

## WALK 20 BW RIDGE/LONG CAUSEWAY

**START** Parking area near Lobden Golf Club, just beyond the raised 9<sup>th</sup> tee

**DISTANCE** About 6 miles

**TIME** 3 hours (plus)

Start through the gap in the raised tramway, and turn right, not along the tramway but to its left, up by the Rossendale Way sign that points you directly at Brown Wardle. An alternative is to shift gently to the left, where another path becomes more and more distinct, and becomes the best way of negotiating the unseen dip that cuts across the right-hand route. Not that the dip is impossible, and 3 solid old boundary stones (see next column) show you the best way through. Both paths become grassier, broader and steeper, and they come together: and the ascent of the South Face requires



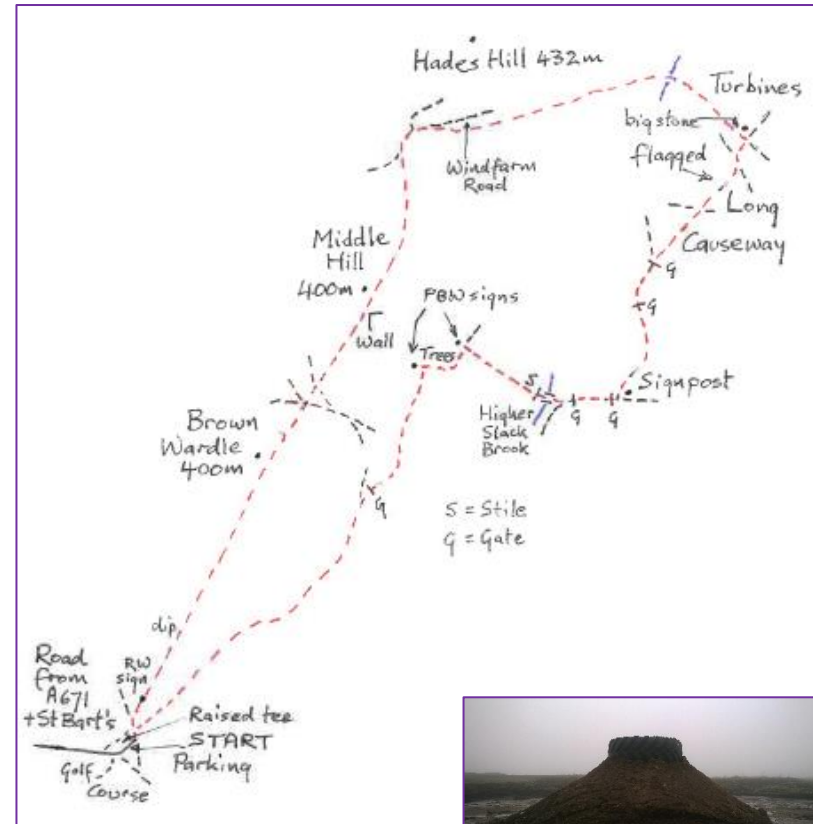
Boundary Stone...plus snow on Brown Wardle...but blue sky over the Pennines Photograph by John Hollows

pitons – Ok, an exaggeration – after all, every June about a hundred 8 to 16-year-olds run this...downhill, admittedly. Once up, take a breather – and take in the view to the south: the etymology of *ward-le* takes you back to two Anglo-Saxon words meaning *guardian* (or *lookout*) and *hill*, and from here you can quite see why.

Spot the upright stone hereabouts. This is an old boundary stone between two parishes: the **S** refers to Spotland Parish, The **H** on the other side to the mysterious Hundersfield Parish. A Whitworth Boundary Walk used to go annually from one stone to the next.

The path over the top is straight, clear, stony and close to flat, though the cairn on your left at the northern end defines the summit of Brown Wardle (400m) correctly. The descent begins immediately, first on grass, then in (or beside) a deep scar. (Those kids go up this.) As you descend, spot your way up the right shoulder of Middle Hill – from here, spot the corner of the wall, right-ish.

Traverse Windy Gap in a wiggly straight line...i.e. don't drift onto the flat path disappearing right...and then it's head down and haul up again – your choice of path/scar. The best place to breast the climb is between hummocks on your left and the wall on your right. Past the hummocks you'll hit a stony track – perfect. If you've drifted over to the wall, you'll see a footpath sign pointing you diagonally right and low. That *is* the way the senior fell-runners go, but you should take a few



steps to your left, and up. Soon you'll be on the stony track. The actual summit of Middle Hill must be somewhere to your left here, but it's not marked. Keep the wire fence on your left. Stick with that and you'll emerge onto the windfarm road, at a point where a

mysterious tumulus rears up on your left.

