

Walk 13 - AINSWORTH, AFFETSIDE TO HAWKSHAW

Distance: **3.8 miles**

About: **3 hours**

Terrain: **Ascent 551ft descent 492ft**

Parking: **Plenty on street' available.**

Public transport:

486 - Radcliffe to Bury via Ainsworth (return)

510 - Bury to Bolton via Ainsworth & Walshaw (return)

Refreshments:

The Old White Horse & Duke William Inn
- Ainsworth.

The Pack Horse Inn - Affetside

**The Red Lion & Waggon & Horses -
Hawkshaw**

No public toilets. All paths fully waymarked.

Ainsworth has a long history of human habitation, Bronze Age burial sites and artefacts, dating back at least six thousand years have been found on the surrounding moors. It was first mentioned in the early 13th century, when land there was given by Roger de Middleton to Cockersand Abbey. The Church of England had a chapel of ease built in Tudor times but there was a long history of religious dissent in the village. Much of the surrounding area was common land but was gradually enclosed. Coal mining was extensive on Cockey Moor from the earliest times with evidence of early bell pits visible from Cockey Moor Road. The whole township was finally enclosed in the early nineteenth century. In 1853 the vicar recorded that 1700 people lived in Ainsworth, mostly handloom weavers and small farmers.

① From the lychgate of the Parish Church (just inside the gate are two slotted stones, the remains of the village stocks, dated 1753) cross the main road and proceed, almost directly opposite down Duke Road between the recreation ground on the left and the small cemetery on the right.

Go through the covered archway on the left hand side of the Duke William Inn.

The Duke William Inn dates back to 1737 (and reputedly haunted) and was one of the two coaching inns on the old main road through the village which then crossed Arthur Lane. It was probably at these crossroads that the local gibbet was sited and where hangings would take place.

Follow the cobbled back yard around to the right and into the back lane, on the right there is the handsome old Presbyterian (Unitarian) Chapel and on the left the Reform Club (now the Old Stables) with the original horse mounting steps and block still in place outside.

Both buildings are Grade-II listed, both built in the 18th century. The chapel was first built in 1715 and enlarged in 1773. The graveyard contains interesting 18 & 19th century graves. The Reform Club (now the Old Stables) was built in 1768 to provide accommodation and stabling for worshippers who lived a long way from the village.

Turn left around Hooks Cottage, with a date-stone 1773 above the front door, built by Nathan Brooks (who is buried in the graveyard opposite). Continue down Knowsley Rd to the junction at the bottom, where the lane on the left goes to Barrack Fold Farm.

In 1642, Lord Strange (a royalist and 7th Earl of Derby) mustered more than a thousand men on Cockey Moor in preparation for an attack on Bolton. The assembly was probably in the neighbourhood of Barrack Fold Farm, which could well be how the farm received its name. There is also a local tradition that a number of soldiers lay buried by a clump of trees near the footpath leading down to the bridge over Whitehead's reservoirs. Other suggestions are that Knowsley, which is the name of the Stanleys in Lancashire, received its name because Lord Strange's soldiers mustered there or that Lord Strange himself had his headquarters about there. The Holcombe Hunt point-to-point races

were also held here from 1921 to 1971, known as the 'Mill Workers Derby' attracting crowds from all around the area. The mills of Bury and Bolton closed for the day and crowds of up to 100,000 were reported as attending the early meetings.

② Turn right, past the front of the row of cottages and continue down the lane ahead, a well-trodden path lined with trees and bushes.

Knowsley Cottages reputedly, but unverified, are Flemish weavers' dwellings of the seventeenth century

Just a few metres before the first stile (Walk No.11) Ainsworth to Walshaw, turn left over a similar stile and follow the path over several stiles across the fields, to the right of Broomfield, Ainsworth Nursing Home (partially hidden by trees).

