop over and walk up the right side of two fields, crossing a low wall in the process. The stile into the third field has a dodgy top step – try not to use it. Once over you'll find rushes ahead...but there is a path through towards their left edge. Soon you'll meet a cross-track – you're going right, through the gate, which must be shut behind you. The track runs in a gully – you are advised to walk along the left rim. One field along you'll see a stile, placed a curious 10 metres left of your path. Go over, and follow the arrow rightish (an odd chicane) to rejoin the track. Use the

stepping stones to cross a sludgy patch, then *immediately* take the well-worn path that goes flat and leftish.



Peewit Aloft. Pencil and crayon drawing by Mary Cawley

The sunken version leads straight ahead, with paths on either rim. Use the leftmost, if conditions and livestock allow, because that gives you the best views down into Prickshaw Brook and across to a tree that will help you later, and because you'll be trending left to an unpromising little stile when it comes into view some 200 metres ahead. Don't judge a book by its cover: it's a solid stile! And it leads to a section of unexpected, hidden delight – a sheeptrack that dips, lifts and contours the round rise overlooking the brook (such a little brook in such a deep and elegant cut!), dropping then to a crossing point with a ladder-stile up a short scramble on the other side.

Climb over the stile, and turn left immediately, being wary of the barbed wire at your left elbow. The narrowness doesn't last long. At the third little rocky outcrop 25 metres along, the fence trends left and down, and the path trends right and up. Stick with it, and after 100 metres or so it'll join with another, slightly more trodden, path coming from your right. Follow this path, left, aiming at the top of a tree, above the brook, with the spire of Christ Church, Healey, beyond it. The path crosses two

tumbledown walls, with the second turning into a helpful guide on your left. Ahead is a ruined farm – slip through the guide wall and spot a short post bearing an arrow. Also helpful? Only indirectly, since the arrow points straight ahead, whereas the path you want – a proper path, oh joy! – is below you on your left. If you take a couple of steps down to your left, and turn around, you'll see it descending to an evident zigzag about 50 metres down. Down you go, not forgetting to say thank you to your guide-tree.



Doctors Wood Bridges. Pencil drawings by Linda Parker



The far end of the avenue of trees at the bottom is permanently boggy. You've two options here. Either shorten the bog by crossing the stile into the wood, then ford Fern Isle Brook, and walk straight ahead along a narrow path on the right side of the stream; *or* stay on the obvious – but sludgy – main path and