

WALK 9 MIDDLE TROUGH AND KNOWSLEY

START Landgate, near the cattle grid;
or, carefully, on the main road

DISTANCE 2.5 to 3 miles

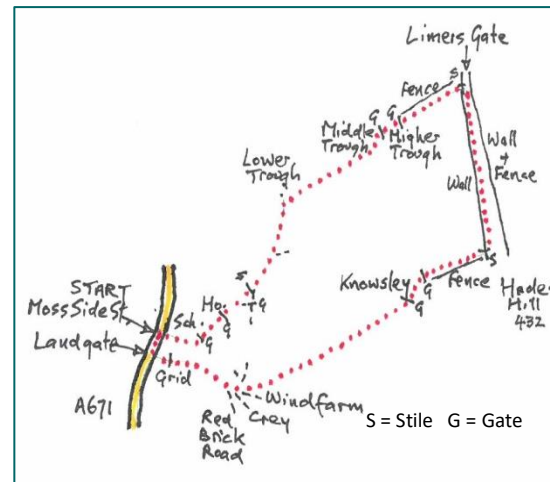
TIME 2 hours

NATURE OF WALK This starts as a stroll and becomes a demanding climb; then descends steeply and becomes the sort of easy slope you relish at the end of a walk. The first half is a delight just after lambing; the higher bits afford wonderful panoramas on a sunny day. Sturdy footwear.

[The walk begins on Moss Side Street. From Landgate, that means walking a few metres north on the main road to the next turning on the right.]

At the end of Moss Side Street furthest from the main road is a gate half left, between St John with St Michael School and the big farm building. At all times **any dog MUST be on a lead through here.** The track leads up to a second gate beside a substantial house: the gate is usually closed and the way through may involve sliding a pallet aside – please put it back carefully to stop sheep roaming one way or t’other. Now head straight across the next field, dipping for the far left corner (ignoring the farm gate right-ish), where you’ll find a fatman’s agony of a stone stile, then a small gate onto a roadway. Go left.

Walk past the first farm/turning on the right, and up towards the gate of Lower Trough Farm – but just before it bear right on the uphill track. Pass



through Middle Trough Farm gate, up a steepening road towards the white buildings of Middle Trough. At the red post box bear right on the uphill track, then 50 metres on go through a wheeled gate and on for another 25m. Turn left immediately after the horse exercise arena. There may be a rope fence across the path – don’t worry: go over it and follow the track up, with Higher Trough Farm on your right. 30m. further on you’ll find a hardly-used little metal gate with a footpath arrow. Go through and up, keeping to the fence (later wall) on your left, through two more gates, one rusty, the other wooden. Ascend the scar – sometimes it’s better on the right. It’s steep, so

take your time and enjoy the lark song. At the very top there’s a high stile over the moor-wall – if it’s not in very good nick, use the gate instead...but please make sure you move it securely back into place once you’re through.

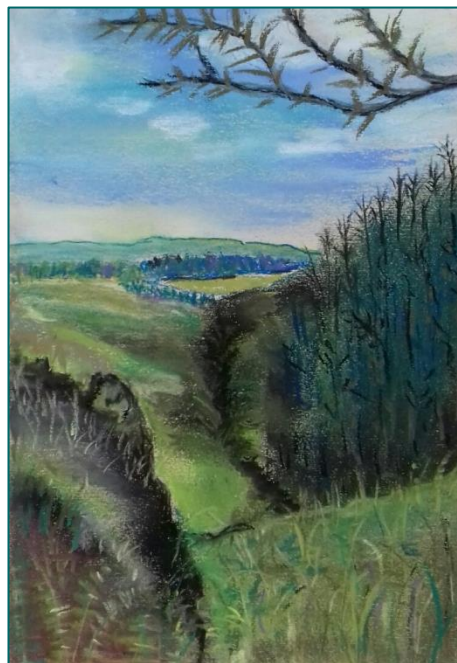
Turn right, onto a broad track bounded by two walls. *This is part of the old drovers’ road called Limers Gate (gate is from the Old Norse for “street”) that once was the main north-south highway in these parts, both in the days before the turnpike road in the valley bottom didn’t exist and after it was built. (It was cheaper up here: no tolls.) Behind you, to the north, the road ran all the way to Settle, in North Yorkshire; ahead of you, to the south, to Rochdale, and beyond. It is believed that the original trade was in lime from Settle, with the packhorses carrying salt from Cheshire on the return journey. The most famous drover locally was a 19th century woman, born Mary Alice Hartley but known as Ailse o’Fussers, who grew up in Pot Oven Farm on the Facit edge of Brown Wardle and ran a string of 20 Galloway ponies. She is famous for dressing as a man (perhaps for her own security); having a donkey, called Jerry, that she tethered to her bedpost of a night; and for giving birth to a baby that died very young. The story is that, heartbroken, she insisted that she should carry the baby’s coffin to its burial place. Mary Alice herself is buried in the churchyard at St Bartholomew’s. (Whitworth Heritage Museum (07434703972) on North Street has much more on Ailse o’Fussers.)*

As you walk along Limers Gate you'll see that, within the walls, the path splits – you should keep to the right-hand wall, aiming for another wall-stile just before a wide gate. Over you go, and two things will become rapidly apparent – the land is steep and grassy; and it's not obvious where the path goes. The answer is straight down, keeping the wall, and then the wire fence, on your left. You'll pass a substantial timber shed on the private land just the other side of the fence.

Generally a descent like this would have panoramic views ahead, but here you might be more aware of the dense trees below. But have faith – and concentrate on getting down safely, through two gates. After the first, avoid the bog by detouring briefly to the right. After the second you'll enter the corner of a garden, but the sign shows you clearly where to go – through the lawned garden with a pond and ducks on your left. Very soon you're onto the exit road from the farm. There's a gate to go through (if it's shut, please close it again after you) and then the view opens up splendidly – and, because the road up to the farm is well maintained, you'll be able to get your head up and enjoy it even as you stride out.

Just keep on a downward trajectory, and you'll soon be at the cattle grid, and the main road. One curiosity, however – the amazing junction of roads that you'll pass through near the bottom: the one going up to your immediate left is the newest, the

Crook Hill windfarm road; the next is the road to Crey Farm, and on up to Middle Hill; the third, from the big stone with the EU symbol, leads onto the Red Brick Road (Whitworth's original Road to Nowhere – though it's useful for walkers!); then there's the road you're on, down to the main road; and to the right there's the spur to the settlement of wagons and caravans; and the road that you walked earlier, that leads up to Middle Trough. It's hard to think of any other six-way junctions in the whole valley. JF



Pastel drawing by Claire Entwistle



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. This one deserves to be walked more often than it is.

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!

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