

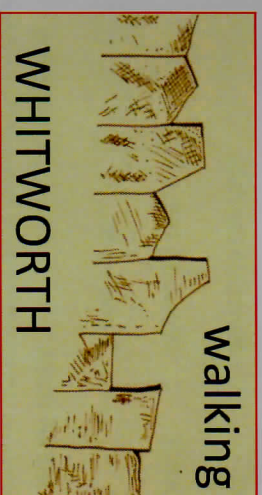
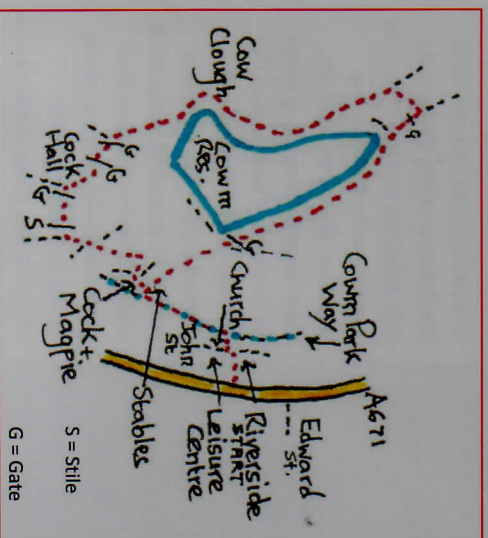
If you're going on, take stock of the ascent. The track consists of two parallel flagstone tracks, with smaller stones bedded sideways and lumpily between them. The flagstones were for wagon wheels, the bit between for the horse pulling the wagon to get a grip. If the weather is dry, and the track is too – a rare combination! – no problem...except some of the flags may be greasy and slippery from earlier weather. In which case, be a horse, and pick your way up the middle. If the roadway has become second cousin to a river, pick your way as best you can for maybe 15 metres, then get up onto the useful shoulder of grass next to the left-hand wall. This will get you most of the way up the hill easily enough. At the chicane at the top become a horse again: things may be watery, but it's always manageable up here.

If you were to turn right at the top you'd be en route to the Chair, which you might have spied from various places down in Whitworth. But this walk takes you leftish – where there's a lovely view over the wall to (maybe) the water-skiers on the reservoir – to a gate. Through you go. The tall wall on your left here makes these next few metres a bit of a gloopy puddle-trap at times, so beware of shiny-booted offspring getting stuck/losing wellies. However, 50m. ahead is a small wooden gate on your left. Go through, and trend to the right, looking out for the start of a set of steps.

They will lead you down to Cock Hall Farm, but take them carefully – some of the flags are not well laid, and in slippery weather... Once negotiated, though, you've a lovely, safe, tarmac stroll between the houses, so that you can get your head up and admire the way these buildings have been restored. And do notice the flagstone walls, re-erected with real skill by a local builder with an eye for the quirky beauty of a style of

walling which, as you've seen, is almost a Whitworth signature.

Beyond the houses the path, clearly marked, passes through a sprung gate and down the side of one of these walls, to the bottom of the meadow. Climb the stile and turn sharp left. The flagstone path - walk cautiously just beyond the second set of trees if the ground is wet, and use the wall as a handrail - leads to a wooden bridge. At its far end go left, and up the slope to the suburban housing of Cowm Park. Go straight ahead on New Way and, after a right-left kink at its far end, you'll be back at the Cock and Magpie, and the stables. Retrace your steps along Cowm Park Way North, down the steps at St Anselm's, past the Leisure Centre (where you can buy a coffee and snacks if it's open) and up the steps to the Riverside.



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 (walk 14 may be 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!

WALK 15 COWM RES. OUTER/COCK HALL

Produced by Whitworth Sports Council and funded by



ERIC WRIGHT
CHARITABLE TRUST

WALK 15 COWM RES OUTER/COCK HALL

START Riverside Car Park

DISTANCE About 2.5 miles

TIME 2 hours max.

