

## WALK 19 CROOK HILL WINDFARM

START Up Whitworth Rake to parking area just past the 9<sup>th</sup> tee at Lobden Golf Club

DISTANCE 8 miles or so

TIME Give yourself a solid 3 hours

NATURE OF WALK Liz Hughes of Over The Tops walking group supplied this one. It's not the easiest/shortest of strolls, but neither is it particularly demanding, and though the route is quite long the route-finding is easy. It takes in two contrasting memorials – one commemorating a long life and a love of this land, the other much more sombre. The return journey has a lot less climbing than the outward half. But it is largely a high route, and open, so be equipped for wind and lower temperatures. Wait for a day without mist - it's a walk of constant panoramic views, if you can see them. Pack a picnic, perhaps?

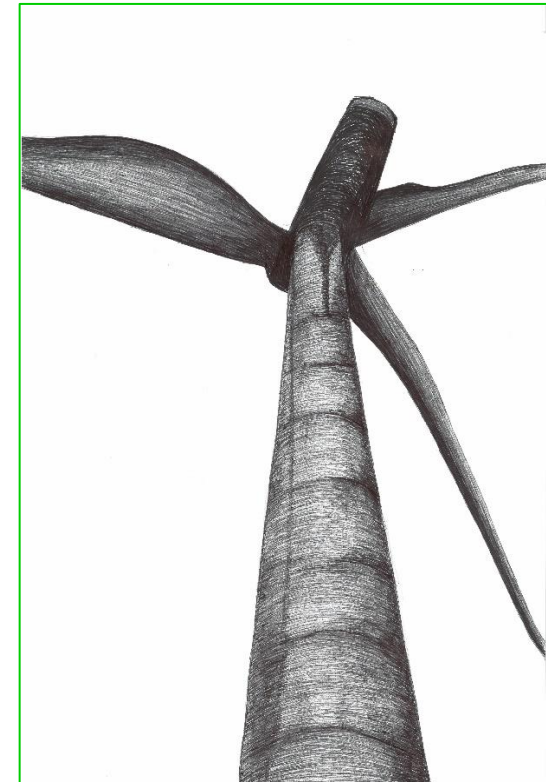
\*\*\*

Near your parking spot is a signpost near a gap in the raised tramway. Head for the gap, but immediately *before* it turn right on a roadway that will send you well to the right of Brown Wardle. Where the good roadway turns sharp right into a property with an incongruous no entry sign, your route goes straight ahead on a rougher track leading to a complicated-looking gate with a bridleway sign. Go through and head for the trees. This is the site of the ancient Brown Wardle Farm. Take a

cautious peek – steps lead down into a vaulted cellar that was used for preparing meat. Follow the green pathway downhill until you meet a short signpost with a blue sign. Turn left, down a stonier, then muddier, path that leads to the corner of Watergrove reservoir. Go right, across the bridge, then left along the long dam. Pass through one little gate and at the reservoir corner follow the obvious road round to the left. After the pond (sign warns of deep mud) take the first turn right, signposted Shore.

Pass through 3 gates. The first comes soon, at the top of the memorial wood. The second is over the brow, and the track sweeps right. The third is a fair way down the track, which has a steep embankment to your left and a six-foot wall to the right. The going's easy, but if you're 5'5" you'll be thinking wistfully of Whitworth walks, where you're almost never without a view. Keep on this track (it improves!): about 100m. beyond a small lodge/res. you'll meet another 3-way signpost. Ignore all their blandishments, and turn sharp *left*, up the track which stretches ahead of you. It's unchanging in its gradient up Clay Pot Hill (nowhere near as hard as Facit Incline) and its direction: ahead you'll see the blades of the turbines and, starting as a mole on the hill amongst them, the Jackson Memorial. Up you go.

The memorial was built to honour a local farmer who spent his life walking these moors in all weathers with his dog. The views from here are obviously dependent on weather conditions, but sometimes it can feel as if the whole of Manchester and its Pennine hinterland (Stoodley Pike, the moors of the Bronte country) is laid out for your delectation, or a game of I-Spy. (Blackstone Edge, anyone? Jodrell Bank?) Whatever, eat your butties and take a while to marvel.