Built as an isolation hospital in 1906 to treat infectious diseases, its last case of smallpox in 1966 and it was sold and converted to residential homes in 1984

Continue by the wooden fence and then the rather straggly hedge downhill to the Upper Lowercroft reservoir. Cross the reservoir over the footbridge, then

bear right above the gorse bushes for around 100 metres until the stile in the hedge half way up the hill, on the left, comes into view.

The three Lower Croft reservoirs were constructed for the nearby Lower Croft Works and are, together with the surrounding areas, sites of biological importance (SBI) and an excellent area for wildlife. The bird sightings at this site cover many species, including the Common Tern, Wheatear, Oyster Catcher, Mallard, Canada Geese, Great Crested Grebe, Greylag, Moorhens, Coots, Black-headed Gull, Common Terns, Great Spotted Woodpecker, House Martins, Swallows, Willow Warblers, Nuthatch, Reed Buntings, plus Eyebright, Hairbell and other interesting plants and Chimney Sweeper Moths.

Cross the stile and the next stile straight ahead in the hedge, and then head in the direction of Bentley Hall Farm, whose roof can be seen over the brow of the hill on the left. Upon cresting the brow of the hill, head for Bentley Hall Road dead ahead and look for the wooden post in the dry stone wall, which marks the position of the stile (around 100m to the right of the hall)





Kestrel

Turn left onto the unmade track Bentley Hall Road as far as the 'T'-junction with Harwood Road at Old Holts Farm. Turn left and almost immediately right through a squeeze stile by a 5 barred gate into a large meadow.

Follow the path across the meadow, heading for the solitary sycamore tree in the distance to cross the wooden stile alongside it.

Go downhill across a field towards a couple of wooden stable blocks and over the stile just behind them (between a pair of holly trees). Turn right uphill and join a second path beside a small rectangular reservoir and farmhouse, The Height.

Bear right and follow the narrow path uphill it broadens out eventually to become a farm track, Bowstone Hill Road.

Continue, noting the great panoramic views from Winter Hill up ahead, the whole of Manchester on the left and the Pennines behind.

Look out for Lapwings, Skylarks, Curlew, and Kestrels in the fields (and bats in the late evening)

2 Join Tottington Road outside Isherwood's Farm then turn next left almost immediately on to Watling Street.

During the Roman occupation of Britain, around AD78, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, the Roman Governor of Britain, founded a fort at Manchester and from it built a series of radial roads. One of these to Ribchester ran north through Affetside, part of the line of the Roman Road is still visible along Watling Street as it approaches Affetside.

The impact of the Romans in the Bury area appears to have been fairly short-lived, with only this Roman Road surviving as a significant landscape feature. Like most of the Roman road network, the Roman paving fell into disrepair when the Romans left Britain, although the routes continued to be used for centuries afterwards. The road became the boundary between the Tottington Lower End and Bradshaw Manors in the Medieval period. A Roman mile was 1,000 paces and a milestone was set up to mark each mile. Their roads were built at the rate of 1 kilometre every day.

Here's your chance to walk in the footsteps of the Roman Legions, for around half a mile along Watling Street to Affetside.

3 Affetside

Public transport

480 - bus to Bury or Bolton

Affetside is a small linear attractive village at 900ft above sea level, on top of the West Pennine Moors at a crossroads of an ancient packhorse route where Watling Street cuts through it North South, and Slack Lane and Black Lane (old pack horse routes) cuts through it East West with panoramic views out across the surrounding moorland. In the centre of the village near the Millennium village green is a Scheduled Ancient Monument known as Affetside Cross. Its origins are unknown and theories vary from being of Roman origin to being a waymarker on the pilgrims route to Whalley Abbey via Pilgrims Cross on Holcombe Moor. Alternatively the cross could simply identify a late 17th century market place or because its claimed to mark the half way point between London and Edinburgh. The Millennium village green makes an excellent spot for a picnic, or take an opportunity to put your feet up and browse the information board attached to a boulder.

