

WALK 3 WHITWORTH DOCTORS' TRAIL

START Car park on Market Street between Basil's restaurant and Duffy's funeral parlour.

DISTANCE Not quite 3 miles.

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Walk past Basil's then turn right into Church Street. At the mini-roundabout the road up becomes Taylor Street, and here are three 17th century buildings, two barns and a cottage – spot the date-stones. Across the road, on the corner of Union Street is the site of Betty Stays' House. Betty Dawson made corsets for patients with back problems. Evidently she'd measure a patient, walk to Manchester to buy materials, walk back, and make the stays, all in one day: fee - £3 or £3 and 10 shillings.

Up Taylor Street is the Square. On the left, just beyond the turning, is Whitworth House, built in 1674, but later the home of the famous Whitworth Doctors. John Taylor was the first true Whitworth Doctor, setting up his practice in 1764. He had originally been a blacksmith, but had developed an interest in horse ailments. Sometimes he was called upon to use his horse doctor's skills on human patients, particularly broken or malformed bones, but also cancers. Such problems were common to both humans and horses, so it followed that similar treatments could cure either. Outside Whitworth House there stood a wooden horse-stocks, for immobilising equine patients.

People were dealt with inside, and at the height of their fame the Doctors had queues of up to 100 people waiting for them – with an insistence on orderliness and no preferential treatment for the wealthy. Famously the earliest of the Doctors would interrupt consultations with human patients if there was a horse outside needing treatment. This fate might befall any patient, no matter how important. Once, one of the Doctors travelled to London to treat the Bishop of Durham: a cartoon appeared in the London press, in which the Doctor is pictured abandoning the eminent cleric to see to a horse outside the door.

The last Whitworth Doctor was James Eastwood Taylor, who practiced for 30 years until his death in 1876.

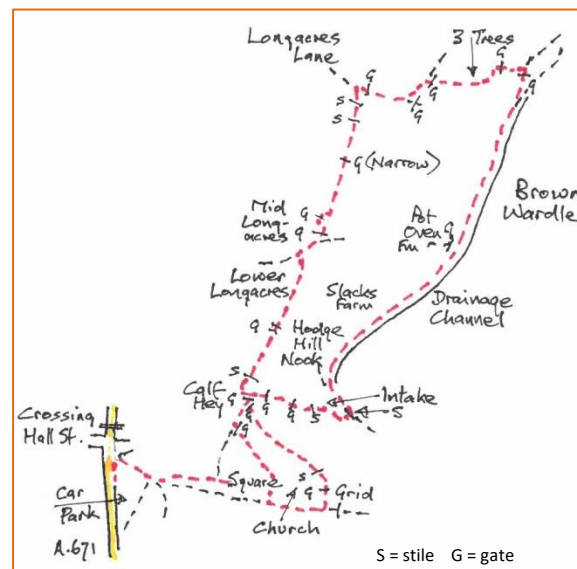
The Whitworth System

Some of the later Taylors obtained formal medical qualifications, but still continued what had become known as the 'Whitworth System'. Using techniques which to the modern mind seem amazingly brutal, and locally gathered herbs, the Taylors successfully treated the ailments of patients that orthodox physicians and surgeons had failed to cure.

Whitworth Red Bottle was an embrocation containing 6 parts camphor, 6 parts oil of origanum, 1 part anchusa root and 80 parts methylated spirits.

A 'snuff of wondrous virtues for the head' was made from powdered Assarabacca (European Wild Ginger) was used by John Taylor (1740-1802) to treat the Princess Elizabeth for a 'continued pain and stupor in the head'.

A caustic compound known as 'Keen' was used to eat away cancer, apparently with success, although the shock occasioned by the treatment could prove fatal.



Beyond the Red Lion at the top of the Square is a set of steps. Near the top is the entrance to the Doctors' Vault. Turning left at the top and passing through a metal gate you'll come onto a flagstone path known as Cripples Walk. This was used to exercise patients' legs, the Doctors directing patients up into the surrounding countryside to speed their recovery process. At the end of this path turn right up what is now a concrete roadway, leading to Calf Hey, a building used for patients' lodgings. Once you're through the gate at the side, you'll note that Calf Hey has 9 rear windows, typical of premises used for handloom weaving.

Now you'll start along a flat section of the walk. Once this was a well-paved pathway, but time and grass have covered the old causeway stones, resulting in one particularly awkward section 20 metres beyond the first squeeze-stile. There are stepping stones, but they are often overwhelmed in even short periods of wet weather, necessitating a detour up the hill to the right, circling with the wall up there on your right, and descending near the wall at the far end of this piece of land.

There, pass through a double gate, then alongside the white buildings of Lower Longacres Farm. Next go straight ahead, passing a lamppost, and bearing right, up to the hidden kissing-gate below Mid Longacres Farm. The tarmac road sweeps elegantly up and left, where you'll see a footpath sign pointing you to the right. Walk the length of this field – barn/wall/fence on your left – to a fatman's agony at its lowest point. Straight ahead again, over one stile and maybe a second (the gate's usually open) at Longacres Farm. The earliest farm on this site was recorded in 1626.

At this point you turn sharp right, through the gate of Longacres Stud, a much more recent addition to the landscape. There's a second gate 100 metres up, but you should follow the footpath to the left, and then pass through the gate and up the lovely sweep of the track leading to the three trees and the ruin of Hopwood Barn Farm. Behind you'll find a walled lane leading to the intake stone wall, with its helpful signpost right. Follow the path leading on a gentle diagonal up to the main path along the flank of Brown Wardle. Stay on this path, even though it's not quite the line of the ancient Limers Gate.