Turbine Biro drawing by Hayley Murphy

From the memorial continue in the same direction, up a broad green path. In about 400m, near Turbine 5, you'll encounter another memorial, this one a small cairn, dedicated to "Lost Boy" from Shore. *In February 1930 Alec Jenkinson was just six years old. He and a group of friends wandered onto the moors just beyond their field, playing ... only for a thick mist to come down. Alec got separated from his friends, and despite a desperate search it took 4 days for his body to be discovered, in a hollow not far from here.*

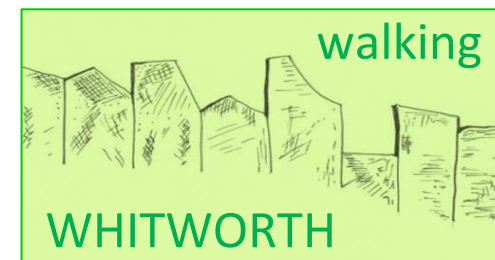
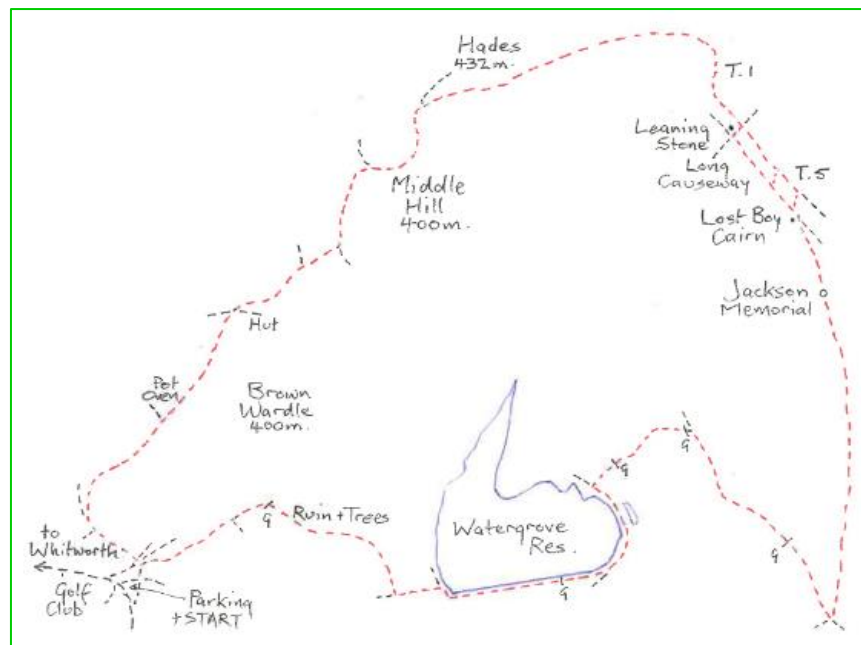
From this memorial one way back is to follow the track going left to the Leaning Stone, then pick up the instructions on Walk 18. Or (and definitely in mist) you can yomp the 150 metres or so across to the service road – the walking is easy, and being so close up to these giants makes you realise just what feats of engineering have been accomplished here. The windfarm may do weird things to your sense of scale when you step out along the road – it seems to take ages to reach Turbine 1. But navigation is simple – just walk the road as it twists and rises. You're over 400 metres above sea level up here. The panoramic view can be fantastic.

Eventually you'll begin to recognise where you are, especially if you've ever done the annual Skyline walk in a clockwise direction. Having been dipping for a while

you'll reach a point where the road becomes super-wide – this led to the contractors' yard when the road was being built and the turbines erected. Here the road swings a big right-hand bend, ready for its drop down off Middle Hill and into Shawforth. (If the view of Shawforth opens up in front of you you've gone too far. Retreat.) On the bend watch, on the left, for a widening flat area, at the near end of which are some little hummocks, with a flat path between two of them. Through you go.

Beyond, the path angles left, becomes grassy/muddy, and leads you off Middle Hill at a cheerful gradient. At the bottom turn right, through a small basin of squelch (rushy escape route just to the left) and you're now on the broad path (with a derelict drainage channel at your left foot) that will lead you comfortably all the way back to the gap in the raised tramway at the southern end of Brown Wardle where you left your car. JF

[You do, of course, have other finishing options. You could pick up a path left, past the concrete bunkers, and walk around the east (left) side of Brown Wardle; or even go over the top. The least-walked option is to stay on the wide, western path till just beyond the big flagstones beneath the second bunker, then pick up a gentle grassy path that becomes a very pleasant terrace along the western flank...at least as far as the south-west shoulder. After that it's either a diagonal yomp, or drop onto the main path somewhere near Pot Oven Farm.]



The windfarm began production of electricity in 2015, but the process began well before that. Locally there were doubts, and the building of the access road seemed to cause problems with the water supply to some properties and disruption to the water flow around Landgate. Moving the vast components of the turbines through Whitworth, around the turn at Landgate, and up the steepest of the slopes near Crey Farm, was a logistical masterclass – the teamwork of the police outriders was fascinating; as was the double steering of the hugely long low transporters; and the weighting that was needed for traction on the climb onto the moor. Now the 11 turbines, each 125m. high, have the capacity to produce 37.4 megawatts of power. Some reservations remain, but compared with gas-fired carbon-emitting plants, or a nuclear option that bequeaths radioactive waste to our grandchildren and generations beyond, wind power seems utterly benign and sensible. JF

## WALK 19 CROOK HILL WINDFARM

Produced by Whitworth Sports Council with a generous grant from the Crook Hill Community Benefit Fund