At the Pack Horse, turn down the side of pub through a wooden gate and onto 'Black Lane'.

The Pack Horse, AD1442, is the last remaining public house on Watling Street. Inside the pub

there is an old dusty skull, previously behind the bar, but now beautifully displayed by the new management, reputed to be that of the executioner (George Whewell) of Lord Strange, the 7th Earl of Derby, who sacked Bolton in 1644 and was beheaded in the Mark et Place, Bolton. Rumours say he spent his last night on earth in the Man and Scythe pub nearby.

Go down past Tom Nook farm and cross over Turton Road to the cottages opposite and turn left down the side of the end cottage on the right.

Go over the stile and follow the path down the field, by trees on the right, and across a second stile at the bottom of the field. Proceed between two fishing lodges surrounded by trees on either side of the path.

Go downhill bearing left into the Two Brooks Valley follow the clearly marked & well worn path to join Two Brooks Lane at the bottom a little farther up than Two Brooks Farm.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the valley sustained a community in itself, with a number of mills, works, farms and several groups of cottages. The remains of many of these can still be seen within the valley, and a network of footpaths, once busy links for horses, carts and workers, now provide access to woods, brooks, lodges and fields and a variety of wildlife habitats including grasslands, heath, open water and marsh. Species-rich ancient oak woodland occurs on some slopes, with thriving populations of bluebells, violets and golden saxifrage. Woodlands with these characteristics are ideal habitats for a variety of birds including the great spotted woodpecker and tawny owl. Certain parts of the valley have been officially recognised and protected as Sites of Biological Importance (SBI). These are Hawkshaw Brook (containing the former Two Brooks Mill area) and Bottoms Wood.

Turn left up the lane crossing the river and the ruins of the old Two Brooks Bleaching Mill

A stroll through the remains of Two Brooks Mill no longer gives the impression of the scale of the former enterprise, where up to 200 people were employed at its peak. Closer investigation of the many overgrown remains which are still visible on site in the form of stone walls, slabs, channels and lodges will, however, give some clues as to the

extent of works. The mill chimney still stands on the side of the hill at some distance from the works itself, and served as a flue which ran underground from the boiler house in the valley bottom. The chimney is the only visual reminder of the working history of the locality. A Royal Commission of 1855 gave a poor report of the working conditions in the mill at Two Brooks. Mary Greenhalgh, one of the women working there, and a William Johnson gave evidence of the long working hours starting at 6am and finishing at 11pm with the Saturday shift ending at midnight. Mary Greenhalgh reported how little ones fell asleep at their work "my heart is so sore for them - I cannot speak to them...." she said.

Continue up the lane to Bolton Road at the top and turn right crossing the road to the warm and welcoming, family run Waggon & Horses, an early 19th century stone built village pub.

Hawkshaw is an attractive village of stone-built cottages, church and two warm and inviting pubs that coalesced around the junction of Hawkshaw Lane and the newly built Bolton to Edenfield turnpike in 1803. Prior to this the village consisted of a loose knit collection of scattered farms. The area was first recorded in writing in 1205 as being on the edge of Holcombe Forest.



Squirrel

Public transport:

273 - Bolton to Rawtenstall to Bolton (via Ramsbottom).