NATURE OF WALK A rewarding

variation on Whitworth's most frequently-trodden walk – but rather more demanding because there's some up and down, and underfoot conditions need solid footwear and caution.

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From the Riverside car park go down the steps over the Spodden towards the Leisure Centre. Cross John Street, to go up the little street next to Our Lady and St Anselm's School. Climb the steps and turn left, along Cowm Park Way North, which has a grand view across the valley to Brown Wardle. Approaching the stables, the pavement gives out, so be aware of traffic, and at the crossroads turn right, again taking care as you cross to the pavement on the left. Stay right of the Cock and Maggie and walk up the approach road to Cowm Reservoir. (Stay inside the railing – protection against the wagons that service the quarry, and the motor bikes and 4x4s that use a site up there at weekends.)

Follow the reservoir wall straight ahead through the gate. *About 150m. on you'll meet the memorial to The Great Pedestrian – James 'Trecle' Sanderson: worth a few minutes of your time.* On this stretch of the path you'll probably meet lots of other walkers, often with children or dogs or both – but at the silver squeeze-stille

the vast majority of them will go left for the simple circuit of the res. You, on the other hand, will march straight on, skirting a selection of puddles that are usually wonderful for any small child equipped with brightly-coloured wellies. Go straight through the gate, 100m. ahead, shutting it behind you, please. Take a quick peek at the strange man-made pond just ahead and to your right, and look up to see if the buzzards are about, but at the long stone bench turn left with the wall. In wet conditions this next section needs attentive walking – it can be muddy and slippery. The safest line is usually between the flagstones.

At the next corner, where an avenue of trees comes in from the right, go left, following the footpath sign.

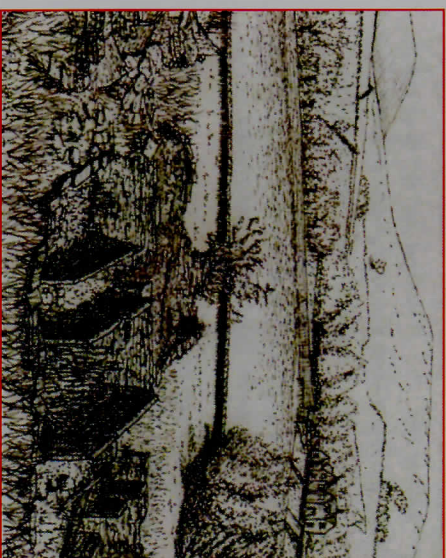


Again, this can be wet and muddy, though there are generally bypasses around the muddiest sections. Simply follow this gently winding, gently undulating track and marvel at the quiet: amazing that a route this delightful and this close is so sparsely walked. Notice the flagstone walling on your left. *Once there were working farms all across the Cowm valley. The building of the reservoir - it opened in 1877 - brought that way of life to an end, although it was 1950 before the final farm was abandoned. In some places locally the eviction of the residents was fraught, even brutal – at Watergrove reservoir the*

balliffs even resorted to removing the roofs of the houses

of people resistant to leaving. Apparently the handover here at Cowm was much more peaceable. The full story is told in a splendid booklet called 'Cowm – the Valley that Died' by Joan Douglas, available from Whitworth Heritage Museum. You'll find yourself soon enough at the ruin of Cowclough, a hamlet that in 1851 had 52 residents. There was a quarry up above, and Sanderson's smithy was here too.

Now the track, Cowclough Rake, swings hard left and changes its character. Just by the curiously urban-looking drainage grid there's a gap in the left-hand wall. If time's short, or you don't fancy a climb, this is the place to bail out. Go through the gap, look for the gate down by the reservoir, and work your way down the field. Just make sure you shut the gate so that no sheep follow you through. Then turn right and follow the obvious path back to the reservoir car park.



Cowclough. Pen and ink drawing by Peter Williams