Follow the windfarm road for a couple of hundred metres, counting the metal drainage channels that run aslant across the road: just past the third (where you'd



go left on an anticlockwise Skyline) step a couple of paces off the *right* of the roadway, to pick up a narrow but obvious path (with a wall 20m. to your right at this point) which runs next to the roadway for quite a way. An alternative way to find this path involves going about 250m. further on the road until the land to the left stops being higher than it: *there* step *right* onto the path. The route here is well away from the actual summit of Hades, but the turning point of the Hades Hill Fell Race is here. Now your path slides down and rightish – and becomes invisible from the roadway which itself has crept beneath a low banking.

Just trundle down this track, which says goodbye to fence/wall on the right, and hugs the hillside on your left, through patches of black shale, until you see a rather elegantly curving wall on your right and meet a stream, which you cross onto the pale brown track rising rightish directly ahead. (At the sign, go left, not down.) Follow this track contouring around Rough Hill, ignoring a right fork, until you encounter a crossroad marked by a Leaning Tower of a stone, where you turn right.

Shortly you'll meet another junction, this one marked by an information sign about the Long Causeway, a packhorse trail which ran from Wardle to Ramsden. Here you go right again, and down, and immediately realise why this path bears this name – it's an ancient narrow packhorse trail made of causey stones – flags set into the soil. They make for grand, stride-out walking in dry weather...but in damp conditions down-sloping flags can be a menace, if the rain is blurring your glasses! (Grass edges then.)

When you come to the cross-track, you can go right, if the causeway is problematic: you'll then trend left and end up somewhere beneath Middle Hill, and flattish paths beneath Middle and Brown Wardle will get you comfortably back to the start. Otherwise, cross directly

over the cross-track, to where the Long Causeway continues downhill, although on this stretch the flagstones are not altogether continuous, and some scarcely poke through the turf. Soon there's an evident end, with a sort of step down to the left, another track, angled leftward this time, and a gate that's slightly awkward to open and shut (which you must). About 250m. down the track you'll pass through another gate, which is usually open, and 400m. beyond that you'll see a tall signpost pointing right toward the centre of the universe.

Go through the adjacent gate, and follow the track down, through another one. 30m. below, turn right down some steps to cross the pretty Higher Slack Brook via a wooden bridge that isn't at all pretty and may be a bit slippery. Climb over the stile on the other side. There are many ways back from here to the start, but the route below has the benefit of simplicity.

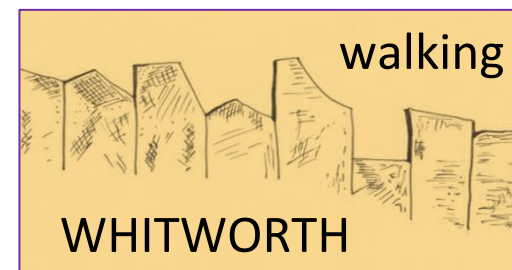
Go straight ahead, between the two hillocks, up the cart track, noticing how different it is from the Causeway. Eventually you'll come to a Pennine Bridleway (PBW) signpost pointing you left. Take this track between a pair of old gateposts and swing right with it towards a stand of four trees (one hollow) and another PBW sign, again pointing you left. And that's it, really. Stay on this



path as it rises up to a gate beneath the eastern flank of Brown Wardle.

*Ozymandias woz ere?*

From there either of the two paths ahead will do – but the surface of the lower, left-hand, one is less stony, less puddled and a joy after rain because next to it runs a splendid old drainage channel – Victorian green technology at its best – so your final half mile will be accompanied by gentle burbling. JF



From down in the Whitworth valley, Brown Wardle is *the* dominant feature in the landscape, with Middle Hill and Hades completing our Eastern wall. All three have their historical importance – Brown Wardle as a guardian; Middle Hill as a quarry, most recently when a section below its top was scooped to provide materials for the windfarm road, its silhouette restored after; and arrowheads and flints found on Hades suggest occupation as far back as the Mesolithic era. Now Hades is the target for September's annual Fell Race, and the first half of this walk borrows from that route - thus our outbound has a couple of demanding climbs.

But you're not racing, and your return route is easier than the runners', dropping you down the ancient Long Causeway and bringing you home across a tumbling tree-lined brook and along the "wrong" side of our hills. JF

## WALK 20 OUR EASTERN RIDGE AND THE LONG CAUSEWAY

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