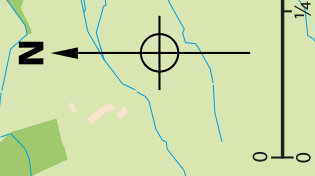
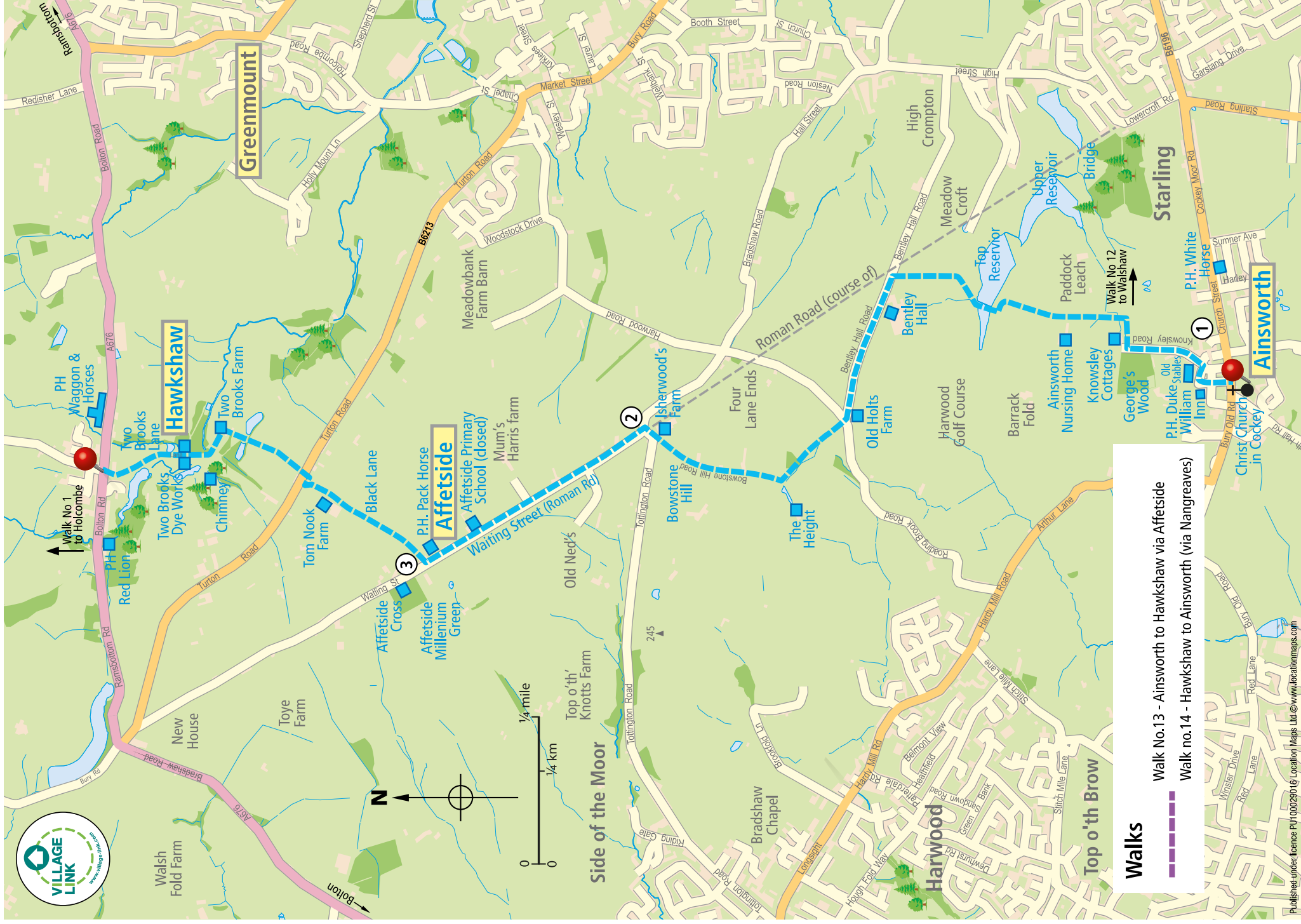
480 - via Greenmount, Walshaw to Bury.

480 - via Affetside to Bolton.

Refreshments:

Red Lion & Waggon and Horses, Hawkshaw

WALK 13 - AINSWORTH, AFFETSIDE TO HAWKSHAW



- Walks**
- Walk No.13 - Ainsworth to Hawkshaw via Affetside
 - Walk no.14 - Hawkshaw to Ainsworth (via Nangreaves)

Published under licence P11 00029016 Location Maps Ltd © www.locationmaps.com