

## WALK 16      KNOTT HILL AND COWM TOP

**START**                Riverside/Ashcroft car park (or the boulders at the top of The Road to Nowhere)

**DISTANCE**        3.3 miles (Riverside start)

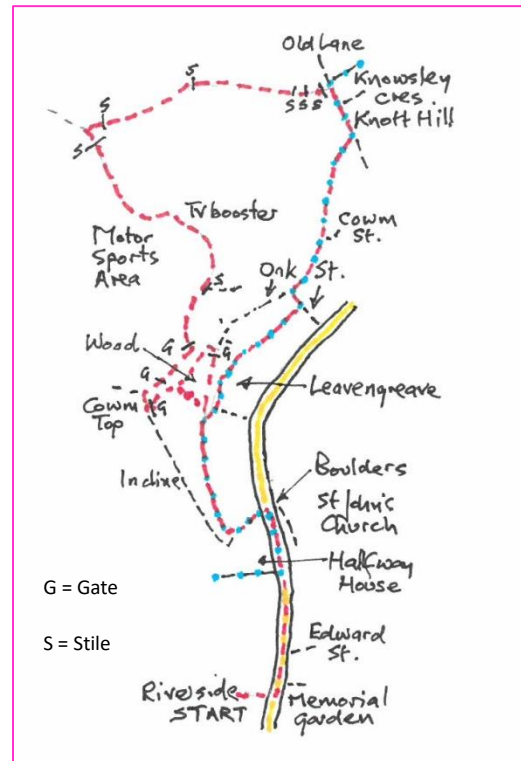
**TIME**                2 hours or so

**NATURE OF WALK**      Steep in places. Plenty of rough walking, so wear boots. **Monday to Friday only** (and even then be cautious - you'll see why later). Don't do it after wet weather, or in mist. A quirky walk, not easy, and one to be undertaken in a precautionary frame of mind.

Turn left out of the car park and walk 300 metres up the main road to the boulders opposite St John's Church, then left, down the road to join the cycle path bending northward. At the breast of the first mild slope (trees both sides) you can *either* stay with the cycle path as it dips right and wends its flat way between the houses of Leavengreave (follow the blue signs); *or* you can take the path less trodden that rises up straight ahead. But beware: it's always slutchy about 10-20 metres in, and the junction halfway up can be a bit soft too. At the junction go straight ahead, and through the wooded tunnel you'll come to a gate that leads into a little path between bungalows. Now kink left, then right, onto Oak Street, which you descend to rejoin the cycle path just below Chapel Houses/East View.

Follow this section of the cycle path till it meets a road, Knott Hill, the approach road up to Knowsley Crescent. Walk up past the copper beeches to the second stile on

your left, immediately before the first house. It sports an orange footpath sign. Up and over – once, then twice, then three times. At the third the path rises dead straight ahead of you – a fence to the left and a broken wall to your right. Take your time, and turn around often, to enjoy the unsuspected dip to your right, with its waterfall after heavy rain, and views across to the farms on the east side of Shawforth.



At the top you'll cross a fence via a stile about 3m. to your right. Start off right of the broken wall, but you'll cross to the left of it soon, then stick with the wall until it

deviates to the right. More concentration needed here. There is a confident path directly ahead through the rushes...but actually it's a con. You *can* head up it, if you wish, looking when it gives out for a path that is no more than a sheep-trod heading off unpromisingly at about 45 degrees to the left. The simpler route is to go sharp left at the foot of the rushy hillock, skirting the whole rushy area by following the tractor tracks that you'll soon pick up. Whichever option you choose, keep your head up, looking for a gate/stile in a corner formed by the bendy extension of the wall you left earlier and a fence. Go over the stile onto trackless moorland – but despair not!