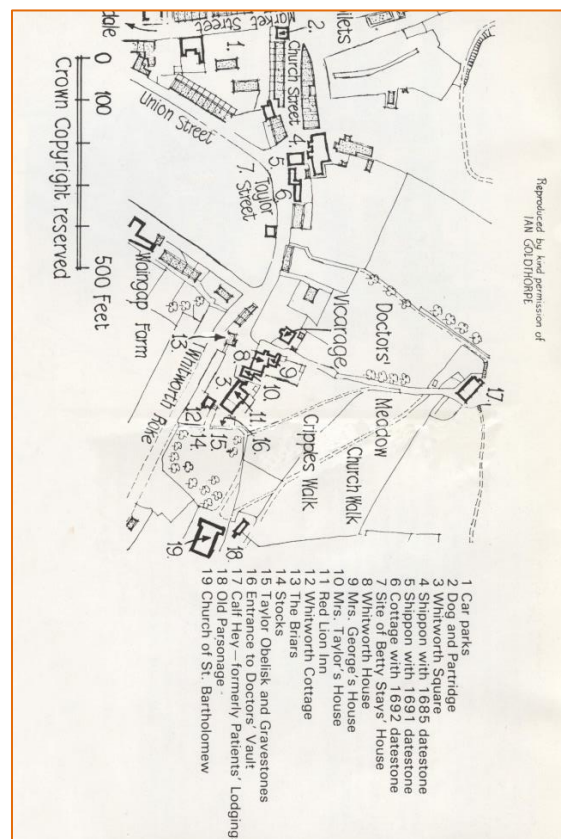
(The name is more commonly applied now to the green road a mile north, above Shawforth.) *Limers Gate* was used heavily in the 16th and 17th centuries by packhorses taking coal from Brown Wardle and Shawforth to Clitheroe and Settle and returning with lime, but also by wool merchants and cattle drovers. You'll pass Pot Oven Farm, named for a long-gone pottery and the home of Ailse o'Fussers, who operated the last packhorse train in the late 19th century. (Leaflets for Walks 1 and 9, and the Museum have more on Ailse.)

Eventually, after a swing down and left, with St Bartholomew's Church off to the right, your path merges with another coming from Hodge Hill Nook. Just after this junction there's an odd, high stile to climb over the wall. The wood is a mess: the stone steps are very secure. Once over* you'll see the ruins of Intake, which was the home of Gilbert Holden, who was cruelly executed at Lancaster in 1809 for making counterfeit money. There was a strong sense of injustice about Gilbert's case, there being more than a whiff of entrapment by the authorities. The upper storey of Intake was rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of Gilbert Holden's baby, though the noises emanating from the house are perhaps better explained by water flowing underground in nearby abandoned mine tunnels.

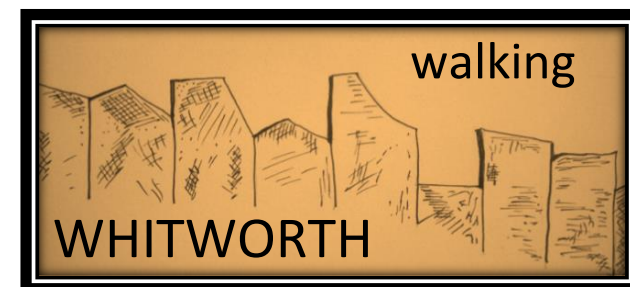
Turn right at the wall junction, and continue down the side of the wall, passing through a stile and two small gates, aiming for Calf Hey, then turn left down the lane to return to the Square. Or, if you fancy seeing St Bartholomew's Church, and its memorable gargoyles, turn left just past Calf Hey and walk up the lovely grassy path that takes you behind the church and pitches you out onto Whitworth Rake just above it. Walk all the way round the church. The rear is always cool and dim, and the gargoyles lour down at you with especial spookiness here. You can return to the Square via the graveyard, but do take care in damp weather – the stones can be slippery. If you're searching for the stocks, they're at the bottom, by a gate near the Taylor Vault. The blue plaque has been questioned by later research, which suggests these stocks were never used officially.

**Check for the presence of cows, calves and even a bull in these fields. If doubtful, don't cross, but go straight ahead then right and right again to descend via Whitworth Rake.*

The reputation of the Whitworth Doctors spread, and patients flocked from all over the north of England and indeed beyond. Wealthier clients would stay at the **Red Lion**, including a gentleman from Leeds who returned annually out of gratitude for having been cured here after the best surgeons in Leeds had failed. Other houses and cottages in the Square were used as lodgings for poorer patients. At the head of the Square now is Whitworth Cottage, which was once two cottages, one of which belonged to a family coachman called Baldwin.



Here's a story from the 1830s about Whitworth Square that's got nothing to do with the Doctors. One Joseph Newhall **sold his wife Sally** here for two shillings and sixpence. Ultimately the sale turned out to be a success, as Sally lived with her 'owner' for many years and married him when Newhall died. JF/BF



This leaflet is rather different from the rest of the series, in that it's a grateful reworking of a classic one from 1976, largely written by Arthur Baldwin with maps by Ian Goldthorpe. With that leaflet Rossendale Groundwork created an active introduction to the life and times of Whitworth's historically most famous residents – the Whitworth Doctors. If, having walked, you find yourself wanting to know more about them, you are invited to visit Whitworth Heritage Museum on North Street – for details of opening times etc call 07434703972.

The walk itself might take an hour and a half normally, but if you stop to identify historical features or potter around Whitworth Square and St Bartholomew's Church or succumb to the delights of *The Red Lion* you could easily double that.

Like all the other walks in this series, however, this one is essentially circular, and features, as is almost a given in Whitworth, some ups, some downs, lots of good fresh air, and plenty of wonderful views that we should never take for granted. Education, exercise and aesthetics, all in one small dose.

WALK 3 – WHITWORTH DOCTORS' TRAIL

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