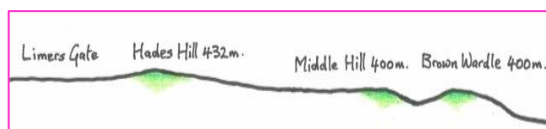
**This next section needs care. It is not on a right of way. You're not forbidden to enter, but you do so at your own risk.** Twenty metres ahead is another stile in the fence to your left that takes you into a very carved-up area of land. This is Cowm Leisure's enclosed off-road track, used **every weekend** and on occasion during the week by motor-bikers and, once a month, 4x4-ers. **Do not enter if bikes etc are present.** It's a pitted, gouged horror-show of a place - but then it always was, as a quarry, and then as an abandoned quarry. Walkers are hard-wired to disapprove of bikers, but unless you're a purist who disapproves of motor sport on green principle it's worth a moment's thought. The bikers who use this place are the good guys, indulging their passion *without* tearing around the open moor scarring the land and scaring the wildlife. Ok, you'll hear bike noise as you're walking peacefully on Brown Wardle on a Sunday afternoon, but later in *this* walk it'll be the constant traffic on the main road you'll be hearing from up here.

Lecture over, now you're in you've got to get through! Here's the easiest way. Bear left from the stile, seeking a broad, relatively dry track. If you're lucky it'll be

picked out for you by green triangular signs. Keep within 20 metres, say, of the fence to the left, until you reach a more open area where the fence turns left and you can too, heading for the building with the television booster, like a vertical cigarette, on top. There, spot the sturdy posts of the perimeter fence by the wood. Stay as far left as you reasonably can, while sweeping down and right, to a stile next to the wood...but ignore it.

**(Do read this bit, please.** If, for whatever reason, you find yourself sharing the track with roaring vehicles, **do** hop over the stile. Then you've 3 options, two bad, one ok. **1.** Down the obvious path. **Don't!** It promises much, but becomes very difficult, and dangerous. **2.** Carefully climb over the wire fence immediately to your right, and work a careful way along the track fence. After 50 metres of fence-clinging-who-wrote-this-rubbish it improves, but it may well lead you to the **unguarded top of a precipice, so don't do this either.** **3.** Over the wire again, edge along as above. 40m. beyond the dogleg in the fence, at a grassy patch, strike off half left on a lovely, if steep, path down through the wood. It'll deliver you to the lower wood featured in the chunk below the picture.)

If quiet follow the fence to the right to just beyond the trees, to a gate. Pop through and, 200 metres along the broadening path, through another by a big gorse bush. You'll find yourself at Cwm Top, with a choice to make.



The most direct route back is to stick with the left-hand fence and head to the left of the houses for what looks like the edge of the world. It quickly resolves itself into Facit Incline, 550 metres of dead straight descent, splendid on a good day after a dry spell, but anywhere

from worrisome to lethally slippery if it's damp. At the bottom you're at the corner of the cycle path, and the Road to Nowhere leads you home, somewhat ironically.



But here's another option – shown red on the map. Opposite the Cwm Top house is a metal gate, with a path leading steeply down towards a wood, which, one way or another, you've to go through. The adventurous way is to turn down through the gap in the fence just before the wood and see where the obvious paths take you before you emerge just above the cyclepath. Or you can pass to the left of the wood, take the right turn just after it, by the bungalows, then turn right again to walk through the tunnel of trees on the path you may have used as you left the cyclepath on your way up. JF



This second series of guides follows the same format as the first - walks are circular, starting from a place where you can park; most fit comfortably into a morning or an afternoon or a summer evening (walk 14 may be tight); all have ups, to give you some of Whitworth's splendid views, and downs (obviously); and all have route instructions supplemented with a simple map. **On this route, treat the map as indicative: but read the instructions *before* taking it on and follow them carefully: they offer a number of potentially necessary caveats and alternatives!**

Whitworth has a fantastic network of paths that can be knitted together into many satisfying walks. For big wide world of walking beyond our valley walls too, invest in OS map 21 and explore. Maybe you'll find walks that are half as good as these!

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